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The View From Wessex Heights: Thomas Hardy's Poetry of Isolation

From any of the major heights in Dorset the soft rolling countryside spreads out like a living panorama as far as the eye can see. For the walker it is an arduous climb, but once having attained the crest of Pilsdon or Bulbarrow or Ingpen Beacon or Wylls-Neck, the ease and the solace of those comforting hills have a salubrious effect. So it must have been for Thomas Hardy, especially in the fateful year 1896.

That year he freed his "good hand at a serial"¹ and escaped from a twenty-five year commitment to prose. Smarting under the "tart disparagings"² of his critics and stung by their lack of understanding of the central concern of *Jude the Obscure*, he turned finally and irrevocably to poetry, his first love. Robert Gittings, in *Thomas Hardy's Later Years*, suggests that not only was Hardy ready in an intellectual and emotional sense to devote his efforts to "the viewless wings of poesy," but there were physical reasons for his move as well. He points out that by 1896 the rheumatism which had so painfully affected his father in the past had begun to plague the fifty-six year old Hardy. Further, Gittings suggests, it was extremely doubtful whether Hardy's wife Emma would at this time be willing to give her efforts to the painstaking task of note-taking and copying which another full-scale novel would entail.³ On October 17, 1896, Hardy wrote in his diary:

Perhaps I can express more fully in verse ideas and emotions which run counter to the inert crystallized opinion—hard as a rock which the vast body of men have vested interest in supporting. To cry out in a passionate poem that (for instance) the Supreme Mover or Movers, the Prime Force or Forces, must be either limited in power, unknowing or cruel—which is obvious enough, and has been for centuries—will cause them merely a shake of the head; but to put it in argumentative prose will make them sneer or foam and set all the literary contortionists jumping upon me, a harmless agnostic, as if I were a clamorous atheist, which in their crass illiteracy they seem to think is the same thing.⁴

"Wessex Heights" was written in December of 1896. It is a seminal poem in the Hardy canon because it touches on the quintessential areas of his life: love of women, friendship and faith. It illustrates a familiar poetic posture for Hardy: the poet alone and introspective. It contains the theme that pervades all his work: a pre-occupation with, and an inability to escape from the past. The poem is populated with images of ghosts and, most important, with its unmistakable mood of loneliness and regret it recalls and anticipates countless other poems which bear this particular quality of isolation.

It would be short-sighted to suggest that the unfavourable, often hypocritical, and at times inflammatory reviews of both *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* decided Hardy against continuing to express himself through the medium of the novel. Indeed, the *Life of Thomas Hardy* for March, 1897, records:

. . . [S]o ended his prose contributions to literature, his experiences of the few preceding years having killed all his interest in this form of imaginative work, which had ever been secondary to his interest in verse.⁵

This statement refers only to "experiences," leaving the particulars, significantly, in doubt. It also acknowledges the preeminent place of poetry in his life. The decision to write only poetry was, as Robert Gittings points out in his biography, neither arbitrary nor abrupt but a gradual process of artistic development.

Although Hardy always maintained that his poems were not autobiographical, contained no consistent philosophy, and were, as he expressed it in the preface to *Time's Laughing Stocks and Other Verses*, "dramatic monologues by different characters,"⁶ the temptation is strong to regard certain of them as expressing the poet's own point of view. In a letter dated October 30, 1919, Florence Hardy states: "Speaking generally, there is more autobiography in a hundred lines of Mr. Hardy's poetry than in all the novels."⁷ Faced with these two contradictory statements, the only course for the critic is to examine the poems themselves.

Many of the poems are presented in tantalizingly biographical terms, referring to people and places bearing only the thinnest of disguises. Often the critic, eager to pursue this course of investigation, will ultimately be caught short by a purely fictitious event, confused by punctuation which seems to alter the meaning, or surprised, finally, to discover that the speaker is not Hardy at all but, as frequently happens, a woman.⁸ The focus of the reader then, of

necessity, must shift to the dramatic persona. It was by placing a fictional character in a familiar setting, and expressing his (or her) voice that Hardy was able to state in a poetic language of infinite variety his most profound and secret emotions. These feelings were expressed in a voice so restrained yet so deeply felt that it seemed at times his thoughts were not so much uttered as overheard. They are the utterances of a man who mused often on the variations of life, and was able to apply the individual experiences of the ordinary man to a universal understanding of humanity.

It is possible that Hardy actually did climb a particular height in Wessex in 1896 to achieve "some liberty" of mind and spirit. His diary records a climb up the Beacon on August 12, 1896.⁹ Whether or not Hardy actually climbed the Beacon on that day is unimportant. What is essential to our understanding of "Wessex Heights" and the central place it holds in Hardy's life as a poet is the attitude of the poet as he makes his mental journey in the style of the symbolic solitary-wanderer figure. It is a journey into the realm of the imagination.

"Wessex Heights" was written at a critical time in his life and it shows Hardy's state of mind as he viewed the past from the vantage point of an isolated hilltop which afforded him what he called in the poem a "long vision." It was hardly a novel stance for a poet—Wordsworth employed it in "Tintern Abbey," Keats in "I Stood Tip-toe" and Matthew Arnold in "The Scholar Gypsy"—but for Hardy at this time in his life it was an important perspective. What emerges from "Wessex Heights" is the sense of a man essentially alone, misunderstood, and plagued by phantoms of the past; a man aware of both his own shortcomings and his strengths, who, by breathing the clear air of the heights experiences "some liberty."

The speaker of "Wessex Heights" has climbed to the top of one of the elevated regions of Wessex for the purpose of achieving some freedom from the day-to-day commerce of the lowlands. But it is more than that. He has come to a place apparently familiar to him; he is comforted by its benevolent nature, "shaped as if by a kindly hand," and experiences there the dreamy sensation of inhabiting a region that is out of time and space. It has an ethereal quality which the speaker cannot closely define except to say that it seems to be where he was before his birth, "and after death may be." He is not sure. It is enough, however, that here at least he has found a place to withdraw to, a place for, as he says, "thinking, dreaming, dying on." The stage has been set. It is the classic setting of the meditative or

romantic poet. Here, like Wordsworth, Hardy experiences the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings."¹⁰ Here, nature acts as both comforter and stimulator. Here, as with the Romantics, the poetry is bred in deep reflection and is both natural and unforced, and finally, the subject matter, like so much of the best Romantic poetry, concerns the poet himself. The speaker, as the stanza suggests, is at a moment of crisis and his thoughts turn inward and backward. He is a man who muses alone.

It can be assumed that the protagonist is Hardy himself. Though it is not possible (nor profitable) to trace all of the biographical allusions, there is too much of the agonized author of *Jude the Obscure* in this poem, too much of the misunderstood husband, the uncomfortable Dorset gentleman, the disappointed lover and friend for it to be another. It is Thomas Hardy looking down from the heights, fifty-six years old, chastened, unsettled, misunderstood, self-pitying, full of regret, but irrepressible.

The poem consists of eight four-line stanzas. The lines are long, consisting of a six-beat rhythm with a simple rhyme scheme of a b b b. The language is conversational and the tone quiet. The first and last stanzas evoke the setting. The poem begins, "There are some heights in Wessex" and ends in the same calm voice, "So I am found on Ingpen Beacon." The major part of the poem is devoted to a poignant analysis of his current condition in the lowlands.

He begins the second stanza by announcing abruptly that he is friendless: "In the lowlands I have no comrade." Worse, he is without the comradeship of his wife who is referred to only as "Her," but who could be understood implicitly as Emma. She is unable, apparently, to fulfil the simple requirements of charity as outlined in 1 Corinthians: 13 by Paul (and parodied by Hardy), ". . . who suffereth long and is kind." At this time Emma was fifty-four, eccentric, devoutly religious, preoccupied with appearances and out of touch with her poet-husband. Hardy admits some culpability when he says there are things "he is too weak to mend," but the "comrade" is blamed nonetheless for her failure to accept him as he is. Hardy continues to bemoan his friendless state as he includes among his disparagers "they", presumably the ordinary folk who inhabit the lowlands, or, as he states, "Down there." They do not understand him; he is both above and removed from them, "there nobody thinks as I." The stanza ends with a forceful statement made even more emphatic by being phrased in negative terms: "But mind chains do not clank where one's next neighbour is the sky." When he is standing on the height

he is not aware of the "clank" which binds him to, or reminds him of, the impersonal minds below, and he is able to draw a clear mental picture both of the pain he has suffered there and the freedom he enjoys on the height.

In the third stanza, Hardy's vision expands from the lowlands to the towns, and from the present to the past. Here are the familiar ghosts of his former days. He knows them; in fact, they are men and women with whom he has "fellowed" and they are anything but friendly to him now. Rather, these phantoms haunt his every action, they track him in "weird detective ways" which suggest perhaps, that their victim is guilty of some crime. He encounters them everywhere, for, as he says, they "hang about at places." More than that, they speak to Hardy in harsh tones, the men sneer and the women use "tart" language. If the poet has committed a crime, the reader is left to speculate that it may be as mundane as allowing friendly intercourse to cease, or as serious, perhaps, as betrayal. Whatever the cause of the estrangement, it is clear that the metaphorical use of the phantom as mental irritant is particularly apt, for "Wessex Heights" is a conscience-stricken, ghost-ridden poem. It is impossible to speculate with any degree of accuracy just whom Hardy had in mind, but it seems impossible that the men and women of the third stanza are, as J.O. Bailey suggests,¹¹ the critics who condemned *Jude the Obscure*. Instead, it must be assumed that they are, as Hardy says, beings who inhabited his "earlier days."

Perhaps, to indulge briefly in some biographical data, he has Henry Bastow in mind—a young architecture apprentice in Dorchester with whom Hardy engaged in lively intellectual polemics, mainly concerning religion. Horace Moule, an important figure in Hardy's past, and one who continued to influence him until his death in 1873, is certainly another possibility. Besides these two there were numerous cousins of his own age, as well as many people in London and in Dorset with whom Hardy enjoyed a lively social intercourse.¹²

Why do they haunt him? Did he betray them? Does he regret what came to pass between them? Part of the answer to these questions is found in the next stanza in which the poet's eye turns inward to examine the puzzle of the enigmatic self.

Employing the spatial and temporal detachment which his Wessex height has awarded him, Hardy next casts his "long vision" on himself. He has a unique, mirrored, timeless view, for not only can he stand in the present and see himself as he was in the past, but that past self, or, as he phrases it, "my simple self that was" can reverse

the effect and gaze from the past to the present. It affords him a spectacular double image of his present state. He recognizes that he is now "false" to what he once was, although the poet does not particularize in what way this could be so. Has his personality altered? Are his attitudes different? Has he become aloof? Instead of answering these questions directly, the speaker announces that he can see his former self both "watching" and "wondering." It is certainly a hesitant, perplexed attitude, bearing with it the strong sense that the speaker is sorry that he has been the cause of it. Nevertheless, he is now a changed man. If, by changing from his former simple self into what he now regards as a "strange continuator," he has betrayed his friends, how much more serious to betray oneself! Not only has he opened a gulf between himself and those phantoms of his youth who exist like angry spectres across a great divide, but he has exposed a painful wound in his own self-image. He ponders what "crass cause" could have been responsible for merging his simple self (perhaps innocent, idealistic, even "churchy") into the person he has become. The harshness of the change is underlined by Hardy's choice of words in this stanza. All of the important words in the last few lines begin with the hard c sound: "crass cause," "can," "continuator," "common," "chrysalis." The former self, with his ability to look from past to present, can see that, though he has become a "strange continuator"—someone who, according to the *Oxford Dictionary*, "carries on the work begun by another"¹³—he has yet something in common with that earlier "simple self." Hardy, most appropriately then, refers to that earlier self as "my chrysalis," that strange, secret, cocoon world of rebirth out of which the worm emerges as the moth. For Hardy, the chrysalis period consisted of approximately thirty years, from 1865 to 1895, during which time his emotional life was shaped by experience.

Stanzas five and six contain the most obscure biographical allusions, as well as the most persistent use of the ghost motif. Professor Frank Giordano Jr., (in an article on the structure of "Wessex Heights") suggests that the mysterious figures populating these stanzas represent the fictional characters of Hardy's novels, now spectre-like and distanced from their creator—part of the dead world of his past life as a novelist.¹⁴ These spectres rise up, as J. Hillis Miller declares, like "ground mist"¹⁵ swirling about Hardy's consciousness. They certainly seem to be images of the past, though not, necessarily, of dead or fictional persons, for Hardy was familiar with the possibilities of "dying, so to speak, before one is out of the flesh." In

The Life of Thomas Hardy he explains with some delight the sensation of being an invisible observer. "I have unconsciously the habit of regarding the scene, (a simple morning call) as if I were a spectre, not solid enough to influence my environment." If he often felt like a ghost, and gained, as he said, some "melancholy satisfaction"¹⁶ from the experience, it would not be unusual for him to imagine himself engulfed by living figures from his past in the shrouds of phantoms. In this guise they haunt him, perhaps gaining as he did, a melancholy satisfaction in their task.

As stanzas five and six make clear, his memories torment him. They cause his breast to "beat out of tune," they chide him, and worse, "they stand there fast." He confesses that he cannot "go to the great grey Plain" for there he sees a "figure against the moon." It is a puzzling reference. If the plain is Salisbury, as seems most likely since later in the stanza he makes reference to the "tall-spired town," the questions remain: Who is the figure against the moon? Why, except for the frightening effect of a silhouette against what surely must be a large, low, full moon, does it make his "breast beat out of tune?" Hardy is not afraid of his ghosts; he is disturbed by them. They are nagging reminders of his past. Therefore, it is more plausible to regard the figure as, perhaps, his mother Jemima Hand or even the Reverend Moule or H.R. Bastow, a representative of his "churchy" past, shown, as J.O. Bailey suggests¹⁷ in opposition to the moon.¹⁸

The next two lines seem wedded to the previous two, not only by a further allusion to Salisbury, but by the repetition of the phrase, "I cannot go." Just as the first two hint at his past religious life, the third and fourth, perhaps the most obscure in the poem, seem also to contain this theme. Could it be that as a young man Hardy had presented himself as a candidate for the ministry in the Anglican Cathedral at Salisbury? *The Life of Thomas Hardy* records these bare facts: "Hardy was a born bookworm, that and that alone was unchanging in him; he had sometimes, too, wished to enter the church; but he cheerfully agreed to go to Mr. Hicks."¹⁹ There is an argument as to whether he did or did not present himself at Salisbury, and if he did, whether he was rejected on "class" grounds, or because of his lack of education. Robert Gittings calls it a "legend" that Hardy suffered some sort of snobbish rejection²⁰, but J.O. Bailey claims that the librarian at Salisbury Cathedral, Dr. Elsie Smith, told him that she had discovered letters indicating Hardy's application and subsequent rejection.²¹ If this is so, the correspondence has not yet come to light.²² Whatever the truth may be, Hardy, in the poem, speaks of

being unable to go to the "tall-spired town" because he is, apparently, obsessed by the memory of those authoritative figures, significantly given the nebulous appellation, "forms," who seem to be forgotten or of no importance to anybody but Hardy. For him they stand firm and unyielding in the "long vision" of his memory—a painful remembrance, perhaps, of youthful idealism in opposition to cold reality.

There are still more ghosts inhabiting the sixth stanza of "Wessex Heights," as well as some chilling reminders of death. For the first time Hardy actually wraps a ghost in the garments of the grave. It is "thin-lipped and vague, in a/ shroud of white," the only dead ghost in the group. It has been suggested that this ghost is Tryphena Sparks who died in 1890 and whom Hardy was said to have courted in Froom-side Vale many years before.²³ There is also a ghost at Yell'ham Bottom who chides "loud at the fall of the/ night." This reference is virtually impossible to trace biographically,²⁴ but it could contain the germ of an idea for a poem written in 1902 called "Yell'ham Wood's Story." Here, the wood's message is simply that we are born to die, and as the poem states emphatically, "life offers—to deny!" The emphasis on death in this stanza seems to act as an admonition to Hardy that he, too, is mortal, and, though to die out of the flesh may have its amusing or melancholy satisfactions, in fact, as he states in the *Life of Thomas Hardy*, "To think of life as passing away is a sadness,"²⁵ and, it might be added, to be haunted by phantoms of the past is indeed a heavy psychological burden.

That he is aware of this haunting is indicated in the last two lines of stanza six. He encounters this next ghost, the "one in the railway train," not at night against the moon, or shrouded in white, but in the prosaic setting of a railway coach. Immediately, thoughts are recalled of sad little Father Time, the wise old child of *Jude the Obscure*, or of the lonely journeying boy of "Midnight on the Great Western." Their poignant journeys in "this region of sin," though reminders of life's brief gasp and the imminence of death, do not seem to bear the direct personal challenge to Hardy that these lines contain.

Three times in these lines Hardy uses the first person pronoun "I" inculcating in the reader's mind the significance to the speaker of that profile, there when he does not want it, and speaking what he would not hear. It is obviously vexing to the poet. Perhaps the best explanation for this image is that what Hardy is seeing in the pane of glass is the reflection of his own face. F.B. Pinion has suggested that the face could be that of Emma Hardy whose predilection for hasty

retreats from Max Gate was well known, and who, as an unconfirmed story states,²⁶ boarded a train for London in 1895 in a desperate attempt to have Dr. Richard Garnett halt the publication of *Jude the Obscure*. Robert Gittings suggests that the face at the window is that of Tryphena Sparks, and J.O. Bailey, with the most fanciful suggestion of all, puts forward the argument that the haunting visage belonged to none other than Randy Hardy, the poet's legendary illegitimate son. James Gibson, based on some information supplied by Professor Keith Wilson²⁷ points out in the notes for *The Complete Poems*, that in the original manuscript the pronoun "her" had appeared in place of the revised "it," thus giving strong support to the claims of Pinion, Gittings and others. What must be remembered here, however, is that it was not unlike Hardy to confuse details deliberately. The important emphasis in stanzas five and six is that not only is the poet tracked by phantoms of the present and the past, but, as Miller suggests, it is a haunting of the self by the self which is for the protagonist that form of haunting most to be feared.

Hardy's thoughts turn, in stanza seven, to another living ghost. There seems to be no doubt that the "rare fair woman" referred to in this stanza is Mrs. Florence Henniker. This is confirmed in a letter from Mrs. Florence Hardy dated December 6, 1914, in which she defends Hardy's loyalty to his friends claiming that Hardy's friendship with Mrs. Henniker was so warm, so mutually satisfying that he would never callously "let her go."²⁹ Florence states therefore, that the voice of the seventh stanza is not that of Hardy, but simply the "poet." Not only has she misunderstood the very personal nature of this utterance, but she has failed to perceive, or refused to acknowledge, the depth of Hardy's feeling for Mrs. Henniker. Florence, like Emma before her, was faced with the uncomfortable fact that Hardy was irresistibly attracted to young literary women especially of a social class more exalted than his own. Though she was by this time a close personal friend of Mrs. Henniker's, Florence refused to believe that Hardy's feelings for her had once been amorous—hence her reliance on the anonymity of the speaker.

The letter does confirm the identity of this last phantom. In 1896, as Hardy tells us in the poem, "I am now but a thought of hers." In the three years before this crisis he had been, or had hoped to be, much more than just a thought. They met in Ireland in May, 1893 at the Vice-Regal Lodge where Mrs. Henniker was attending her brother, Lord Houghton, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, as hostess. In its usual cryptic and understated style, the *Life of Thomas Hardy*

records the following notation after their meeting: "We were received by Mrs. Florence Henniker, the Lord-Lieutenant's sister. A charming, INTUITIVE woman apparently."³⁰ Evelyn Hardy, in the preface to *One Rare Fair Woman*, has interpreted the relationship as one of "strong emotion" and "deep attraction," while the co-editor of this volume of letters, F.B. Pinion, suggests that Hardy's ardour was spiritually and intellectually directed and he makes a case for Mrs. Henniker as the prototype for Sue Bridehead in *Jude the Obscure*. It is highly speculative whether Hardy's relationship with Mrs. Henniker was that of lover, although several poems seem to hint that at least for Hardy that type of relationship was his desire.³¹

Whatever the nature of their attachment, by 1896, when he surveys his past life from the familiar heights of Wessex, he recognizes that he is "now but a thought of hers"—"now" being a key word, suggesting the possibility of something real or imagined quite different in the preceding years. He confesses in this stanza that, though he has loved her, he could never bring himself to tell her: "Yet my love for her in its fullness she herself even did not know." It is a poignant reminder of what could be called Hardy's tragic inability to seize the moment, to free himself from those "mind chains" which cause him so often to examine too methodically, to hesitate, and finally to withdraw. Standing in the splendid isolation of the Wessex hills, Hardy, in 1896, could view his relationships with some detachment. The last line of stanza seven seems to be uttered with a sigh, both of resignation and regret: "Well time cures hearts of tenderness, and now I can let her go."

In March, 1897, after *The Well-Beloved* was reissued, Hardy felt constrained to explain further his theory of the "transmigration of the ideal beloved one." In a letter to a literary periodical he, perhaps, revealed more of himself than he was aware: "There is, of course, underlying the fantasy followed by the visionary artist the truth that all men are pursuing a shadow, the unattainable."³² It will never be known whether Hardy regarded Mrs. Henniker as a personification of this elusive shadow, but that she was ultimately unattainable is manifestly clear.

The final stanza brings the speaker back to the present, to the critical year 1896, and reveals him, metaphorically at least, with his feet planted firmly on the comforting high ground of Dorset. Here on this uncontaminated soil, where there are no direct associations with the men and women who populate his past and present, he can breathe the clear air and "know some liberty."

"Wessex Heights" may be Hardy's fullest expression of regret in poetry. Certainly, in this poem, he gives the reader, through the skilful perspective of his "long vision," the portrait of what he later called "a time-torn man." (CP. p. 136) He offers a glimpse of the quintessential and highly personal aspects of his life: his relationship with women and old friends, his loss of religious belief, and his own self-doubt. His voice is often self-pitying, bearing the tones of a man who is misunderstood. If there is an attitude emerging from "Wessex Heights" it is one of regret: regret that he had been misunderstood by the lowland folk, regret that he had failed to persevere in his friendships, regret that he had disappointed his mother in failing to embrace the religion of his forebears, regret that he had been dishonest with his own "simple self," regret that the once idyllic love of his younger years had faded irreparably, and regret that he failed to seize the moment and love the "rare fair woman." Even though this attitude persists throughout the poem, and pervades hundreds of other poems of a personal nature, Hardy continued to record the truth as he understood it, whether in his earthy rural narratives, his sardonic views of modern life, his self-revealing philosophical utterances, or the highly personal, tender, and regretful love lyrics of 1912-13.

Hardy writes in the conclusion to "Wessex Heights":

So I am found on Ingpen Beacon, or on Wylls-Neck to the west,
Or else on homely Bulbarrow, or little Pilsdon Crest,

Here in "Wessex Heights" he is standing on the threshold of a new career. If his fate is to record in poetry his view of life and his vision of the spirit of man, and if, in so doing he is "tracked by phantoms" of past and present, he submits to his artistic duty nonetheless, with a "proud heart."³³ From "Wessex Heights" the essential poetic voice of Thomas Hardy is made clear. It is deeply personal, honest, and irrepressible, containing always what the poet himself called, "his truth, his simple singlemindedness." (CP. p. 461)

"Wessex Heights" is a microcosm of Hardy's larger world of isolation. The poem alludes to his personal and cultural failings, and, while suggesting that only on the height can he experience some liberty, the act of writing the poem seems to provide an important emotional release for Hardy. The experience was to be repeated time and again as Hardy expiated his loneliness and regret through the medium of poetry.

NOTES

1. Florence E. Hardy, *The Life of Thomas Hardy: 1840-1928* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1962), p. 100. This volume will later be identified as *Life*.
2. Thomas Hardy, *The Complete Poems* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1976), p. 319. This volume will later be identified in the body of the article as CP. All quotations without a footnote number are from pp. 319-320 of CP.
3. Robert Gittings, *Thomas Hardy's Later Years* (Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1978), p. 85. This volume will later be identified as *Later Years*.
4. *Life*, pp. 284-285.
5. *Life*, p. 286.
6. CP., p. 190.
7. *Life*, p. 392. This letter is in Florence's own handwriting in the Dorchester Museum, Dorset.
8. *Later Years*, p. 157. For example, "The Haunter," "Under the Waterfall," and "Lost Love."
9. *Life*, p. 281.
10. William Wordsworth, *Selected Poems and Prefaces* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1965), p. 460.
11. J.O. Bailey, *The Poetry of Thomas Hardy: A Handbook and Commentary* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1970), p. 278.
12. Robert Gittings, *Young Thomas Hardy* (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1975), pp. 7-30. This volume will later be identified as *Early Years*.
13. *The Shorter Oxford Dictionary* Vol. 1 (1933), p. 382.
14. Frank Giordano Jr., "Hardy's Farewell to Fiction: The Structure of "Wessex Heights," in *The Thomas Hardy Year Book*, No. 5 (1975), pp. 58-66.
15. J. Hillis Miller, " 'Wessex Heights': The Persistence of the Past in Hardy's Poetry," *Critical Quarterly*, Vol. X (1968), p. 351.
16. *Life*, p. 209-210.
17. Bailey, p. 276.
18. I disagree with Professor Giordano who believes that the "figure against the moon" is Eustacia Vye of *The Return of the Native*. He suggests this possibility because of the location of the figure on the heath—a heath which Professor Giordano believes to be Egdon Heath.
19. *Life*, p. 27.
20. *Early Years*, p.46.
21. Bailey, p. 278.
22. Professor Pinion told me in August, 1978, that the story was the fantasy of a very eccentric old lady and a country vicar, both of whom had reputations as local gossips. This was confirmed by Professor Michael Millgate.
23. By professor Bailey most notably, as well as by Lois Deacon and Terry Coleman (authors of *Providence and Mr. Hardy*).
24. Again, Professor Bailey suggests that this ghost is Tryphena Sparks, while Robert Gittings speculates that it may be Elizabeth Bishop, daughter of a gamekeeper of Hardy's acquaintance.
25. *Life*, p. 210.
26. This was a story passed down in the family of Ford Maddox Ford and commented on by Gittings in *Later Years*, p. 81.
27. Professor Wilson, investigating the manuscript version of "Wessex Heights" in Dorchester, made note of this fact and his findings were reported in *TLS*. (23 June, 1972), p. 719.
28. Miller, p. 348.
29. Evelyn Hardy and F.B. Pinion (eds.), *One Rare Fair Woman* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1972), p. xxxlv.
30. *Life*, p. 254.
31. Hardy and Pinion, p. xx.
32. *Life*, p. 286.
33. *Life*, p. 413.