THE POETIC NOVELS OF THOMAS HARDY
AND GEORGE MEREDITH

A thesis presented for the
degree of B.A. (and Honours) in English
in the University of Canterbury,
Christchurch, New Zealand.
by Allen F. Fyke
1973
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In the preparation of this thesis many people directly or indirectly have assisted: the English Department staff, especially Professors K.K. Ruthven and R.A. Copland who advised me on technical aspects of presentation; my family who offered much encouragement, especially my sister, Angela who checked up on page numbers and references; and Mr and Mrs Clark who were always helpful and cooperative even when typing continued late into the night.

However my main debt is to Dr Roger Robinson whose enthusiastic supervision helped in so many ways, and whose interest extended to his spending time during his final week in New Zealand in assisting me. Finally there is Miss Mary Clark, helped by her sister, Mrs Veronica Walker, who spent many hours without complaint, deciphering handwriting and typing this thesis, making the finished product what it is.
INTRODUCTION

Hardy went down to botanize in the swamp, while Meredith climbed towards the sun. Meredith became, at his best, a sort of daintily dressed Walt Whitman: Hardy became a sort of village atheist brooding and blaspheming over the village idiot.

C. K. Chesterton,
The Victorian Age in Literature (1913), ch. 2.

Criticism of the novels of Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) and George Meredith (1828-1909) has often concerned itself with the philosophy of, and biographical elements behind, the works. Because of this, Hardy's novels have often been considered largely as examples of inconsistently rendered theses on fatalism set in a rural framework, whilst those of Meredith as pretentious, obscure drawing-room comedies of love. Yet few critics refrain from acknowledging a qualified, largely undefined, greatness in these novels. Very little close textual analysis of these novels has yet been undertaken, and in this thesis four novels by each of these writers is to be subjected to a close textual analysis. The aim of this examination is to demonstrate that the use of language in these works is closer to that of poetry than that of conventional novels. Not only is meaning conveyed by a poetic use of language but the novels are structured poetically and a poetic vision informs them, so that the ultimate aim of this thesis is to prove that the novels of Thomas Hardy and George Meredith are essentially poetic. Whilst the "poetic" twentieth century novel seems to earn immediate critical acceptance, a general reluctance to acknowledge earlier examples of this form of novel seems to be common. Concentrating on one particular novel by each of these authors I hope to illustrate first its poetic qualities, then show how these are apparent in their other works, and finally I shall very briefly indicate the importance of their contribution to the development of "the poetic novel."
Thomas Hardy was by aspiration and early practice, a poet. His earliest novel was initially described as "A story with no plot, containing some original verses" (unpublished) and he always regarded his fiction as a source of income rather than an artistic priority. After Jude the Obscure (1895), his final novel, he wrote nothing but poetry for the remaining very active thirty years of his life. His interest in poetry is evident from his personal writings and from his own poems. However this interest extends into the vision which informs his novels and exerts an influence on their form. I shall now consider Tess of the d'Urbervilles to show how Hardy has adapted various elements and traditions of the novel form to produce what I would claim is essentially a poetic novel. I shall discuss the work from the following points of view:

(i) Language in extracts, and the interrelationship of such extracts.

(ii) Elements of structure.

(iii) Authorial stance.

(iv) Effect of this on reader, leading to an interpretation.

(1) Poetry within single extracts

The text of this novel contains many examples of the rich, evocative poetic use of language and I shall now consider a representative selection of these. The first is a description of Tess in Chapter XXVII:

She had not heard him enter, and hardly realized his presence there. She was yawning, and he saw the red interior of her mouth as if it had been a snake's. She had stretched one arm so high above her coiled-up cable of hair that he could see its satin delicacy above the sunburn; her face was flushed with sleep, and her eyelids hung heavy over their pupils. The brim-fullness of her nature breathed from her. (p. 195)

Here the erotic description of her red throat carries over in the next

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sentence to her "coiled-up cable of hair" to convey by imagery the simile's suggestion of her snake-like quality, the femme fatale notion as suggested by the role of the snake, in either the Biblical story of Adam and Eve (elsewhere mentioned in connection with Tess and Angel's relationship) or in the Greek myth of Orpheus and Eurydice (the music of Orpheus later to be seen in the harp playing scene). Yet to balance this verbal painting of her seductive role we have the phrase "she had not heard him enter" which however is quietly qualified by the remainder of this sentence "and hardly realised his presence there", to show Tess is not entirely unconscious of her charm. Her languid stretching, satin delicacy, face "Flushed with sleep" and her heavy hanging eyelids together with her almost traditional sculptural pose, produce an effect of a sensuous, almost drugged pre-Raphaelite verbal painting, from which Hardy stands back in the following sentence to assert the spirituality of this sexual picture. The meaning of this passage is conveyed through the suggestiveness of metaphor, simile, and vivid connotative verbal painting, rather more poetic than prosaic. Angel sees Tess this way, he woos her with a falsely idealising spirituality which ignores the reality of her body, and so the appropriateness of this impression he has of her, and the significance of the hints of deception in the snake, (in either case the snake works through the female to alter the future of the male) are rendered by an inventive and evocative use of language, which is essentially poetic.

A further description of Tess in Chapter XX, "Minute diamonds of moisture from the mist hung, too, upon Tess's eyelashes, and drops upon her hair, like seed pearls" (p.154), uses poetic devices to convey "her strange and ethereal beauty" (p.154). Here the words used paint a vague, misty, delicate pre-Raphaelite picture; which is also suggested by the quiet rhythm of the sentence, balanced around the central word "too" and tapering off from the metaphor, to the simple yet evocative simile "like seed pearls". The charm and quiet unreality of this early morning scene
is conveyed also by the phonetic cluster of 'm', 'n' and 'o', 'u' sounds, the alliteration and assonance of which give a subdued, murmuring quietness to the first part of the sentence and also link it to the second part where the same vowels are used in their short forms, undiphthongised, to give a clearer, bolder picture of the larger drops upon her hair. The quiet, unreal beauty of Tess in this description may be contrasted to the "dazzlingly fair dairymaid" (pp.154-5) of later in the day whose "teeth, lips and eyes scintillated in the sunbeams" (p.154). In the latter case the harsh, clashing, effect of the sounds conveys the dazzling bold effect of full daylight and radiant beauty. This is a clear example of Hardy's poetic use of language, and other examples of vivid verbal paintings, and the use of sound to aid the sense may be found such as the brief scene in Chapter XXI:

The evening sun was now ugly to her, like a great inflamed wound in the sky. Only a solitary cracked-voiced reed-sparrow greeted her from the bushes by the river, in a sad, machine-made tone, resembling that of a past friend whose friendship she had outworn. (p.158)

The poetic simile in the first sentence and the jarring compound words in the second sentence produce an effect which renders Tess's condition in a heightened form by finding a sympathetic setting, a setting which in its visual and audial presentation echoes the sense of Tess's suffering by a use of language closer to that of poetry than prose.

In the baptism scene of Chapter XIV (pp.115-6) we have the poetic use of language in what is overall a scene created through poetic evocation rather than conventional narration. We see in this scene an almost cameo effect in the pictorial quality of such lines as,"the miniature candle-flame inverted in her eye-pupils shone like a diamond" (p.115), a line exquisitely balanced about "inverted" by "miniature" and "diamond" both containing the 'ia' diphthong, and by the two compound words, "candle-flame" and "eye-pupils". The first pair I mentioned comment on the size of the light, the second on the source, as they focus in Tess's framing face, a
frame carefully drawn in his earlier description of her face. As she baptises her child, Sorrows, Tess in the eyes of her brothers and sisters, is apotheosised, but this apotheosis is also brought to the reader's notice by Hardy's use of such words as "transfiguring effect", "immaculate beauty", "regal", which suggest the Virgin Mary. Also Hardy's use of light, "the kindly dimness of the weak candle abstracted from her form and features the little blemishes" (p. 114), helps create this transcendent picture of Tess, setting the whole scene in a quiet, religious, awe-inspiring atmosphere. Thus he poetically renders the innocence of the scene, the death of "that bastard gift of shameless nature who respects not the social law" (p. 115). With its rhythmic vehemence this sentence violently asserts and embodies the unrestricted non-social quality of the child's condition, as well as the purity of the mother and the transcendence of the events depicted, in a way which even the grinding irony of the following burial scene (pp. 116-7) cannot undermine.

When Tess is with Angel, as in Chapter XXXI, the language is often intensified for poetic effect.

They were never out of the sound of some purling weir, whose buzz accompanied their own murmuring, while the beams of the sun, almost horizontal as the mead itself, formed a pollen of radiance over the landscape. (p. 221)

Here we have the pictorial quality of the description, the light and sound being used to create an effect of almost Arcadian beauty and harmony. However as with the anode of the earlier description Hardy manages here to suggest an internal disharmony inherent in the apparent innocence of their relationship. The use of "some" purling weir, and "their own" murmuring seems to me to qualify ironically the poetic diction, and the "pollen of radiance" seems to indicate the direction of this qualification of the Arcadian innocence. The hazy pollen is used (as I shall discuss later) to indicate a form of self-deception, such as in the harp playing scene, and I think we can see even in this short extract that a similar significance
can here be attached to it. The use of "some" suggests a number of such
idyllic scenes were available, but the fact that the "murmuring" is theirs
rather than that of the traditional weir, which buzzes, suggests perhaps
they are more responsible for the scene than the Creator. Moreover if
anything in the scene should buzz it is then as they hover around in the
"pollen of radiance" of the sun, like bees. So we see Hardy suggesting,
by the irony of this beautifully realised poetic scene, that Tess and Angel
by the fanciful mutual idealisations of their love, could transform any
setting to that of a traditional Arcadian setting. This is a particularly
apt account of Angel's whole fanciful idealising courtship of Tess. The
scene is poetic, and another level of poetic reading is required to
perceive the irony, as the novel makes more demands on the reader than a
traditional novel, demands for close reading as in poetry, meaning being
conveyed by the symbolism, imagery, colours, sounds and allusions rather
than by overt comment or traditional narrative methods.

The interrelation of poetic scenes

Finally I shall consider briefly Hardy's descriptions of machinery,
because they are brief, few and representative of several techniques in
the structuring of the novel. In so doing I hope to show how Hardy uses
poetry to convey his meaning not only in the immediacy of a single sentence
or paragraph, but also extends his use of poetics to the overall structuring
of the novel. Because of this, incidents in the novel have not only their
normal narrative significance, as well as their poetic significance such as
I have demonstrated, but gain an extra level of poetically induced
significance by echoing earlier and predicting future such incidents. Thus
events in the novel are linked by references echoing and alluding to other
such events, rather than by the linkage of traditional fiction, the
chronology and causality of the plot machinery. By considering machinery
we may see one clear instance of what would apply to a close analysis of
The first machine we meet in the novel is the reaping machine in Chapter XIV (pp. 105-6). The scene opens with the sun (evoked as a god which calls to mind a series of such references) awakening the harvesters, "throwing stripes like red-hot pokers upon cupboards" (p.105). The pictorial quality of the description is then carried across to "a yellow cornfield hard by Marlott village" (p.105) where the sun shines redly on the "revolving Maltese cross of the reaping machine" (p.105). The vivid visual quality of this scene is prepared for and the recurrent pervasive redness is at last focused on the "broad arms of painted wood" (p.105).

The strangeness of the metaphor used suggests a closer look is required, to establish the relevance of the phrase "Maltese cross". The Maltese cross worn by Crusaders and the Red Cross has associations, in the former case with people invading an established social order in the hopes of remedying it, in the latter with people at the scene of strife and injury administering aid. In either case invasion or violence has occurred and the wearers hope to create from this, an improved condition, an image which suggests with admirable economy the situation of the machine in the old, established agrarian community. This image, and the following sentence, "The paint with which they were smeared, intensified in hue by the sunlight, imparted to them a look of having been dipped in liquid fire" (p.105), which in brilliant, vivid, use of colour makes the machine stand out from the surrounding countryside in intensified contrast, together with the build up to the description, poetically corroborates the impression of the machine as a threatening invader. The actual choice of the Maltese cross in this context may owe something to the social disturbance caused by Bismark's activities in France. His army were invaders and wore the Maltese cross.

With the passing of time indicated not so much by strict chronology
but rather by the pictorial effect of the sun and the length of the shadows, the machine starts and "there arose from within a ticking like the love-making of the grasshopper" (p.105). This particular simile calls to mind the plagues of the Old Testament, by the choice of insect, by the fact that the machine's starting is associated with the reproduction and propagation of the insect, and by references to the damage done, in both cases through attacks on crops. Also the image is associated with a whole series of similar references to insects (especially gnats), and a larger thread of Biblical references, throughout the novel. At the same time this image works to illuminate by association the immediate implication of the machine as an unwelcome, invading means of ultimately producing better conditions.

The machine moves up and down the field "at the same equable pace" (p.106), drawn by horses and "the glistening brass star in the forehead of the fore horse first catching the eye as it rose into view over the stubble" (p.106). The "glistening" of the star suggests an unreal, shallow false light, especially in contrast with the earlier sun, and this falsity is reinforced by the use of "brass" an alloy. Also "brass" suggests bold, obstinate and has a colloquial usage connecting it to a bract or brassard, as was worn by the crusaders. As a "star" the guide to travellers, this can only be described as a false light. Also the dehumanising of the horses can be seen in the remainder of this sentence which is phrased to suggest that the horse and machine are connected (above the normal physical sense) since the horse "and then the whole machine" (p.106), came into view, suggesting the horse has no significance of its own, but is merely part of the machine. So we see not only the potential invader in this machine but also the dehumanisation this implies.

As the corn left standing decreases in area the animals huddle in refuge until the machine clears the whole field and then the animals flee, driven
from their homes and final refuge. (This reminds us of the effect on the rural peasants, forced off their fields as industry takes over farming).
The harvesters join in the machine's impersonal destructiveness as they kill the fleeing animals. This final stroke has been prepared for by such comments as that of Tess's binding which proceeded "with clock-like monotony" (p. 107).
The image used suggests the timelessness of her hand work, but also carries a disturbing association through the clock image with the ticking of the machine. So with intense ellipsis of meaning and inventiveness of device Hardy presents the threatening picture of the machine, both by the poetry of the scene, by its external allusions, and by its reference to other incidents, ideas and images in the novel.

The next machine we see is the train in Chapter XXX (p. 214), and this episode has, as well as its own poetic level of meaning, an added level due to its relationship to the earlier machine. Here we see the intrusive quality of the machine in more explicit but still highly metaphorical language, rendered through such sentences as, "Modern life stretched out its steam feeler to this point three or four times a day, touched the native existences, and quickly withdrew its feeler again, as if what it touched had been uncongenial" (p. 214), which confirms the interpretation of the former machine, and by reminding us of the former machine adds significance, by association, to the imagery of this passage. The use of "feeler", "stretched out", "touched" and "quickly withdrew" suggests the unpleasant tentative slithering of a reptile or octopus approaching its prey. This is supported by the following description of the train's arrival where the "hissing" as it "drew up almost silently" on the "wet" rails and devours quickly its cargo, enforces the snake-like nature of this machine. Like a feeding predator the light from the engine briefly flashes onto its observer, Tess, and this "Terror" creature from "modern life" is thrown into explicit contrast with the suspended picture of Tess in a "print
gown of no date or fashion" (p.214). The snake image reminds us of the now more realised potential threat of the former episode. The references to Tess link with many similar references, such as the "friendly leopard" in connection with the animal imagery around Tess, her feline attributes in the harp playing scene for example. That the leopard is a predator foreshadows Tess's future relationship with both Angel and Alec. The use of "friendly" is in either case ironical, because by encouraging this friendship each becomes a victim of Tess. In Angel's case he will be her victim due to his interpretation of the spots of her past and her inability to change them. In Alec's case, the chief representative of "modern life", he becomes her complete victim. The importance of this machine to the dairies is again emphasised, but it is again seen as an invader, indeed as a predator, and the hints of the first description are here more forcefully shown in partial realisation, more vivid due to the linkage of the two scenes.

The light is still present and this "poor enough terrestrial star" (p.214), which "stood in such humiliating contrast" (p.214), to the celestial ones, verbally echoes the "brass star" of the earlier description, having both its own significance and by the repetition in a similar situation mutually enforces the significance in each situation. Here it is not merely a "brass star" but a conscious man-made effort to produce light and guide travellers to the contact point between rural life and city life. So while its inferiority to real stars is more explicit, its added dimension of meaning comes from its repetition in a new context, this time with a wealth of former association. Also, although not attached to the train, we are reminded of the "star's" former position and the contemporary use of "iron horse" for locomotives. This strengthens the interpretation of the earlier passage, and from this earlier passage associations are carried over to deepen the suggestiveness of this passage. In this passage Tess is more
directly involved and her relationship to the machine is enforced by a similar set of cumulative images. Much of the potential threat of the first passage is here partially realised, the passages both possess their own intrinsic significance and gain a further level of meaning by the association.

The final machine we have in the novel is the threshing machine at Flintcomb-Ash, in Chapter XLVII (p.365). Here the tendencies and potentials of the machine become fully realised, as it draws its meaning both from the rich poetics of its own context, and from the wealth of echoed associations with the earlier machines. The machine is "the red tyrant" and its power supply is "black, with a sustained hiss that spoke of strength very much in reserve" (p.365). Here we have the redness of the first machine, the reaping machine, realised in its full tyrannical potential; and powered by the black machine which whilst it reminds us of the horse of the first machine, now completely dehumanised, also reminds us of the engine which pulled the train by its "hiss", the two former cases drawn together in this fully realised image. It is now the "primum mobile" of this little world, not merely a false guiding light. The engineman is also dehumanised now, referred to as a "being", and announced with the significant pronoun "it was the engineman" (p.365). The Biblical strain is embraced in the reference to Tophet (a place of sacrifice, and later a place for burning refuse), and serving fire and smoke, the engineman is the servant of a Plutonic master, both references giving a grandeur to this microcosmic "little world". The potential crusade of the first episode, the tentative, exploratory invasions of the second, have become a tyrannical overpowering settlement, ruled by the machine, whose subjects rejoice when the machine fails. Tess herself, hardly present in the first case, only potentially related to the machine, in the second contrasted to and an observer of the machine, is here forced to serve and feed the machine.

In Chapter XLVIII (p.374), the machine is still working and it is three
o'clock in the afternoon. Time is here rendered exactly, unlike the earlier pictorial method involving the light of the sun and its shadows. The poetic intensity in the rendering of machines reaches its climax in this extract, both internally and associatively. "The wheat-rick shrunk lower, and the straw-rick grew higher, and the corn-sacks were carted away" (p.374), is perhaps the most obviously poetic sentence in the whole novel, and may be broken into three heavily metrical parts according to the punctuation. The first part concerning the wheat has six stresses, the second concerning straw, seven, and the third concerning corn, nine, a rhythm which echoes the sense of the decreasing wheat, the increasing straw, and the final end product the removal of the corn. The repetition of compound words with similar sounds in similar positions in the rhythm of the three parts, suggests the monotony of the repetitive workers' process, the sound of the machine, and perhaps the "rick", "sack" elements imply the swish of the grain.

As the passage proceeds the metaphor of the machine monster is sustained by the reference to the gulping of the "insatiable swallower" and the mention of the straw "faeces" of the "buzzing red glutton". Here we see a realisation in poetic terms of the dangers suggested in the earlier references to machines; the scene has its own internal poetry, a poetry which is strengthened and intensified by verbal echoes, cross references and allusion to other such scenes, in a poetic relationship using imagery, symbolism and metaphor rather than the traditional linkage of plot or narrative logic. After the vivid pictorial and onomatopoeic description of the coppery sunset flooding "the flapping garments of the women, which clung to them like dull flames" (p.374), which reminds us of the description of the first machine and its use of the sun, we go to rat catching episode which echoes quite clearly the earlier incident and is yet another linkage which adds to the significance of the narrative episodes.

So we see here in Hardy's renderings of machinery how he uses poetry not
only in the immediacy of a single sentence or paragraph, but extends its usage to linking various scenes and intensifying their individual significance by associations which rely on the integration and intensity of poetry. Thus poetry is not merely a stylistic device but is indeed a structural tool in this novel. This same use of poetics, both to highlight individual aspects and to place them in the overall structure of the novel, extends to other descriptions in the work, such as natural description, and descriptions of characters, and I shall now move slightly back from the text to discuss how other elements of the novel are adapted to Hardy's poetic technique. No element in this novel may be taken in isolation and discussed successfully using the criterion applied to a traditional piece of prose fiction; as with his rendering of particular episodes the criteria must be those of poetry.

(ii) Elements of structure

Hardy's use of place

Hardy's rendering of place, created through a poetic texture of language, with a poet's sense of emotional consonance is clearly poetic in description and function and this is most apparent with reference to Froom Vale and Flintcomb-Ash. The first is described with a wealth of rich, onomatopoeic words such as "oozing fatness and warm ferment" (p.172) and "hiss of fertilization" (p.172) which contribute to evoking a fertile, Keatsian sensuality in the description. By echoing other Romantic poets this atmosphere is verbally strengthened. Wordsworth's "A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal" is recalled in the phrase "the smallest tree as it moved round the stem with the diurnal roll" (p.173), a poem which may be seen echoed in Hardy's other works, such as in the sentence from The Woodlanders (1887):¹

Almost every diurnal and nocturnal effect in that woodland place had hitherto been the direct result of the regular terrestrial roll which produced the season's changes; but here was something dissociated from these normal sequences, and foreign to local knowledge. (p.52)

These allusions to Romantic poets help create the rich textual description of a fertile natural background.

However the place also has a poetic function, acting as a protagonist, stimulating the sensitive peasants whose "ready bosoms existing there were impregnated by their surroundings" (p.172), and also serving as a dramatic chorus to the actions of the characters, at times reflecting their mental states it functions in a relationship which Ruskin termed the "pathetic fallacy". So whilst Hardy holds up a mirror to nature and describes it with an accuracy comparable to that of some Romantic poets, he also refracts his final rendering of nature through his own artistic vision to relate it functionally to his characters by methods more common to poetry than prose.

Against Froom Vale we have Flintoomb-Ash with its snow, strange visiting birds, hard soil and flints, which acts as an antagonist to the same characters, as well as reflecting the state of Tess, this time a deserted woman. Alongside this double function of nature, contributory and choric, we also have the poetic language of such sentences as,

So these two upper and nether visages confronted each other all day long, the white face looking down on the brown face, and the brown face looking up at the white face, without anything standing between them but the two girls crawling over the surface of the former like flies. (p.322)

whose meaning is conveyed by metaphor, simile and verbal painting. In this sentence the common metaphor of the face of the earth is extended to refer to that of the sky, a careful adaptation which shows Hardy's concern with using words for their fullest fresh effect. The repetition of the points of view of the sky and the earth, in balanced antithesis, emphasises the wide frame in which the girls are pictured, and renders the simile of the flies more appropriate in terms of the verbal painting he has created. Whilst firmly grounding his story in the Wessex he creates, Hardy characteristically embodies the insignificance of the individual to the cosmic order in the image of tiny figures viewed in a vast landscape. The former use of place
is customary in novels, the latter use more prevalent in poetry. In Chapter XVI as Tess enters the Valley of the Great Dairies he comments:

"Tess stood still upon the hemmed expanse of verdant flatness, like a fly on a billiard-table of indefinite length, and of no more consequence to the surroundings than that fly" (p.125). Here Hardy imbues the environment with a scope wherein Tess is insignificant.

The only place where we see modern life is Sandbourne, the representative home of progress. Hence we would expect it to be related in some poetic way to the machines. The city strikes Angel as being "like a fairy place" (p.420) which reminds us of the artifice of the "brass star" and the later created light at the station, and connects the "glittering novelty" and "midnight lamps" of Sandbourne to the overall pattern. He finds Tess significantly, at the same time as the milkman, which recalls their earlier contacts and the station. The description of Tess recalls earlier descriptions of her, referring to her hair, voice and eyes. Her hair is now coiled in haste, unlike the early languid, leisurely picture of it, her formerly soft voice is now hard, her eyes shine unnaturally. The effect of the city is apparent on her, the haste, noise and false lights reflected in her person, show the relationship of place to character, as well as the relationship of the place to its earlier antennae into the country. The movement is clear, Tess has been completely captured by the "red tyrant" and is now right in its lair. The train "bore Clare on its wheels" (p.420) to Sandbourne, Tess was "drawn hither", the landlady is in "enforced bondage to that arithmetical demon Profit-and-Loss" (p.425), and the place is called a "watering place", all of which contribute to the suggestion of Sandbourne as the lair of the monster Progress. So Hardy's use of place as well as his description of it, is associative, evocative, choric and integrated within an interrelated sequence of impressions - all traits which one is obliged to call poetic.
Hardy's use of time

The passing of time in the novel is more clearly indicated in terms of the seasons and the natural settings than by the number of years passed in a conventional chronological scheme. So we remember events which occur in the rich fertile summer of Talbothays and those in the barren cold winter of Flintcomb-Ash in these very terms, rather than in terms of the months passed between actions, a use of time which is another aspect of Hardy's use of place for emotional consonance. I earlier showed how the length of the shadows in the sunlight depicted the passing of time in particular episodes, which is an adaptation in little of the overall method. The echoing allusive scenes, mythic names and situations, together with the dwarfing natural settings often give the scenes a timelessness, an effect Hardy reinforces by his use of time in the sense of antiquity or history. This effect is to make the characters act out their lives in a long corridor of time, their actions being almost insignificant recurrences of archetypal actions.

One example of this use of time occurs in Chapter XVI, in "The Rally". After the conventional chronological reference of the first sentence, the use of time as a medium in which actions are repeated is suggested by the words "she left her home for the second time" (p.121). As she moves away from home her insignificance even to her family is stressed in the reference to her younger brothers and sisters. She is soon moved into an expanding frame of reference as "she felt akin to the landscape" (p.122). The mention of her ancestors takes our thoughts back beyond the initial "two and three years after the return from Trantridge" (p.121) to perhaps the first cause of her problems, the degeneration of her aristocratic forbears. As she enters the Valley, she sings ballads with even earlier origins, then the primitive "Song of Creation" (Psalm 148), and even beyond this Hardy introduces

ancient pagan utterances "and probably the half-unconscious rhapsody was a Faltohistic utterance in a Monotheistic setting" (p.124). So here time in conjunction with the setting, is used to expand the frame of reference in which Tess acts, with a double effect. It provides a long corridor of time in which Tess acts out her relatively insignificant version of the events which occurred, to her ancestors, in ballads and to the creator. At the same time by virtue of the grandeur of the preceding examples and of the intense communication Tess feels in this setting it is a brightly lit moment in Tess's life and suspended in time. So whilst her rallying hopes of recreating her universe seem dwarfed alongside the mention of the creator's, her kinship with this creation and the grandeur of the stage wherein she acts out this communion, seem to work to enlarge the significance of her acts. The remainder of this chapter, especially in its reference to the "infinite cows and calves of bygone years" (p.126) adds to the reductive effect. The reference to the shadows of these homely figures as sculptures of ancient origins is another such example of a poetic use of time, whilst it acts as a predictive image of the portraits in the lodgings the first night of their marriage. It is as if, although insignificant, Tess's actions reverberate in the inescapable corridor of time. So we see conventional chronology used, but often subordinate in this role to the more important many-sided poetic functions of a much grander concept of time.

Hardy's characterisation

Hardy's portrayal of characters is similarly adapted to fit his poetic method. Although they remain realistic, psychologically credible denizens of Hardy's world they are sometimes elevated to a larger scale. Also, whilst he makes their actions insignificant at times, this process is balanced by increasing the magnitude of his characters to an almost mythic status. Also the parvenu, nouveau riche, may appear a stagey melodramatic, overwrought character, but in the framework of the novel he is more than a
character introduced to seduce Tess. His origins and the character of Tess whom he seduces show he has a large role to play, hence the elevation of his character; the overwrought association with the imagery of the city (for example, the use of redness to surround his depiction), the careful allusions to his satanic qualities the "Old Other One", as Tess's seducer, (at Flintcomb-Ash he reminds us of Satan tempting Christ in the wilderness, the very use of "The Convert" as a title is rife with irony on many levels).

Angel with his name and harp-playing is rich in mythic and Biblical associations. Tess moves from the eternal milkmaid, to become motherhood incarnate, to become the essence of womanhood, and finally she becomes a sacrifice. The characters grow to the poetic proportions of Elizabethan dramatic heroes as they wrestle with the various forces Hardy includes in the work. Yet death for them, except perhaps Tess, is not so much a victory as merely the end. That he can have such characters is a product of the poetic vision which informs the work. Further, characters are not merely revealed in action, overt comment or dialogue. Around each character is a cluster of images and associations which accumulate and work in relation to other such clusters in a similar process to that which I demonstrated at work in Hardy's rendering of machinery. So our response to the character is created through this verbal and metaphorical texture as much as through conventional knowledge and "recognition". Around Tess the cluster consists of images mainly of flora and fauna; around Alec those of redness and flames, fires and pitchforks; around Angel those of vague mistiness and ethereal harp-music, which stand in interesting contrast to the earthiness of those surrounding Tess's parents, and in suggestive relationship to the shortsightedness of his own family. So characters in revelation, realisation

and function transcend normal fictional characterisation in a way which I
suggest is essentially poetic.

Hardy's rendering of action

The characters' actions also often have a symbolic significance, which
is more important than their narrative function. Hardy can introduce chance
events, coincidences which would undermine the credibility of a normal novel,
but read in terms of a poetic vision, these actions have their own
significance, metaphoric rather than naturalistic. To cite one particular
action, the removal of Tess's boots by Angel's brothers at Emminster is so
full of coincidence that it has severely offended many critics who insist
upon discussing Tess in the framework of a traditional novel, considering
any poetry present merely purple patches in the brown drabness of its
fatalism. In this scene the action itself is significant in that it shows
the Clare brothers' attitude to Angel's marriage, and including Mercy Chant
shows the superficiality and hypocrisy of the form of Christianity they
assume. Also it is an example of Tess's interpreting events to produce her
sorrow;

She knew that it was all sentiment, all baseless
impressibility, which had caused her to read the scene as
her own condemnation; nevertheless she could not get over
it; she could not contravene in her own defenceless person
all these untoward omens. (p.339)

The coincidences are great, yet added meaning in the scene comes from the
imagery used, Tess the animal hounded up the hill for example, and the
complex, allusive, dramatic irony which pervades the action. The economy
of such a complete image of scornful rejection, antipathy and misunderstanding
is developed masterfully. The effect is more powerful than a more "likely"
encounter would have been. It is a less extravagant form of poetic imagery,
which in the context of this poetic novel is quite justified, and by no
means an intrusion 1.

Moreover the relation of action to action, unlike the causal linkage of a traditional plot, is achieved in a method similar to that which we saw linking the renderings of machines. The plot can be seen as a series of inter-related situations and actions linked by cross references and allusions, using metaphor, simile and imagery to weave together a series of movements. Each movement has its own direction and significance and also draws part of its meaning from its interrelationship with other such movements, a method more familiar to the student of poetry than to the novel critic. I shall now discuss one sequence of action, Chapter LVIII, which is Tess's arrival at Stonehenge with Angel, after her murder of Alec, her lying on the stone and awaiting her capture. I hope to illustrate its inherent poetic value, its relationship to other such actions, and its position in the various movements of what may be called the "plot".

The scene and setting are rich in poetic phrases and images such as: "The wind, playing upon the edifice, produced a booming tune, like the note of some gigantic one-stringed harp" (p.440). The onomatopoeia and extravagant fantasy of the simile combine with the ironic association with the harp which earlier lured Tess, to create a richness of meaning far beyond the immediate auditory function of the sentence. Tess's action as she "flung herself upon an oblong slab" (p.441), is a poetic, grandly tragic action rather than the normal reaction of a frightened, pursued murderess. The quietness as they listen to the wind soughing among the monuments evokes an eerie stillness. The poetry of the scene once again extends beyond such internal poetic effects, to the choice and portrayal of place, the use of time, the status of the characters and the nature of the action. The action hence has its own internal poetic value independent of its position in the novel.

However the action gains added significance by poetically echoing earlier, similar actions, the associations building new value into the
context of the action. The mention of harp-music recalls the earlier account of Angel's music. The mindless state then induced by the music is now to be totally realised in her death; the action now is much grander, the instrument bigger, the player more powerful, the effect much more final, an effect which in part arises from our association of this action with earlier passages. The air of uneasy calm and mindlessness reminds us also of the night when Prince was killed, and her comment at Talbothays which first attracted Angel's attention. "I do know that our souls can be made to go outside our bodies when we are alive" (p.142), she says, as dairymen Crick plants his knife and fork on the table "like the beginning of a gallows" (p.142), and she goes on to explain the easy way to induce this state,

> Lie on the grass at night and look straight up at some big bright star; and, by fixing your mind upon it, you will soon find that you are hundreds and hundreds o' miles away from your body, which you don't seem to want at all. (p.142)

She lay under the stars when seduced, she put birds, lying injured under the stars out of their misery, now these minor tragedies reverberate in their implications to focus in this final tragedy as Tess lies under the stars to await the final departure of her soul from her body at the gallows. The action of lying on the slab also recalls Angel's sleepwalking, Alec's practical joke and her family's sleeping in the vaults.

The relationship of this action not only to other actions of a similar nature, but also to its position in the various movements which comprise the plot, gives it further levels of meaning. One such movement which may be taken as typical is the religious movement. Religion pervades the novel in phrases such as "the thorny crown of this sad conception" (p.172), in scenes, such as the confirmation of the fowls, and in the verbal paintings, such as those which compare Tess to the Madonna, and these are combined in a pattern which constitutes a movement following the Biblical story of the Fall of Man. Phases one and two in the Valley of Blackmoor and the Chase

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correspond to Eve's seduction by Satan, Phases three and four in the Valley of the Var, to Adam's participation in Eve's action, and the fifth and sixth Phases Flintcombe and Salisbury Plain, to their banishment from the Garden to pain, labour and death. This movement is focused and culminated in the particularly appropriate final action, the sacrifice of a "pure" victim, on an altar set aside for the sacrifice of innocent animal victims. That the sacrifice is in a pagan setting is prepared for by the constant reference to Tess as a heathen, especially with reference to the sun, and by the number of mysterious monuments such as Cross in hand which reinforce the grotesque splendour of this sinister final altar. Like Christ before his death Tess quietly awaits capture, she also hands her sister over to Angel in the hopes of improving their lot, an action which reminds us both of Christ's motives for his sacrificial death, and of His handing His mother over to a trusted friend whilst on the Cross.

Another movement which is brought to its conclusion in this, Tess's final action, is the ballad strain which pervades the novel. The ballad is part of the way of life of Hardy's characters, and parts of ballads are sung or suggested throughout. It has also been pointed out that the story of Tess is an almost traditional ballad plot. So we see here, Tess, as ballad heroine, after having performed all the customary actions of the ballad, being arrested and lead to her traditional hanging.

In terms of the hunt metaphor, Tess the animal (as were her family in

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the vault) is hunted to earth and finally tracked down and held at bay by the
"trained" officers of the law. If one considers Tess as a social novel, Tess
has been forced out of her rural life, out of her other employments, indeed
out of the city and society itself as the social order here triumphs. In
connection with this if we consider the movement not only in terms of Tess's
representing the decline of the rural order, but also as a continuation of the
decline of the aristocracy, then we see here the final phase as Tess goes to
join her ancestors, a definitive version of her family in the family vault.

The Darwinian elements demonstrated by John Holloway working on various
levels in the novel constitute a movement, as Tess struggles to discover and
adapt to her ecological niche, which similarly focuses in this final scene.
Here the climax is reached as the organism, Tess, goes away to die, having
improved Angel and leaving her relative Liza-Lu to take her place and
continue the species for its betterment. The use of the nineteenth century
scientific term "phrases" in this novel, helps indicate even more clearly
the presence and direction of this particular movement which like the others
culminates in Tess's final action and contributes to its poetic richness of
associations.

Finally, John Holloway has shown how the most basic movement in the
novel, that of Tess's tragic career, is mirrored in little in the few days
which Angel and Tess spend together before this scene. The scene at
Stonehenge completes this movement both in little as they separate and in
the larger echoed sequence of separations, drawing the story to its final,
definite close for Tess. I hope to have shown this scene, unfortunately
labelled "unlikely" or "stagey" by various critics, is richly poetic

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1. John Holloway, ibid.
2. John Holloway, ibid.
internally, by association, and in relation to various movements, a fulness of meaning which transcends the limited vision of conventional criticism and provides a fitting climax to Tess's story. Other key actions in the novel would render the same rewards on close and sympathetic examination.

So far I hope to have shown that every element in the novel from the choice and use of words, to the logic and unity of the structure is closer to poetry than to traditional fiction. At this point we can say that Tess is a technically poetic novel, the poetics of which function in a similar way as do Carlyle's in Past And Present. In the latter writer the direction and point of the work can be discovered by locating Carlyle's position in relation to his material, by seeing his manipulation of his poetics as he argues for his philosophy. Thus Carlyle is essentially a masterful prose writer who uses rhetoric and poetics to convey his consistent opinion. With Hardy, to discover the direction of his work, we must locate his position relative to his material, or his attitude to the character who records the events. If this is consistent he is essentially a prose novelist using a poetically structured novel as a vehicle for his ideas.

However we find Hardy shifting in relation to his material, recording his own reactions to, and impressions of, the various aspects of the work in a style which does not always distinguish them from those of his characters, a stance which is essentially poetic. This inextricable, authorial involvement in the subject matter, which can be seen in his poetry, and which dissolves the consistent, objective, narrative viewpoint distinguishes this novel from works such as Carlyle's. This process can be seen in poems such as "The Dead Bastard". In this poem the language used is appropriate to the speaker, the emotional attitude befits the situation. The vehement

defiance of the last stanza however seems to belong more to the author of 
_Jude the Obscure_ and the baptism scene in _Tess_ than to the woman regretting 
her former attitude to her dead child. "The Heart A Woman's Dream" is in the 
form of a monologue, a woman relating her dream of reading her dead lover's 
heart. The disturbing atmosphere evoked by the central situation is 
appropriate to the woman's disturbed mental state. However the imagery and 
language used

> It was inscribed like a terrestrial sphere 
> With quaint vermiculations close and clear

is far from the natural idiom of the disturbed woman, who later says in a 
more natural conversational style, "Though I knew not 'twas so".

In the former poem Hardy's involvement is apparent in the vehemence of 
the poem's defiance, in the latter his presence may be seen in the language 
used which does not accord with the speaker's idiom, and this same essentially 
poetic involvement in the text may be seen in _Tess_. In discussing Hardy's 
position in relation to his material I am indebted to David Lodge's 
*Language of Fiction* as the starting point for much of the following.

(iii) **Authorial stance**

Lodge has noted that in a novel no representation of reality can be 
entirely neutral and objective: it must always be mediated through the 
consciousness of a narrator or a character, in the fictional illusion. I 
shall discuss the representation mainly of nature in this work as it is 
mediated through the consciousness of the narrator, Hardy, and as it is 
mediated through the consciousness of a character, Tess. That these two 
sources of information exist in this novel suggests a complexity of viewpoint 
more familiar to the poetic novels of Virginia Woolf than to contemporary

2. Lodge, p.179.
novels, more familiar to poetry of the period than to its novels.

The title-page tells us that the story of Tess is "Faithfully presented by Thomas Hardy" and the explanatory note to the first edition describes the novel, rather equivocally "as an attempt to give artistic form to a true sequence of things". We are often made to feel that Hardy as local historian is retelling a story, about someone he did not directly know, but whose events took place in living memory, and that his information is second hand. Lines such as, "The name of the eclipsing girl, whatever it was, has not been handed down" in Chapter II, together with similar references in Chapters XIV, XXXV support this impression. Thus Hardy narrates a story, knowing its outcome, and commenting through the authorial remarks as he proceeds. However, Hardy as narrator, inheriting a Wordsworthian and acquiring a Darwinian view of nature, gives comments regarding nature which, added up, give no definitive direction or guide to the meaning of nature in the work. So we see Hardy commenting on the girls at Talbothays, "They writhed feverishly under the oppressiveness of an emotion thrust on them by cruel Nature's law - an emotion which they had neither expected nor desired" (p. 171), which suggests the deterministic nature of Darwinian thought; together with his numerous comments linking Tess with nature and asserting this Wordsworthian or Rousseau-esque unity as the basis of her purity: "She was ashamed of herself for her gloom of the night, based on nothing more tangible than a sense of condemnation under an arbitrary law of society which had no foundation in Nature" (p. 315). Although his authorial comments are generally welcome, such as that on the burial of Tess's child with its slow grinding irony, they are often non-committal and prefaced by qualifying remarks such as "fancy might have regarded" or "some would risk". When Hardy does intrude dogmatically it is often for the immediate effect, the consistency of such authorial comments not being of primary importance. In the "Preface" he states that the novel is "in the contemplative to be often charged with impressions than with convictions" and we must read the novel
with a keener eye to imagery and metaphor than to accumulated authorial comments.

Moreover this voice of Hardy as local historian narrating the story dependent upon secondary sources is in a state of uneasy coexistence with the voice of the creative author acquainted with the deepest mental processes of his characters. This uneasiness may be seen especially in Hardy's hesitation about how far he should attempt to imitate the verbal quality of Tess's consciousness. Sometimes he does not attempt an imitation at all but gives her thoughts in his words; occasionally he realises how far his words are removed from Tess's idiom and states "she thought without actually wording the thought" (p.103) to explain the language used: and on other occasions he does directly imitate the verbal quality of Tess's consciousness. To illustrate this I shall consider the account of her disappointment at the appearance of Alec:

She had dreamed of an aged and dignified face, the sublimation of all the d'Urberville lineaments, furrowed with incarnate memories representing in hieroglyphic the centuries of her family's and England's history. But she screwed herself up to the work in hand, since she could not get out of it, and answered -

"I came to see your mother, sir" (p.50)

The first sentence is a conscious literary paraphrase of Tess's vague, romantic expectations; whereas the second sentence is tough, simple and idiomatic, precisely rendering the verbal quality of Tess's consciousness. Each sentence is written in a justifiable mode, but the transition between the two is too abrupt and causes a disturbance and confusion of viewpoint to the reader. Elsewhere he fails to maintain the distinction between Tess's consciousness, and his own articulation of it, which one expects maintained in the literary illusion of the novel. Thus Hardy as narrator shifts in relation to his material. His presence as creative author, aware of the mental processes of his characters stands in stimulating counterpoint to his presence as local historian.
This latter comment regarding Tess's consciousness leads on to my second field of inquiry, the revelation of nature through a character's consciousness. Much of the nature seen in the novel is, indeed, revealed through, and in relation to Tess's consciousness. Throughout the novel, as we have seen, Hardy associates Tess with nature, with flora and fauna, and uses natural settings which reflect her mood, suggesting her purity lies in the truthfulness of her innate response to nature. Yet when Tess herself reacts to nature to see her situation reflected in, or encouraged by her environment, Hardy often takes the reader back a step to show us the fallacy of her response. It is as if Hardy were himself exploring the possibilities and truth value of what Ruskin called the "pathetic fallacy". The image of the fly on the billiard table in Chapter XVI illustrates these comments. Tess enters the Valley and we are told "she felt akin to the landscape" (p.122) an idea which is reinforced by the joyous songs she sings, and it would seem that in this sympathetic, joyful, natural setting Tess will prosper. But in the sentence,

Not quite sure of her direction Tess stood still upon the hemmed expanse of verdant flatness, like a fly on a billiard-table of indefinite length, and of no more consequence to the surroundings than that fly. (p.125)

the image of the fly serves to indicate her insignificance in this vast indifferent setting; not, as one would expect, to elaborate on Tess's temporary confusion, as its position in the sentence seems to demand. Instead of allowing the nature with which she feels a kinship to guide her course, Hardy steps back and shows us the futility of such a response to what is an indifferent nature. Dismissing mid-sentence his own tendency to use the "pathetic fallacy" with reference to Tess, he undermines our confidence in Tess's response to nature as well, because much of the nature was seen through her consciousness and it was Tess who "felt akin to the landscape", in the illusion created. So distancing the reader by the abrupt sentence structure, he undermines our confidence in both his, and more
importantly Tess's response to nature. Shortly after, he again encourages us to believe in the harmony of Tess and nature, and the possibility of this harmony leading to renewed happiness for Tess, only to undermine this by showing that although Tess may feel extraordinarily elated "it was not the expression of the valley's consciousness that beautiful Tess had arrived, but the ordinary announcement of milking-time" (p. 126), the following details almost sarcastically showing the stupidity of Tess's feeling in harmony with nature.

Again, in the final two paragraphs of Chapter XIII, Hardy shows Tess, in the first of these, explicitly entertaining the "pathetic fallacy", whilst in the second he points out the "objective reality". However the poetry of the former paragraph "The midnight airs and gusts, moaning amongst the tightly-wrapped buds and bark of the winter twigs, were formulae of bitter reproach" (p. 104), is not overthrown by the rationality of the second paragraph. Moreover if indeed "the world is only a psychological phenomenon" (p. 104), the subjectivity of the second paragraph is only as valid as that of the first, and if she feels in antagonism with nature then she is in antagonism with nature. The fact that nature presents its most sombre aspect when Tess is most desolate is in fact evidence of how deeply she is in accord with nature. So Hardy by inextricably involving himself in the extract, undermines our confidence in Tess's response to nature, our confidence in his response to Tess, and his response to Tess's response to nature. That Tess should prefer a sad but sympathetic nature to a gay but indifferent nature is a sign of her humanness. Hardy tends to encourage us to associate Tess with nature, and Tess to entertain the "pathetic fallacy", only to undermine this by showing the futility of a false identification with nature. This is similar to the way he himself falls back on Darwinism to prevent his adopting a facile Wordsworthianism, for example, his acknowledgement of the ultimate usefulness of the machines. The similarity of their positions
shows how closely Hardy is involved in the text, his own reactions being textually recorded in the exploratory capacity usually reserved for poetry.

I have necessarily had to separate out the components of Hardy's fictional poetic, but a poem is essentially an integrated entity of language and thought; to demonstrate the wholeness and fusion of his art, I will finally consider a single scene, that in which Tess comes upon Angel Clare playing his harp in the garden at Telboothays, which occurs in Chapter XIX.

In discussing these four paragraphs I hope to illustrate all my previous individual points. The extract is:

It was a typical summer evening in June, the atmosphere being in such delicate equilibrium and so transmissive that inanimate objects seemed endowed with two or three senses, if not five. There was no distinction between the near and the far, and an auditor felt close to everything within the horizon. The soundlessness impressed her as a positive entity rather than as the mere negation of noise. It was broken by the strumming of strings.

Tess had heard those notes in the attic above her head. Dim, flattened, constrained by their confinement, they had never appealed to her as now, when they wandered in the still air with a stark quality like that of nudity. To speak absolutely, both instrument and execution were poor; but the relative is all, and as she listened Tess, like a fascinated bird, could not leave the spot. Far from leaving she drew up towards the performer, keeping behind the hedge that he might not guess her presence.

The outskirt of the garden in which Tess found herself had been left uncultivated for some years, and was now damp and rank with juicy grass which sent up mists of pollen at a touch; and with tall blooming weeds emitting offensive smells – weeds whose red and yellow and purple hues formed a polychrome as dazzling as that of cultivated flowers. She went stealthily as a cat through this profusion of growth, gathering cuckoo-spittle on her skirts, cracking snails that were under-foot, staining her hands with thistle-milk and slug-slime, and rubbing off upon her naked arms sticky blights which, though snow-white on the apple-tree trunks, made madder stains on her skin; thus she drew quite near to Clare, still unobserved of him.

Tess was conscious of neither time nor space. The exaltation which she had described as being producible at will by gazing at a star, came now without any determination of hers; she undulated upon the thin notes of the second-hand harp, and their harmonies passed like breezes through her, bringing tears into her eyes. The floating pollen seemed to be his notes made visible, and the dampness of the garden the weeping of the
garden's sensibility. Though near nightfall, the rank-smelling weed-flowers glowed as if they would not close for intentness, and the waves of colour mixed with the waves of sound. (pp.144-5)

Poetic devices operating within single sentences include the use of sound to aid the sense of his description. In such phrases as "cuckoo-spittle" and "slug-slime", the alliteration, assonance and thickening consonants help evoke the sensuous over-ripe fertility of the scene. The visual quality is present in the colourful description of the weeds, and mingled with the small moves towards the splendid, intensified, synaesthetic description of the final paragraph, as Tess moves closer to the music. The rhythm and sound of the extract quietens as Tess moves towards the music, from the harshness of "a polychrome as dazzling" to the subdued, rhythmic, hypnotic quality of "the waves of colour mixed with the waves of sound" with its repetition and balanced long vowel sounds. The second field of inquiry was the allusive, associative relationship between scenes. Tess's ecstatic mindless state reminds us of her condition when Prince was killed and the line "The exaltation which she had described as being producible at will by gazing at a star, came now without any determination of hers; she undulated upon the thin notes of the second-hand harp" anticipates the scene at Stonehenge. The haziness reminds us of a series of references to mist, at the Chase, at Alec's house, whilst courted by Angel, at the Trantridge dance, and perhaps most significantly in the "intoxicating atmosphere" when she rejoins Angel after the murder. The harp recurs and the animal imagery of "a fascinated bird" and "stealthily as a cat" reverberates throughout the novel. The scene has its own poetry, and this gains a new dimension of meaning by association with other incidents in the work. The sense of place here is obviously poetical, the description of nature, and of Tess's impression of and relationship with nature, especially the flora is used for poetic, rather than purely descriptive effects. Time is also used poetically especially in the last of these paragraphs where the suspension of time and
the dissolution of spatial perspective in Tess’s mind, renders the scene highly charged with poetic significance as one of the brightly lit suspended moments in the long corridor of time and space, in which she lives.

The character of Angel is drawn almost resembling a painting, as he sits, an almost mythic character, playing his harp (even though poorly) with an Orphic effect upon Tess: whilst Tess especially in her ecstatic, mindless, impressionistic involvement with the scene belongs more to poetry than to prose. The actions are few and are in a symbolic relationship to their situation. Tess’s actions indicate her place in nature, those of Angel herald the start of his ethereal, hypnotic courtship of Tess and so the place of this scene in the various movements which constitute the "plot" is apparent.

Finally I shall consider the shifting points of view offered, the difficulty in locating the origin of the impressions, which signify Hardy’s essentially poetic involvement in the text. In the third paragraph we have the phrase "in which Tess found herself" which suggests she is aware of her surroundings; followed by the observation that the garden had been uncultivated for some years and the comparison of the weeds with cultivated flowers, which must come from the narrator. But the lines "damp and rank with juicy grass which sent up mists of pollen at a touch; and with tall blooming weeds emitting offensive smells" seem to describe the sensations of Tess, it is her touch which disturbs the pollen, her nose which smells and her eyes which see the garden. The opening sentence of the following paragraph seems to favour a view of the weeds’ paragraph as authorial for we are told that, "Tess was conscious of neither time nor space." However we are soon told that this mental state did not exclude her observation of the physical attributes of the overgrown garden, but included them and transfigured them through the "pathetic fallacy"; "The floating pollen seemed to be his notes made visible, and the dampness of the garden the weeping of
the garden's sensibility. This introduces a new view of the garden, neither that of soiling nastiness, nor that of wild unconstrained nature, but that of beauty perceived through emotion. This new view can be seen as an extension of either of the former views, but not both, depending upon our evaluation of Tess's ecstatic response to the music. In spite of the poor music she is "taken in" by it, as she is by his idealising love, and the transfiguration of the weeds is an index of her delusion, this is the extension of the "soiling nastiness" view. In terms of "wild unconstrained nature" this experience, independent of the quality of the music is an indication of the extent to which she is in close harmony with nature in all its aspects. Hardy's aside "but the relative is all" does not help us to decide. The problem arises from the difficulty we have in locating the recording consciousness, in deciding whether it is primarily the narrator Hardy's, or the character Tess's. This involvement in the text is essentially poetic, and with this observation I shall close the discussion of this extract where I hope to have illustrated many of the points in manner and content which make Tess essentially a poetic novel.

(iv) Effect on reader and interpretation

Hardy said in the "Preface", "Let me repeat that a novel is an impression not an argument" and it is in these terms that the novel must be criticised. The failure to realise this fact has led critics to make such comments as David Lodge's description of Hardy as an "in spite of" novelist, or Virginia Woolf's "No style in literature, save Scott's is so difficult to analyse; it is on the face of it so bad, yet it achieves its aim so unmistakably." To criticise Tess in terms of ordinary prose criteria is

1. Lodge, p.164.
to find faults which in the context of this poetic novel become virtues. To interpret this novel, then, one must read with an eye to the poetics I have shown constitute this work, to determine the direction of Hardy's "impressions", which by definition are not distinct, logical, consistent and clearly defined.

The overall impression gained is that Tess is a pure victim. She is a victim of forces and, Hardy having enlisted our sympathies for Tess, we are tempted with him to locate these outside of her. This complex network of forces includes circumstances, society, nature's or God's rules, Fate and Providence. In so doing we are drawn with Hardy into sympathy with the Wessex peasants who in a fatalistic way blame external causes for most of their problems, as does Tess on occasions. However, closer examination will reveal to the reader, as it does to Hardy present in his exploratory capacity in the text, that these forces also have an origin which is inherent in Tess's character, an internal source. When we consider the former discussion of Tess's feeling in antagonism with nature in Chapter XIII, we see that if she was then a victim, she was a victim of her own interpretation of nature. Thus we see Tess as a victim of her subjectively created universe blaming herself as does Tess in Stanza IV of "Tess's Lament".

And it was I who did it all,
Who did it all.

Her tragedy then, lies in her failure to adjust or recreate her own universe for her own self-preservation and betterment, her purity lies in her refusal to alter what she considers an absolute set of circumstances. Thus the finest point in the reader's response to Hardy's often shifting views of Tess is a deep and consistent sympathy with her as a victim of her subjectively created universe. An example of this is the death of Prince. It is her fault, she is indulging in one of her dreamy moments, and she blames

1. Collected Poems, p. 161
herself as a murderess. Her sorrow comes from her own interpretation of what she has done. Unlike her parents she is too sensitive and self-conscious to blame fate, and so torments herself by refusing to adjust her own interpretation of the events. Her purity lies in her truthfulness to this absolute interpretation, she will not even alleviate her feeling of guilt by blaming her tiredness. She can put birds out of their misery so the death itself does not upset her. Also she is capable of closing her mind to her earlier sins, as she does when she forgets her past with Alec and enjoys Angel's company. In this case her consciousness will not let her escape into forgetfulness. Her very truthfulness to her own subjective vision of reality, which as we saw in the discussion of the "pathetic fallacy" is not always accurate, is both the cause of her tragedy and the basis of her purity.

This same truthfulness to her own created universe makes her torment herself about telling Angel her past, makes the past with Alec a cause for sorrow, makes her refrain from coquetry (at which she is not unskilful) to retain Angel and makes her fail to contact him. Yet the fact that Hardy and the reader are often aware of the falsity of her interpretation of reality (often based upon over-sensitivity to a situation and vague, dreamy romantic notions), together with the knowledge that her purity will make her unflinchingly follow the course prescribed by her created universe, engages our sympathy and increases the impact of the final tragedy.

She is too intelligent to blame external causes, too sensitive to ignore the circumstances, and this very intelligence and sensibility together with her beauty give ample evidence that she could easily have acted on a number of occasions in such a way as to change her future, to recreate her subjective universe. Occasionally she does act, as when she writes to Angel, for example, an act which required a readjustment of her personal universe, but the depth of tragedy lies in the gap between what she does do and what she (as opposed to her parents and Marian and Izzy) could do. Her failure
to act is a sign of her purity, her truthfulness to her own subjective view of reality.

Hardy does not strictly formulate the cause or implications of this, for it is an impression not an argument. However the strong Darwinian movement in this novel is an indication that Hardy at least had a vague impression that man's consciousness had in some way evolved along with his behavioural characteristics. The tragic view which informs his work further suggests that the two did not evolve sympathetically and the overall impression is similar to that expressed in the poem "Before Life and After",

A TIME there was - as one may guess
And as, indeed, earth's testimonies tell -
Before the birth of consciousness,
When all went well. 1

A critic who claims Hardy takes too many liberties with the traditions of the genre could well recall Hardy's comment upon Tess,

And it was the touch of the imperfect upon the would-be perfect that gave the sweetness, because it was that which gave the humanity. (pp.174-5)

The process - essentially poetic - which I have described in Tess may be seen at work in Hardy's other novels as intensively if not always so consistently. To further illustrate my earlier claims, I shall now discuss briefly extracts from (i) The Return of the Native, (ii) The Mayor of Casterbridge and Jude the Obscure.

(i) In The Return of the Native, Hardy devotes the entire first chapter to a description of Egdon Heath. From the first two paragraphs Hardy sets the tone which will characterise the heath for the remainder of the novel. In the first sentence the language used to describe the heath, "vast", "wild", "unenclosed" suggests an enormity of size on which the "moment by moment" embrovnment will occur. Thus the darkening is made to seem extended in time, and this together with the non-specificity of the opening words, "A Saturday afternoon in November was approaching the time of twilight" (p.11) gives the impression of an eternal heath upon which time does indeed make but little impression. The heath's indifference to temporal occurrences is further seen in the unaffective language of such phrases as "an instalment of night which had taken up its place before its astronomical hour was come" (p.11), where the objective rendering almost ironically suggests not change or effect but mere scientific necessity. This timeless presentation of the heath as vast and immutable is made more explicit in sentences such as "The distant rims of the world and of the firmament seemed to be a division in time no less than a division in matter" (p.11). The reference to the clouds as a tent will be recalled later in the comment on the barrow which "formed

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1. Page references throughout are to the following Macmillan editions:
The Return of the Native, "St Martin's Library" (London, 1958)
The Mayor of Casterbridge, "St Martin's Library" (London, 1958)
Jude the Obscure, "St Martin's Library" (London, 1957)
the pole and axis of this heathery world" (p.19). This sentence uses both "pole" as a support for the tent of the sky and "axis" as a fulcrum for the timeless world embodied in the presentation of the heath. By shifting our attention from the sky which was like a tent to the floor of the heath, from the "pallid screen" to the "darkest vegetation" in a series of repetitive cyclic movements Hardy puts us into the position of the heather cutter, in a prose style which reminds us of the impressionist poets' use of cyclic focus such as Verlaine's in "La lune blanche". Hardy in a late poem "Snow in the Suburbs" shifts our attention by a similar movement in the poem by focusing on the tree then the street then the air and so back to the tree. The effect is to intensify the impression of the static part of the picture, in the poem the tree, in the novel the heath as the sky gradually merges into the dark night of the heath. The startling effect of the purposive action, succinctly depicted in the final line of the poem "And we take him in" is similar to the abrupt opening of the following chapter of the novel "Along the road walked an old man" (p.15). The effect of this abrupt mention is to make both the cat and the old man seem anomalous in the environments described.

The accumulation of sonorous words used, "vast", "unenclosed", "embrowned", "darkest", "distant" give the heath a grand, awesome power which seems to lead inevitably to the personification of the heath and its attributed powers in the final sentence. The dark grandeur of this earliest description of the heath persists, and the timelessness of this "Titanic form" in its primitive clothing with its "lonely face, suggesting tragical possibilities" (p.13) sets the tone for the whole novel. Almost every critic who has discussed this novel has noticed the significance of the heath, but

the poetic aspect of the usage lies not only in its realisation as a sympathetic or antagonistic background for the action, but rather in the way Hardy sets up a tension between the dramatic preservation of the unities of time and place and the vast, timeless setting wherein the actions occur. Because of this representation of the heath every other element of the novel is influenced in presentation.

Hardy's use of time is not merely the chronological index to the causal sequence of events which constitute the plot, but is influenced by the presentation of the heath. The heath is seen as a vast spatial and temporal stage wherein characters act out their brief roles, "The great inviolate place had an ancient permanence which the sea cannot claim" (p.14).

Thus the characters are dwarfed, but at the same time the intensity with which Hardy records their actions, the ancient nature of their actions and the symbolism surrounding each act moves them into a larger time scheme. An example of this may be seen in the fires lit on Guy Fawkes night, in themselves futile attempts to combat the darkness of the heath, but rich in symbolic and ancient suggestiveness; being not only commemorative of the 1605 plot but also related to a pre-Christian seasonal myth. This fact together with the Promethean implications of the fires gives new depth to the characters' use of them as signals. This method which places the action of the characters in a time scheme which rivals the ancientness of the heath, sets up one of the exquisite, highly-strung tensions which characterise this novel. Actions having significance both in the immediate temporal situation and in the larger frame of temporal reference are more common to poetry, where man's significance in the dimension of time has been from our earliest records, a major concern of poets. This effect extends to the characterisation in the novel, where although characters in one sense are

dwarfed to insect proportions on the heath, they gain magnitude by the very fact that each major character at some time in the novel is seen reacting to the heath. Sometimes, for example, Eustacia, made a more worthy opponent to the heath by the cluster of ancient classical references surrounding her. Venn is seen reacting to the heath sympathetically,

To do things musingly, and by small degrees, seemed, indeed, to be a duty in the Egdon valleys at this transitional hour, for there was that in the condition of the heath itself which resembled protracted and halting dubiousness. (p.19)

Glym in his decision to stay and his occupation becomes "a mere parasite of the heath" (p.283). Against this we see Eustacia with Promethean associations rebelling against the heath "Tis my cross, my shame, and will be my death" (p.93) whilst Thomasin sees it in its reality "Egdon in the mass was no monster whatever, but impersonal open ground" (pp.367-70). As in Tess however, the extent to which the characters' impressions of the heath and Hardy's own impressions are distinguishable, varies. With Eustacia, who reacts most violently to the heath, we see Hardy's poetic vision becoming inextricably involved in the perceptions recorded. When Eustacia flees from her home we see this occurring in the extract;

Eustacia opened her umbrella and went out from the enclosure by the steps over the bank, after which she was beyond all danger of being perceived. Skirting the pool she followed the path towards Rainbarrow, occasionally stumbling over twisted furze-roots, tufts of rushes, or oozing lumps of fleshy fungi, which at this season lay scattered about the heath like the rotten liver and lungs of some colossal animal. The moon and stars were closed up by cloud and rain to the degree of extinction. It was a night which led the traveller's thoughts instinctively to dwell on nocturnal scenes of disaster in the chronicles of the world, on all that is terrible and dark in history and legend - the last plague of Egypt, the destruction of Sennacherib's host, the agony in Gethsemane.

Eustacia at length reached Rainbarrow, and stood still there to think. Never was harmony more perfect than that between the chaos of her mind and the chaos of the world without. (p.359)

Saying, "she was beyond all danger of being perceived" the fictional illusion is that Hardy is to record her progress. However the perception of the "twisted furze-roots, tufts of rushes or oozing lumps of fleshy fungi"
would seem to be Eustacia's, the latter metaphor being Hardy's reasonably close paraphrase, if not direct recording, of her mental idiom. The following reference to "the rotten liver and lungs of some colossal animal" seems to belong both in context and form to Eustacia's consciousness, as she feels the heath at its most hostile. The comment on the prevalence of these obstructions during this season could be either Eustacia's or more probably Hardy's, and the following comment on the moon and stars, especially since Eustacia's vision of them is hampered by her umbrella, her eyes on the ground, is clearly Hardy's. The "traveller" in the next sentence could refer either to travellers in general in which case the comment is essentially Hardy's, or it could refer to the specific traveller, Eustacia, in which case the thoughts recorded after are Eustacia's. Perhaps the "pathetic fallacy" has been a product of Eustacia's consciousness, perhaps of Hardy's, the point being that Hardy is aware of his involvement in the text and says; "Never was harmony more perfect than that between the chaos of her mind and the chaos of the world without" showing that the evil apparent in the heath, if in harmony with a mental state, is such because of the perception and interpretation of the heath both by the character and the author himself - the vision of both being inextricably involved.

This interpretation of the heath as hostile where Hardy often shows it neutral either through his own comments, or through those of another character such as Thomasin, who may be seen as a control element in the novel, is the cause of Eustacia's tragedy. Hardy says of Thomasin that "to her there were not, as to Eustacia, demons in the air, and malice in every bush and bough" (p.369) adding that "her fears of the place were rational, her dislikes of its worst moods reasonable" (p.370). Eustacia, associated with fire, and ancient and rebellious women, and Satan (not only by fire but by her use of the hourglass) is a witch-like rebel against the heath which her over-fanciful imagination has interpreted as an evil oppressor. Because of this she dies fittingly on the heath, a victim of her over-sensitive
interpretation of her environment.

Clym who can survive both in Paris and on the heath, learns, by a process similar to that of Lear and Gloucester, to interpret his environment correctly. Far from being a noble savage in union with the heath, he is refined and learns by suffering, his true vocation, that of educating those who wrongly perceive the heath as the Hades of superstitions. As the novel's hero then, he may finally take his stand, displacing Eustacia, on the Rainbarrow, "the pole and axis of this heathery world," and like Homer and Milton partially blind, Samson betrayed by woman and Christ whilst preaching "his years, these still numbering less than thirty-three" (p.412) instruct his fellow heathmen. When Clym does suffer, he does so because of his false interpretation of circumstances, such as his mother's position, and in all the impression of the novel seems to be that life's tragedies arise from men's tendency to incorrectly interpret their relationship to what they perceive.

Because the tragedy lies mainly in man's evolved consciousness the actions are few in this novel. Much of the narrative is concerned with the preparation for action, the period between perception and action, where interpretation, often false, of the perception occurs. What actions do occur are linked not only by the normal causal chain of a traditional plot, but also by metaphoric association. When Eustacia stands on the barrow appropriate imagery surrounds her, which undergoes subtle associative variation when Clym stands in the same place, and adds richness to each episode in a similar way to that which we saw in Tess. Verbal echoes also occur, for example, the rising description of Eustacia on the Rainbarrow, "Above the plain rose the hill, above the hill rose the barrow, and above the barrow rose the figure" (p.20), is recalled in the variation "Between the drippings of the rain from her umbrella to her mantle, from her mantle to the heather, from the heather to the earth" (p.360) as Eustacia later wanders
on the heath, depressed. Superstition such as Susan Nunsuch's effigy and Eustacia's subsequent drowning also provide a spurious but evocative method of bypassing traditional causality in the action.

Balance of tensions are perhaps most clearly used in this novel's structure to replace a traditional plot. The most interesting discussion of the novel's structure I have read is that of R.W. Stallman who says, "The plot is a piece of geometry". With a perceptive analysis he draws together all aspects of the work into the central symbol of the hourglass. He continues to say, "The heath is at the centre of the hourglass of The Return of the Native".

The poetic aspects shown at work in Tess are present in this novel but are less intense and less consistent. Alongside such intense pieces of prose as that which describes the wind on the heath (pp.61-2), or that of Eustacia's dream (p.125); we have Hardy introducing his own comments which often seem intended to show his learning rather than illuminate the narrative, such as,

As with Farinelli's singing before the princesses, Sheridan's renowned Begum Speech, and other such examples, the fortunate condition of its being for ever lost to the world invested the deceased Mr. Yeobright's tour de force on that memorable afternoon with a cumulative glory which comparative criticism, had that been possible, might considerably have shorn down. (p.56)

and exploring the realms of objective prose with such devices as the question and answer style; "Was Yeobright's mind well-proportioned? No" (p.180), and he goes on to explain why. Thus I think Hardy wrote this novel aware of his poeticising tendencies and as James Joyce in Ulysses objectified his material with a familiar myth, Hardy gave a similar but not completely successful objectivity to his work by using elements of classical

drama such as the chorus of the peasants. However the poetry triumphs and
"indeed, as the richness of its linguistic and stylistic resources may
already have suggested, The Return of the Native obeys not so much the
architectural concept of form favoured by Greek tragedians as the harmonic
or poetic - i.e. less clearly rational concept of form favoured by modern
novelists." 1

(ii) In The Mayor of Casterbridge, Abel Whittle's account of Henchard's
death, in itself interesting, also culminates many of the movements both of
allusion and action which constitute the novel.

"Yes, ma'am, he's gone! He was kind-like to mother
when she wer here below, sending her the best ship-coal
and hardly any ashes from it at all; and tatties, and such-
like that were very needful to her. I seed en go down
street on the night of your worshipful's wedding to the
lady at yer side, and I thought he looked low and
faltering. And I followed en over Grey's Bridge, and
he turned and seed me, and said, "You go back!" But I
followed, and he turned again, and said, "Do you hear,
sir? Go back!" But I seed that he was low, and I
followed on still. Then 'a said, "Whittle, what do ye
follow me for when I've told ye to go back all these
times?" And I said, "Because, sir, I see things be
bad with 'ee, and ye wer kind-like to mother if ye were
rough to me, and I would fain be kind-like to you." Then
he walked on, and I followed; and he never complained at
me no more. We walked on like that all night; and in the
blue o' the morning, when'twas hardly day, I looked ahead
c' me, and I seed that he wambled, and could hardly drag
along. By that time we had got past here, but I had seen
that this house was empty as I went by, and I got him to come
back; and I took down the boards from the windows, and helped
him inside. "What, Whittle," he said, "and can ye really be
such a poor fond fool as to care for such a wretch as I!"
Then I went on further, and some neighbourly woodmen lent me
a bed, and a chair, and a few other traps, and we brought 'em
here, and made him as comfortable as we could. But he didn't
gain strength, for you see, ma'am, he couldn't eat - no, no
appetite at all - and he got weaker; and to-day he died. One
of the neighbours have gone to get a man to measure him." (pp.331-2)

In this extract Abel Whittle's dialect speech is recorded, perfectly
imitating both the terms he would use and the pattern of speech, "I looked

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1. John Paterson, "Composition and Revision of the Novel" from "The Making
of The Return of the Native", English Studies 19 (Berkeley, 1960). Reprinted
ahead o' me, and I zeed that he wambled". In the dialect terms used and the untutored phrasing Hardy conveys his deeply moving meaning by the verbal art of moulding simple peasant speech into deeply moving poetic rhetoric. The rhythms of speech are preserved as well as the constant repetitions, especially those concerning Henchard's former conduct towards Abel's mother and Abel himself. This superbly illuminates Abel's mental state, as well as giving further significance to the subject he is discussing. The vivid picturesque dialect together with the dramatic, uninhibited directness with which Abel gives his account of Henchard's death, show Hardy using simplicity of language to evoke a grandly tragic atmosphere.

The speech is all in dialect and spoken by Abel whose intelligence, the reader has already learnt, cannot comprehend the tragic significance of what he relates. Thus we get the first source of poetic elevation in the scene, the foolish peasant, like Wordsworth's child in "We Are Seven" or Hardy's woman in "A Practical Woman"¹, who tells simply what happened but who cannot fully appreciate the significance of the events, or who may feel their importance, but cannot articulate it, any more than he realises the literary allusion in Henchard's final words. This method sets up a relationship between author and reader which, whilst a product of the text, transcends the surface meaning of the narrative in a dramatic style common to poetry. In a similar fashion Abel cannot appreciate the peripatetic turn of circumstances as he disobeys Henchard's orders and refuses Henchard his final severing of all contact with humanity, nor can he perceive the significant reversal which allows Abel to order Henchard to turn back to the hut. This reversal has been anticipated² by Henchard's return to his former trade, his return to his former clothes, his return to drink, his departure from

¹. Collected Poems, p.841.
Casterbridge exactly as he left it, his revisiting Waydon-Priors, the scene of his initial crime, and by such recurrent imagery as that involving birds' being caged. Now the final reversion comes as the once degraded peasant leads the now degraded, former mayor to the hut, a reversal accompanied by a change in direction, a change from night to day, a change in the direction of bestowed charity and guidance, and the wheel comes full circle as Henchard in words reminiscent of those used by King Lear turns from attempting to repel Abel to questioning his desire to stay and aid. This culmination of reversals mirrors in little the reversals characteristic of the structuring of this novel, such as the reversal of Henchard's and Farfrae's positions in the town of Casterbridge, and in relation to Lucetta. Moreover Henchard's desire to walk and his subsequent weariness lead to his final exhausted submission just as his earlier impulsive actions lead to his earlier downfalls.

The silence of Henchard in this final scene is noteworthy, his comments given in Abel's report are one removed from the event. The whole scene is reported as it occurred earlier and Abel's speech is riddled with comments referring to an even more distant past "ye were kind-like to mother if ye were rough with me" which distances the scene, almost to the extent Henchard would seem to have desired, whilst emphasising motivation, cause earlier in time, and a discernible pattern of significance in human fate. However the final irony occurs due to Henchard's having written his will, rather than merely giving Abel his orders. In this desire for complete, self-abnegating anonymity Henchard leaves a will which only Elizabeth-Jane and Farfrae can read, a gesture which like so many other gestures he has made is self-destructive, and his silence together with the distancing of the scene shows the extent to which Hardy is in control of his medium. The author who created the spectacular events earlier in the novel here mingles pathos, tragedy and irony using only the dialect speech of a simple peasant, a mastery of words which bespeaks a poet's sensitivity to language.
The scene also contains literary allusions which in association with other related references constitute some of the movements, these in conjunction with the tension and balanced reversals make up the plot. Critics have discovered allusions to Oedipus Rex\(^1\), The Bible\(^2\), Faust\(^3\), Carlyle's essay on Goethe's Helena\(^4\) and King Lear in this novel.

Considering one of these movements, that of King Lear, we see Henchard selling his wife, the initiating act which reminds us of Lear's misuse of Cordelia, structurally the circular reversals reminding us of the "wheel of fire" in King Lear. Incidents such as Henchard's taking a bird to Elizabeth-Jane on her wedding day in the hope of creating a reconciliation with her after his deceit, also contribute to the movement. This reminds us both of the swallow in the tent when Henchard sells Susan and in this association is a case of an image gaining significance by repetition in an ironically reversed situation, and also recalls King Lear's hope of reconciliation and happiness when he is restored to Cordelia; "We two alone will sing like birds i' the cage". Thus a King Lear movement runs throughout the work on many levels and in this final scene is brought into focus by the choice of the hut on the heath, by Henchard's fallen state, by the character of Abel, and by distinct verbal echo in Henchard's final words.

By this method the sense of place and characterisation are by association elevated beyond the specific incident to the timeless realm common to the tragic heroes of poetry. The use of time, with the emphasis on the cause or motivation lying in the past, formerly shown at work in this passage is typical of the use of time throughout the novel. The most obvious example of this emphasis on the past is seen in the time gap between chapters two

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and three. The effect of this is to emphasise the causality between his crime and his punishment, to emphasise the fact that the past is still a living force in the minds of characters, and it is this factor which encourages much action in the novel, such as the Furtho woman's revelation and the skirmish ride. John Paterson has pointed out the similarity between Abel Whittle's and Henchard's circumstances especially in this final scene. Many of the movements and balanced reversals depend upon the active influence of time for their development. This strong involvement of time if far beyond the index of duration in a conventional plot.

The novel is a tragedy of character, perhaps the most balanced, best structured novel Hardy wrote. The poetic elements shown in Tess occur in this novel, the confusion of viewpoint somewhat eliminated by his frequent use of Elizabeth-Jane as a refraCTOR of his impressions. The tragedy is ambitious, it is a character consciously fighting against his own weaknesses and finally dying a victim of his own efforts, yet Hardy can still include such beautiful descriptions as that of Elizabeth-Jane;

Indoors she appeared with her hair divided by a parting that arched like a white rainbow from ear to ear. All in front of this line was covered with a think encampment of curls; all behind was dressed smoothly, and drawn to a knob. (p.91)

This is a cameo description of her, in the superb economy of language, the evocative exquisite simile "like a rainbow" the general compact structure of the sentences, and in the very picture described which is often seen on early Victorian cameo ornaments.

The compact balance of this description is similar to the balance Hardy achieved between form and content in this novel.

(iii) Having discussed mainly the poetic use of setting in The Return of the Native and the poetic structuring of The Mayor of Casterbridge, I shall

now consider briefly the poetic characterisation of Father Time in *Jude the Obscure*, concentrating upon the extract:

The child fell into a steady mechanical creep which had in it an impersonal quality - the movement of the wave, or of the breeze, or of the cloud. He followed his directions literally, without an inquiring gaze at anything. It could have been seen that the boy's ideas of life were different from those of the local boys. Children begin with detail, and learn up to the general; they begin with the contiguous, and gradually comprehend the universal. The boy seemed to have begun with the generals of life, and never to have concerned himself with the particulars. To him the houses, the willows, the obscure fields beyond, were apparently regarded not as brick residences, pollards, meadows; but as human dwellings in the abstract, vegetation, and the wide dark world. (p.287)

This extract follows the boy's arrival in the train where he sat with a key around his neck and a half-ticket stuck in the band of his hat, both of which details give the impression that the character to be depicted is somewhat dehumanised, if not mechanised. As his character is revealed the key will be seen in terms of that used to wind a clock. As the boy walks towards Jude's house, even before we hear of his appropriate nickname "Little Father Time", the description of his movement is seen to indicate clearly his symbolic association with time. The passage with its quiet, regular, prose rhythm, suggests the slow, regular passivity of his movement. Words such as "fell into", "steady mechanical creep", "followed", "without an inquiring gaze" remind us of the movements of the hands of a clock, by the above attributes. This is aided by the rendering of the "impersonal" nature of his "movement" (not his 'walking' or his 'trudging' but the gliding movement) which is compared to that of a wave, a breeze and a cloud. The three elements in this metaphor have certain qualities in common. The effect of each may be perceived but none of them may be captured, restrained or essentially changed, each is the movement through one medium of something which the medium itself cannot effectively annihilate, and each is transient in its duration. In these qualities they resemble the passage of time in human life, which suggests the symbolic function of Little Father Time as well as reflecting his own attitude, for example, at the flower show when
the quality of the roses most significant to him is their inherent transience. Like a clock hand he has no goal to aim for and "follows his directions literally" the goal being not his father's house but one of those "human dwellings in the abstract". His deductive reasoning is contrasted to the average child's inductive epistemology; and is fixed, stable and like time an index to the measure of duration which remains uninfluenced by the actions or locality encompassed by its movement. This is reproduced by his movement which appears impersonal and quite unrelated to his environment or possible goal.

It is this habit of seeing only the general principles at the expense of particular applications, which gives psychological justification to his later murder and suicide, "Done because we are too many" (p.147). This action also brings about quite credibly Sue's miscarriage. So in terms of the novel's psychology this action is quite acceptable, and we must remember Hardy's comment in the "Preface to the First Edition"; "Jude the Obscure is simply an endeavour to give shape and coherence to a series of seemings or personal impressions, the question of their consistency or their discordance, or their permanence or their transitoriness, being regarded as not of the first moment." The "shape and coherence" which this action contributes to the structure of the novel is also apparent. The action eliminates part of Jude's past, some of Sue's past, and indirectly, by the miscarriage eliminates the potential future link of Jude and Sue. After this they leave each other, Sue returning to Phillotson, Jude again seduced by Arabella, their situations further reversed by Sue's being at Marygreen and Jude's being at Christminster. So it is structurally a focal point in the novel. However a further level of significance derives from its thematic contribution, which is produced mainly by the suggestivity of poetic association.

On that little shape had converged all the insuspiciousness

and shadow which had darkened the first union of Jude, and all the accidents, mistakes, fears, errors of the last. He was their nodal point, their focus, their expression in a single term. (p.348)

This extract shows the role he plays. He is "time" which has caught up with Jude, not so much as an external, imposing, threatening force but as a product of Jude's own making, his past, which has reached his present and affects his future. Thus Father Time plays a symbolic role in the novel, the symbolism gaining added significance by its relationship to the mental states of the major characters. This symbolism functions in a similar way to that of Phillotson's furniture in the sentence:

The heavy, gloomy oak wainscot, which extended over the walls upstairs and down in the dilapidated "Old-Grove Place," and the massive chimney-piece reaching to the ceiling, stood in odd contrast to the new and shining brass bedstead, and the new suite of birch furniture that he had bought for her, the two styles seeming to nod to each other across three centuries upon the shaking floor. (p.229)

which reflects the situation of Sue and Phillotson, in style, age, contiguity and polite, distanced conversation.

Pinion¹ has shown religious symbolism and movements in the novel, balance and antithesis, and claims the novel was moving towards the drama of inner conflict. This is so, I feel, the settings and characters (such as Little Father Time) acting largely as objective correlates for, or projections of, Jude's mental state. If the dialogue seems artificial, the action contrived, perhaps this is because Hardy was attempting to render Jude's mental processes, the silent uncertainty of this character on his lonely journey through life. So the "chronicler of moods" (p.298) may bypass the causal relationships of real life or traditional narrative sequence, selecting only those which illuminate the mood of the character at the point of the fictional illusion. Thus we see the poetry and poignant symbolism of the episode when the rabbit is caught in the gin, which anticipates D.H. Lawrence's poem "Love on the Farm" both in content, form and effect.

¹ F.B. Pinion, pp.51-7.
more poetic than prosaic.

The basic impression of the work is similar to that of the other novels, that man's sensitivity in interpreting his perception is too highly evolved for his circumstances and causes his tragedy. Hardy had at last written a novel where his poetic perception of his characters (no longer is he tempted to blame fate, or superstitions; but goes straight to the heart of the matter, 'modern consciousness') is as highly strung as his characters' perceptions of their circumstances. Like his characters Hardy suffered the tragedy of this over-sensitive interpretation and wrote in the 'Postscript', "the experience completely curing me of further interest in novel writing," as he dedicated himself to poetry. Only later, in the novels of D.H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf and James Joyce do we see the intensity of Hardy's poetic novel-writing come to fruition, and Hardy's tragic end to novel writing, with his impatient comment may be compared to Jude's comment in Jude the Obscure:

"It takes two or three generations to do what I tried to do in one."
George Meredith was, like Thomas Hardy, keenly interested in poetry throughout his literary career. His poetry extends to three substantial volumes, and his practice and consciousness as a poet can be seen exerting a considerable influence on his novels. "He was a consciously experimental writer; his technical innovations pushed the novel almost as far as it would go towards the compression and ellipsis of poetry."¹ This chapter is concerned with illustrating the above comment, showing how The Egoist² is essentially a poetic novel. The structure of my discussion follows that which I used in my discussion of Tess.

(1) Poetry within single extracts

Almost every level of discourse in the novel contains poetic elements, and almost every aspect of poetry in its various forms is exploited. Characters such as Mrs Mountstuart display a Restoration poet's ability to epigrammatically establish a character in such comments as that which characterises Clara as "a dainty rogue in porcelain" (p.41). The author himself invokes the "Comic Spirit", and referring to "The Book of Egoism" creates a system of machinery in the Imps which recalls the elaborate machinery of Pope's Rape of the Lock. Later, Sir Willoughby's love reminds the reader of the Arcadian tradition, the garden and music which Clara plays adding to this impression. However there is unrest in Arcadia, the illusion is fading and the line expressing Sir Willoughby's disgust, "without any effect on Clara; and that was matter for sickly green reflections" (p.248), strongly recalls Pope's expression of disillusionment regarding youthful expressions of Arcadia;

In every loom our labours shall be seen,
And the fresh vomit run for ever green! (Dunciad II, Lines 155-6)

De Craye's comment, "Never was man like you, Willoughby, for shaking new patterns in a kaleidoscope" (p. 478), admirably sums up the changing, reversing activities in the final part of the novel. It also contains a pun upon the word pattern, a dexterity in the use of language which the author draws to our notice in the subsequent reply.

A more Romantic and perhaps a more serious use of language can be seen in Chapter XXVI, when Vernon sets off to track down the escaping Clara.

Rain was universal; a thick robe of it swept from hill to hill; thunder rumbled remote, and between the ruffled roars the downpour pressed on the land with a great noise of eager gobbling, much like that of the swine's trough fresh filled, as though a vast assembly of the hungry had seated themselves clamorously and fallen to on meats and drinks in silence, save of the chaos. A rapid walker poetically and humourously minded gathers multitudes of images on his way. And rain, the heaviest you can meet, is a lively companion when the resolute pacer scorns discomfort of wet clothes and squealing boots. South-western rain-clouds, too, are never long sullen: they enfold and will have the earth in a good strong glut of the kissing overflow; then, as a hawk with feathers on his beak of the bird in his claw lifts head, they rise and take veiled feature in long climbing watery lines: at any moment they may break the veil and show soft upper cloud, show sun on it, show sky, green near the verge they spring from, of the green of grass in early dew; or, along a travelling sweep that rolls asunder overhead, heaven's laughter of purest blue among titanic white shoulders: it may mean fair smiling for awhile, or be the lightest interlude; but the watery lines, and the drifting, the chasing, the upsoaring, all in a shadowy fingerling of form, and the animation of the leaves of the trees pointing them on, the bending of the tree-tops, the snapping of branches, and the hurrahings of the stubborn hedge at wrestle with the flaws, yielding but a leaf at most, and that on a fling, make a glory of contest and wildness without aid of colour to inflame the man who is at home in them from old association on road, heath and mountain. Let him be drenched, his heart will sing. And thou, trim cockney, that jeerest, consider thyself, to whom it may occur to be out in such a scene, and with what steps of a nervous dancing master it would be thine to play the hunted rat of the elements, for the preservation of the one imagined dry spot about thee, somewhere on thy luckless person! The taking of rain and sun alike befits men of our climate, and he who would have the secret of a strengthening intoxication must court the clouds of the South-west with a lover's blood.

Vernon's happy recklessness was dashed by fears for Miss Middleton. Apart from those fears, he had the pleasure of a gull wheeling among foam-streaks of the wave. He supposed the Swiss and Tyrol Alps to have hidden their heads from him for many a day to come, and the springing and chiming South-west was the next best
thing. A milder rain descended; the country expanded darkly
defined underneath the moving curtain; the clouds were as he
liked to see them, scaling; but their skirts dragged. Torrents
were in store, for they coursed streamingly still and had not
the higher lift, or eagle ascent, which he knew for one of the
signs of fairness, nor had the hills any belt of mist-like
vapour. (p. 274-5)

The most noticeable and representative aspect of this extract is the
length of the sentences, and the way in which a metaphor is drawn out and
explored in all its possibilities to be picked up again in a later sentence.
The sentence referring to the South-western rain clouds is perhaps the
clearer example of this in the extract. It is long, each part of it an
extension of and elaborating on the preceding part, so that the images and
metaphors used are gradually unfolded and developed. The reader's attention
is moved from the clouds to the earth in a movement resembling that of the
sun's light as the clouds part and rejoin. The cumulative progression of this
sentence admirably reflects the banking up of clouds which is its subject.
Words such as "enfold", "overflow", "rise", "break", "show", "rolls",
"drifting", "chasing", "upsoaring" as much describe the action of the
sentence, as the reader "wrestles" with its "long climbing watery lines", as
they describe the action of the clouds. The particular imagery used in this
description closely resembles that used in a poem "The South-Western"¹ the
reference to "titanic white shoulders" resembling the references to Olympus,
and "giant's club", references to hawks occur in both, as does the references
to the sun's effect on the foliage. In another poem "Southwest in the
Woodland"² the eagle reference recurs, even more similar to the prose version.

The first sentence contains the image of the rain as "a thick robe" and
the comparison of the sound of the rain to that of swine's feeding, the first
a vivid visual image, the second a striking audial image. The image of the

¹ George Meredith, Poems (London: Constable, 1898), Vol. II, p. 139. All
references to the poems are to this edition, Vols. XXIX, XXX and XXXI of
The Works of George Meredith.
robe is suggested by such references as that to the rain-clouds, which "enfold", "the veiled feature", "veil", "travelling sweep", "moving curtain" and finally "skirts dragged". The sound of the swines caught up by references to the "squealing boots", "strong glut", "hunted rat" and "gulls", is similarly extended. This is typical of the way both sentence and metaphor are developed, extended and explored to reveal all their possibilities.

As well as the excellent visual quality of the images used, sound is used to aid the sense of many of the phrases in this extract. In the first sentence in the phrases, "thunder rumbled remote" and "ruffled roars", the alliterating 'r's' and the assonance of the long vowel sounds provide a splendid onomatopoeic description of the thunder to which they refer. The sound of the rain, compared to the sound of pigs' chaps is similarly illustrated and embodied in such phrases as "downpour pressed", "eager gobbling", "swine's trough fresh filled", "seated themselves clamorously". Here the alliterating 'p', 'd', 's', 't' sounds together with the generally shorter vowel sounds admirably imitate the sound attributed to the rain.

The rhythm of this sentence equally aids the meaning. The abrupt opening is corroborated in its definitiveness by the decisive, terse rhythm of the next section. The third section refers to the thunder and moves with an appropriate, slow, even rhythm. The final simile referring to the rain is rhythmically uneven and disjointed which again imitates the sound of its subject. Similar use of sound and rhythm aiding the sense can be found elsewhere in this extract such as in the phrase "along a travelling sweep that rolls asunder overhead" (p.274). Here the sense is echoed by the sound of the long vowels used and by the rhythm which builds up with a steady pace, towards the heavily weighted words with three syllables and long vowels which end the phrase. This phrase recalls "the rolling level underneath him steady air" in Gerard Manley Hopkins' almost contemporary
poem, "The Windhover", as does the reference to the hawk recall the falcon. The technique is similar, the omission of the expected pronoun before "head", and the rhythmic compactness achieving an effect similar to that of Hopkins' poem.

The density of language and the poetic devices used in this extract demand close attention. The elevated style of many of the images is in keeping with the context, however, because not only is the weather being personified but it reflects the situations of the characters, and is rendered largely as a recording of Vernon's consciousness. Being a record of some of the "multitude of images" which Vernon gathers as he walks, the erudition and niceness of phrasing is quite appropriate to Clara's scholarly pursuer.

The disturbance of the weather coincides with the disturbance in the characters' minds which results from Clara's desperate attempt to escape. The slight improvement in the weather "A milder rain descended" anticipates the improvement in Clara's situation as she nears the station, and in Vernon's as he nears the clue to her whereabouts provided by the "man-tramp" (p.275). However since much of the description is rendered as a record of Vernon's consciousness the weather is seen to play a curiously intricate double role. Vernon is disturbed, but he also enjoys the weather (as does Clara, presumably, because if anything it strengthens her resolve to reach the station and so aids her escape) and he also is pleased that Clara has at last acted positively to escape from Sir Willoughby. (Earlier, in Chapter XII, he discussed this with Clara). So the weather is called upon to reflect disturbance and joy, mediated through the consciousness of one who experiences both these states. This the weather does, for alongside the ugly image of the swine and the threatening thunder is the description

of the weather as "a lively companion." The description of the South-Western rain-clouds contains words such as "strong glut" which recalls the former aspect, and "kissing overflow" which recalls the "lively companion" aspect, of the weather. To balance the predatory picture of the "hawk with feathers on his beak of the bird in his claw" is "the pleasure of a gull wheeling among foam-streaks of the wave", the first of which bespeaks captivity the second freedom. Similarly "the hunted rat of the elements" is balanced by "the eagle ascent", the former suggesting victimisation by the weather, the latter transcendence of the elements. While reflecting Vernon's ambivalent attitude to the circumstances, the hunting imagery also relates to Sir Willoughby's, Vernon's and De Graye's pursuit of Clara. In Sir Willoughby's case the pursuit is both physical and mental. The use of the eagle in two different images, to connote both predatoriness, and transcendent freedom is an example in an example of the use of weather, and shows the superb economy and skilful use of language which Meredith employs to draw from every word its maximum effect. The poetic intensity and richness of this verbal artifice is typical of Meredith's style throughout the novel, as is his habit of turning aside from his main concern to apostrophise, in this case the "trim cockney", without shattering the intricate verbal network.

A further illustration of Meredith's poetic use of language can be seen in the description of Clara in Chapter XVIII;

A description of her figure and her walking would have won her any praises: and she wore a dress cunning to embrace the shape and flutter loose about it, in the spirit of a Summer's day. Calypso-clad, Dr. Middleton would have called her. See the silver birch in a breeze: here it swells, there it scatters, and it is puffed to a round and it streams like a pennon, and now gives the glimpse and shine of the white stem's line within, now hurries over it, denying that it was visible, with a chatter along the sweeping folds, while still the white peeps through. She had the wonderful art of dressing to suit the season and the sky. To-day the art was ravishingly companionable with her sweet-lighted face: too sweet, too vividly-meaningful for pretty, if not of the strict
severity for beautiful. Millinery would tell us that she wore a fichu of thin white muslin crossed in front on a dress of the same light stuff, trimmed with deep rose. She carried a grey-silk parasol, traced at the borders with green creepers, and across the arm devoted to Crossjay, a length of trailing ivy, and in that hand a bunch of the first long grasses. These hues of red rose and green and pale green, ruffled and pouted in the billowy white of the dress ballooning and valleying softly, like a yacht before the sail bends low; but she walked not like one blown against; resembling rather the day of the South-west driving the clouds, gallantly firm in commotion; interfusing colour and varying in her features from laugh to smile and look of settled pleasure, like the heavens above the breeze. (p.175-6)

Here she is dressed "in the spirit of a Summer's day" and Meredith goes on to invoke this spirit, using metaphor, simile and vivid visual imagery.

Indicating the "silver birch in a breeze" he continues with an extended, balanced, well-wrought metaphor to develop the description of what is both the tree and Clara's appearance. The choice of the birch may obliquely hint at the future chastising effect Clara will have upon Sir Willoughby's pride. It is more likely however, that the tree is used to initiate the sylph-like description which follows; similar to the later effect she has upon De Craye, "for rarely had the world seen such union of princess and sylph as in that lady's figure. She stood holding by a beech-branch, gazing down on the water" (p.458). The balance of this sentence is achieved by the phrase "here it swells, there it scatters" and the phrases "and it is puffed", "and it streams" the pronoun "it" linking all parts, the symmetry achieved by the adverbs 'here' and 'there' and by the repeated conjunction 'and'. The remainder of the sentence is similarly balanced by the repetition of the adverb 'now' followed directly by a verb, until it tails off in a nice rhythmic fashion. The movement derived from such words as "swells", "scatters", "puffed", "streams" and "hurries", together with the personification rendered through words such as "gives", "denying", "shatter", "peeps through", animate the description preventing it from being a merely, stilted, static, artificial purple-patch. Together with this, the choice of words such as "swells", "puffed", "pennon", "sweeping folds" and "peeps
through" indicates that the description refers not only to the tree but also to Clara as she appears in her dress.

This particular comparison of a woman to a tree occurs frequently in Meredith's poetry. The poem "Love in the Valley" contains some examples such as,

Beautiful she looks, like a white water-lily
Bursting out of bud in haven of the streams.
When from bed she rises clothed from neck to ankle
In her long nightgown sweet as boughs of May,
Beautiful she looks, like a tall garden lily
Pure from the night, and splendid for the day. (p. 162)

Later in the poem,

Nightlong on black print-branches our beech-tree
Gazes in this whiteness: nightlong could I,
Here may life on death or death on life be painted.
Let me clasp her soul to know she cannot die! (p. 168)

the comparison is, as in the novel, unannounced. In the last line of this reference the "her" should logically refer to the personified "beech-tree", but the reader realises it refers to a woman. In the same poem a similar comparison is again made in the lines,

Soft new beech-leaves, up to beamy April
Spreading bough on bough a primrose mountain,
you
Lucid in the moon, raise lilies to the skyfields,
Youngest green transfused in silver shining through:
Fairer than the lily, than the wild white cherry:
Fair as in image my seraph love appears
Borne to me by dreams when dawn is at my eyelids:
Fair as in the flesh she swims to me on tears. (p. 170)

The meaning of this sentence in the novel is conveyed by metaphor, simile, imagery and personification, techniques more common to poetry than prose. The following sentence states what this sentence illustrates, and could also be taken as a fitting comment on Meredith's own artistic ability.

Stepping back from the text Meredith moves from his poetic stance to give a clear millinery account of Clara's clothes. The effect of this is

to highlight the difference between a cold, unemotive realistic account of Clara's clothes and a transforming poetic description of the same subject. The final sentence shows Meredith readopting his poetic stance. The visual quality is again evident from the number of colour adjectives. In the first phrase "hues of red rose and green and pale green" is a superbly economical way of suggesting the whole spectrum of shades both of red and green which are present in the picture, together with the "billowy white". The diction again suggests movement; "ruffled", "pouted", "billowy", "ballooning and valleying", being words which do this, as well as suggesting the audial qualities of the description. The alliteration and assonance, especially of the final two words "ballooning" and "valleying" with their equivalent number of syllables, and identical endings, onomatopoeically suggest the gentle, fluttering, disordering effect of the wind on her dress.

The similarity in the description of South-west clouds and the sky above them to that earlier discussed, bears witness to a close, real observation of natural phenomena and a consistent rendering of these observations. The similarity between "gallantly firm in commotion; interfusing colour and varying in her features from laugh to smile and look of settled pleasure, like the heavens above the breeze" and "rolls asunder overhead, heaven's laughter of purest blue among titanic white shoulders: it may mean fair sailing for awhile, or be the lightest interlude" illustrates this point, and reveals a consistency not always apparent when reading the novel, but evident as soon as it is studied. Another example is the description of Clara "like a yacht before the sail bends low" which is comparable to the later description of Mrs Mountstuart "and now the great lady sailed along the sward like a royal barge in festival trim" (p.476). This latter description in both form and function recalls the announcement of Dalila in Milton's Samson Agonistes:

But who is this, what thing of Sea or Land? Female of sex it seems, That so deckt, ornate, and gay,
on this article and shows how the porcelain references gain added significance by further associations, one of which is Austin Dobson's "Proverbs in Porcelain", French-style amorous dialogues which appeared two years before The Ecclesiast. The breaking of Colonel De Cray's wedding present may also invoke echoes from Restoration and Augustan comedy: the famous double-entendre scene of "viewing the china" in Wycherley's The Country Wife, Pope's image in Rape of the Lock:

Whether the nymph shall break Diana's law,  
Or some frail china-jar receive a flaw.

However like Mayo, Mrs Beer is ultimately unsympathetic, and by considering their basic objections side by side, we see a similarity which when explored in its implications leads to the control issue in Meredith's use of imagery, and indeed the crux of Meredith criticism. Mayo's objection is worded thus,

- until as we approach the end of the story we feel,  
like Clara, that we have been "overdone with porcelain" and are constrained to exclaim with Mrs Mountstuart "Porcelain again!" and "Toujours le porcelaine!"

whilst Beer exclaims;

but the nagging repetition of the porcelain imagery grates after a time in a way which makes us share something of Sir Willoughby's exasperation.

Both critics seem to expect the image to evolve, to culminate in some richly symbolic episode, in a way similar to Hardy's developing images. Its presence without such direction seems to them gratuitous literary contrivance. However, the image does work in a pattern, which I should like to suggest resembles that of a dance. It is mentioned often in various contexts with varying degrees of significance. It combines with other images in various ways, and like the interweaving figures in a dance comes to the forefront but seldom. Thus the reader viewing this dance of imagery shares the response of the participants, and like Clara, Mrs Mountstuart, and Sir

1. Mayo, p.75.
Willoughby, who in their symbolic function belong in the dance pattern of imagery is drawn into the rhythm of the tune which guides the dance.

References to porcelain are, of course, common in this work, some slight such as Mrs Mountstuart's comment to Sir Willoughby regarding Clara's appearance; "Not so bright: like a bit of china that wants dusting" (p.500), which immediately follows a reference to another image sequence that referring to webs, and imprisonment, "and if a man can't spin a web, all he can hope is not to be caught in one" (p.500). Other references are more oblique such as De Craye's comment on Harry Oxford and Constantia; "And they're a pair as happy as blackbirds in a cherry-tree, in a summer sunrise, with the owner of the garden asleep" (p.460), which alludes to the legend behind the Willow Pattern. The association arises from the reference to the cherry-tree, the garden and the birds all of which occur in the traditional story, where the gods turned the escaped faithful lovers into birds in a garden as a reward. This gives a clear indication of De Craye's attitude to Constantia's escape with Harry Oxford. In this context the image is seen framed by the animal imagery preceding and the military imagery following.

Finally, this image comes to the forefront of the dance on two occasions. The balance is achieved by the fact that on both occasions, it is through a wedding gift that it achieves this pre-eminence. The first is Colonel De Craye's shattered porcelain vase, which arrives as a gift. In this context it gives particular irony to Mrs Mountstuart's "Well, now the gift can be shared, if you're either of you for a division" (p.174), and "At any rate there was a rogue in that porcelain" (p.174). It also signifies the hero's earlier illusion of a perfect match, being shattered by the arrival of De Craye, who first meets Clara owing to the destruction of the vase. The remainder of the novel is concerned with Willoughby's "picking up the fragments" of his former love-life. The image here relates closely to the

characters as if a dancing partner, so close indeed that the shattered vase arrives in De Craye’s place in the fly, whilst he walks. It also aids in the announcement of De Craye’s intrusion.

This image again comes to the forefront of the dance, with reference this time to Lady Busshe’s wedding present, likewise porcelain, which Clara accepts as "Another dedicatory offering to the rogue in me" (p.364). Again its significance lies in the way it reflects the characters’ situations and reacts with them. It is the occasion for a battle of wits at Pattern Hall. For Lady Busshe it is a way of testing her suspicion of a rift in Clara and Willoughby’s relationship. For Clara it is an obstacle in that its acceptance is a further tie which she does not wish, and to Sir Willoughby it offers a threat to his desire to present a serene, unbroken, facade to the world. To the county gossips it indicates Clara’s unwillingness to go through with the wedding. Lady Busshe’s comment "'I think,’ says she, 'it should have been the Willow Pattern’ " (p.365), which is explained "And she really said: 'he’s in for being jilted a second time!' " (p.365), gains significance in relation to the Willow Pattern legend, whilst it comments directly upon the present situation.

Rather than a direct evolution the image recurs with various, different degrees of significance; this comment applies to other image chains in the work. One of the elements of the Willow-pattern is the blossoming fruit tree, and this occurs in this novel in the sequence of images referring to cherry-blossoms.¹ The secretary is an important part of the legend and Vernon plays a similar role in the novel. The references to blossom often relate to Vernon, the wild-cherry tree is called by Willoughby "Vernon’s Holy Tree" (p.78). The famous cherry-tree sequence later to be discussed shows this image at its foremost position, and again it relates to Vernon. Later when Clara feels some sympathy for Vernon she observes; "The tree seemed

¹. Some such references occur on pp.78, 117-8, 189, 262.
sorrowful in its withering flowers of the colour of trodden snow" (p.263).

Thus characters become associated with appropriate image clusters; Sir Willoughby with the pattern upon porcelain part of which depicts the blossoms just as his estate includes the wild cherry tree. Clara is associated with the "dainty rogue" in the porcelain just as she is the disturbing element in Sir Willoughby's nicely patterned life.

The "trodden snow" in the last quote is an example of the overlap of images, for associated with Vernon's love of climbing is a sequence of Alp images which again act in various roles. When Clara and Vernon discuss the possibility of broken engagements in Chapter XII, the imagery used in their conversation largely refers to Alps. When Clara writes to Lucy Darleton the idea of mountains in connection with escape (and by implication perhaps through Vernon) is made explicit; "She wrote of the mountain country with real abandonment to imagination. It became a visioned loophole of escape" (p.212). When referring to Sir Willoughby, however, the mountain imagery plays a different role. Vernon's assertion of independence and Clara's growing defiance makes the mountains, which to them bespeak freedom, become for him a positive threat. This is rendered through such imagery as; "such was the speculation indulged by Sir Willoughby, and he shrank from the thought and declined to know more than that he was on a volcanic hillside where a thin crust quaked over lava" (p.302), which owes the particular violence to the fact that even the maid Barclay shows a new independence. The freedom gained at the end of the novel is again reflected in the proposed visit to the Alps, "That was upon the season when two lovers met between the Swiss and Tyrol Alps over the Lake of Constance" (p.547), the name of the lake strongly recalls "Constantia", the name of the first of Sir Willoughby's loves to escape. Connected to this and linking it to what follows is Vernon's calling Clara a Mountain Echo.

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John Goode has demonstrated other sequences of images concerning mirrors, echoes, webs and images of imprisonment which pervade this novel. These work in a similar way, as do other such sequences, and may be seen interacting with members of other image sequences. Rather than discuss each of these I shall merely discuss one occurrence of such an image and list further references below.²

And this female, shaped by that informing hand, would naturally be in harmony with him, from the centre of his profound identity to the raying circle of his variations.
Know the centre, you know the circle, and you discover that the variations are simply characteristics, but you must travel on the rays from the circle to get to the centre. (p.113)

Here the visual picture presented represents a web, the allusion being to Sir Willoughby's enticing and ultimately devouring Clara, caught in his estate. However, the language used, "raying circle", "rays", "characteristics" strongly suggests a mirror, which comments on Sir Willoughby's egoism in a similar way to that when he looks into female's eyes and sees his own image reflected.

Finally, two other chains of images I have noticed are concerned with military and nautical language. The former of these is often used with reference to the battle of wits which characterises the social intercourse of the novel. Colonel De Craye, because of his occupation and his particular ability to perform well in society, is often associated with this imagery. Lady Mountstuart excels in such intercourse and delights in De Craye's abilities and so her description of her dinner party is made up of many such references. Willoughby Patterne was "a prince among them

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Web imagery: pp.113, 323, 500.
Echo imagery: pp.169, 405, 443.
Imprisonment imagery: pp.97, 101, 212, 334, 443,
formerly" (p.370), Vernon Whitford "defeats". Other words used help build up this military imagery here, for example, "assisting", "bound", "sharpening his lower lip for cutting remarks", "attacked", "on the field" and "beaten". Even in failure she still puts high value on D'ArCYe's ability, as the military imagery shows. However, Sir Willoughby uses similar imagery to wound D'ArCYe, before whom he is slowly falling, when he says "Miss Dale has been reproving Horace for idleness, and I recommend you to enlist him to do duty, while I relieve him here" (p.410). The military language used by Mrs Mountstuart in D'ArCYe's favour, is here used by Willoughby to satirise D'ArCYe for his abilities. Elsewhere military imagery is used to modernise drastically Cupid's weaponry in relation to D'ArCYe (p.226). For Clara, social intercourse is often an unwelcome necessity and the imagery reflects this: "Clara produced an active smile in duty " (p.34). For Dr. Middleton the rattle of social superficiality is a distraction, "a career of hotels - equivalent to being rammed into monster artillery with a crowd every night, and shot off on a day's journey through space every morning" (p.54), which he compares unfavourably with the quiet, studious hours available in the library.

Because social obligations oppress Sir Willoughby, and cause much of his difficulty he is often seen on the defensive, yet still prepared to do battle, in the military imagery:

At the back of his mind there was a suspicion that his adversary would not have yielded so flatly without an assurance of practically triumphing, secretly getting the better of him; and it filled him with venom for a further bout at the next opportunity: (p.314)

or in need of protection: "A poor feast, she was yet a fortress, a point of succour, both shield and lance, a cover and an impetus" (p.337). Two other references, showing the restraining effect of social forms upon Sir Willoughby through military imagery, overlap with my next point.
of discussion, nautical imagery. These are: "he had to compass being pathetic as it were under the impediments of a mailed and gauntleted knight, who cannot easily heave the bosom, or show it heaving. Moreover pathos is a tide" (p.334), which is echoed later in the phrase "on the tide of pathos" (p.336) and: "He began: clumsily at first, as yonder gauntleted knight attempting the briny handkerchief" (p.335). In these, the words "tide" and "briny", even if only tentously in the latter case, suggest nautical terms.

As with much of the imagery, nautical imagery comments on the tension between the responsibilities a person has to himself and to social forms. This has been shown to be the case in the image of Clara as a yacht, and Mrs Mountstuart as a barge. When Clara and Laetitia talk Clara refers to herself as "a fisherman's float" (p.528). This image shows her position is dependent upon the skill of the user and the behaviour of nature, in a similar way to the effect of the image of her as a yacht – the outcome is not completely in the hands of the user but relies partly on external causes. Sir Willoughby, whose act of refusing to see Lieutenant Patteron, a naval officer, is that which first stimulates Clara's hostility, is most at sea in social circumstances and the imagery used shows him constantly struggling to keep his head above water. Thus he supposes that "the whole floating bulk of his personality" (p.112) is "securely sustained" (p.113) on "the full river of love" (p.112), but later imagery indicates otherwise: "Us, too, he drags into the deeps, but when we have harpooned a whale and are attached to the rope, down we must go; the miracle is to see us rise again" (p.113). Later pirate imagery (p.258) refers to Clara's prevarication and the consequent betrayal of Willoughby's misplaced affections.

In the description of Dr. Middleton's yawn, "The repression of it caused a second one, a real monster, to come, big as our old friend of the sea advancing on the chained-up beauty" (p.345) similar imagery occurs.
The latter part of the description seems to refer to Sir Willoughby and his relationship to Clara, in which case it overlaps with prison imagery. The use of the word "repression" may indicate that a psychological interpretation is possible, conveyed by imagery similar to that employed by Tennyson in *The Kraken* (1830).

When Sir Willoughby kisses Clara, "Unhappily, the fancied salute of her lips encircled him with the breathing Clara. She rushed up from vacancy like a wind summoned to wreck a stately vessel" (p.257), the image shows Willoughby and Clara in a similar situation to that of yachts in a race competing for the wind. Finally, at the end of the novel when Sir Willoughby struggles most desperately to negotiate with his social environment, this is conveyed by the striking image, "The confounded gentleman heaved on a bare plank of wreck in mid sea" (p.476) which is strengthened by its immediately following the commanding image of Mrs Mountstuart.

De Craye who navigates easily within the social currents reflects this ease in his choice of titles, "EARLY NAVIGATORS? INFANT HYMNS?" (p.298) and in his story about Jamaican rum and the "perfectly salt old gentleman" (p.390), both of which he uses to negotiate with awkward social intercourse.

Vernon, who generally shuns social involvement, is commented on by Sir Willoughby who says "Old Vernon is a scholar - and a fish" (p.129). When Vernon is unwillingly forced into social involvement with Clara at the inn, he is quite out of his element and the imagery is strikingly appropriate: "Vernon turned from the portraits to a stuffed pike in a glass-case, and plunged into sympathy with the fish for a refuge" (p.280). In talking to Clara he refers to her uncharacteristically bold action as a result of her possibly being "carried on tides and blown by winds " (p.284).

Images work with varying significance depending upon their context. They overlap with one another in a variety of combinations. Pages 168-9
show references to mirror, nautical, military, porcelain, echo and prison imagery, in "mirrors for life" (p. 168); "worth their salt even then; you can make head against" (p. 168); "protection for himself called it forth; he was intuitively a conjuror in self-defence" (p. 168); "rogue in porcelain" (p. 168); and "hollow chamber of horrible reverberation" (p. 169). A sympathetic reader could similarly trace through knife, metal, animal and musical imagery, with comparable results.

The image does not develop systematically but comes to the forefront on one or more occasions, as do figures in a dance, and then drops into a series of less significant appearances. In Meredith's novel, "one image in its time plays many parts", it does not evolve as in Hardy's prose, so that it is "the last scene of all which ends the strange eventful imagery".

(ii) Elements of structure

These comments on imagery apply in part to other aspects of the novel. I shall now separate out the various elements of structure as I did with Hardy to show how these are adapted to harmonise with the dynamic concept of the dance which dramatically directs the imagery.

Meredith's use of place

The action of this novel all takes place in the very limited regions of Sir Willoughby's estate and environs and "it deals with human nature in the drawing-room of civilized men and women, where we have no dust of the struggling outer world, no mire, no violent crashes" (p. 1). Except in the occasional outdoor scene the action is generally further restricted to the high-point of social intercourse, the most rigid conventionality of the drawing-room conversation. This is perhaps the most striking of the dramatic unities Meredith employs in his structuring, yet he seemed to be aware that "Human nature is as human there as anywhere else, its
opportunities as full and as menacing as in a slum or a coal mine or a
dust bowl or a snake pit. The choice of place being geared towards
conventionality, appearance and forms provide a central clue to the novel's
meaning. For in such a setting the characters themselves are forced to
adopt superficial, socially acceptable, refined behavioural characteristics,
and the restraining influence of such a setting is the cause of much of the
emotional energy generated by the characters' inner mental processes,
reacting against such forms. Indeed the sense of place is often revealed
through the characters' actions, the refined dinner party in a splendid
Victorian room is rendered with reference to the conversation, rather than
through lengthy description. The sense of place and the effect it has upon
the characters as both the cause, and an illustration, of their predicament
renders the imagery more significant. The porcelain imagery is seen as part
of this setting, the restraining influence of such a closed world renders the
imprisonment imagery more concrete. Web and echo imagery are more
appropriate in the closed drawing-room society and against this the freedom
suggested by the Alps becomes more significant. I have already shown the
social significance of the nautical and military imagery and in the world of
appearances the mirror imagery is appropriate and is similar to that which
characterises l'Hôtel de La Mole in Stendhal's Le Rouge et le Noir (1831) and
which is again evident at the ball held in l'Hôtel de Retz. In both cases
the superficiality of the society in which he finds himself is recorded
through Julien's observation of the number of mirrors. This is similar
in form and function to the mirror imagery J. Hillis Miller has
demonstrated at work in Our Mutual Friend.

Thus the sense of place contributes to and illustrates the
predicament of the characters, it is not merely a background for the

p. 185.
and viii, pp. 265 ff. and 299 ff.
Dickens, Our Mutual Friend (New York: New American Library of World
action as in a conventional novel.

Meredith's use of time

The time scheme in the novel undergoes similar dramatic concentration, the whole of the action in the novel occupying only a few weeks. This contributes to the restraining forces upon the characters, because as the time of the wedding approaches, Clara works against the hours to gain her freedom. At the end of the novel the time factor works against Sir Willoughby and in conjunction with the forms, stimulates him to act to maintain his dignity.

Meredith's characterisation

In the characterisation dramatic elements are also present. The characters are few, and the evenly distributed eloquence remind us of Oscar Wilde's dialogues. The larger than life characters of Sir Willoughby's aunts, Mrs Mountstuart and the county gossips remind us of Jonsonian "humour" characters, their attitudes often recalling Comedy of Manners theatre, their dialogue resembling Restoration theatre. The accelerated action and dialogue of the final part of the novel recalls the scintillating tension and reversals of the final scene of Volpone, where the characters work against time and the complexity of the author's plot.

Characters in this novel often seem manipulated by an author intent upon making them follow the steps of his dance-patterned plot. Together with this the image cluster surrounding characters suggests that the characters' roles are symbolical, even allegorical. Thus Sir Willoughby, the perfect English gentleman by all acceptable ethical standards and who "has a leg", becomes egoism incarnate and is exposed in his folly as the other characters trample him under. Lactitia's refusal of Sir Willoughby is the final blow and would appear an example of Meredith's sacrificing credible characterisation to fit the demands of his plot. In this he invites similar criticism to that levelled at Hardy.
However, if the presence of a manipulating author seems to undermine the characterisation in, for example, the elaborately controlled dialogue exchanges, the narrative language often offers a stimulating counterpoint to this artificiality. In the narrative comments Meredith shows a deep interest in the psychological processes of his characters. These give depth to the characters and by affording psychological insights prevent their being merely symbolic figures. Some narrative comments are direct psychological observations such as:

"When the young lady spoke so carelessly of being like Crossjay, she did not perhaps know that a likeness, based on a similarity of their enthusiasms, loves and appetites, has been established between women and boys" (p.312). Other comments employ vivid imagery and seem almost paraphrases of the thought processes of his characters, in a style later to be employed by "stream of consciousness" writers, and resembling later accounts of dream experiences. An example of such a comment is,

Poor troubled bodies waking up in the night to behold visually the spectre cast forth from the perplexed machinery inside them, stare at it for a space, till touching consciousness they dive down under the sheets with fish-like alacrity. Clara looked at her thought, and suddenly headed downward in a crimson gulf. (p.210)

Here the thoughts which she allows to come forth only in dreams, the wish to find an escape through someone like Harry Oxford, possibly De Craye, rise from her subconscious mind in the striking image of "the spectre cast forth from the perplexed machinery inside". The sudden repression of such thoughts on their "touching consciousness" is conveyed by the image of a diving fish, plunging back into its proper element as the thoughts are pushed back into the unconscious mind. The dream quality is apparent, and the language used, "troubled bodies", "night", "cast forth", "dive down", "under the sheets" and "crimson gulf", suggests the sexual nature of this repressed hope of escape through De Craye: "Soon after the plunge, her first object of meditation
was Colonel De Greye" (p.210).

A similar method is used to comment upon Sir Willoughby's mental state:

Such were Clara's inward interjections while poor Willoughby burnt himself out with verdigris flame having the savour of bad metal, till the hollow of his breast was not unlike to a corroded old cuirass found, we will assume, by criminal lantern-beams in a digging beside green-mantled pools of the sullen soil, lumped with a strange adhesive concrete. How else picture the sad man? - the cavity felt empty to him, and heavy; sick of an ancient and mortal combat, and burning; deeply-dented too:

With the starry hole
Whence fled the soul:
very sore; impotent for aught save sluggish agony; a specimen and the issue of strife. (pp.242-3)

Here his jealousy is indicated by the adjectives of colour, "green" and "verdigris"; whilst the emptiness and loneliness of damaged pride he anticipates on Clara's departure are indicated by such words as "burnt out", "bad metal", "corroded", "sullen", "cavity", "empty", "deeply-dented". Direct comments as well as poetry intermingle in this narrative comment, which also utilises other image references such as that referring to military language, as well as external literary associations, the gravedigging scene in Hamlet for example, to paint an essentially psychological picture of Sir Willoughby. The psychological interest in his characters influences Meredith's presentation on other levels.

Lionel Stevenson¹ has pointed out the accuracy with which Meredith often records Sir Willoughby's conversation. Willoughby ignores a question, continues his own train of discussion, then with a "delayed reaction" answers the former question. This befits his egoism and is a very close approximation to normal speech patterns. This can be seen in Chapter XI when Clara talks to Willoughby about Flitch's future (p.112).

Here Clara ignores Willoughby’s comments about himself, absolutely questioning him about Fitch and the possible future of Vernon. Willoughby continually refers back to himself, answering her questions and pursuing his own line of argument simultaneously. Stevenson points out how Meredith often anticipated later psychological theories in this novel; Sir Willoughby’s ‘mother fixation’ in Chapter VI; Clara’s horror of incompatibility and the analysis of women’s need for mental and spiritual freedom; and her ‘Freudian slip’ over the name Barry Oxford which indicates her desire for an alternative lover and a similar situation to that of Constantia. For quite different reasons Jack Lindsay ¹ has pointed out the ubiquity of Meredith’s penetrating analysis of egoism, and the isolating tendency of this trait.

This psychological aspect of characterisation affords a stimulating counterbalance to the characters’ symbolic function. It also works to maintain a dynamic tension between their puppet-like manipulation to suit the dramatic dance-like plot, and their inner life. In this way it is central to the meaning of the novel, which concerns the tension between appearances and the possible effects of inner realities.

**Meredith’s rendering of action**

The action in *The Egoist* is minimal, continuous and bears overt witness to a narrow range of emotions, chief of which is frustration. It has certain dramatic qualities such as the Racinian conflict of love and duty which afflicts Clara. The characters come and go in chapters whose titles read like stage directions, they play their role and leave. In this way the characters are reshuffled and react to each other in varying combinations. The process is dramatic, points out the various sides of the pattern of egoism and like the technique employed with images:

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resembles a dance. Thus characters act very seldom, when they do their
actions often have dramatic precedents, such as Crossjay's overheard
conversation, Clara's seeking a confidante, and the rapid unravelling of the
plot in the final scene.

This lack of external action is balanced by the barely contained
vehemence of inner life which the characters experience. So in the novel with
numerous conversations, a piece of broken porcelain (the actual action is
offstage), one flight to the station and a laboratory explosion, there occur
to balance this, mental murder and cannibalism (pp. 310, 167 respectively),
spiritual rape (pp. 232, 305) and much non-physical action which is conveyed
by violent, robust, energetic, physical imagery such as that when Meredith
says "conscience will be made to walk the plank" (p. 259). This technique is
similar to, and may be indeed borrowed from George Eliot's. This is one
reason why Meredith chose to include so much nautical and military imagery,
I suggest. At times, Meredith obliquely suggests very strong imagery such as,
"Skittish filly, was among his phrases; but she had a bearing and a gaze that
forbade the dip in the common gutter for wherewithal to paint the creature
she was" (p. 228) where the very mention of refraining from stronger language
calls it to mind. Sentences such as, "She seized her langour as it were a
curling snake and cast it off" (p. 86) show how the action described in
metaphor far exceeds that of the character's physical actions. This last
quote recalls Lady Mountstuart's remark "the more we rattle the viler we are"
(p. 384) and the snake imagery of "an ancient virginal aspiration to escape
from their coil" (p. 232) and "Laocoon of his own serpents, he struggled to
a certain magnificence of attitude in the muscular net of constrictions he
flung around himself" (p. 414). The violence of the snake metaphor may be
seen in a poem:

Set your serpent wits to find
Tortures of a new device!

1. George Meredith, The Shaving of Shagpat: An Arabian Entertainment (London:
with a similar significance, and also shares some of the vehemence of George Eliot's similar image, "He found another vent for his rage by snatching up Rosamond's words again, as if they were reptiles to be throttled and flung off." 1

Thus, as with the other unities, the unity of action is compensated for by the diversity of the characters' inner lives which the former barely contains. Again, the tension between the stilted, formal, external actions and the violent, barely restrained inner actions is central to the meaning of the novel. The actions are related to form the plot by a method comparable in its end result to that used to relate imagery and descriptions employing such imagery. Thus the plot may be seen as a dramatic dance of characters, each character at some point reacting to almost every other character. Critics tend to pick on particular actions, which are memorable because so few, and ignore the pattern of the whole. Particular actions such as that revealing Vernon's former marriage, tend to make us share the surprise of the characters at this late revelation, just the repetition of "porcelain" made us share Sir Willoughby's frustration. The novel is structured so as to demand an active reading, a reading which demands similar attention to details as does that of a poem. This closeness of attention forces some degree of sceptical involvement upon the reader, who can never be entirely sure of Meredith's own position in the dance. I shall now discuss the difficulty Meredith offers the reader who wishes to locate his position.

(iii) Authorial stance

Meredith is an overt contriver who takes pride in his artifice, an artifice which rewards close textual analysis. With the detachment

and involvement of a master of ceremonies at a formal dance he develops
the novel. With a philosophic detachment, he is apparent in the
manipulation, his curiosity and his involvement are apparent when he
studies at close quarters the reactions of the characters to each other
and to the situation he has created for them. Yet when thus involved
the remorseless, scientific accuracy with which he records his characters'
reactions makes him seem an observer, a character in his own novel. So
we see Meredith shifting in position, setting up a situation, becoming
involved in the characters' reactions to this situation and then
detaching himself to give a cold analytical account of the value of the
characters' responses.

An example of this may be seen in Chapter XL when Sir Milloughby,
proposing to Laetitia, is overheard by the hidden Crossjay. The chapter
opens with Meredith making objective narrative comments about Crossjay,
"Young Crossjay was a glutton at holidays and never thought of home till
it was dark" (p.420), a comment which could well have been made by any
character in the novel. However, he soon shifts his position and the
text begins to record Crossjay's consciousness, at times imitating the
verbal idiom of his articulated thoughts. So the sleek, war-like feeling
on the ottoman is Crossjay's perception, his thoughts which dwell "in
the thick of the day's adventures, doing yet more wonderful things"
(p.421). After the vivid simile of the ice-skater we expect the remainder
of the episode to be rendered as it impresses itself upon Crossjay's
consciousness. This is so, the literary illusion being furthered in the
comment:

'Oh! Sir Milloughby,' a voice had said.
The accents were sharp with alarm. (p.421)

The unidentified voice and the paraphrase of Crossjay's recognition of
Laetitia's presence make this extract essentially a record of Crossjay's
consciousness. The excitement of the near revolution is generated by our perceiving it through Grossjay's consciousness. The technique is developed masterfully, the traditional situation exploited to its full. However, the fictional illusion is not sustained. Meredith tires of this and becomes more interested in the range of reactions Sir Willoughby expresses at the situation of his refusal. As Sir Willoughby goes through feelings of surprise, shock, anger and humility Meredith becomes more and more interested. This interest may be seen by studying the narrative comments which shift from being the record of Grossjay's consciousness of the scene to being those of Meredith the observer.

The comment 'There was hesitation' (p.422) could be either Grossjay's or Meredith's, as could the following: "She did not reply", "No response", "She was mute", "She had not a word" (p.423). Even if the ordering is Meredith's, the unimaginative similarity could be Grossjay's. "Jactitia burst forth with" (p.424) could be either Grossjay or more likely Meredith. "He took a stride to inspirit his wits" is clearly Meredith both in language and by virtue of its being a visual observation (unless Grossjay looks out or accustoms his eyes to the dark or heard footsteps in which case Meredith would probably have included this fact). All the remaining narrative comments during this dialogue are clearly Meredith's, such as;"he said in a voice between supplication and menace that laid a claw on her, and she turned and replied" (p.430). At the end of the dialogue he reverts to Grossjay who "listened to the drumming of his head" (p.430). The recording consciousness is not clearly defined but shifts towards being Meredith's as he becomes progressively more interested in the scene. However, when it is Meredith's, it is objectified by its ruthless accuracy. Like one of his images or one of his characters, Meredith is involved in the dance and occasionally comes to the forefront.
Within the dialogue itself at the peak of Sir Willoughby's frustration Meredith intrudes, and this can be seen in the speech:

You have changed? ... You have set your heart? ... You could marry: ... there is a man? ... You could marry one! I will have an answer, I am sick of evasions. What was in the mind of heaven when women were created, will be the riddle to the end of the world! Every good man in turn has made the inquiry. I have a right to know who robs me - We may try as we like to solve it. - Satan is painted laughing! - I say I have a right to know who robs me. Answer me. (p.426-7)

The first part of this is excellent, natural dialogue, the broken, short, stilted, repetitive questions and exclamations befit Sir Willoughby's mood. However, the following rhetorical questioning and the general social comment are more likely to be those of the author than Sir Willoughby's. The speech then reverts to a near hysterical tone which admirably reflects Sir Willoughby's state, and is appropriate speech for him in his present situation.

When recording characters' thoughts Meredith sometimes intrudes, as can be seen in Chapter VI:

He knew, too, that he was prescribing poetry to his betrothed, practicable poetry. She had a liking for poetry, and sometimes quoted the stuff in defiance of his pursed mouth and painèd murrur: 'I am no poet'; but his poetry of the enclosed and fortified bower, without nonsensical rhymes to catch the ears of women, appeared incomprehensible to her, if not adverse. She would not burn the world for him; she would not, though a purer poetry is little imaginable, reduce herself to ashes, or incense, or essence, in honour of him, and so, by love's transmutation, literally be the man she was to marry. She preferred to be herself, with the egoism of women! She said it; she said: 'I must be myself to be of any value to you Willoughby!' (p.47)

The first sentence is the author's paraphrase of Sir Willoughby's thoughts. The second is direct imitation of the verbal idiom of Willoughby's consciousness up to the word "defiance". From here the observation recorded is the narrator's, the remainder of the sentence being Sir Willoughby's thoughts recorded direct. The transition is abrupt, the distinction not always clear. What follows is an overlap
of Sir Willoughby's consciousness and the narrator's interpretation and thoughts on this subject, as has been illustrated by Gillian Beer.¹

So Meredith's stance in the renderings of narrative commentary, dialogue and characters' consciousness is not always clearly defined, but shifts and adjusts, in a way similar to Hardy's and to his strange precedent writers' Sterne and Peacock. Also to add to the difficulty of assigning a position to Meredith in relation to his material is the extraordinary variety of literary modes he employs. I shall discuss this, and illustrate many of my earlier points by a close analysis of the cherry-tree sequence in Chapter XI. This is introduced by a display of Meredith's literary versatility. The sentence "Were I to marry, and to run!" (p.116) is clearly a direct and soliloquised rendering of Clara's thoughts. This is immediately followed by a comment aimed at the reader, "There is the thought; she is offered up to your mercy" (p.116). After this is a sentence which shows Meredith himself entering the position of the reader in relation to Clara: "We are dealing with a girl feeling herself desperately situated, and not a fool" (p.116). Meredith and reader join the dance centred around Clara. Following this is placed uninterrupted natural dialogue which becomes comical at Crossjay's reference to his dormice. After this lighthearted dialogue, the conversation becomes serious and approaches a "Comedy of manners" attitude in subject. Then there is Clara's bitingly ironical, satirical remark about Sir Willoughby and naval officers. Following this is a line of semi-direct speech. Narrative commentary then takes over, and the passage moves towards the highly-wrought and famously "poetical" description of the wild cherry-tree. This description finished, the attention turns back to Crossjay who with an effect bordering upon bathos, has the final say in direct speech.

The amazing number of differing literary modes employed in such a short

¹ Beer, pp. 129-30.
extract helps disguise Meredith's own position, whilst it is characteristic of the work as a whole. The extract also shows clearly the poetic use of language Meredith employs in this novel and I shall now discuss the description of the wild cherry-tree to show this. This occurs when Clara comes upon Vernon "stretched at length, reading, she supposed; asleep, she discovered" (p.117) beneath its boughs.

She had a curiosity to know the title of the book he would read beneath these boughs, and grasping Crossjay's hand fast she craned her neck, as one timorous of a fall in peeping over chasms, for a glimpse of the page; but immediately, and still with a bent head, she turned her face to where the load of virginal blossom, whiter than summer-cloud on the sky, showered and drooped and clustered so thick as to claim colour and seem, like higher Alpine snows in noon-sunlight, a flush of white. From deep to deeper heavens of white, her eyes perched and soared, wonder lived in her. Happiness in the beauty of the tree pressed to supplant it, and was more mortal and narrower. Reflection came, contracting her vision and weighing her to earth. Her reflection was: "He must be good who loves to lie and sleep beneath the branches of this tree!" She would rather have clung to her first impression: wonder so divine, so unbounded, was like soaring into homes of angel-crowded space, sweeping through folded and on to folded white fountain-bow of wings, in innumerable columns: but the thought of it was no recovery of it; she might as well have striven to be a child. The sensation of happiness promised to be less short-lived in memory, and would have been, had not her present disease of the longing for happiness ravaged every corner of it for the secret of its existence. The reflection took root. "He must be good...!" That reflection vowed to endure. Poor by comparison with what it displaced, it presented itself to her as conferring something on him, and she would not have had it absent though it robbed her.

She looked down. Vernon was dreamily looking up.

She plucked Crossjay hurriedly away, whispering that he had better not wake Mr. Whitford, and then she proposed to reverse their previous chase, and she be the hound and he the hare. Crossjay fetched a magnificent start. On his glancing behind he saw Miss Middleton walking listlessly, with a hand at her side.

"There's a regular girl!" said he, in some disgust; for his theory was, that girls always have something the matter with them to spoil a game. (pp.117-8)

This extract moves from Clara's ordinary curiosity as to what Vernon is reading, to a vision. The movement is indicated by the diction which moves from common, unemotive words such as "curiosity", "book", "boughs", "grasping", "craned her neck", "bent head" and "the load" to the rich, evocative, connotative vocabulary of such phrases as "virginal blossom", "whiter than
summer-cloud", "noon-sunlight" and "a flush of white". As the intensity of
the vision approaches its climax the words become abstract, "wonder",
"happiness", "beauty", "reflection", "thought", "sensation", "memory" and
"secret of its existence". The spiritual quality of this vision as it moves
from being merely a vivid visual experience, is indicated by the religious
connotations of such words as, "heavens", "mortal", "vision", "good",
"divine", "unbounded", "angel-crowded space" and "wings". The rhythm also
aids the development of this movement. The sentence starting "she had a
curiosity" (p.117) follows no perceivable rhythmic pattern until the words
"virginal blossom". After this the compound words "summer-cloud" and the
longer "noon-sunlight", together with the symmetry of the bi-syllabic words
"showered" and "clustered" around the monosyllabic "drooped" establish a
rhythm in the contracted texture of the sentence, which evolves to the tidy
completing rhyme of "light" and "white". This even,rhythmic sweep in the
sentences persists throughout the whole rendering of the vision, until the
rhythm is appropriately broken in the sentence referring to the intrusion of
conscious reflection.

The use of colour is striking in this extract, whiteness pervading the
whole description. This reminds one of the description of the bride early in
Women in Love,"They pressed near to receive her, looking with zest at the
stooping blonde head with its flower buds, and at the delicate, white, tentative
foot that was reaching down to the step of the carriage. There was a sudden
foaming rush, and the bride like a sudden surf-rush, floating all white beside
her father in the morning shadow of trees, her veil flowing with laughter"
(p.20), by its repetitive use of adjectives suggesting whiteness.1 Whiteness
is conveyed by such words as, "virginal blossom", "whiter", "higher Alpine
snows", "noon-sunlight", "a flush of white" which, added to the religious
imagery evokes the atmosphere suggested by such phrases as "heavens of white".

This gives the scene an aura of innocence, of purity, which is further established by the complete, almost religious, silence which surrounds the scene, and by such external allusion as that to Matthew 18:3 which is contained in the sentence "she might as well have striven to be a child" (p. 118).1

This vision-like rendering of the experience is comparable to the meeting with "the forest's white virgin" in the poem "A Faith on Trial"2, especially when we recall the earlier description of the wild cherry-tree as "the Vestal of the forest" (p. 78). In the poem he meets the virgin;

She, the white wild cherry, a tree,
Earth-rooted, tangibly wood,
Yet a presence throbbing alive;
Nor she in our language dumb;
A spirit born of a tree; (p. 188)

As this quotation shows, the woman is embodied in the spirit of a tree. This is similar to the spiritual life Meredith bestows upon the tree in the novel. The imagery used contains similarities as can be seen by comparing

Choir over choir white robed;
White-bosomed fold within fold: (p. 189)

from the poem, with the lines from the novel, "soaring into homes of angel-crowded space, sweeping through folded and on to folded white fountain-bow of wings" (p. 118). As well as resembling the imagery used in his poetry, Meredith's use of imagery in this extract is typical of his practice throughout the novel. Here, the cherry-tree and blossom imagery used throughout the work in various contexts comes to the forefront to play its major role. It serves to stimulate the vision physically, as well as symbolically suggesting innocence by its initiation of the pervasive whiteness.

1. St Matthew, "Believe me, unless you become like little children again, you shall not enter the kingdom of Heaven" 18:3. The remainder of this chapter in the Bible, especially 18:3-14, could well have been in Meredith's mind when he was considering Clara's, Sir Willoughby's and Vernon's attitudes to Crossjay.
2. Poems, Vol. II, p. 188
Being a double-blossom cherry-tree, the suggestion is perhaps of richness, abundance and fertility. However, the earlier opinion of Dr Middleton on this "Vestal of the forest", the wild cherry" expresses his belief in its sterility, induced by the gardener, "though I believe that, with his gift of double-blossom, he has improved away the fruit" (p. 73).

This shows the closeness with which the novel must be read, whilst it hints at the symbolic meaning of the blossoms in this context. The tree itself produces a fine show of blossoms, blossoms which themselves are splendid but which bear no fruit, in Dr Middleton's opinion. These blossoms stimulate Clara's vision, again splendid in itself but bearing no fruit, by Dr Middleton's criteria. Being "Vernon's Holy Tree" the significance of Clara's vision relates to her association with Vernon. The beauty lies in her realisation that "he must be good who loves to lie and asleep beneath the branches of this tree" (p. 116), and in Dr Middleton's eyes cultivation of this relationship with Vernon, as opposed to the luxury Sir Willoughby offers, would be a sterile pursuit. Thus while the vision impresses Clara, it is undermined by virtue of its not being acted upon, but being merely remembered; in which it reflects the tree itself, commented upon by Dr Middleton but condemned by its inability to produce fruit. Dr Middleton may be wrong in both instances but he is right in as much as the fruit is delayed in its production in both cases.

This is similar to the undermining of the vision in the poem. The tree invites the narrator:

She beckoned, I gazed, unaware
How a shaft of the blossoming tree
Was shot from the yew-wood's core.
I stood to the touch of a key
Turned in a fast-shut door. (p. 189)

but the inconclusiveness of his future is indicated by the image of the "fast shut door". The blossoming tree itself is undermined in its aspect of fertility, its ability to offer a new life, by the fact that it is grafted to
a yew tree, traditionally associated with death by frequently being planted in grave-yards. The possibility of innocent escape through Vernon is also conveyed by Alpine imagery in phrases such as, "peeping over chasms" (p.117) and "like higher Alpine snows" (p.118). This is set in contrast to the hunt imagery, implicit in words such as "hound" and "hare", which reflects the routine life of Clara at the Hall. The secretary and the blossoms recall the Willow Pattern allusions, and the Alpine imagery also works in conjunction with this. In a less obvious way other sequences of images are represented in this extract. Military imagery may be perceived in such phrases as "pressed to supplant it", which also contains a pun on the word 'plant', in relation to the tree. "Immerable columns" as well as its overt meaning, contains military suggestions and hints at Church architecture. Similarly the phrase, "confering something on him" recalls the bestowal of military honours, whilst in connection with "vowed" hints at a religious service. Mirror imagery is implicit in the tree's role of mirroring Clara's attitude to Vernon's attributes, themselves mirrored in the description. In the phrase, "reflection came, contracting her vision and weighing her to earth", "reflection" could refer to her thoughts in which case the last, temusously nautical, reference to anchorage, is her becoming conscious of her position and thus ceasing to elevate her mind in religious ecstasy. The words "reflection", "contracting" and "vision" in their physical sense, however, strongly suggest mirror imagery, an example of Meredith's superbly elliptical use of language to gain by suggestion, the maximum effect possible. Images of imprisonment are absent in this extract which is largely concerned with a lack of recognition, or failure to take advantage, of a possible source of freedom.

The sense of place is used here to initiate and sustain the vision. Time is suspended and is brought back into action with the references to memory, and the transience of the moment, which occur after the vision. In these aspects the extract is comparable in its intensity to the harp-playing
extract in Tess. Whilst Vernon and Clara (Vernon quite passively, which again links him to the essence of the cherry-tree) are seen reacting to each other Crossajay is forgotten. The action is non-existent during the vision, but characteristically working against this unity of time, place and action, is the, this time transcendent mental action of Clara. The mental activity is full of movement indicated by such words as "unbounded", "soaring" and "swimming". Meredith's involvement is apparent as his thoughts mingle with those of Clara as he delights in the beauty of the description. Yet in this involvement the compression and intensity of the language used bears witness to a detached control of his medium, as does the dexterity with which he manipulates the imagery and rhythm. Even so, Meredith seems to delight in playing with words, cunningly planting references to trees throughout the extract, for example, "supplant" and "took root", which seem present for their own sake. This habit introduces multivalency directly into the texture of the sentences, and qualifies Meredith for K.K. Ruthven's supporting comment on Huizinga's theories, that "homo sapiens is essentially homo ludens, especially when he is masquerading as homo scribens." This observation of technique is close to the centre of Meredith's content. If Meredith's form is an invitation to the "game theorists" in literary criticism, then his content is a similarly open invitation to similar theorists such as Eric Berne in the field of psychology, who in the book Games People Play analyses human relationships with conclusions comparable, indeed almost identical with those of Meredith in The Egoist.

Effect on reader and interpretation

To arrive at the meaning of Meredith's work conventional criticism of the novel must adapt itself to a closer study more common to poetry. To study characters, plot, themes and other regular elements in novels in the hope of somehow seeing a meaning conveyed by and through these elements is a futile exercise. Meredith's novel is a brilliant display of form and this is inseparable from the content. Meredith's form both reveals and illustrates, but most important it essentially is the content. Thus to seek an extractable content is purposely rendered impossible by Meredith's dance-like scintillating changes of literary mode and authorial stance. The style cannot be seen through to find the meaning, because like Sir Willoughby's egoism it adopts a different mask to suit each different circumstance. The style in its "hide and seek" reaction on the reader fulfils the expectations of "game theorists". The adoption of masks when involved in social intercourse follows Eric Berne's theories.

If the dramatic elements seem over-played then this is because the egoist's mind is essentially theatrical. The artificiality and stultifying sense of place, and the conventional, stylised action are so because this is the effect place and action have upon the characters, who try to express their violent inner lives in behavioural actions which befit the artifice of social convention. That they do so is a result and a cause of their egoism. The authorial manipulation of characters is similar to Sir Willoughby's own manipulation of persons. The change of authorial stance is comparable to the characters' change of mask, as they react with other characters and circumstances.

Main objections to Meredith have centred around the opinion that the novel is a false display of literary contrivance, a mannered, conscious style which draws attention to itself rather than to its subject. In this aspect it answers to Christopher Caudwell's description of poetry as opposed to
prose: "The poem and the story both use sounds which awake images of outer reality and affective reverberations; but in poetry the affective reverberations are organised by the structure of the language, while in the novel they are organised by the structure of the outer reality portrayed." \(^1\) With this I agree for poetry often does draw attention to its own structure, rather than to a separable subject. Because the prose of *The Egoist* fits Caudwell's definition of poetry rather than prose, I suggest we may define the style, quite safely, as poetic prose. However, it is poetic on a further level in that this form is itself the subject. The egoist by his appearances draws attention to the form he presents to the world, at the expense of his true inner self, a self which eventually even to the egoist himself becomes essentially a fragmented set of forms, of masks. Thus the hectic shattering of illusions at the end of the novel, becomes appropriately an "objective correlative", in Eliot's phrase, to the mental activities of Sir Willoughby, in his final stage of disintegrative egoism. Thus the self-congratulatory aspect of Meredith's style becomes part of the subject.

The sustained vitality of language in this novel is partly the result of Meredith's ironically detached position, as he writes a work which challenges and by its very nature defies complete analysis or conclusive interpretation. The most we can do is join Meredith's dance. Doing this we see the story of Sir Willoughby who needs to be loved, but who because of the cramping social conventions and ethical rules cannot overtly express this wish. He therefore must negotiate with convention and adopt various masks. This dance is led by Meredith who experiments with literary styles in a bewildering range of authorial stances, each style and stance reflecting, embodying and becoming part of Sir Willoughby's problem.

To give a conclusive, absolute, interpretation of *The Egoist* is to run

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the risk of earning the comments bestowed upon Mrs Mountstuart; "That is why people of ability like Mrs Mountstuart see so little; they are so bent on describing brilliantly" (p.324). The spirit of Meredith may nudge the Comic Spirit to say of one's efforts,

You see how easy it is to deceive one who is an artist in phrases. (p.324)
CHAPTER 4
THE ORDEAL OF RICHARD FEVEREL (1859)
BEAUCHAMP'S CAREER (1875) AND DIANA OF THE CROSSWAYS (1885)

A discussion of any of Meredith's novels demands close attention to a large number of differing literary modes and authorial stances. To make such an analysis of the three remaining novels to be discussed in this thesis is beyond its scope. Therefore I shall discuss short extracts from each of the following novels: (i) The Ordeal of Richard Feverel, (ii) Beauchamp's Career and (iii) Diana of the Crossways¹ to illustrate further some of my earlier comments on Meredith's prose style, and to show Meredith's position in the development of the genre. Before Hardy and Meredith few poetic elements were present in the novel form, except perhaps in some of Emily Bronte's work.

Dickens with his imagery and the rhetorical structure of his language closed the gap somewhat between poetry and prose fiction, but he remained essentially a masterful prose writer. When Dickens heightens the vivid descriptions in his works by a stimulating, seemingly poetic use of language, he does so for what is very often a didactic, prosaic reason. With the two writers I have considered, however, the gap between poetry and prose may be seen closing and indeed the genres seem to have fused. This tendency evolves through E.M. Forster, D.H. Lawrence, and Virginia Woolf to reach its ultimate conclusion in James Joyce.

(i) Richard Feverel is one of Meredith's earliest novels, and indeed the earliest novel discussed in this thesis. Yet even from this early date one may see many of Meredith's literary characteristics, and many poetic elements,

¹. Although I prefer Meredith's original version of 1859, page references, unless otherwise indicated, are to an edition based upon his 1878 revision; viz. The Ordeal of Richard Feverel. A History of a Father and Son, (London: Constable, 1912), thereafter abbreviated to Richard Feverel.

Page references are to: Beauchamp's Career, (London: Constable, 1909).
Page references are to: Diana of the Crossways, (London: Constable, 1916).
working in the text. The extracts I shall discuss are those which concern Richard's first meeting with Lucy, which occurs in Chapter XIV, and his reaction to the news that he has had a child to Lucy, which occurs in Chapter XIII.

Above green-flashing plunges of a weir, and shaken by the thunder below, lilies, golden and white, were swaying at anchor among the reeds. Meadow-sweet hung from the banks thick with weed and trailing bramble, and there also hung a daughter of earth. Her face was shaded by the broad straw hat with a flexible brim that left her lips and chin in the sun, and, sometimes nodding, sent forth a light of promising eyes. Across her shoulders, and behind, flowed large loose curls, brown in shadow, almost golden where the ray touched them. She was simply dressed, befitting decency and the season. On a closer inspection you might see that her lips were stained. This blooming young person was regaling on dewberries. They grew between the bank and the water. Apparently she found the fruit abundant, for her hand was making pretty progress to her mouth. Fastidious youth, which revolts at women plumping her exquisite proportions on bread-and-butter, and would (we must suppose) joyfully have her sarcasms to have her poetical, can hardly object to dewberries. Indeed the act of eating them is dainty and induces raving. The dewberry is a sister to the lotus, and an innocent sister. You eat: mouth, eye and hand are occupied, and the undrugged mind free to roam. And so it was with the damsel who knelt there. (p.26)

The idyllic scene depicted here is largely rendered through the vivid, pictorial use of language. The intensity of the description compares favourably with some of Hardy's colourful scenes, and later D.H. Lawrence and E.M. Forster were to continue to infuse this quality into the novel. The colours in the first sentence "green-flashing", "golden and white" provide the primary elements of this verbal painting, whilst the intermediate, secondary colours are provided by such words as "brown" and "stained", the whole being nicely integrated by the numerous shadow effects depicted. This use of shadow not only integrates the verbal painting but also renders the description more realistic by showing both the dull shaded elements and those

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1. cf., for example, D.H. Lawrence, Sons and Lovers (Penguin Books, 1949). "The tall white lilies were reeling in the moonlight...It almost made her dizzy" (p.35) and "The meadows seemed one space of ripe, evening light...over a tree-clump that made a dark boss among the pasture (p.49), and E.M. Forster's, The Longest Journey (Penguin Books, 1960) when he describes the paper burning under the bridge with phrases such as "a rose of flame" and "one arch became a fairy tunnel, dropping diamonds" (p.272).
which the sun highlights. So we see that "her face was shaded by a broad straw hat", a concrete description which is balanced by the comment to the effect that the brim of this hat "left her lips and chin in the sun", and radiating forth from this nodding is "a light of promising eyes". Similarly her curls are "brown in shadow" but against this drabness is the comment that they were "almost golden where the ray touched them". As well as serving the purposes I have already mentioned this technique admirably reflects Meredith's own artistic ability to dress to advantage a natural description, without making it appear stilted or artificial. Another method of disguising the artifice is used in this extract; this is the juxtaposition of words suggesting motion and those which convey the pictorial quality. After "green-flashing" is the word "plunges", a noun, but strongly suggestive of movement, the "lilies, golden and white, were swaying", her "large loose curls", "flowed" and the stained lips and chin must be moving as she devours the fruit, all of which add movement to what could otherwise easily become a stilted set piece of description.

The scene is seen largely through Richard's consciousness and appropriately moves from a largely physical perception of the scene to a more ethereal, thoughtful, speculative musing. This transformation of the scene in Richard's consciousness is conveyed by the diction which moves from physical words such as "reed", "earth", "face", "pluming", "bread-and-butter" and "scraggy" (which by becoming more basic throw into sharp relief the following words) to the vague, romantic almost religious diction such as "musing", "lotus", "innocent", "undrugged mind free to roam" and "damsel who knelt there". The subject matter changes from recording Richard's perceptions to recording his wandering thoughts. The clear, physical description is conveyed in sentences, with terse, clear, explicit sound patterns largely free from alliteration, assonance and onomatopoeia. As Richard's dreamy idealisation of the scene becomes the subject matter the sentences lengthen as do the vowel sounds, and alliteration and assonance blur the distinction between words to
produce a quiet, rhythmic pattern. This latter effect can be seen by comparing the early description of the scene and Lucy to the later description: "Surrounded by the green shaven meadows, the pastoral summer buzz, the weird-fall's thundering white, amid the breath and beauty of wild flowers, she was a bit of lovely human life in a fair setting; a terrible attraction" (pp.96-7).

Donald Fanger has shown the similarity between this particular scene and one which occurs in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. He observes that "besides a certain similarity in situation, both passages carry a charge of impassioned vision through a diction which strains towards the poetic, and swelling, incantatory rhythms which weave the observed detail into a whole more felt than seen". But Stephen, on seeing this girl cries from his soul "in an outburst of profane joy" (p.136). Jack Lindsay has shown the model for Lucy in Meredith's novel to be Mary, who was also the model for the feaules of "Love in the Valley" and Modern Love, and this being the case the implication of impending tragedy should, as it is with Stephen, be apparent in the description. This is so, for, as with the undermaining of the wild cherry-tree passage in The Picture, and in the description in the poem to which I compared this extract, the idealised picture of this "daughter of earth" (p.96) is similarly undermined. The dangerous nature of this "terrible attraction" is made explicit in Chapter XV. Yet in the description itself the use of "lilies" whilst suggesting Lucy's purity also carries associations with death, just as a later description of her carries a similarly foreboding implication: "The hand was pure white—white and fragrant as the frosted blossoms of a Maynight" (p.103).

2. The passage referred to from this novel is: "He was alone. He was unheeded...and touched with the wonder of mortal beauty, her face" which occurs in The Portable James Joyce, edited by Harry Levin (New York, 1947), pp.431-32, (or in The Essential James Joyce, edited by Harry Levin (Penguin Books, 1965), p.166. My references are to the latter).
4. Lindsay, p.92.
The reference to "buckles" amidst the otherwise fertile flora suggests wild unconstrained nature in a way similar to the weeds in the harp-playing scene in Tess. The ambiguity of their function is also similar, they may represent the unbridled spontaneity of this natural meeting, and in conjunction with the lilies suggest the death of Sir Austin's "System", or they may suggest the inherent dangers of the relationship to develop from this meeting. I suggest that with superb economy Meredith has used this imagery to suggest both possibilities, for this meeting at once heralds the decline in Richard's rigorous adherence to the "System" and is the start of their unfortunate love. "Dewberries" are noted for their acidic taste which could suggest the forthcoming bitterness of Sir Austin's reaction to the news of this meeting and of its consequences. Against this bitterness is the quietly ironical reference to its innocent sisterhood of the lotus. This could refer to Tennyson's "The Lotus-Eaters", (1832), and in conjunction with Richard's nautical position, and the preceding nautical imagery hint at the drowsiness which Lucy induces in him.

In this evocative scene Lucy is introduced as "a daughter of earth", and Richard may be considered to be acting out one of his many roles as knight errant, coming upon and rescuing "the damsel". In this Odyssean, wandering-adventurer role, the knightly quest and his desire to find a lover as a substitute for the motherless "System" he anticipates the heroes of many modern works. In the first two structural devices Meredith's novel may look back to Tennyson's use of the Greek Classics and the Grail legend but it also anticipates the works to follow Sir James Frazer's The Golden Bough, such as Joyce's Ulysses (1922) and T.S. Eliot's The Waste Land (1922). The concern with finding a substitute mother is common in post-Freudian literature and may be seen in almost any of D.H. Lawrence's earlier novels.

2. Richard's search for a mother is discussed by Hill, p.xvi.
In this extract we see natural imagery, nautical imagery and mythical imagery playing combative roles and contributing to the immediate significance of the extract, whilst placing this extract in the larger strands of imagery which structurally unite the work. Other images such as those referring to cypress trees work in a similar fashion in various image combinations. Even in the highly-wrought poetic rendering of this extract, Meredith can be seen inserting a wryly humorous comment relating female diet to poetic potential. "Fastidious youth, which revolts at women plumping her exquisite portions on bread-and-butter, and would (we must suppose) joyfully have her scraggy to have her poetical, can hardly object to dewberries" (p.96). This comment aimed at "youth" in general nevertheless serves to comment wryly on Richard and reawakens the reader's consciousness of his relationship to the author, the character and the scene. The earlier description of the scene, largely physical, is rendered as the lyrical paraphrase of Richard's consciousness of his surroundings. As if to compensate for Richard's unstimulated perceptions Meredith calls the reader's imagination into action by his metaphoric, vivid description, and by such phrases as "you might see", which invite active imaginative reading. This wry comment, however, serves to jolt the reader from too fanciful an embellishment of the scene by suddenly distancing him from it. Following this sudden jolt, Richard himself starts to idealize the scene, and the sentence "Indeed the act of eating them is dainty and induces musings" indicates that Richard's thoughts, stimulated by the sight of lucy, need no longer be embroidered by the author's imaginative paraphrase. Thus the remainder of the extract is read by a reader who has already been jolted out of over-imaginative sympathy with the characters, and concerns a character doing to the scene what the author has just encouraged the reader to do, idealise it. This shifting authorial stance and the demands it makes upon the reader are early manifestations of Meredith's later

1. This extends to include lucy. of Hill, pp.xvi-xvii.
developed "Comic Spirit" theory, or of what modern literary critics would call the "game theory." As well as the varying literary modes and authorial stances employed in this novel other elements help to emphasise the "game" element. Shakespearean allusions are subtly integrated, openly quoted and at times ironically inverted to add significance and to provoke close, necessarily inquisitive reading. ¹ "The Pilgrim's Scrip" anticipating "The Book of Egoism" is the clearest play element in this novel. Juliet Mitchell shows Meredith's varying attitudes to "The Pilgrim's Scrip", and the way in which it is kept in a stimulating relationship with the novel itself. ² Meredith "is writing a novel about a man writing a book of aphorisms conceived from the characters in his novel", ³ whilst "the characters within the novel created by Meredith are yet in search of an author who will describe their salient features in abstract". ⁴ In her penetrating analysis she relates this use of "The Pilgrim's Scrip" to Meredith's treatment of Richard concluding that: "This meeting of the language of the art of fiction with that of the role of the character within it parallels at a linguistic level that, which is at a formalist level, between "The Pilgrim's Scrip" and the novel structure". ⁵ Thus this works to give the illusion of art moving into reality, and then from life back to the artifice of art, an intricate, illuminating technique which looks back to Lawrence Sterne and forward to the "modern" 'game theorists.' As well as the above element, and the inclusion of dramatic elements to illustrate and embody Richard's role playing, clues are hidden in the text, in the form of allusions. The events on Richard's birthday, at

1. cf. Hill, pp.xiv ff., and Juliet Mitchell, "The Ordeal of Richard Feverel: A Sentimental Education", in Meredith Now: Some Critical Essays, p.80. In this letter article, p.72, Mitchell shows Meredith alluding to Greek legends, the Bible, and Goethe as well as Shakespeare.
5. Mitchell, p.76.
seven year intervals, the name "Feverel" and Richard's "fever", the coincidence of Austin Wentworth's and Sir Austin Feverel's Christian names and the link in their former fortunes, and the quoting of Sandoe's verse before crises all make the reader attentive to details, a necessarily active reader.

I shall now briefly consider the scene when Richard, shocked by the news that he has had a child to Lucy, walks away into the forest (pp. 424-7). I hope to show the direction of the various elements in the novel by discussing this later extract briefly, after which I shall briefly comment on the quality of development. This reaction to a highly charged experience looks forward to Birk's action in Women in Love after Hermione hits him with a ball of lapis lazuli. The intensity of what becomes a spiritual experience is recorded in this extract with the power of the wild cherry-tree extract, the harp-playing scene in Tess and the "brightly lit moments" and "epiphanies" of any modern novelist. The language used is again poetic and many of the images recall those used at their first meeting. The first meeting used the image of "two electric clouds" (p. 77), they met and the storm of their impact now hits Richard, the electrical imagery appearing in words such as, "metallic", "beams", "as white fire", "shone", "flints", "lights" and "energies", and the storm in the "heavy thunder-drops" which "struck his cheek". The cold, metallic, harsh clarity of this description befits Richard's new awareness, the storm, his shock as it settles in his consciousness. The distinct recognition of the news is conveyed in sentences such as, "No haze spread around" (p. 424), tense and clearly appropriate in form and function. Richard's disturbance on hearing this piece of news is similarly rendered in sentences embodying in form and content, his mental state: "Then heavy thunder-drops struck his cheek, the leaves were singing, the earth breathed, it was black before him and behind" (p. 425).

This latter sentence with its unusually disturbing images and its pervasive darkness comments on and illustrates Richard's condition.

This extract containing violent imagery is far removed from the earlier extract which is remembered for its lyrical beauty. Whilst phrases such as, "they led him a blind and tottering man" (p.426), may seem traditional storm images perhaps borrowed from King Lear, other phrases carry an intensity which anticipates modern novels' use of imagery, such as, "Up started the whole forest in violet fire" (p.425). Indeed phrases in Women in Love seem verbally to echo this scene, especially in the passage earlier referred to as similar. The electric imagery applied to Hermione (p.117) recalls that used in this extract, and the physical experience leading to spiritual release recalls the leveret which leads to Richard's experiencing the illumination of "the Spirit of Life" (p.426). The weather conditions and the environment are similar and the comment that Birkin "was walking in a sort of darkness" echoes the comment on Richard that "it was black before him and behind". Birkin's fulfillment as the Flora assaults his naked body is similar to the "savage pleasure that Richard enjoys in his contact with the storm. This "purification" through intense communication with nature also anticipates other modern literature, most noticeably perhaps T.S. Eliot's The Waste Land. Many elements are shared by these two works, but the most noticeable are; the phrase "all at once the thunder spoke" (p.425) and the subsequent alternation of the "voice" of the thunder and "eye" of the lightning as they address him, which recalls Part IV of The Waste Land, the references to the Rhineland, the rain and fire, and especially the mention of the "forest chapel" (p.426), traditional ending of the Grail quest.

In the midst of this intensely rendered experience, itself psychologically before its time in the vividness with which it is recorded, Meredith shows his keen sense of psychological observation in the short episode when Richard considers the butterflies and moths. This combines with much psychology in
the novel which indeed is centred around the development of a character deprived of a mother, and is subtitled "A History of a Father and Son", much of the "history" being internal history. Juliet Mitchell has elaborated on this aspect of the novel in the article to which I have previously referred.

This novel contains much action, many differing styles and tones, and many points of discussion, from social concerns and theories on education to moral and psychological concerns. The story develops from gladness to sadness, a tendency which can be seen on many levels, according to Juliet Mitchell. I agree with the general outline of Mitchell's argument. However, I feel that this kaleidoscope of modes and subjects lacks the consistent, vital rendering of the psychological element of integration which directs the style, guides the action and focuses the attention of Meredith's later novels.

However, the novel rewards close study because it reveals many of Meredith's later developed literary characteristics. Indeed much of the future of the genre may be seen in its seminal stages in this early work. When Meredith writes,

> At present, I am aware, an audience impatient for blood and glory scorns the stress I am putting on incidents so minute, a picture so little imposing. An audience will come to whom it will be given to see the elementary machinery at work; who, as it were, from some slight hint of the stress, will feel the winds of March when they do not blow. (p.189)

he makes a very valid comment on his own literary future. It is the viewing of "the elementary machinery at work" which gives The Egoist its intensely unified impact, the "stress" which he puts "on incidents so minute" which contributes to the convincing psychological exploration in the novel. In Richard Feverel I suggest that Meredith made some concessions to "an audience impatient for blood and glory" in some of the action he included. This novel is full of extravagant action and this tends to fragment the unity of design, to separate out form and function. However, even from this early date

1. Mitchell, P.73.
Meredith shows his uneasiness in emphasizing too much the action of his novel and bypasses some crucial events, a technique which throws emphasis on the motivation and consequences, leading to a psychological emphasis, the main source of unity in his later works. With somewhat less conviction than J.B. Priestley, I would entertain the view that "so far as English fiction is concerned, however, there can be no doubt that the modern novel began with the publication of The Ordeal of Richard Feveral". 

(ii) Beauchamp’s Career illustrates Meredith's developing literary talents and his control of expanding subject matter in his novels. The novel is largely biographical concerning his friend Maxae who stood as a Radical candidate, and excellently captures and comments on the mood of the contemporary English public. The fear inspired by the French is admirably rendered in the opening pages of this novel and other artists, such as Gerard Manley Hopkins commented upon this national panic. Literary allusions to Carlyle and Ruskin along with references to Byron, Dante and Plato, help to fix the chronology of the events in the novel firmly in time. No writer is given a completely sympathetic or completely unsympathetic treatment, but becomes an element in the discussion of ideas which interact in the novel. Thus the novel in part becomes a forum for ideas, the reality of these ideas being established by the wealth of allusions to available and contemporarily discussed writers. This use of known authors as well as fixing the events of the novel in a recognisable social and intellectual milieu, also provides an interesting deviation from the other fictitious writers and books within his novels, such as "The Book of Egoism" in The Egoist, Diaper

2. cf. Stevenson, pp.198 ff.
Sandoz's volume of verse and Sir Austin's "Pilgrim's Grind" in Richard Feveral and the Diaries and Memoirs describing Diana, as well as her own novels, in Diana of the Crossways 1.

Thus, with the events of the novel rendered with recognisable correspondence to the events of real life, one would expect that the novel would itself in some way be concerned with man in relation to his social and intellectual environment. This is so, and as with The Poet, the novel is poetic partly by virtue of this close correspondence of form and function. Moreover poetry may be seen exerting an influence not only in this abstract sense, but also in the language used. To find precedents for poetry concerning man in relation to society one looks primarily at the Augustan age, the golden age of such poetry in the English tradition, the eighteenth century. If the extracts from Richard Feveral anticipated the "Romantic revival" in the modern novel, then the extract I shall discuss from Beauchamp's Career anticipates for example, James Joyce's "Neo-classical revival" especially in the dexterity with which Meredith manipulates language. This extract occurs when war seems imminent, social unrest is rising to a pitch, and it is conveyed largely through Everard Romfrey's consciousness:

One of the half-stifled cotton-spinners, a notorious one, a scab of rank sedition and hater of aristocracy, a political preacher, managed to make himself heard. He was tossed to the press for a morsel, and tossed back to the people in strips. Everard had a sharp return of appetite in reading the daily and weekly journals. They printed logic, they printed sense; they abused the treasonable barking our unmercifully. They printed almost as much as he would have uttered, excepting the strong salt of his similes, likening that rascal and his crew to the American weed in our waters, to the rotting wild bee's nest in our trees, to the worm in our ship's timbers, and to lamentable afflictions of the human frame, and of sheep, oxen, honest hounds, Manchester was in eclipse. The world of England discovered that the peace-party which opposed was the actual cause of the war; never was indication clearer. But my business is with Mr Beauchamp, to know

1. A fuller list may be found in Beer, p.81.
whom, and partly understand his conduct in after-days, it will be as well to take a bird's-eye glance at him through the war.

'Now,' said Everard, 'we shall see what stuff there is in that fellow Nevil.'

He expected, as you may imagine, a true young Beauchamp-Ronfrey to be straining his collar like a leash-hound. (pp.30-31)

In this extract many poetic devices reminiscent of eighteenth century poetic practice occur. The phrase "half-stifled cotton-spinners" with its balance, its terse rhythmic quality and its assonance and alliteration recalls the symmetry and balancing condensation of the couplet form. This description is elaborated upon and the phrases, "a notorious one" and "a political poacher" neatly frame and hold in balance the long two-part description between them, all linked by the use of the indefinite article throughout. This accumulation of attributes is finely balanced and increases in vehemence as it progresses towards the superbly terse phrase "a political poacher". This phrase with its sonic devices and its succinct imagery admirably embraces Everard's opinion of the "cotton-spinners", whilst these very qualities which give it its pithy appropriateness are used by Meredith to comment wryly upon Everard's criteria for judgement. This description becomes ironical when the reader recalls the earlier description of Everard "in mind a medieval baron" (p.44) and "to his mind the game-laws were the corner-stone of law" (pp.15-6) so that "an attack on them threatened the structure of Justice" (p.16). After this oblique comment upon Everard's limited vision the sentence tapers off in a nice rhythmic fashion, which, after the build-up of descriptions, achieves an effect approaching bathos, which again reflects Everard's opinion of the ultimate ineffectiveness of their disturbances. This accumulation of descriptions may well be a device intended by Meredith ironically to bestow a heritage upon the cotton spinners by a literary allusion to Old English kennings often used to establish noble family lineage. His familiarity with contemporary Old English studies is suggested as early as his first,
unrevised edition of Richard Feverel ¹ (1859), in phrases such as "Fame, the 
chief retainer of distinguished families" (p. 10) and in the extended
description of family lineage in the work. If this is Meredith's intention 
then he is again being ironical in his rendering of Everard's opinions. For
by placing Everard's opinions of the "cotton-spinners" in a literary context
which alludes to ancient Anglo-Saxon writings, Meredith gives the "cotton-
spinners" an apparent lineage, which whilst expressed through Everard's
consciousness blatantly contradicts his earlier and more typically conscious
response to the class, "The cry for war was absolutely unanimous, and a
supremely national cry, Everard Homfrey said, for it excluded the cotton-
spinners" (p. 30).

The sentence following this is exquisitely poetical and may be scanned
as follows,

he was tossed / to the press / for / more /
and tossed back / to the people / in strips / (p. 30)
to reveal two perfect anapaastic trimeters in form, and in the metaphors
used reminiscent of the harsher satires of Dryden and Pope. Both balance
and reversal are achieved not only by the rhythm but also by the diction.
The repetition of the word "tossed" effects a balance, whilst the word in
conjunction with the following prepositions "to" and "back" also suggests
reversal. The phrases "to the Press" and "to the people" suggest reversal
whilst the impact given by the heavily stressed 'p' sound, similarly
positioned in each half, effects a linkage and a balance. Add to this the
striking imagery and the suggestion of meat fed to the dogs, torn apart and
thrown back, is conveyed. So the "pauser" of the former sentence has been
spotted by the landed owner and much to Everard's delight, the watch-dog of
law and order, the Press, has been set loose upon him and given him his due

¹. The page reference is to the Holt, Rinehart and Winston edition of
Richard Feverel which is based upon Meredith's 1859 version.
punishment. The delight Everard has in this punishment is seen by his renewed interest in the "daily and weekly journals". This is superbly connected to the preceding imagery by the use of the word "appetite", which shows with the economy typical of this extract, Everard's characteristic identification with the game-keeping press. The rhythmic, balanced symmetry is sustained in the next sentence, with its broken, balanced first part, harmonised by rhythm and verbal repetition, and further linked to the longer-syllabled, second part by the initial pronoun "they". In this longer, latter part of the sentence the canine imagery is maintained in the phrase "barking cur" but this time it is used to vilify the "cotton-spinner" rather than to praise the Press. The spinner is now not even a poacher but because of this image may be likened to the poacher's dog. The use of "cur" suggests not only ill manners but in its canine application suggests a mongrel quality which intensifies the irony of the ancient lineage discussed earlier, as well as adding to the effectiveness in Meredith's rendering of Everard's self deception, as his "appetite" for the Press increases. The next sentence linked to the former by "they", continues the reductive tendency in the animal imagery applied to the "cotton-spinners". The imagery moves from "rascal" to "weed" to "rotting wild bees' nest", to the "worm in our ships' timbers" until they finally become parasitic germs in human, then animal, bodies. Whilst reminding the reader of the harsh eighteenth century satires, this string of similes is used to show up Everard's prejudices in an exaggerated form, and in so doing they, of course, comment ironically upon him. At the same time this string of images refers to many of the threads of imagery throughout the novel, such as nautical imagery. Each of these images in this context, suggests a thing unpleasant in itself: for example, a "rascal", "worm" or "lamentable affliction". At the same time each image contains a suggestion of the proliferation of the malaise into the environment; so we see the "rascal" which in connection with "his
crew" suggests mutiny, the worm which rots the ships' timbers, and the
disease which may spread. All these images admirably capture Everard's
opinions on the social consequences of allowing unbridled freedom of
speech to the cotton-spinners: like the disease it will spread, even
perhaps as far as the "honest hounds". This last phrase neatly draws
us back to the main thread of imagery, that referring to dogs, which
unites this extract.

Following this long, balanced,neo-classical, satirical account is
the short, terse, evocative summarising statement, "Manchester was in
eclipse" (p.30). Barely metaphorical, this offers a variety of interpretations;
the sunshine of aristocratic favour has been blotted out by the outcry of
one cotton-spinner, the Press has quite outshone, and taken the limelight
from, the agitator, or perhaps an early cry from the Clean Air Society
in polluted Manchester. The next sentence with the hyperbolic expressions
"the world of England" and "never was indication clearer" (p.30) ironically
shows the limited vision of "the world", the limitations due perhaps to the
darkening effect of the eclipsing Press upon the minds of the people like
Everard; this sentence with its irony, its exaggeration and zeugastic
linkage of "opposed" and "caused" with "war", is carefully wrought in its
antitheses and recalls the Augustan poets' use of language in a similar
fashion, for similar satiric purposes.

Meredith then relinquishes his coldly objective manner and directs a
"personal" comment to the reader, a change in authorial stance which tends
towards involvement, a tendency which is counteracted by the long sighted
view and almost scientific accuracy of what he purports, in his business-
like manner, to reveal. This is followed by a line of direct speech,
after which the commentator Meredith gives us his view of what Everard
expects. This is significant, for earlier he ironically, but nevertheless
faithfully, gave in heightened, metaphoric language, a paraphrase of
Everard's thought processes. Here he comments overtly as narrator, telling us directly what Everard thinks, free from authorial embellishments. The two methods are different, but are artistically fused by the unifying canine imagery, since Everard expected "a true young Beauchamp-Donfrey to be straining his collar like a leash-hound" (p.31). Like other elements of the novel, the psychological processes of Everard, rendered through different modes, are linked by the imagery used in them.

This final observation is a convenient stepping stone to a more general appraisal of the novel. This shifting authorial stance whilst perhaps owing something to the eighteenth century novelist, Laurence Sterne, anticipates Ford Madox Ford and James Joyce. Gillian Beer has pointed out the value of such altering modes and authorial stances and comments that: "Repeatedly, what seems at first only florid and obscure shifts into clear insight as the reader realises fully the image presented". She goes on to illustrate how the function of imagery and metaphor is vital to the structuring of the novel, as well as being a central clue to, and embodiment of, its content. Characters, she argues, react in varying ways to metaphor. For example, Beauchamp dislikes metaphor because it avoids literal contact with reality. The attitude of characters to metaphor is one aspect of Meredith's style, an aspect wherein the function of imagery is expanded so as to embrace a considerable portion of Meredith's content. In the revelation of characters' various attitudes to metaphor Meredith shows their attitude to the reality of the novel. The relationship of character to environment, real and imagined, is the subject of the novel. The actions in the novel are relatively few, a main scene often avoided or simplified in its rendering, and this makes the metaphors around characters such as the gamekeeper and canine imagery in the above extract, more

important, and indeed a vital unifying principle. This lack of
conventional plot causality and development makes the imagery of yachts,
seas, knight errantry, Don Quixote and others, function in a way similar
to that we saw at work in The Egoist.

This emphasis on imagistic rendering of characters' actions makes
their actions seem almost metaphoric expressions of their active inner
life. This is not only a technique but is Meredith's subject. For the
lack of dramatic action emphasises motives and consequences, throws into
relief the distinction between the novel's and the world's life, internal
and external action in characters, image and referent, metaphor and reality,
and explores their inter-relationship, their not always clear distinction
and the possibility of a nexus in art. This anticipates Henry James'
concern with psychological exploration especially that of motivation and
consequence in the novel. This change of emphasis from the causal linkage
of the actions of a conventional plot, to what could be called the causal
sequence of psychological states anticipates James Joyce, just as the plea
for honest communication with, and relationship to, the external world
anticipates E.M. Forster's plea for spiritual honesty.

The importance of the imagery and the dextrous use of language
demand close attention and creative reading. I hope to have illustrated
by my discussion of the extract, at least the necessity for such a
reading, a further example of which is given by Beer. In these aspects,
the novel demands the closeness of textual study which is demanded by the
novels of James Joyce.

Both Joyce and Meredith manipulate language and structure their novels
to achieve an objectivity which is undermined by the very control they
show of their medium. In Beauchamp's Career this undermining of the

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1. Beer discusses this more fully, pp.103-7.
objectifying ability of art is part of the meaning of the novel, just as
metaphors are attempts by some of the characters to negotiate with and
perhaps express their inner states.

The novel is condensed and associative in form, close to much poetry
and to recorded thought processes. This marks the development from
Richard Feveral which through The Exploits leads to Diana of the Crossways
and provokes comments such as that on Meredith's method of description,
by Virginia Woolf: "That is the way, as one trusts at such moments, that
the art of fiction will develop". 1

(iii) Diana of the Crossways, almost exactly contemporaneous with
Hardy's final novel, shows the sophistication to which Meredith's abilities
evolved and has much in common with what was to become the "modern" novel.
As many critics have pointed out, in spite of Meredith's prefatory comment
the story is firmly based upon fact. 2 Critics have also discussed the
social, philosophical and literary climate in which the work was written. 3
Yet the impact the novel makes is a result of Meredith's ability to use
events from the real world and to transform them by the use of poetic
into the substance of fiction. I shall discuss short extracts to show
their internal poetic and to show how these lead towards the refinement
of the poetic twentieth century novel. In this novel we see lyrical
passages such as:

1. Virginia Woolf, from Granite and Rainbow (London, 1953), p.50,
2. cf. Beer, p.147, Greeton, p.162, Stevenson, pp.254 ff, J.A. Hammerton,
George Meredith, His Life and Art in Anecdote and Criticism (Edinburgh, 1911),
3. cf. for example, Beer, p.145 and Stevenson, pp.259-62.
Rain had fallen in the night. Here and there hung a milkwhite cloud with folded sail. The South-west left it in its bay of blue, and breathed below. At moments the fresh scent of herb and mould swung richly in warmth. The young beech-leaves glittered, pools of rain-water made the roadways laugh, the grass-banks under hedges rolled their interwoven weeds in cascades of many-shaded green to right and left of the pair of dappled ponies, and a squirrel crossed ahead, a lark went up a little way to ease his heart, closing his wings when the burst was over, startled black-birds, darting with a clamour like a broken cockcrow, looped the wayside woods from hazel to oak-scrub; short flights, quick spirits everywhere, steady sunshine above. (pp.178-9)

In this extract Meredith gives his characteristically animated description of the South-west rain clouds, using colour, "milkwhite and blue", metaphor; "with folded sail" (p.178), and personification; "breathed below" (p.179) rather than direct descriptive methods. The image of the cloud as a yacht "with folded sail" is nicely caught up in the following sentence where it is seen "in its bay of blue" (p.179). The idea of gentle movement is conveyed by references to the wind, too gentle to move the clouds, yet it "breathed below" but so gently as to lift only "at moments" "the fresh scent of herb and mould" (p.179). The drowsy quietness of this early description is aided by the rhythm of the sentences and the long subdued vowel sounds as, for example, in the sentence,"At moments the fresh scent of herb and mould swung richly in warmth" (p.179). This sentence stands in contrast to the next long sentence with its accelerating rhythm, its short vowel sounds which reflect the springing into life of the scene, as Diana drives past, in the sunlight. The use of the sun and the sentence "Diana held the reins" (p.179) carefully associates Diana with her mythic status, especially in the mutual ability to animate and stimulate natural life. Diana metaphorically and literally draws forth life from the scenery through which she drives. This long sentence describes the bursting forth of life, of "quick spirits everywhere" (p.179) and contains sonic devices such as the alliteration and assonance of the phrase "beech-leaves glittered" (p.179) which uses sound to help convey
the meaning. The sense of the sentence is further illuminated by the
diversity of colours, sounds and movements. The words "glittered",
"many-shaded green", "dappled", "black", "hazel" and "sunshine" help
create a polychromatic spectacle. The animals include "ponies",
"squirrels", "a lark", "black-birds" and "cockcrow". The movement is
diverse and conveyed by such words as "rolled", "cascades", "crossed",
"went up", "darting", "looped" and "short flights" which stand in active
contrast to the terse, steadying phrase "steady sunshine above" (p.179).
The vital interdependence of the diverse elements of this integrated
picture of animation is rendered not only by the above devices and by the
focusing element of the sun, but also by the diction itself. Words such
as "glittered" suggest both movement and colour inter-reacting, "cascades"
carries a strong verbal suggestion, the lark which closes its wings "when
the burst was over" (p.179) recalls the burst of rain the night before
as well as its own activities, the use of "cockcrow" suggests both the
clamour of the black-bird disturbed by Diana, and the cry of the rooster
announcing the normal rising of the sun. This tends to integrate the elements
of the description, announcing a more general or more significant break
of dawn and start of life. Also Meredith by this technique furthers the
synaesthetic quality of the description, which engages very rapidly,
many senses. The sense of sight is engaged early, in the phrase, "milk-
white cloud", that of hearing in "roadways laugh" and "clamour", that of
smell in "the fresh scent of herb and mould", that of touch in references
to the wind, and that of movement in the words listed above. So by an
intensely lyrical, poetic use of language Meredith conveys his meaning.

But all is not lyrical in this novel which contains bitter wit such
as that when Diana, in contest with Lady Wathan says, "I thank you warmly,
Lady Wathan, for what you have not done" (p.224) and the harsh irony of,
"Your forbearance is creditable, Lady Wathan" (p.224). Together with such
phrases is Meredith's comment on Diana and Dacier when they meet after their night's stay at Rovio: "They met, exchanged greetings, praised the beauty of the morning, and struck together on the Bell" (p.153). The description of the Bell is rich in Meredithian pithy wit, the symbolism of the Bell, striking. The "Resurrection Bell" clearly indicates (in its symbolic function) the reawakening of Diana's affections, this time towards Dacier, after her previous severe set-back, as well as suggesting the consequent disturbances due to her affection. This is conveyed in the above sentence by the clever pun on the words "struck together" which invites all the interpretations mentioned above.

Together with the lyrical and the witty use of language is the use of violent imagery such as that when Redworth goes to the vacant house at Crossways. "The vivid idea of her was a phantom presence, and cold, assuring him that the bodily Diana was absent" (p.84), a ghastly method of saying Diana was there in spirit if not in body. This is followed by an even stronger use of imagery to describe the sound when "he rang the house-bell" (p.34) and "it seemed to set wagging a weariful tongue in a corpse" (p.34). An extremely powerful picture of empty dejection is rendered through this image. This recalls the imagery of the empty house at Skye in Virginia Woolf's To The Lighthouse (1927) and the centrality of the house to the structure of the novel recalls "Howards End" in E.M. Forster's novel of the same name (1910).

The Crossways acts as an important central image in this novel, and Jan B. Gordon has discussed its functional importance and its relationship with the image of Diana as a many-sided goddess. ¹ From this we see that, as with Sir Willoughby Pattern's name in The Egoist, Diana's very name gives rise to a series of interrelated mythical images. Gillian Beer has

¹ Jan B. Gordon, "Diana of the Crossways: Internal History and the Brainstuff of Fiction" in Meredith Now, Some Critical Essays (pp.246-7).
elaborated on this and as with the formal dance pattern of imagery in
The Rajah the image can be seen relating in different contexts with
different images, with various degrees of significance. To take one
example, that of Diana as the goddess of hunting (itself only one aspect
of the mythical potential of her name, she is also the goddess of chastity,
of the moon and of midwifery), this gives rise to a series of hunting
images in the novel. However these images are themselves split so that
Diana is at times the huntress, such as when Dedier thinks "two members
of the same family her victims!" (p.328) after her deception of him, or
when society, especially Lady Calthin, considers Diana a fortune hunter.

At times however she becomes the hunted, such as in the sentence,
"The Crossways had been turned into a trap" (p.379) which suggests Diana
has been run to earth, and in the hounding of society she receives through
scandal. At times Diana herself is confused as to her relationship to the
hunt, victim, uninvolved instigator or predator, and this doubt may be seen
in sentences such as; "She would not now be seeing herself as hare, serpent,
tigress!" (p.97). The many ways one image may be applied and the many
meanings it may assume on application is typical of the multivalency which
pervades the novel.

Related to the hunting imagery is that of nakedness, Diana's fear of
being hunted down by society and exposed. Water imagery also connects
with other image patterns in the work, and is used in most of Meredith's
novels. An example of Meredith's use of water imagery which shows both
his economy of images, and yet their allusive multivalency, occurs late in
the novel when Redworth says to Diana, "You pushed for the best society,

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1. Deer, pp. 152 ff.
2. cf. Lindsay, pp. 352-3.
like a fish to its native sea" (p. 407) to which Diana replies, "Pray say, a salmon to the riverheads" (p. 407). Overtly a metaphorically expressed social comment on Diana, the use of "salmon" through its spawning habits and acute liability to be caught at the head of a river, suggests both the images of midwifery and hunting, two aspects of Diana the goddess. By this method of evocation Meredith creates a number of sides, not always complementary, to each image in the novel. While Diana is associated with the goddess Diana, other characters earn similar image clusters, for example Percy Dacier can be seen as the Actaeon to the mythic Diana. Redworth's name itself gives rise to images. Throughout the novel the "red" and the "worth" of Redworth, his passion and his integrity and wealth, his association with sunsets and with practical business, are kept in stimulating counterbalance, neither aspect ever eclipsed completely by the other. Harvey Kempneck has discussed not only the mythical but also the social implications of this device, saying that in the final marriage Meredith makes the equation Sun-England-Redworth: Noon-Ireland-Diana¹. Thus no image has a single meaning but is intentionally multivalent, the number of interpretations increased by its reacting with or as part of other similarly multivalent images, and this use of imagery does, indeed, illustrate and embody a large part of the subject matter of the novel.

Similarly the sense of place is used to relate to characters' mental states, and the relation of these to the characters' personality and social behaviour. Gordon has shown how place, time, action and characterisation are interlocked in a series of regressive fictions². An example of this is Diana's action of writing about Percy Dacier disguised as a character

² Gordon, pp. 246ff.
in her novel which in the world of Meredith's novel provokes gossip. However, Meredith by writing about Diana's doing this adds fuel to the suggestion of scandal around Diana, both in the world of his novel and in the world of Mrs Norton. Thus the novel in a novel leads to a number of reflecting, regressing, stimulating relationships between characters and between art and life. The novel alternates between a record of the events and a self-conscious fictional commentary on the events, and this may be seen reflected in the chapter titles 1.

The harmonised function of place, imagery and characterisation has been illustrated in a discussion of Meredith's rendering of the Irish Ball, by Gordon 2. This again shows the closeness of form and function in this novel. Action is often avoided such as the actual events of Diana's betrayal of the political secret. This is a novel concerning people's awareness of their masks, at such point Diana has no mask and it is only of this lack that she has awareness: "She was a dethroned woman. Deeper within, an unmasked actress, she said" (p. 351). Because the novel is concerned with people's consciousness of their adopted masks, myths take equal status with facts. The modern novel often uses myth as a framework for both anthropological and psychological inquiries 3.

Meredith similarly employs mythic elements but the multivalency of the relevant images set in his "game theorist's" structure, means that, as with other aspects of his structure, they are used as an index to his characters' levels of awareness of their masks. Thus life and art are held in varying relationships, this is furthered by the internal novel, the letters and diary and the stimulating relationship of Diana and Meredith, whilst Diana is at times a vehicle for Meredith to express

his own problems as a novelist.

No clever transcripts of the dialogue of the day occurred; no hair-breadth escapes, perils by sea and land, heroisms of the hero, fine shrieks of the heroine; no set scenes of catching pathos and humour; no distinguishable points of social satire - equivalent to a smacking of the public on the chops, which excites it to grin with keen discernment of the author's intention. She did not appeal to the senses nor to a superficial discernment. So she had the anticipatory sense of its failure; and she wrote her best, in perverseness; of course she wrote slowly; she wrote more and more realistically of the characters and the downright human emotions, less of the wooden supernumeraries of her story, labelled for broad guffaw or deluge tears - the grappling natural links between our public and an author. Her feelings were also.

(p. 221)

this is not always so. He remains coldly in control of his medium and when he does slip into sentimental sympathy with Diana it is often to illustrate the adoption of a mask in the form of creating a character and hence undermines its sentiment by the control shown. Thus when Gillian Beer mildly complains that "the novel's realism is limited and its generosity of perception enhanced by the author's romance with his heroine" saying that Meredith "becomes so engrossed with the ego of his heroine that he fails to animate those about her or to make actual the world beyond her immediate circle", she seems to have forgotten that this technical characteristic is in fact an example of the subject under discussion. Just as Diana uses Percy Dacier as the hero of her book "The Young Minister of State" without recognising that the portrait expresses her hidden love for him, so also does Meredith enjoy a "romance with his heroine", the only difference being the conscious artistry by which Meredith creates the illusion of his love for Diana. The subject matter is the adoption of masks, the living within these created selves and the degree of consciousness as to the nature of these created selves, as Beer herself says: "Meredith was sufficiently a Victorian to be troubled by

the omnipresence of self but he was also fascinated by its disguises and its manifold expressions in action. ¹

Because the reader can see that a character, or indeed the author, is at times adopting a mask he becomes a voyeur, a reader of diaries, an observer of the process of novels' being written by Diana and by Meredith, a listener to gossip, a watcher of hearts. This is supported by other details in the work such as the literary suggestivity afforded by the use of the name "Clarissa" for a boat. ² This is a refinement in psychological subject matter from The Egoist and is closer to modern novelistic psychology. Sir Willoughby suffered because he adopted a mask, here the tragedy comes more from the characters' growing awareness of the multiple masks they adopt, an awareness which itself gives rise to another mask, that delusion of self-awareness. Characters in this novel must develop in self-knowledge until they cease to search for their 'real' self and reconcile themselves to the knowledge that their total identity is but a combination of selves. This is not merely a preconceived theory about the need for self-knowledge which Meredith uses as the theme for his novel. The integration of the fragmented identity takes place on many levels and throughout all the novel.

The imagistic multivalency is one expression of the fragmented self, unified only in essence, but expressed in many ways. Crossways is seen as home by Diana, in the novel it is the meeting point of different directions, different ways of life. Diana the goddess is many faced, each role, such as Diana the huntress is applied to Diana from different directions. The gossip involves Diana as both subject and instigator. Her novel "The Man of Two Minds" is another expression of this and Meredith comments significantly, probably as Diana is looking into a

¹ Beer, p. 144.
² cf. Gordon, p. 250.
mirror "she glanced at the woman likewise divided, if not similarly" (p. 304) later allowing Diana to say of this novel "I shall sign it 'By The Woman of Two Natures'" (p. 360). Meredith's treatment of Diana with its ambivalent tone: sometimes realistically, sometimes sentimentally expressed, is a further illustration of his meaning, as he adopts a mask. This growing awareness of the many manifestations of self means that at each step a new consciousness, developed yet distinct, from the former mental state evolves. This is reflected in the novel's structure by the pervasive refracting, mirroring regressions, never exactly the same as, but copied from, the original. The emblem for this is Paytham's portrait of Diana (p. 271).

When Diana acts impulsively such as in revealing Dacier's political secret, she blames herself and Meredith defends her attitude by blackening Dacier through his marriage to Miss Asper. Diana's self-blame, as with Meredith's blaming Dacier is false, deliberately so. Diana's self-blame is done to preserve her image of herself as coldly logical. Meredith's deliberately artificial blackening of Dacier is done to preserve his wryly created image of Diana as a blameless heroine. This subtlety of technique shows how closely Form identifies with function in this novel. The same subtlety may be seen in his treatment of Redworth, early in the novel his worth is emphasized, later his passion. Towards the end of the novel Redworth's stature is enlarged as befits Diana's new opinion of him. Meredith and Diana, as they develop their images of Redworth, change positions. Meredith sees his worth at first and shows this by referring to his good social development, his kindness to Diana and his constant consideration of her wants. Later he uses imagery, especially that of sunsets to show that the ultimate attraction would appear to be passion. However Diana at the outset sees only Redworth's physically oriented attentions, she later develops an image of him based apparently upon his worthiness to be her partner, a worthiness the reader suspects is influenced by financial considerations, In his
portrayal of Diana Meredith shows a character in the process of discovering the many aspects of personality, the multiplicity of the manifestation of self. This developing self-consciousness is balanced by an increasing number of masks which Diana uses to hide from herself the stark reality of this knowledge. So her acceptance of Redworth, along with Meredith’s apparent approval of and planning for this, could well be not so much the reward for a matured knowledge of self, but rather yet another adoption of a mask, the beguiling complacency of professing to have done what is best. The development is not linear but is convergent, and anticipates the flux of personality in modern novels. 1 Meredith’s comment upon Diana as she writes “Cantatrice” could well be applied to his own novel, “of necessity she wrote her best, convinced that the work was doomed to unpopularity, resolved that it should be at least a victory in style” (p.264). His bewildering style together with his subject matter of the masks, makes his “game theorist” attitude more fitting. Meredith, I submit, often made comments and assumed stances “as baits for the critics to quote” (p.264), and to conceal his intentions. "The total effect is of unrest, excitement, growth. Meredith demands of the reader a pitch of receptiveness and of participation more commonly granted to poetry than to the novel. He rewards him with an experience complex, peculiar and vivid.”

As Beer says; "The responses of Wilde, of James, of Lawrence, of Forster and of Virginia Woolf all betray admiration and a sense of creative kinship." 3 This may be seen in Wilde’s epigrammatic formulations and rejection of "realism"; in James’s style which abandons the notion of universal readability and forces the reader to respond at his highest pitch of sensibility; in Lawrence’s symbolic organisation of plot and acknowledgement of woman’s sexuality and her search for freedom, in Forster’s buoyant

heroines, musical imagery, manipulation of fantasy; and in Virginia Woolf's rendering of the inner life through moments and symbols rather than plot. But Meredith's closest kinship is with James Joyce. This kinship extends beyond Joyce's quoting Meredith in Ulysses¹, for both are essentially poetic novelists. In the novels of Thomas Hardy and George Meredith can be seen the initiation and development of the poetic novel; a development in the genre of which it may be said that:

This is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.²

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The emphasis of this thesis has been entirely on a close reading of the eight novels themselves. Many other areas of reading have played their part, both in original literature and academic criticism. This Bibliography lists only the few works directly quoted or referred to which have directly influenced my arguments, rather than the many more which have had an indirect effect.

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