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HENRIK IBSEN AND THOMAS HARDY:
A SOCIOLOGICAL COMPARISON

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of English
University of Richmond

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Garland Karr Linkous, Jr.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Although much has been written about the plays of Henrik Ibsen and the novels of Thomas Hardy, there have been no notable comparisons of the works of the two men, perhaps because they wrote in the two different media. Another possible explanation is the fact that Ibsen is universally regarded as the father of modern drama, but Hardy's status—whether he is the last Victorian novelist or the first modern one—is disputed. It is the purpose of this paper to demonstrate, by comparison, that Hardy should very definitely be classed with the modern, realistic writers.

When first studying Ibsen and Hardy, a number of similarities are immediately apparent. Born only twelve years apart—Ibsen in 1828, Hardy in 1840—both left home at an early age to work at jobs far removed from their chosen vocations. At fifteen Ibsen became an apprentice apothecary, and at sixteen Hardy went to work in an architect's office. When Ibsen was twenty-two he moved to Christiania, now called Oslo, to enter the university, but he soon became involved with the theater and writing. Similarly, the twenty-one year old Hardy went to London, where he continued with classical studies, took up French, and came into contact with the scientific, social, and literary ideas of the

late Victorian age.

Each man did much writing prior to his first notable work. Ibsen wrote a number of plays, and Hardy had three novels to his credit plus many unpublished poems. Moreover, their early works are similar in that they are generally melodramatic and have the conventional happy ending. For example, Lady Inger of Östraat (1855), a "well-made" play, and Hardy's Desperate Remedies (1871), a novel of pure plot, both depend upon mistaken identities, misplaced letters, and other artificial devices to keep their stories moving.

The literary skills of both men were late to mature. Ibsen's first major success was Brand (1865), written when he was thirty-seven, and Hardy was thirty-four when his Far from the Madding Crowd (1874) was published. The greatest works of each man were yet to come, however, and also the greatest trials and rewards. Both were later to receive extremely severe criticism because they dared to deal with modern social problems, but fortunately each one lived long enough—Ibsen died in 1906 at age seventy-eight, Hardy in 1928 at eighty-eight—to receive the acclaim which they so richly deserved.

Concerning the similarities in their later works, it is easy to see that the outstanding trait of the two men is the same, for both are recognized for the excellence of their female characters. Eva Le Gallienne says of Ibsen

that "the range and variety of his portraits of women are incomparable. His grasp of the intricacies of female psychology is miraculous."¹ Similarly, it has been observed that Hardy's "gallery of women is unique. . . . There they stand, flesh and blood women, whose every action, whose most delicate sensation is thoroughly understood by their creator."²

Of major importance to this study is the fact that there are many similarities in the individual female characters of the two men, most noticeably between Hedda Gabler and Eustacia Vye, and Rebekka West and Sue Bridehead. The parallels between the first two are not a result of Ibsenian influence on Hardy, for The Return of the Native (1878) was written twelve years before Hedda Gabler (1890), nor is it plausible that the reverse is true. With regard to the resemblances between Rebekka of Rosmersholm (1886) and Sue of Jude the Obscure (1895), David Cecil has noted that "Hardy saw Rosmersholm shortly before writing Jude;³ and,

¹Eva Le Gallienne, trans. "Introduction" to Six Plays by Henrik Ibsen (New York: Modern Library, 1957), p. xiii.

²W. P. Trent, "The Novels of Thomas Hardy," Sewanee Rev., I (November, 1892), p. 24.

³In June, 1893, according to Florence Emily Hardy, The Life of Thomas Hardy (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1962), p. 256.

whether intentional or not, there is a marked similarity between Sue's story and that of Rebekka West."⁴ Thus Chapter II of this paper will thoroughly consider the four women as one proof that Hardy was as modern as Ibsen.

There is also another area of agreement between the two men, their criticism of the double standard. Ibsen first dealt with the problem in A Doll's House (1879). "The theme in the play which interested Ibsen most was not that of woman's freedom—her so-called emancipation—but that of the different ethical codes by which men and women live."⁵ His investigation of the harmful effects of the standard was continued in Ghosts (1881) and The Wild Duck (1884). Hardy, on the other hand, used the theme only once, in his Tess of the D'Urbervilles (1891):

There is one thing which not the dullest reader can fail to recognize—the persistency with which there alternately smoulders and flames through the book Mr. Hardy's passionate protest against the unequal justice meted by society to the man and woman associated in an identical breach of the moral law.⁶

In order to further demonstrate that Hardy should be placed among the moderns, the third Chapter of this study will deal

⁴David Cecil, Hardy the Novelist, An Essay in Criticism (London: Constable & Co., 1943), p. 133, n. 1.

⁵Le Gallienne, op. cit., p. xv.

⁶William Watson, Excursions in Criticism (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1893), p. 80.

with the manifestations of the double standard which were explored by the two men.

Finally, there is the matter of their reception by the critics of that day. When Ibsen had Nora Helmer slam the door on her husband, Torvald, in A Doll's House, a torrent of abuse descended upon his head. The public of that time was not prepared to see the truth presented so boldly, nor was it happy to see society's hypocrisy revealed so clearly. Two years later he again shocked the world with Ghosts, and the reaction was so violent that he immediately struck back at his critics with the satirical play entitled An Enemy of the People (1882), in which he thoroughly castigated the supposed liberals who had been among his foremost detractors. His following plays were not quite as controversial, and continental audiences, spurred to thought by his work and that of other realists, had begun to realize the truth of what he said and thus received them with little comment.

The story in England was different, however, for the forces behind hypocrisy in literature still prevailed. Thus when A Doll's House was first performed competently in London in 1889, there was a great deal of harsh criticism which continued as other plays were presented. The disapproval was mild, however, when compared with that which greeted the production of Ghosts in 1891. "If A Doll's House

caused a commotion, Ghosts caused what [William] Archer termed 'a frenzy of execration.'⁷ Soon attention was directed to a native Englishman, for Hardy published Tess in the same year. Although it suffered rather severely under the lash of adverse reaction, it was his second work of social criticism, Jude the Obscure, which, as was the case with Ibsen, received the greatest condemnation. Hardy, unlike Ibsen, did not lash out at his critics but simply refused "to deliberately stand up to be shot at,"⁸ and Jude was his last piece of prose fiction.⁹ The change in public taste occurred in England as it had elsewhere, however, and when Hardy died he was regarded as the leading novelist of late nineteenth century England.

In order to understand fully the contribution of each man to modern literature and also the hysterical criticism of their works, it is necessary to know something about the state of literature, and the causes thereof, at the time of their arrival. The general trend of European literature in the nineteenth century is from romanticism to realism, but the progression was not steady, nor did it occur at the same

⁷Le Gallienne, op. cit., p. xix.

⁸Hardy, op. cit., p. 246.

⁹The Well-Beloved, published in March, 1897, had been serialized in 1892.

time or in the same manner in every country. As Priestly has said:

It was as if all the major writers of the age were working at the top of this gigantic tower of industrial production, scientific discovery, urbanization, and there had fallen upon them, long before it reached the masses below, the curse of Babel, a wild confusion of tongues. There are literary movements of a sort, but they move in opposite directions, cancelling each other out.¹⁰

The confusion caused by the clash of ideas extended to every sector of human endeavor and made the nineteenth century the world's greatest in terms of total accomplishment. There were geniuses in every field of activity, and they came from many different countries. Moreover, outside influences, such as science, philosophy, industrialism, and government, affected literature, and in turn were affected by it, more than ever before. In order to make some sense out of the turmoil, there is needed a brief survey of literature in the three countries—France, Germany, and England—whose literatures were influenced most by the movement toward realism.¹¹

French poetry, drama, and prose, both fictional and non-fictional, were going through a period of sterility

¹⁰J. B. Priestly, Literature and Western Man (New York: Harper & Bros., 1960), p. 189.

¹¹The following literary histories were taken from the sections "French Literature," "German Literature," and "English Literature" in the Encyclopedia Britannica (1958).

as the century opened because of the political upheavals of the time. Not until the arrival of Victor Hugo in the 1820's did the literature of France return to a high level. The greatest of the French romanticists, Hugo's influence continued until past the middle of the century in the novel and in poetry. In drama his genius was also lyrical, and he was surpassed in popularity by Augustin Eugène Scribe, the foremost exponent of the "well-made" play, which was technically superb but lacked depth. Victor Émile Augier, Dumas films, and Victorien Sardou carried on the tradition, and mechanical melodrama continued to be the mainstay of the French theater until after A Doll's House was written. It was in the novel that France took the lead in realistic literature. Balzac's Human Comedy, written between 1829 and 1850, contains a mixture of romanticism and naturalism, but the former was completely abandoned by Gustave Flaubert in his Madame Bovary (1856), a drab but scrupulously truthful portrait of life which has been called the first realistic novel. The naturalism of Émile Zola, who stirred up turgid social depths, was soon to follow. An eminent critic also, Zola emerged as the most important and influential French writer of the century. Thus, as the time of Ibsen was reached, France was far ahead of all other countries in the novel, but drama and poetry were still unrealistic. Significant non-fictional prose was sadly lacking. France was

ready, however, for the naturalistic wave that was about to break, for her novelists had prepared the way. For that reason, Ibsen's plays caused less commotion in France than in any other country and Hardy's novels none at all.

Germany at the beginning of the century lay under the influence of Goethe, her greatest literary figure and one of the world's greatest. He was at once the best and last German exponent of romanticism. The so-called Young Germans of the 1830's, perhaps realizing that nothing more could be accomplished in the romantic tradition after Goethe, numbered among them Heinrich Heine, who led the break with the old ways. Although he was Germany's greatest lyricist, he also satirized contemporary life in many of his poems and prose works. There were no other significant writers in the fields of poetry and the novel until the last few years of the century, but the theater saw the arrival of an important forerunner of Ibsen, Friedrich Hebbel, who showed tragedy in the rigidity of middle class morality in his play entitled Maria Magdalena (1844). The field of non-fictional prose was the most outstanding during the nineteenth century. The early romantic philosopher, Friedrich von Schelling, was replaced by his friend and collaborator Friedrich Hegel, whose ideas were eventually to become the basis of communist political and social thought and Hitler's National Socialism. In 1848 appeared the Communist Manifesto of Marx and Engels,

a work which has had a greater effect on the twentieth century than any other book. The final great German philosopher of the century was Nietzsche, who railed strongly against romanticism and generally opposed all accepted moral principles. The situation in Germany around 1880, therefore, was completely different from that which existed in France. Drama, poetry, and the novel were in a state of depression, and naturalistic philosophy was in the ascendant. The prominence of realism made the Germans only slightly more critical of Ibsen's work than the French, and Hardy's work, which was quite popular in Germany, was not considered even remotely obscene.

The first eighty years of the nineteenth century saw England's longest sustained period of greatness in poetry and prose and its most vacuous on the stage. With the possible exceptions of T. W. Robertson and W. S. Gilbert, no important playwrights appeared until Henry Arthur Jones and Arthur Wing Pinero in the mid-1880's. Both dealt with social problems in a manner similar to that of Ibsen, but with far less candour. Most of the plays presented throughout the century were conventional melodramas. Romanticism was in full sway in poetry as the century began. Initiated by Wordsworth and Coleridge, it continued for approximately thirty years, reaching culmination with Byron, Shelley, and Keats. Tennyson departed somewhat from the tradition and

tried to reconcile the conflicts between old and new ideas which troubled the people of his day. Robert Browning has been called the first psychological poet, but almost no trace of realism appeared in the poetry of the century until the arrival of Swinburne, who revolted against Victorian hypocrisy in both verse and criticism. The prose field also demonstrated a richness unmatched by any other time. In the non-fictional line, the theories of Thomas Malthus and the utilitarianism of Jeremy Bentham were to have important influence on literature. John Stuart Mill carried Bentham's thought into the Victorian era. Thomas Carlyle, in espousing the theory of work and, along with John Ruskin, condemning his own age, expressed the sentiments that were to come to a head in the latter part of the century—a rising tide of dissatisfaction with the injustices of the Industrial Age and demands for reforms. Shortly after the middle of the century, Charles Darwin presented world Christianity and the prevailing modes of socio-religious thought with their greatest challenge since the Reformation with the publication of his great work on natural selection, Origin of Species (1859). It was in the field of the novel, however, that the spirit of the age was expressed most accurately and with the highest ability. Scott made his great contribution to literature, the romantic, historical novel, with the publication of Waverley in 1814. The next great

writer to emerge was Charles Dickens, who is generally considered as England's finest novelist. Although he was a social reformer of major proportions, his novels were more sentimental than realistic. Contemporary with Dickens was William Thackeray, a great moralist and satirist. The age also produced a number of excellent women authors, headed by George Eliot (born Mary Ann Evans), the great problem novelist of the century, and including Jane Austen and the two Brontë sisters, Charlotte and Emily. A later writer in the field of democratic realism was Anthony Trollope, and the second best problem novelist was George Meredith. As was the situation in the non-fictional field, however, the writers of fiction dealt with the bad side-effects of industrialism but failed to consider the moral and ethical causes of the century's problems. Thus, although England could boast more masters in all forms of literature than any other country, she was far behind the continent in the presentation of a natural world. The influence of Ibsen and the French realists was not to penetrate until after 1890, and England was, therefore, the most vituperative country in Europe in its reception of the works of Ibsen and Hardy.

The similarity in the harsh reception of Hardy, when compared with that of the admittedly modern Ibsen, gives further proof that the former was among the leaders in bringing realism into English literature. Chapter IV will

present, therefore, examples of the harsh reception to the works of the two men.

The final Chapter of this paper will draw together the ideas which may be logically concluded from the comparison of Ibsen and Hardy from a sociological point of view. The view was chosen because it provided the best way of demonstrating the modernity of Thomas Hardy, who should be considered not only as a great novelist but also as one of the leaders in the movement away from hypocrisy and toward realism in literature.

CHAPTER II

FOUR WOMEN OF IBSEN AND HARDY

I. HEDDA AND EUSTACIA

At the beginning of Hedda Gabler, Henrik Ibsen presents Miss Juliane Tesman, the maiden aunt of Jørgen Tesman. She can best be classified as the typical maiden aunt, a pleasant, happy, unsophisticated member of the middle class. Since she and her sister, also unmarried, were responsible for raising Tesman, it is to be expected that he holds many of the same opinions and has many of the same values as his aunt, and, when he comes on the stage, such proves to be the case. Aunt Juliane is the creator, and Tesman an inhabitant, of what is later called "the 'Aunt Juliane atmosphere,'"¹ a society that would be termed stilted by someone who does not have the same background. The Tesmans, however, as natives of that society, are completely satisfied with it; they are happy in their simple ignorance of a more lively type of society, and they have found productive and rewarding occupations within the limits of their environment

¹Le Gallienne, op. cit., p. 379. All quotations from Ibsen's plays are taken from this volume, hereafter denoted Vol. I, and Eva Le Gallienne, trans. "The Wild Duck" and Other Plays by Henrik Ibsen (New York: Modern Library, 1961), hereafter denoted Vol. II.

and their own intellectual stolidity.

Thomas Hardy opens The Return of the Native, on the other hand, with a description of Egdon Heath, a grim and drab wasteland. Although the heath would seem to have no relationship to the Tesman society, both are actually very similar, for Egdon exhibits the same social sterility to anyone who is not a native of the place. The dwellers on the heath display the same stolidity, the same satisfaction with their lives as do the Tesmans, and they also find just as much beauty and enjoyment in their simple existence. Only faintly aware of the outside world in which they would be as out of place as Aunt Juliane and Jörgen would be in high society, they do not yearn for anything different. The heath becomes something almost alive in its influence on the people who are its permanent residents, for it has nurtured and raised them, and they, like the Tesmans, cannot be other than what they are without great physical and intellectual exertion, which the heath, by its very nature, discourages. The natives of Egdon, however, have found occupations which satisfy them, and they are not unhappy.

Into the two environments come two aliens—the "neurotic scheming monster,"² Hedda Gabler, and Eustacia Vye, "the first of Hardy's irresponsible and mildly neurotic

²Vol. I, xxiv.

hedonists."³ Ibsen himself describes Hedda with a detail that is unusual for him:

She is a woman of twenty-nine. Her face and figure show breeding and distinction. Her complexion is pale and opaque. Her eyes are steel gray and express a cold, unruffled repose. Her hair is an agreeable medium-brown, but not especially abundant.⁴

Hardy also gives a more complete description of his heroine than he usually does:

She was in person full-limbed and somewhat heavy; without ruddiness, as without pallor; and soft to the touch as a cloud. . . . She had Pagan eyes, full of nocturnal mysteries. . . . 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. . . . Her presence brought memories of such things as Bourbon roses, rubies, and tropical midnights; her moods recalled lotus-eaters and the march in 'Athalie;' her motions, the ebb and flow of the sea; her voice, the viola.⁵

It is immediately apparent that both women are completely out of place in their respective environments, but their choice of places to live was severely restricted. "Hedda's father, a general, is a widower. She has the tradition of the military caste about her, and these narrow her activities to the customary hunt for a socially and

³Albert J. Guerard, "The Women of the Novels," Thomas Hardy, A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Albert J. Guerard (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963), p. 64.

⁴Vol. I, 351.

⁵Thomas Hardy, The Return of the Native (New York: Modern Library), pp. 77-79. Hereafter cited as Return.

pecuniarily eligible husband."⁶ Although she was a member of the gay society of Oslo and was always surrounded by eligible men, none were willing to marry her. Thus, having turned twenty-nine, she became somewhat desperate, and when Tesman made an offer of marriage she accepted, without any consideration of the possible consequences of a union with a man whose interests were so completely at odds with her own.

Somewhat similarly, Eustacia was the daughter of the regimental bandmaster at Budmouth, a fashionable seaside resort, where she had also been in the center of the social whirl. Her parents had died, however, and she was placed in the care of her grandfather, a retired naval captain, who had a cottage on the heath because it was an inexpensive place to live. She remembered Budmouth with an exaggerated fascination, and her mind was filled with "romantic recollections of sunny afternoons on an esplanade, with military bands, officers, and gallants around."⁷ She could not have remained in the city without a guardian, however, and thus she came to live with her grandfather. Later, of course, she is to marry Clym Yeobright and thereby become even more irrevocably tied to the heath.

⁶George Bernard Shaw, The Quintessence of Ibsenism (New York: Hill & Wang, 1963), p. 109.

⁷Return, p. 80.

The social backgrounds of the two women meant that they had a false picture of the real world and were, therefore, extremely susceptible to the charms of an engaging man. Before their marriages, both met such a man. Hedda formed an acquaintance with Ejlert Lövborg, and Eustacia had an affair with Damon Wildeve. Both men are intelligent and have ability but are failures. A conversation between Tesman and Judge Brack reveals that Lövborg's debauchery has disgusted his family:

Brack: You must remember that his relatives have a great deal of influence.

Tesman: But they washed their hands of him long ago.

Brack: At one time he was considered the hope of the family.

Tesman: At one time, perhaps. But he soon put an end to that.⁸

Similarly, Hardy says of Wildeve that there were "those who had expected much of him, and had been disappointed."⁹

Both men are quite attractive to women. Lövborg is "an interesting man, a romancing idealist. . . . He has personal address, is undoubtedly a man of brains, and dissipated as he is, manages to surround his loose living with the halo of Byronism."¹⁰ Hardy himself describes Eustacia's

⁸Vol. I, 368.

⁹Return, p. 48.

¹⁰James Huneker, "Henrik Ibsen," Iconoclasts, A Book of Dramatists (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909), p. 102.

lover in great detail:

He was quite a young man, and of the two properties, form and motion, the latter first attracted the eye in him. The grace of his movement was singular; it was the pantomimic expression of a lady-killing career. . . . Altogether he was one . . . in whom no woman would have seen anything to dislike.¹¹

Hedda had used Lövborg merely as a means of investigating a way of life about which she was supposed to know nothing, for through him she could vicariously enter a world forbidden to her. By the force of her personality and beauty she made him confess everything that he had done. "How did you make me talk like that, Hedda? By what power?"¹² he later asked her. For the first time Hedda had learned what it was like to have power over another human being, and she liked the feeling. Lövborg, however, misinterpreted her interest and her impudent questions, for he thought that they signified a desire to lead his type of life. Nothing was further from the truth, for Hedda had too much pride and sense of social class to do anything of that sort. Thus, when he asked her to share that life with him, she ordered him out of the house at the point of a gun.

Although Eustacia had no such overwhelming desire to learn about the forbidden world, she had used Wildeve just

¹¹Return, p. 49.

¹²Vol. I, 388.

as cold-bloodedly as Hedda had used Lövborg, but her motive was different. He was simply a diversion, for she was only "filling up the spare hours of her existence by idealizing Wildeve for want of a better object. This was the sole reason of his ascendancy."¹³ Wildeve, however, made a mistake about Eustacia's attitude toward him that was just as disastrous to his cause as Lövborg's misinterpretation had been. He thought that seeing Thomasin Yeobright would make Eustacia jealous, and indeed it did, but astonishingly he found himself asking Thomasin to marry him, even though he did not love her. When she accepted, his chance to win Eustacia was gone, but she still exerted a power over him that made him do whatever she wished. After his initial wedding attempt had failed, he had seen Eustacia's bonfire and had gone to meet her. "I determined you should come," she cried triumphantly, "and you have come! I have shown my power!"¹⁴ Wildeve's mistake continued to backfire on him, moreover, for, although it had become possible that he would not marry Thomasin after all, Eustacia had decided that she no longer wanted him. He persisted in his attentions, however, but by the time that he had almost overcome her reluctance to renew their relationship, a greater man had

¹³Return, p. 84.

¹⁴Return, p. 75.

appeared on the scene, for Clym Yeobright had returned from Paris.

Eustacia's feelings about Clym were unlike anything Hedda ever felt for a man and demonstrate one of the few differences between the two women, although both are alike in their misunderstanding of the true nature of love. That Hedda actually hated the word itself and what it represented was shown when she told Judge Brack, "Ugh! Don't use that revolting word!"¹⁵ She would not, and perhaps could not, love someone because she felt that it would place her in that person's power, and, as will be seen later, any restriction of her freedom to act as she so desired was abhorrent to her. Eustacia, on the other hand, wanted to love and be loved, but she also did not understand. "What a strange sort of love," she thought about Diggory Venn's relationship to Thomasin, "to be entirely free from that quality of selfishness which is frequently the chief constituent of the passion, and sometimes its only one!"¹⁶ Here she unwittingly revealed the basis of her own love for Clym, for, in her own way, her reason for marrying was as coldly logical as was that of Ibsen's heroine. "Though she made no conditions as to his return to the French capital,

¹⁵Vol. I, 374.

¹⁶Return, p. 185.

this was what she was secretly hoping for."¹⁷ Eustacia felt that her power over Clym would be sufficient to enable her to persuade him to leave the heath, but she is to be sadly disappointed.

Rowland Grey said of Eustacia that "it was fatal that she should yoke herself irrevocably to one thus drawn to the austere life. Her frantic efforts to break the chains of circumstance were the only logical sequence to her impulsive yielding."¹⁸ It is easy to see that the statement could apply equally well to Hedda, for, just as Clym was absorbed with his preparations for founding and teaching a school on Egdon, Tesman's only interest besides his wife lay in studying about the domestic industries of Brabant during the middle ages. Both men were quite happy with their scholarly pursuits, but the two women soon discovered that they could not share their husbands' fascination with their respective occupations. Tesman's work bored Hedda, and Eustacia never seriously considered Clym's suggestion that she could aid him with the school. Neither woman was temperamentally suited to either help or else sit quietly by their husbands, as any dutiful wife was supposed to do,

¹⁷Return, p. 247.

¹⁸Rowland Grey, "Certain Women of Thomas Hardy," Fortnightly Rev., CXVIII (October, 1922), 680.

according to the precepts of that time.

There had been, of course, a first flare of enjoyment on the part of the two women, but disillusionment occurred when they realized their mistakes. In Hedda's case the discovery came during her wedding trip:

Hedda: Oh, my dear Judge, I can't tell you how bored I've been.

Brack: Are you really serious?

Hedda: Of course. Surely you can understand? How would you like to spend six months without meeting a soul you could really talk to?

Brack: I shouldn't like it at all.

Hedda: But the most unendurable thing of all was—

Brack: What?

Hedda: To be everlastingly with one and the same person. . . .

Brack: But with our good Tesman, I should have thought one might—

Hedda: Tesman is a specialist, my dear Judge.

Brack: Undeniably.

Hedda: And specialists are not amusing traveling companions—Not for long, at any rate.¹⁹

Eustacia's discovery did not take much longer. "If I had known then [before she married Clym] what I now know," she said to Mrs. Yeobright, "that I should be living in this wild heath a month after my marriage I—should have thought twice about agreeing."²⁰ It is to be expected that their boredom and dissatisfaction would lead eventually to indifference, and such is indeed the case. Hedda's unconcern is

¹⁹Vol. I, 373.

²⁰Return, p. 301.

evident in her every statement to Tesman about their affairs, but he never realized it. Clym was smarter than his counterpart. "You seem to take a very mild interest in what I propose, little or much,"²¹ he said to Eustacia, and afterwards she managed to feign enough interest so that he did not have reason to complain again.

The stage is now set for the re-entrance of the two old lovers, and Hedda's and Eustacia's mistakes in rejecting them and marrying others are made even more evident by the sudden rise in the fortunes of the two men. Lövborg's book had brought him both riches and fame, and Wildeve had inherited eleven thousand pounds. Their new affluence is in sharp contrast to their lack of money previously and also to the relative poverty of the two husbands. The injury to Clym's eyes, caused by too much studying, had forced him to cancel his school plans and take to cutting furze and turf, one of the lowest jobs on the heath. The success of Lövborg's book, combined with the renunciation of his former depravity, have put him directly in line for the professorship sought by Tesman, the expectation of which had led him to get married, take an extended and costly honeymoon, and lease Secretary Falk's villa, which is actually too large and expensive for his and Hedda's needs and resources.

²¹Return, p. 339.

Moreover, the recipients of the men's good fortune are the two women to whom they had turned after being rejected by Hedda and Eustacia. Lövborg had formed a relationship with Thea Elvsted, the second wife of a country sheriff, that was similar to the one he had enjoyed previously with Hedda. Thea, however, had reformed Lövborg, giving Hedda one more reason to dislike her, since Hedda could not have done so. She also envied Thea because she was "the girl with that irritating mass of hair—she was always showing off,"²² in contrast with Hedda's own rather thin tresses. Many years previously, when they were schoolmates, Hedda had threatened to burn off all of Thea's hair, and she was not just teasing. Another difference between Hedda and Eustacia is apparent in the latter's attitude toward the other woman. Eustacia did not dislike Thomasin, although she had a superior attitude toward her and envies her now that Wildeve is wealthy. But she could never be intentionally mean to anyone.

The two old lovers wish to regain their previous intimacy with Hedda and Eustacia. "To be yearning for the difficult, to be weary of that offered; to care for the remote, to dislike the near; it was Wildeve's nature always,"²³ and the same can easily be said of Lövborg. That

²²Vol. I, 355.

²³Return, p. 266.

the two women are now married is of no consequence to them. In fact, it makes the attempt even more enjoyable, for it adds an element of excitement because of the illegality involved. There is also an extra complication in Hedda's case that is to become extremely important later. Brack, a former suitor who had not been very ardent, wants to start something with her again.

Both Hedda and Eustacia view the attempted rapprochement with interested neutrality. That is, they welcome the diversion for the entertainment it can offer but have absolutely no intention of succumbing to the men's desires and thereby violating their marriage vows. "All the same, no unfaithfulness, remember,"²⁴ Hedda tells Lövborg, although she has just admitted that she does not love Tesman. Similarly, Eustacia reminds Wildeve that "we have been hot lovers in our time, but it won't do now."²⁵ Neither of the women is prepared to take the one step which could prevent their final tragedies, for it would entail a transgression of established moral laws and would subject them to the censure of society, something they will not risk.

Their cowardice may at first seem somewhat surprising in light of the fact that they have previously appeared to

²⁴Vol. I, 387.

²⁵Return, p. 353.

be quite emancipated, in the nineteenth-century meaning of the word. Hedda's forwardness in boldly asking Lövborg about the sinful world seems to place her in that category. Hardy is more specific about his heroine's supposed modernity:

. . . She was a girl of some forwardness of mind, indeed, weighed in relation to her situation among the very rearward of thinkers, very original. Her instincts toward social nonconformity were at the root of this.²⁶

That the impression of emancipation is false, however, has been evident all along by certain casual actions of the two women. For example, the shock that Hedda displayed when she learned that Thea had left her husband is the same type of reaction that the typical nineteenth-century Philistine would have had. In addition, during her discussions with Brack and Lövborg she would tempt them into thinking that she would welcome their advances, but she never meant to do so. Amelia von Ende said of Hedda:

. . . She scorns conventional respectability but she has not the courage to break its social code. She would be a rebel, but she is a coward at heart, who has not the strength to bear consequences and to assume responsibilities.²⁷

What people will say is the ruling principle of Hedda's

²⁶Return, p. 82.

²⁷Amelia von Ende, "Henrik Ibsen and the Women of His Dramas," Theater, X (August, 1909), 52.

life, and Lövborg, somewhat wiser the second time he encounters her, recognizes her cowardice and tries to make use of it. Brack will later use the same method in trying to get his way, unwittingly driving her to suicide, and finally Hedda herself is forced to admit that she has a "tragic flaw:"

Hedda: I have such a fear of scandal.

Lövborg: Yes, Hedda, you are a coward at heart.

Hedda: A terrible coward.²⁸

Eustacia's fear is expressed just as plainly in her actions and statements. She always met Wildeve at night, when few people would see them, and, after her marriage, she encouraged his presence and at the same time discouraged it. Hardy states that "she had advanced to the secret recesses of sensuousness, yet had hardly crossed the threshold of conventionality."²⁹ Eustacia, however, either did not realize, or else was unwilling to admit, the reason for her problems and failures. In keeping with the theme traditionally associated with Hardy, she blamed outside influences, over which she had no control. The atmosphere of the heath, of course, was partially to blame, but she did have several chances to leave, and only her fear of scandal kept her there.

²⁸Vol. I, 389.

²⁹Return, p. 114.

Now the stories of the two women begin to move toward the final tragedies. In attempting to play with Lövborg and Wildeve, Hedda and Eustacia started a chain of circumstances beyond anything they had ever imagined. Hedda actually only hoped to find a momentary excitement by regaining her control over Lövborg, for her craving for power had become insatiable, particularly when she looked at Thea, that poor, simple woman who, with resources far less than Hedda commanded, had so dramatically influenced Lövborg's life. It would have been a waste of time to try anything of that sort with Tesman. To her he is a nonentity, not worth bothering about, but Ejlert Lövborg, there is a man, a proven genius, and to influence him would be a significant achievement indeed. "For once in my life I want the power to shape a human destiny,"³⁰ she tells Thea, but that power is to be exercised in a strange way:

How to have a hand in Lövborg's life without doing anything for Lövborg, how to be a power in her little world along the line of least resistance? . . . Nobody need know, and her revolt against circumstances being a private affair, she would still be respectable.³¹

Hedda's spiritual poverty, however, meant that her influence had to cause harm, for, "like all people whose lives are

³⁰Vol. I, 395.

³¹F. M. Colby, "Analogies of a Disagreeable Heroine," Bookman, XXV (July, 1907), 469.

valueless, she has no more sense of the value of Lövborg's or Tesman's or Thea's lives than a railway shareholder has of the value of a shunter's."³² To her, people were merely tools to be used as she saw fit.

Although Eustacia's motivation is altogether different, "what desolation she brings on all around her in her unscrupulous fight for happiness!"³³ She does not desire power or influence but wishes only to enjoy herself. "But I am not going to be depressed," she tells Wildeve. "I began a new system by going to that dance, and I mean to stick to it. Clym can sing merrily; why should not I?"³⁴ Again she uses her power over Wildeve, however, for "he had long since begun to sigh again for Eustacia,"³⁵ and he takes her words at more than face value. Moreover, she feels no sense of shame at what she is doing. She can reconcile being seen with Wildeve because he is now a relative by marriage, and the fact that few people know of their former relationship means that talk will be at a minimum.

Hedda's first step in her conquest of Lövborg is to destroy his relationship with Thea, which she accomplishes

³²Shaw, op. cit., p. 113.

³³Cecil, op. cit., p. 27.

³⁴Return, p. 351.

³⁵Return, p. 325.

with a few well-chosen words. Lövborg had desperately needed someone who had faith in him, someone to boost his ego. Hedda had failed because she had no interest in Lövborg the man, only in what he had to tell her, but Thea did have faith in him and grew to love him. By making him distrust Thea's confidence, Hedda destroys the foundation upon which he had built his new life, and he hoists his glass and goes off to Judge Brack's party.

Eustacia, as has been noted, did not deliberately set out to break up Wildeve and Thomasin, but that was the result of her actions. Because he had begun to long for her again, he needed only slight encouragement in order to consider ending his unhappy relationship with his wife. Eustacia's disillusionment and resulting sadness gave him what he thought was an excellent opportunity, for with his new affluence he was able to take her away from the heath, something she has always fervently desired. Her cowardice, however, prevents her from thinking seriously about his proposal until after the tragic result of Mrs. Yeobright's visit.

Although the death of Clym's mother was an accidental and unforeseen consequence of Eustacia's desire for a little excitement, it is similar to Lövborg's suicide in that both lead directly to the final tragedies of the two heroines. Hedda's part in Lövborg's death, however, was intentional,

for she urged him on and even gave him one of her father's pistols with which to do the deed. Having brought things to a state which she had not foreseen, and in danger of having her lies discovered, she decided to take the final step in influencing a human destiny; and if Lövborg kills himself in a beautiful manner, there will be an added bonus, for she will have caused a magnificent end to a largely wasted life, a grand finale to what was otherwise a sad story of failure.

Hedda's plans miscarry, however, for Lövborg dies messily from a gunshot wound in the stomach incurred while fighting in the boudoir of the local bawdyhouse madam. The circumstances surrounding his death mean that there will be a police investigation and that her part in the tragedy will be certain to come out. The discovery of her involvement in the affair is made by Brack, who sees in it the opportunity to have his way with her. Similarly, Eustacia's innocent action of not opening the door for Mrs. Yeobright is also found out, but by her husband, whose anger causes her to leave home and apparently puts an end to any chance she had to change her situation.

Suddenly, instead of the expected excitement, each woman finds that she is alone and at the mercy of a man who has definite and unsavory plans about their future relationship. After Lövborg's death, Hedda looks around and sees that Thea and Tesman are engrossed in an attempt to salvage

some of Lövborg's second book, which Hedda herself had destroyed. Now they have no use for her, who formerly had no use for them. "Is there nothing at all—I can do to help?" she asks. "No, thank you. Not a thing,"³⁶ Tesman answers. Even more terrifying, however, than her awareness of her future loneliness within her own home, is the leering face of Brack, who has made it quite clear that she must do his bidding or be involved in a vulgar scandal. "I am in your power, all the same," she says to him. "Subject to your commands and wishes. No longer free—not free!"³⁷ The lack of freedom is anathema to her, for it means that whatever she does in the future will be determined not by her desires but by the whims of another. Her pride will not let her suffer such a fate:

Life has no such charm for her that she cares to purchase it at the cost of squalid humiliation and self-contempt. The good and bad alike in her compel her to have done with it all. . . . Hedda, tangled in the web of Will and Circumstance, struggles on till she is too weary to struggle any more.³⁸

She has finally become conscious of the whole failure of her life. "How horrible!" she cries in desperation. "Everything

³⁶Vol. I, 427.

³⁷Vol. I, 427.

³⁸William Archer, trans. "Introduction to Hedda Gabler," The Works of Henrik Ibsen (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911), VI, 17.

If touch becomes ludicrous and despicable!--It's like a curse!"³⁹ Her cowardice has brought her to this unhappy situation, and, being the way she is, she sees no escape but suicide.

Eustacia also finds that she is terribly alone. The connection of her name with Mrs. Yeobright's death combined with the breaking up of her marriage will make her Egdon's chief topic of conversation for a long time. She can find refuge in her grandfather's house, but it would be even more lonely than before:

. . . She would have to live on as a painful object, isolated and out of place. She had used to think of the heath alone as an uncongenial spot to be in; she felt it now of the whole world.⁴⁰

In addition, Wildeve would have a hold over her, just as Brack had one over Hedda, except that Wildeve's is a monetary one. Eustacia has to have money in order to leave Egdon. Wildeve has it and has offered to take her away with him, but "to ask Wildeve for pecuniary aid without allowing him to accompany her was impossible to a woman with the shadow of pride left in her; to fly as his mistress . . . was of the nature of humiliation."⁴¹ As Joseph Warren Beach

³⁹Vol. I, 424.

⁴⁰Return, p. 436.

⁴¹Return, p. 441.

has correctly observed:

. . . When it is a question of giving herself in payment for his services, we can readily understand her being driven to despair. Her reluctance to renew their relation is quite in accord with her pride, her moral dignity, and her romantic imagination.⁴²

Eustacia would be a captive of Wildeve instead of a captive of the heath, and any restriction of freedom horrifies her, much as it did Hedda. Eustacia realizes only now that her life has been a total failure, and she cries out bitterly against her fate:

How I have tried and tried to be a splendid woman, and how destiny has been against me! . . . O, the cruelty of putting me into this ill-conceived world! I was capable of much; but I have been injured and blighted and crushed by things beyond my control.⁴³

Her dreams and hopes shattered beyond any hope of reconstruction, Eustacia goes to her death.

Thus end the lives and the stories of Hedda Gabler and Eustacia Vye, two women who tried to achieve a selfish happiness but were doomed to failure because they would not dare far enough to do so. Having placed themselves into intolerable situations and unwilling to take the necessary steps to correct those situations, their lives became

⁴²Joseph Warren Beach, "Bowdlerized Versions of Hardy," *PMLA*, XXXVI (1921), 638.

⁴³Return, p. 442.

unendurable. "Hedda's despair lies in the idea that there are surely so many possibilities of happiness in the world, but that she cannot discover them."⁴⁴ The same may be said about Eustacia, and perhaps it is their inability to find the happiness which everyone craves that makes them bearable and even pitiable. Their creators, however, have not judged the two women. They have simply painted pictures, pure character studies, of two people who live, influence others, and die. What Dowden said of Hedda is just as true of Eustacia:

She comes from the void, and into the void she goes. Her death was not an act of courage; . . . it was only the last note struck of her wild dance-music, and has at best an aesthetic propriety. . . . She cannot be recast; she is extinguished, and that is all.⁴⁵

The two women simply could not adjust to their surroundings. "Removed from her cramping environment Hedda would have developed along more normal lines. . . . By enclosing her within the Tesman walls . . . she was driven in among herself, and passing from one mood to another she finally became shipwrecked."⁴⁶ By changing "Tesman walls" to "Egdon Heath," the statement becomes equally applicable

⁴⁴Archer, op. cit., 8.

⁴⁵Edward Dowden, "Henrik Ibsen," Contemporary Rev., XC (November, 1906), 669.

⁴⁶Huneker, op. cit., p. 107.

to Eustacia. They are certainly two of the strangest women in fiction, and one cannot be exactly sure what to think of them. Huneker quoted the excellent summation of Hedda by Henry James, and the words are also true of Eustacia:

The 'use' of Hedda Gabler is that she acts on others, and that even her most disagreeable qualities have the privilege, thoroughly undeserved doubtless, but equally irresistible, of becoming a part of the history of others. And then one isn't so sure that she is wicked, and by no means sure that she is disagreeable. She is various and sinuous and graceful, complicated and natural; she suffers, she struggles, she is human, and by that fact exposed to a dozen different interpretations, to the importunity of our suspense.⁴⁷

Regardless of the interpretation of the two women, the genius of their creators has made them more to be pitied than hated, for they are real and alive, just like women seen every day. Both their tragedy and their greatness lie in that fact.

II. REBEKKA AND SUE

Although the stories of Rebekka West of Rosmersholm and Sue Bridehead of Jude the Obscure are not as similar as are those of Hedda and Eustacia, the women themselves are very much alike. "Both are emancipated women who are forced by the tragic consequences of putting their revolutionary views into action, to admit the compelling power of the

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 108.

beliefs against which their reason rebelled."⁴⁸ Ibsen and Hardy certainly favored the new liberalism, the new freedom of action for both men and women that had come to be a major point of interest during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, but they also realized the dangers inherent in the clash of those new ideas with the old ones. Rebekka and Sue, therefore, represent a type of emancipated woman that the two authors did not like, the one whose superficial emancipation is not deep enough and strong enough to withstand the pressures brought to bear against any pioneer.

Rebekka's education had come from only two sources. The first was her adopted father, Doctor West. "Doctor West had taught me many things," she says. "In fact, all the scattered knowledge I had of life in those days [before she came to Rosmersholm], I'd learned from him."⁴⁹ The doctor's morals are somewhat questionable, however, for Rebekka was actually his illegitimate daughter. It is to be taken for granted, therefore, that he did not spend much time giving her instructions as to the proper moral standards of the day. In addition, "books of a 'liberal' character filled the mind of the young woman with dangerous ideas,"⁵⁰ and the

⁴⁸Cecil, loc. cit.

⁴⁹Vol. I, 321.

⁵⁰Huneker, op. cit., p. 85.

books had been left to her by Doctor West. Among them were some written by the notorious Ulrik Brendel and others which dealt with marital relations "from the so-called modern point of view,"⁵¹ as Professor Kroll calls it. Rebekka was also very familiar with the ideas expressed in some of the radical newspapers.

Sue's early training was very similar. "When I was eighteen," she tells Jude, "I formed a friendly intimacy with an undergraduate at Christminster, and he taught me a great deal, and lent me books which I should never have got hold of otherwise."⁵² Although the type of books she had read is never explicitly revealed, it may be assumed that they were similar to the ones which Rebekka had read, for Sue developed many of the same opinions about life.

Naturally, any education which came entirely from liberal books and liberal men would tend to produce a warped person, and such was indeed the case with Rebekka and Sue. They had adopted their liberal ideas not from a deep conviction produced by logical reasoning, but simply because they had not been exposed to any other point of view. Both were originally from small country towns, and they had had

⁵¹Vol. I, 288.

⁵²Thomas Hardy, Jude the Obscure (New York: Modern Library), p. 175. Hereafter cited as Jude.

no chance to learn that life is not simple and easy and that most people did not favor the liberal ideas which Rebekka and Sue so fervently espoused.

When Doctor West died, Rebekka was forced out into the world, and, armed with her great ideas and the optimism of youth, she set out on a course of conquest. She selected as her victim Johannes Rosmer, the last member of an old and respected family, because, as she later tells him, he had once been one of Ulrik Brendel's students:

. . . I wanted to be a part of this new world; I wanted to belong to it—to share in all these new ideas. One day Professor Kroll was telling me of the great influence Ulrik Brendel had over you when you were still a boy; I suddenly thought it might be possible for me to carry on his work.⁵³

Thus Rebekka came to Rosmersholm, but, with her imperfect knowledge, she failed to realize that of all the men she might have chosen, Rosmer was perhaps the worst. His education about the world had been little better than hers, for it had not taught him to think for himself. "I know," Kroll says to him, revealing Rosmer's tragic weakness, "how easily you are influenced by those around you."⁵⁴

Although Sue's parents were not dead, she was just as much on her own as was Rebekka, for she lived by herself in

⁵³Vol. I, 321.

⁵⁴Vol. I, 291.

Christminster and received no financial help from her mother and father, who were in London. She had also looked for someone to influence, as she tells Jude:

. . . I did want and long to ennoble some man to high aims; and when I saw you, and knew you wanted to be my comrade, I--shall I confess it?--thought that man might be you.⁵⁵

Jude, however, was as weak as Rosmer, for he was a country boy and had no understanding of the type of life that Sue wanted him to lead. He too had been influenced early in life, for his old teacher, Phillotson, had convinced him that he could go to the university in spite of his poverty and lack of education. Moreover, Arabella had tricked him into marriage by using her feminine wiles, an indication that Jude could be easily swayed by a woman.

When the two ill-educated, easily-influenced men come into contact with two intelligent, fascinating young ladies, it is no surprise that they soon hand over both their souls and their minds to the women. Rebekka and Sue, however, say nothing about loving the men, for that was not what had attracted them to Rosmer and Jude. The two women are not interested in love, for they have supposedly discarded it along with the other old ideas that they consider foolish. Rebekka continually speaks only of the comradeship or

⁵⁵Jude, p. 182.

friendship which she and Rosmer enjoy, and she violently refuses to marry him when he suggests it. Sue also speaks of comradeship, and she explicitly tells Jude, "You mustn't love me. You are to like me—that's all!"⁵⁶ Both women realize that if love enters their relationships with the men, it will subvert the noble purpose to which Rebekka and Sue are dedicated, for to accept the reality of love is a defeat for them and the ideals in which they believe. When Sue later weds Phillotson, "the marriage was no marriage, but a submission, a service, a slavery,"⁵⁷ just as it would have been for Rebekka had she married Rosmer. Thus, after Sue is divorced from Phillotson, she does not want to make the same mistake again, and she rejects Jude's initial offers of marriage. Moreover, although she later accepts, she continually makes excuses to postpone the ceremony. She would rather live with Jude out of wedlock, for it enables her to maintain the fiction that she has not been defeated by the customs against which she rebels.

Under the persuasive influence of the two emancipated women, Rosmer and Jude begin to lose their old beliefs and take up new, idealistic ones. Kroll, after listening to

⁵⁶Jude, p. 185.

⁵⁷D. H. Lawrence, "Sue Bridehead," Guerard, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

Rosmer's ideas about the world, correctly analyzes Rosmer's new intellectualism and tells him exactly what is wrong with him:

Rosmer: . . . I have faith in the true purpose of Democracy.

Kroll: What purpose?

Rosmer: That of giving all men a sense of their own nobility.

Kroll: All men—!

Rosmer: As many as possible, at any rate.

Kroll: By what means, may I ask?

Rosmer: By freeing their thoughts and purifying their aims.

Kroll: You're a dreamer, Rosmer.⁵⁸

It is not that Rosmer's general purpose is bad—even the aristocratic Kroll would not totally disapprove of it—but his method of attaining it is certainly a dream. Something else has happened to Rosmer, however, which is the most serious thing of all:

Kroll: . . . What about your faith? The faith you were brought up in?

Rosmer: I no longer believe in it.

Kroll: You no longer—!

Rosmer: I've given it up. I had to give it up, Kroll.⁵⁹

Jude vacillated more than Rosmer. He had come to Christminster to seek an education. When that seemed hopeless, he decided to become a minister. Eventually he discarded that idea also and with it all religious belief.

⁵⁸Vol. I, 279.

⁵⁹Vol. I, 279.

"You root out of me," Jude says somewhat angrily to Sue, "what little affection and reverence I had left in me for the Church as an old acquaintance. . . ." ⁶⁰

Hardy said of Jude that "he was mentally approaching the position which Sue had occupied when he first met her," ⁶¹ and the statement is equally true of the status of Rosmer's mind. They have discarded all of their old beliefs but have not replaced them with anything concrete. The ideals that they have are only superficial. Moreover, those ideals are such that the two men are in a minority, and they do not have the strength of purpose to be pioneers and to withstand the attacks made upon them by the conservative element. Rosmer finds that people are making vile accusations about his relationship with Rebekka, and Jude loses several jobs because of rumors that he and Sue are not married. Rosmer and Jude did not realize that the world would not let them live in peace unless they obeyed its rules.

The women have also begun to be quite disillusioned, for they realize that their liberal beliefs have failed. Not only have they fallen in love with their two "friends," but they have also yielded to some of the social customs

⁶⁰Jude, p. 429.

⁶¹Jude, p. 378.

which they once held in contempt. Rebekka starts to have doubts about her former treatment of Rosmer's wife, Beata, whom Rebekka had driven to suicide. Her conscience finally asserts itself, and she becomes no longer sure that her crime against Beata was justified by her ideals. The conservatively persuasive influence of old Rosmersholm and her love for Rosmer have destroyed her:

. . . Rosmersholm has robbed me of my strength. My spirit that was once so fearless has become warped and crippled here—as though its wings had been clipped. I no longer have any daring, Rosmer—I've lost the power of action.⁶²

Moreover, in trying to ennoble Rosmer, she had actually destroyed him. "I no longer believe in my power to change others, Rebekka," he tells her. "I no longer believe in myself in any way."⁶³ Realizing what she has done, Rebekka, her life now meaningless, wants simply to leave Rosmersholm, but Rosmer, and perhaps poetic justice, will not let her. Rosmer asks her to commit suicide in order to restore his faith in her and also in himself, and she accepts.

It is the deaths of the three children which cause Sue to make a re-evaluation of her life. Beata had taken her own life because Rebekka had persuaded her that she was holding Rosmer back. Little Father Time kills himself and

⁶²Vol. I, 330.

⁶³Vol. I, 333.

his brother and sister because of a casual remark by Sue that life would be much easier for her and Jude if they had not had any children. She feels responsible, therefore, for their deaths, and her conscience, which she, like Rebekka, had tried to forget, begins to trouble her. Finally she too admits that the customs in which she does not believe have defeated her. "I am cowed into submission," she confesses to Jude. "I have no more fighting strength left; no more enterprise. I am beaten, beaten!"⁶⁴ Not only has she failed, moreover, but she has also been the cause of Jude's ruin. "Eight or nine years ago," he tells a crowd at Christminster, "when I came here first, I had a neat stock of fixed opinions, but they dropped away one by one; and the further I get the less sure I am."⁶⁵ Sue decides that she must atone for her sins and that she can do so only by returning to Phillotson, to whom she now feels she has always been married, in spite of their divorce. To stay with him, however, will be a living death, for she cannot stand him. Her only peace, like Rebekka's, will come in death, and that will eventually happen.

Thus end the stories of Rebekka and Sue, two women who wanted desperately to accomplish what they thought was

⁶⁴Jude, p. 419.

⁶⁵Jude, p. 399.

good for the world but which brought only unhappiness and tragedy to them and to their loved ones. The words of Kroll to Rebekka, telling her why she is doomed to failure, are just as applicable to Sue:

I don't think this so-called Emancipation of yours goes very deep! You've steeped yourself in a lot of new ideas and opinions. You've picked up a lot of theories out of books—theories that claim to overthrow certain irrefutable principles—principles that form the bulwark of our Society. But this has been no more than a superficial, intellectual exercise, Miss West. It has never really been absorbed into your bloodstream.⁶⁶

Because their emancipation did not go deep enough, Rebekka and Sue could not withstand the intense pressure brought to bear upon them by society, nor did they realize that the end does not justify the means. Their dilemma, however, was not unique. Albert J. Guerard called it "the characteristic nightmare of the late Victorian age: the problem of ethics without dogma and the problem of the restless and isolated modern ego."⁶⁷ The two women were aliens in a hostile society, which they understood no more than it understood them.

Neither Rebekka nor Sue deserved sympathy and they did not get it from their authors. Their lives were indeed

⁶⁶Vol. I, 318.

⁶⁷Albert J. Guerard, Thomas Hardy, The Novels and Stories (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949), p. 19.

tragic, but the real tragedy lay in the fact that their type of false emancipation was praised by many liberals of the time. Rebekka and Sue were typical of "the woman who was coming into notice in her thousands every year. The woman of the Feminist Movement; the slight, pale bachelor girl, the intellectualized bundle of nerves that modern conditions were producing."⁶⁸ Thus the blame for Rebekka's and Sue's tragedies falls both on society and on the wrong kind of liberalism, and which one to blame the most is still being debated today.

Hedda and Eustacia, Rebekka and Sue, the four women of Ibsen and Hardy are remarkably similar in thought, feelings, and behavior. It may indeed be said that they are modern, but, even more important, they are "women in whom goodness is never of that unearthly perfection which makes of human beings allegorical figures, but women in whom strength and weakness are ever blended. Their goodness is not without baser alloy, nor is their badness unrelieved by some redeeming trait."⁶⁹ That is to say, they are real and alive, and no more can be asked of any author.

⁶⁸Grey, op. cit., 683, quoting an unidentified German critic's statement about Sue.

⁶⁹von Ende, op. cit., vi.

CHAPTER III

IBSEN, HARDY, AND THE DOUBLE STANDARD

The double standard has probably been the outstanding problem in the relationship between men and women ever since the world began. Throughout history women have always been considered as inferior beings. In fact, modern law, which is based on English common law, still treats them as men's property in some cases. Not until the late nineteenth century did the idea become prevalent that women should be treated as individual human beings. Obtaining the right to be treated equally before the law was the goal of the Feminists, but that was not sufficient, nor was it really fair, for the social, ethical, and moral codes by which men and women live are somewhat different.

Ibsen and Hardy, with the awareness of life that is common to all great authors, were among the first to realize that "the relation of the sexes, in which an endearing tie is thought to transfigure the stern destinies of mankind, reveals itself as one of the most fertile sources of human misery."¹ Thus Ibsen wrote A Doll's House and Ghosts, both of which dealt with the ethical side of the problem, and

¹Herbert L. Stewart, "Thomas Hardy as a Teacher of His Age," North American Rev., CCVIII (October, 1918), 586.

The Wild Duck, which touched on the moral side. Hardy also used the moral side in his Tess of the D'Urbervilles, but, perhaps feeling that the book was a definitive statement on the subject, he did not write about it again. His self-confidence was justified, however, for a few years later "Uncle Dudley" of the Boston Globe wrote that "few, since the appearance of Tess, have cared to defend the double standard of morals, one for men, another for women."²

Nora Helmer was a tragic victim of the double legal and ethical standards which treated a woman like a man and at the same time differently. She was treated like a doll, instead of a person, by her father, her husband, and her friends, but under the law she was a responsible adult, although the way people treated her had not made her one. She was like the average woman of that time, living a happy but unreal existence, and in most cases she would never have had the chance to find out what was wrong with her life.

Ibsen gives her that chance, however, in the sickness of her husband, Torvald. He had to go to Italy in order to get well, and she had borrowed enough money for them to make the trip, forging her father's signature on the note. Because she knew that Torvald would rather have lost his

²Quoted in "Thomas Hardy: Last of the Victorians" (anon.), Literary Digest, XCVI (February 4, 1928), 41.

health than go into debt, she told him that her father had given her the money. She has repaid almost all of the loan when the moneylender, Krogstad, suddenly demands that she use her influence to get him a job in the bank where Torvald is the manager, or he will see that she is sent to jail for her crime. Nora, secure in the naive belief that the law will never punish her because her forgery was committed in order to save her husband's life, pays no attention to Krogstad's ultimatum. When she learns that she really is liable for her misdeed, Nora realizes that her happy home life bears no relation whatsoever to the real world and that she is totally ignorant of that world. She still feels, however, that Torvald will take the forgery upon himself in order to protect her. "The final disillusion comes when he, instead of at once proposing to pursue this ideal line of conduct when he hears of the forgery, naturally enough flies into a vulgar rage and heaps invectives on her for disgracing him."³ Torvald, in other words, places his own honor above his love for Nora, but to her such an action is inconceivable:

Helmer: . . . One doesn't sacrifice one's honor for love's sake.

Nora: Millions of women have done so.⁴

³Shaw, op. cit., p. 86.

⁴Vol. I, 78.

health than go into debt, she told him that her father had given her the money. She has repaid almost all of the loan when the moneylender, Krogstad, suddenly demands that she use her influence to get him a job in the bank where Torvald is the manager, or he will see that she is sent to jail for her crime. Nora, secure in the naive belief that the law will never punish her because her forgery was committed in order to save her husband's life, pays no attention to Krogstad's ultimatum. When she learns that she really is liable for her misdeed, Nora realizes that her happy home life bears no relation whatsoever to the real world and that she is totally ignorant of that world. She still feels, however, that Torvald will take the forgery upon himself in order to protect her. "The final disillusion comes when he, instead of at once proposing to pursue this ideal line of conduct when he hears of the forgery, naturally enough flies into a vulgar rage and heaps invectives on her for disgracing him."³ Torvald, in other words, places his own honor above his love for Nora, but to her such an action is inconceivable:

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Nora: Millions of women have done so.⁴

³Shaw, op. cit., p. 86.

⁴Vol. I, 78.

In just those few words Nora has named the great difference in the ethical standards of men and women, and she now knows that only by leaving home and going out into the world can she truly educate herself. Torvald will not, in fact cannot, help her, for he is the typical good husband and father, the ideal of nineteenth-century Philistinism.

The next play to come from Ibsen's pen was Ghosts, which was an apology for Nora. "Over against the woman whose first most sacred duty seemed her duty to herself, he sets the woman who sacrifices freedom, truth, and happiness, to the demands of custom and convention."⁵ Mrs. Alving is a picture of the model wife who stays with her husband although life with him is intolerable. He is a drunkard and a lecher, and she spends most of her time keeping the truth from being discovered. When the full story of his debauched life is revealed to the audience, the hypocrisy of society is amply demonstrated by Shaw's statement that "even those who are most indignant with Nora Helmer for walking out of the doll's house, must admit that Mrs. Alving would be justified in walking out of her house."⁶ She had done so once but had been sent back home by Pastor Manders, the

⁵Louie Bennett, "Ibsen as a Pioneer of the Woman Movement," Westminster Rev., CLXXIII (March, 1910), 282.

⁶Shaw, op. cit., p. 87.

upright minister who expresses the ideas which were held by the average citizen of the time. He is a propagator of the double standard, for, although he was partially aware of the dissipation of Captain Alving and knew that Mrs. Alving did not love her husband, he still urged her to return to him. If the situation had been reversed, however, if Mrs. Alving had been a drunken profligate, no one would have questioned her husband's right to leave her, or, more probably, to divorce her. Manders, of course, mentioned the criticism that she would have to face if she left her husband, and she bowed to the threat.

In addition to being a victim of the double standard, Mrs. Alving also passed it on to the next generation, for she sent her son away and did not tell him about his father. Thus she perpetuated the idea that Captain Alving was worthy of the respect which society held for him. Moreover, she even decided to build an orphanage in his honor, in order to put an end to the rumors that circulated about him after his death.

There are also a number of other instances of the double standard in the play, all of them demonstrated by Manders. For example, he criticized Jakob Engstrand for accepting money for marrying the woman Alving had seduced, but when Engstrand said that the money had been used only for raising Alving's illegitimate daughter, Manders stated

that "this puts things in an entirely different light."⁷ Engstrand should rightly be criticized, but the double standard demanded that he be praised. Here again a woman would have been condemned for doing exactly what Engstrand had done. She would have been called a prostitute, regardless of what she had done with the money.

The final scene, one of the most tragic in modern drama, illustrates not only that the sins of the father may be visited on the son, but also the fact that Mrs. Alving must pay for her own sin of acquiescence to the dictates of society. If the double standard had not been in effect, the situation would never have arisen, but Mrs. Alving failed in her duty to herself, her son, and her sex, thus causing the suffering in the play.

In The Wild Duck, Ibsen used the double standard in a manner very similar to Hardy's use of it in Tess, but not as prominently. He presents the happy home in which there is a concealment of the truth on the part of the women, Gina. Before she had married Hjalmar Ekdal, she had been the mistress of an old man named Werle. When he had taken his pleasure with Gina, Werle cast her aside. She went home and later, at the urging of Werle, Hjalmar rented a room there. He eventually married Gina, and the past was forgotten as

⁷Vol. I, 125.

far as she was concerned, for she was a model wife.

Gregers Werle, one of those heedless liberals against whom Ibsen always spoke out, now comes on the scene. When he learns that his friend Hjalmar has married Gina and is "living under the same roof with that degraded creature,"⁸ he decides that if Hjalmar knows the truth about his wife their marriage will be a happier one. Gregers simply blurts out the story of Gina's past misdeeds, and naturally Hjalmar becomes extremely angry with her:

Hjalmar: So this is the mother of my child! How could you hide this from me! . . . You should have told me at the very start; then I'd have known what kind of woman I was dealing with.

Gina: But if you'd known, would you have married me?

Hjalmar: What do you think? Of course not.⁹

Hjalmar's reaction is exactly the reason why Gina had not mentioned her past, and it is also an excellent example of the way the double standard operates. He does not consider the love for him that she has demonstrated by her patient devotion, and he dismisses the fact that her conduct has been unimpeachable during the fifteen years that they have been married, although he had previously told Gregers that he was "as content and happy as any man could be."¹⁰

⁸Vol. II, 123.

⁹Vol. II, 173.

¹⁰Vol. II, 160.

His observance of the double standard is even more hypocritical, however, in light of the fact that his own past had not been the model of virtue that he demanded of his wife. "You were getting into some pretty wild habits when you first met me," she reminds him. "You can't deny that, can you?"¹¹ The man, of course, can always rationalize his past behavior, and Hjalmar has a convenient excuse available:

Wild habits! That's what you call them, do you? But how could you understand what a man goes through when he's on the brink of despair, as I was! Especially a man with my ardent, sensitive nature.¹²

Just as millions of women have sacrificed their honor for love, millions have also overlooked the past transgressions of their husbands, as Gina had done. "Maybe that's true," is her answer to Hjalmar's excuse. "Anyway—I don't hold it against you; you made a real good husband once we got married and settled down."¹³ Hjalmar could have said the same thing about his wife, but the double standard prevented him from doing so. Here again the standard brings tragedy to those who abide by its hypocritical code, for it is partially responsible for the later suicide of their daughter, Hedvig.

¹¹Vol. II, 174.

¹²Vol. II, 174.

¹³Vol. II, 174.

In a review of Tess in the Illustrated London News, Clementine Black said that the essence of the book "lies in the perception that a woman's moral worth is measurable not by any one deed, but by the whole aim and tendency of her life and nature."¹⁴ Because the double standard exists, however, Tess continually suffers for her one mistake, even though her subsequent life was exemplary. Regardless of what she does, her past always haunts her, preventing her from attaining the happiness that she deserves.

There are five major instances of the double standard in the book. The first occurs when Tess returns home from the D'Urberville estate and people learn that she is soon to be an unwed mother. She is ostracized by local society, forced to live "as a stranger and an alien"¹⁵ in her native village, but Alec D'Urberville, the father of the child, is not condemned. Instead he is regarded with interest by the women and admiration by the men as "a reckless gallant and heart-breaker."¹⁶ Poor Tess does not even receive the sympathy of her mother, who criticizes her not because of the child but because she had not married Alec. The

¹⁴Quoted by Edmund Blunden, Thomas Hardy (London: Macmillan & Co., 1942), p. 73.

¹⁵Thomas Hardy, Tess of the D'Urbervilles (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1960), p. 78. Hereafter cited as Tess.

¹⁶Tess, p. 72.

attitude of Mrs. Durbeyfield reveals another facet of the double standard. Tess's seduction would not have been considered wrong by society if she had married Alec, but she is condemned because she derived no profit from her breach of the moral law. Alec, of course, considers the whole affair as something of a lark, as many men would.

The second instance happens after the birth of the baby. Tess has to baptize it herself, for her father will not let a parson into the house to see the shame of the family. When the child dies, it does not have a Christian burial. Tess pleads with the parish minister to perform the last rites, but he will not do so because the child was illegitimate. He is, therefore, damning that poor baby's soul to eternal Hell for an action over which it had no control. Thus the punishment for an immoral act extends even to those who had no part in that act.

The third example of the double standard occurs after Tess marries Angel Clare. On their wedding night Angel says that he has something to confess:

He then told her of that time of his life to which allusion has been made when, tossed about by doubts and difficulties in London, like a cork on the waves, he plunged into eight-and-forty hours' dissipation with a stranger.¹⁷

He also tells her that he has never repeated the offense and

¹⁷Tess, pp. 198-199.

that he had not told her before their marriage for fear of losing her.

Tess readily forgives him, however, and states that she too has a confession to make. "It can hardly be more serious than mine, dearest," he says, and happily she tells him, "No, it cannot be more serious, certainly, because 'tis just the same!"¹⁸ She then proceeds to tell her story, but Angel's reaction is the same as Hjalmar Ekdal's had been. Frantically Tess pleads with him to "forgive me as you are forgiven! I forgive you, Angel. . . . But you do not forgive me?" "O Tess," he answers, "forgiveness does not apply to the case! You were one person; now you are another."¹⁹ His statement is typical of the hypocrisy of the double standard. In spite of the fact that she has not repeated her mistake, suddenly she is not the person whom he married. She has become a wicked woman, and they can no longer live together. Angel does not explain the logic of how a few words can change a person from good to bad, and indeed there is no logic to the double standard. For the identical action, the woman forgives the man, but the man does not forgive the woman. This scene between Tess and Angel is probably the finest example in literature of the

¹⁸Tess, p. 199.

¹⁹Tess, p. 202.

unfairness of the double standard.

The fourth instance occurs at the death of Tess's father, which ends the lease on the family cottage. The lease is renewable, but again Tess's past rises up to plague her:

Ever since the occurrence of the event which had cast such a shadow over Tess's life, the Durbeyfield family (whose descent was not credited) had been tacitly looked on as one which would have to go when their lease ended, if only in the interests of morality.²⁰

Tess's model behavior since her misdeed is overlooked, of course, and also the fact that she is now married. The double standard does not punish someone just once, and a fallen woman is hardly ever able to escape her past. The punishment, moreover, again falls on the innocent, for the entire Durbeyfield family is left without a roof over its head, simply because of something that had happened to one member several years previously.

By this time Alec has reappeared on the scene. In his attempt to win Tess back the double standard is applied for the fifth time, but in a strange way. Because Tess's husband had obeyed the dictates of the double standard once, Alec tells her, he will continue to do so. "Now look here, Tess," he says to her, "I know what men are, and, bearing in

²⁰Tess, p. 316.

mind the grounds of your separation, I am quite positive he will never make it up with you."²¹ Alec also appeals to her love for her family. The Durbeyfields have been unable to find a place to stay, and he offers them one, but with the expected condition. Thus she is seduced a second time, but "her dilemma was clear-cut: Was she to send her family to the devil or go herself? She chose herself. If this was not a good—nay, sublime—action, then we must recast the sacrificial code."²²

Although the story of Tess ends tragically with her death on the scaffold, she dies happily because Angel, the man she truly loves, has forgiven her. In doing so, he achieves for himself a moment of supreme joy, something that the advocates of the double standard will never have. That moment is his reward, and the lack of it is their punishment.

Unfortunately, the double standard exists to some degree even today. Had not Hardy and Ibsen so clearly exposed its faults, however, it is safe to say that it would be even more prevalent than it is. With their work, Hardy and Ibsen helped pave the way for women to take their rightful place in modern society.

²¹Tess, p. 316.

²²Benjamin DeCasseras, "Thomas Hardy's Women," Bookman, XVI (October, 1902), p. 132.

CHAPTER IV

THE HARSH RECEPTION OF IBSEN AND HARDY

The critical reaction in England and, to a lesser degree, America, to Ibsen's two most controversial plays, A Doll's House and Ghosts, and Hardy's last two novels, Tess of the D'Urbervilles and Jude the Obscure, appears ludicrous today, but it illustrates, perhaps better than anything else, the state of the Victorian mind in the late nineteenth century. Considering the similarities in the works of the two men which have been shown in this paper, it is not surprising that their reception was almost equally harsh.

A Doll's House was the first of Ibsen's plays to be performed in England by a competent professional group.¹ Since the audiences of that time were interested in the action-filled melodramas of the school of Scribe, the story of Nora Helmer, with its emphasis upon her mental development, was considered rather uninteresting by many critics. In an article reviewing some of the newspapers' comments about the presentation, Archer quoted the Times, which felt that the play, "with its almost total lack of dramatic

¹On June 7, 1889, at the Novelty Theater in London.

action, is certainly not an enlivening spectacle."² That opinion was seconded by the Referee, which stated that the drama was "of no use, as far as England's stage is concerned."

The Standard, on the other hand, opposed the play because of the ill effect it might have on the people who saw it, and it felt that "it would be a misfortune were such a morbid and unwholesome play to gain the favor of the public." It remained for People, however, to first label an Ibsen play immoral. According to People, the drama was "unnatural, immoral, and, in its concluding scene, essentially undramatic." The reaction is typical of the Victorian mind, which wished to dictate the morals of the community, instead of letting the individual make his own decision about what was right and wrong. The critic of the Mirror felt that "the stuff that Ibsen strings together must nauseate any properly-constituted person." What he actually meant was that the play should nauseate any properly-constituted person.

In addition, the critics were not content with just condemning the play, and they also attacked the author and

²William Archer, "The Mausoleum of Ibsen," Fortnightly Rev., LX [NS 54] (July, 1893), 79. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations about A Doll's House are from the same page of this article. The actual reviews could not be obtained.

his admirers. Franc quoted an article by Clement Scott, who later became the acknowledged leader of the anti-Ibsenites, on A Doll's House:

Having flung upon the stage a congregation of men and women without one spark of nobility in their nature, men without conscience and women without affection, an unlovable, unlovely, and detestable crew—the admirers of Ibsen, failing to convince us of the excellence of such creatures, turn round and abuse the wholesome minds that cannot swallow such unpalatable doctrine, and the stage that has hitherto steered clear of such displeasing realism.³

Two years later Ghosts was first presented to the English public,⁴ and the lengths to which the press went in describing it were amazing. Perhaps it was because Ibsen's plays were becoming more and more popular with the public as the years passed, both on the stage and in published form. The critics may have realized that people were paying little attention to pronouncements about the evils of the new realistic literature, and conceivably they thought that one great barrage of execration aimed at Ibsen would destroy him forever. Shaw noted, however, that Archer "was able to put the whole body of hostile criticism out of court by simply quoting its excesses in an article entitled "Ghosts and

³Miriam Franc, Ibsen in England (Boston: The Four Seas Co., 1919), p. 26.

⁴On March 13, 1891, at the Royalty Theater, Soho, by J. T. Grein's "Independent Theater of London." It is interesting to note that Hardy was a member of the advisory directorate of the theater.

Gibberings," which appeared in The Pall Mall Gazette on the 8th of April, 1891," which Shaw reprinted in part as "samples of contemporary idealist criticism of the drama."⁵

The Standard, which had always been one of Ibsen's chief antagonists, stated that the play was "unutterably offensive" and urged "prosecution under Lord Campbell's act [for the suppression of houses of ill fame]." The reviewer must have felt that, since the people would not watch out for their own morals, the government would have to do it for them. The sentiment was echoed in the Sporting and Dramatic News, which stated optimistically that "if any repetition of this outrage be attempted, the authorities will doubtless wake from their lethargy."

It is somewhat surprising that so many highly respected critics were unanimous in their condemnation of a man who is today considered one of the world's greatest playwrights. All of the reviewers were experienced playgoers, upon whom the public depended for some idea of which plays to see, and yet they were "thrown into convulsions by a performance which was witnessed with approval, and even with enthusiasm, by many persons of approved moral and

⁵Shaw, op. cit., p. 91. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations about Ghosts are from pp. 91-93 of this book. The actual reviews could not be obtained.

artistic conscientiousness."⁶

Again Ibsen himself and the people who went to see his plays were condemned. Gentlewoman called him "a gloomy sort of ghoul, bent on groping for horrors by night and blinking like a stupid owl when the warm sunlight of the best of life dances into his wrinkled eyes." The members of the audience were "lovers of prurience and dabblers in impropriety who are eager to gratify their illicit tastes under the pretense of art," according to the Evening Standard. Another one of Ibsen's long time critics, the Sporting and Dramatic News, reported the amazing and, though not meant to be so, amusing "statistic" that "ninety-seven per cent of the people who go to see Ghosts are nasty-minded people who find the discussion of nasty subjects to their taste in exact proportion to their nastiness."

The most hysterical reaction to the play came from Clement Scott. In a lead article in the Daily Telegraph, London's largest newspaper, on the morning after the presentation of Ghosts, he compared it to "an open drain, a loathsome sore unbandaged, a dirty act done publicly, a lazar house with all its doors and windows open."

There were other criticisms in the same vein, but they are too numerous to mention. It must be noted, however,

⁶Ibid., pp. 4-5.

that the critical condemnation of Ghosts was based on a completely erroneous interpretation of the play's meaning. The Victorians called it a play about venereal disease, although Ibsen had not mentioned Oswald Alving's illness by name. Moreover, the fact that he is ill is not revealed until the last few moments of the play, and the importance of the disease is only minor. Ghosts is not the tragedy of Oswald; it is the tragedy of his mother. The title of the play should have given the critics some hint, for it refers to the past sins which have arisen to plague Mrs. Alving. The critics, however, had gone to the play looking for some evil in Ibsen's new play, and Oswald's sickness gave them what they were seeking—an excuse to villify Ibsen.

The uproar over Ghosts had hardly died down when Hardy published Tess, sending the critics into a new rage. The novel had been published previously in Graphic, but several of the "naughty" chapters had been left out.⁷ Not until they were restored to the book did Tess's story cause adverse comment. Blackwood's Magazine disagreed with the entire basis of the book, stating that it preferred "cleanly lives, and honest sentiment, and a world which is round and contains everything, not 'the relations between the sexes'

⁷For a full treatment of the subject, see Mary Ellen Chase, Thomas Hardy from Serial to Novel (New York: Russell and Russell, 1964).

alone."⁸

The most mistaken estimate of the book's worth was made by Francis Adams, who praised Hardy's descriptive power but declared:

Yet one cannot for a moment hesitate in one's recognition of the fact that Mr. Hardy's novel is not a success--it is a failure. One has no desire to come back to it. A second reading leaves a lower estimate of it than the first, and a third is not possible.⁹

Jude appeared four years later, and the hostility toward Hardy that had arisen with the publication of Tess soared to new heights. Harry Thurston Peck, in a review of Jude entitled "A Novel of Lubricity," had the following to say:

. . . We must condemn, without the slightest shade of qualification, the latest volume from his pen as being both a moral monstrosity and an outrage upon art. . . . It is rather the studied satyriasis of approaching senility, suggesting the morbidly curious imaginings of a masochist or some other form of social pervert. . . . It is simply one of the most objectionable books that we have ever read in any language whatsoever. . . . In our judgment frankly and deliberately expressed, in Jude the Obscure Mr. Hardy is merely speculating in smut.¹⁰

⁸"The Old Saloon" (anon. rev.), Blackwood's Magazine, CLI (March, 1892), 465.

⁹Francis Adams, "Some Recent Novels," Fortnightly Rev., LVIII [NS 52] (July, 1892), 22.

¹⁰Harry Thurston Peck, "A Novel of Lubricity," Bookman (New York), II (January, 1896), 428-429.

Even the Church of England got into the act, for "the Bishop of Wakefield announced in a letter to the papers that he had thrown Hardy's novel into the fire."¹¹ The most famous review of the work, however, was the one by the critic of the New York World, Jeannette Gilder, who wrote:

I am shocked, appalled by this story! . . . It is almost the worst book I have ever read. . . . I thought that Tess of the D'Urbervilles was bad enough, but that is milk for babes compared to this. . . . Aside from its immorality there is a coarseness which is beyond belief.¹²

Thus in 1896, both in England and America, Hardy was being castigated by the prudish element of the press, in practically the same language that the critics had used and were still using to condemn Ibsen. The tremendous amount of invective that was poured on the two authors is hard to explain even with the knowledge that the Victorian era was an extremely hypocritical one. Today, of course, tastes have changed so much that no one would even consider calling Hardy or Ibsen immoral, and it is pleasing to note that both men lived long enough to see the harsh criticism of them repudiated.

¹¹F. E. Hardy, op. cit., p. 277.

¹²Quoted by F. E. Hardy, p. 279.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

In attempting to prove the modernity of Thomas Hardy by comparing him with the admittedly modern Henrik Ibsen, it was never the intention of this paper to imply that either man wanted to or tried to be a leader in the liberal movements in the society and literature of their time. It is true, of course, that An Enemy of the People was a direct attack on society's hypocrisy and that Jude the Obscure was didactic, but the motivation of the two works, the only ones of theirs which can be considered even remotely reformist, was personal rather than the result of any great crusading zeal. Ibsen was angry at the reception of Ghosts and was simply striking back at his critics, and Sue, Hardy wrote a friend, was "a type of woman which has always had an attraction for me, but the difficulty of drawing the type has kept me from attempting it till now."¹

Both men have suffered a fairly serious decline in their reputations in recent years. The false impression that Ibsen was a combination of socialist and feminist, for which Shaw was primarily responsible, has given rise to the

¹F. E. Hardy, op. cit., p. 272. The friend was not identified.

belief that, since the nineteenth-century type of socialism and female emancipation is no longer an important part of either life or literature, Ibsen is somewhat outmoded. Hardy has similarly suffered, for, although he was truly modern, there were many elements of Victorianism in his novels. Comparison with later English realists placed those elements in sharp focus. Thus, although his books are widely read today in high schools and colleges, he is generally considered as the last Victorian novelist instead of the first modern one, and emphasis is placed more on the technical perfection and marvelous descriptions in his works than on their intrinsic value.

Ironically, it has been the very change in literary standards for which Ibsen and Hardy were partially responsible that has led to their decline. After they had helped pave the way for realism in literature, later playwrights and novelists passed on to such heights of naturalism that Ibsen and Hardy are no longer regarded as significant except in an historical sense, and, of course, this study dealt with them in that light. No author, however, should ever be considered just historically, and the question arises about the importance of Ibsen and Hardy today.

In that connection, the two outstanding traits of the two men must be noted and always emphasized—their ability to create real men and women, not mere characters,

and their objectivity. Although their men are alive and convincing, it is their women upon whom attention is centered. As has been mentioned, no other authors are so universally recognized for excellent women. In fact, Ibsen can be called the playwright for actresses, for many of the greatest ones of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including Ethel Barrymore, Mrs. Patrick Campbell, Eleanora Duse, Minnie Maddern Fiske, Elizabeth Robins, Helena Modjeska, Alla Nazimova, and Ellen Terry,² not only were pioneers in presenting Ibsen's plays but also received some of their fame through their portrayals of his characters. Hardy too has always received praise for his heroines, and it is interesting to note that four of the above-mentioned actresses—Ellen Terry, Elizabeth Robins, Eleanora Duse, and Mrs. Campbell—either requested to be allowed to portray Tess on the stage or were suggested to Hardy for the role.³ In addition, Mrs. Fiske received rave reviews for her New York and Boston performances as the unfortunate milkmaid.⁴

²Montrose J. Moses, Henrik Ibsen, The Man and His Plays (New York: Mitchell Kennerly, 1908), pp. 352 ff. He lists performances and casts in various countries.

³Marguerite Roberts, "Introduction" to "Tess" in the Theater (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1950), pp. xxiv-xv.

⁴Ibid., pp. xxxiv ff.

With regard to objectivity, Ibsen has always been praised. He never intrudes upon the action of the play; if any lesson is to be learned from his dramas, it must be through the words and actions of his characters. His own ideas are there, since all of his creations were a part of him, but the audience must ferret out the details for itself. In addition, Ibsen never judges his men and women. He only shows situations and reveals human beings, for he was "too well aware of the infinite convolutions of the human soul. He knew that there were always two sides to any problem—and the last words he was heard to speak were the words, 'On the contrary.'"⁵ Hardy was also objective in the presentation of his characters. Although he occasionally speaks directly to the reader, it is done in such a fashion that it is not objectionable. Moreover, he usually does so only to give information about his characters, for he rarely passes judgment on them. He simply presents them accurately and fully, with all the goodness and evil that are inherent in every person, and lets the reader decide whether they should be blessed or damned.

It is hoped that this paper has accomplished its stated purpose of demonstrating that Hardy was as modern as Ibsen. The answer to the question as to whether they are

⁵Vol. I, xxx.

important today should also be evident by considering the traits of the two men which have been explored here and then looking around at the modern world. There are still many cowardly women like Hedda and Eustacia, and others who, like Rebekka and Sue, are filled with a false, superficial idealism which brings destruction to those with whom they come into contact. Dull but happy men such as Tesman, austere men like Clym, wasted men similar to Lövborg and Wildeve, and men who, like Judge Brack, desire to have women in their power for some immoral purpose are prevalent in every country. A great many men still adhere to the double standard, which is still a problem. Finally, criticism of novels, plays, and other forms of literature is often almost as harsh as that which Ibsen and Hardy had to face. Thus it may truly be said that Ibsen and Hardy are still valuable, for modern man can learn much from them.

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