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HARDY'S PROSPECTS AS A TRAGIC NOVELIST

THE TERMS UNDER WHICH Thomas Hardy can be considered a tragedian are becoming more and more problematic. In his lifetime and for some time after, he was called "tragic" because the critics then concentrated upon the grandeur of his conceptions, the lowering gloom of his atmospheres, and the courage of his characters unable to avoid being destroyed by Fate or Chance.¹ In the 'twenties and 'thirties an interest in the spirit of science brought approval to Hardy by critics who saw his plots "in terms suggestive of physics and dynamics"; the dominant position of A. C. Bradley in Shakespearean criticism and a simplistic Aristotelianism encouraged readers of Hardy to see that the first "five books [of *The Return of the Native*] are like the five acts of a classic play".² With the rise of rhetorical criticism and the demand for formal unity—two results of the rigorous scanning performed on individual works by the "New Critics"—Hardy's star as tragic writer declined precipitously, as techniques that previously had drawn praise were scorned for their ineptness. Bareness of motivation, rough-hewn and mechanical plots that lumber to what seem to be predetermined conclusions, commitment to a certain philosophy—these accusations have debased his currency.³ To a surprising degree, Hardy has become small change in the "economics" of scholarship despite his attractiveness to psychological and imagistic critics like Guerard and James Scott.⁴

But the same New Criticism which contributed to Hardy's decline is also responsible for a rejuvenation of interest in the "tragic" as a quality in literature apart from the manner in which certain pieces of literature employ methods that are present in classical masterpieces. Critics who have applied New Critical standards to generic investigation have located the "vision" or "spirit" of tragedy not in forms but in recurrent concerns that the *substance* of the work possesses. Ironically, this sort of analytical criticism is far kinder to Hardy than the sort that demands total linguistic cohesion, which the school of New Criticism that these tragic theorists spring from had insisted upon before awarding its gold stars.

The most controversial modern writer on tragedy is Joseph Wood Krutch, whose regretful but unceremonious burial in 1929 of tragedy as an active genre in the modern world is probably responsible for the formulation of the theories that defend the existence of tragedy. Krutch does not refer to Hardy in his essay on "The Tragic Fallacy" in *The Modern Temper* (New York, 1929), but ironically Hardy comes fairly close to supplying an example of the potentiality of tragedy in modern times. To use Krutch's terms, Hardy believes in man even if he cannot believe in God. Though Krutch believes that modern tragedy is debilitated because man can no longer believe he is the centre of a universe governed by meaningful laws, Jude, Tess, Eustacia, and Henchard quite clearly experience in their ends "one of those splendid calamities which in Shakespeare seem to reverberate through the universe". Though in Hardy's view the universe is a calamitous place to exist in, his protagonists are equal to the demands. Tess shows an ability to suffer "more than she can bear", Eustacia commits suicide rather than give in to the universe's pressures to become less than a "splendid woman", and Jude kills himself in defiance of a life made empty by Sue's apostasy.

And in an oddly paradoxical way, Hardy's heroes do live—as Krutch insists a tragic hero should — in a "world which he may not dominate but which is always aware of him", though it is a truism that Hardy's universal forces are unconscious and think no more of man than of plants. Despite its ostensible unconsciousness, Hardy's universe operates in such a way that man does become its centre, its measuring device. Hardy remarks in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* that man is always superior to his environment, and thus no man receives less than he deserves. And as Roy Morrell has somewhat scatteredly shown,⁵ Hardy's characteristic protagonist follows a course that shows his life "not to be merely an accusation against, [but] a justification of, the world in which it occurs" (Krutch, p. 138). Foolishness and failure to act cause tragedy in *Tess* and *Jude*, a refusal to look at the truth causes tragedy in *The Return of the Native*, choices made in *The Woodlanders* cause that novel's tangled lives and the actions that lead to the denouement, and of course *The Mayor of Casterbridge* traces the career of a man impelled by his very character to take actions the least to his own advantage. They thus merit their fates, and justify God's ways to man. Every novel of Hardy's satisfies "the universally human desire to find in the world some justice, some meaning, or, at the very least, some recognizable order", though that order and justice may be uncongenial and harsh, assessing cruel punishment for the least misstep; but with the possible exception of *Jude*, every novel

of Hardy's, like every "real tragedy, however tremendous it may be, is an affirmation of faith in life, a declaration that even if God is not in His Heaven, then at least Man is in his world" (Krutch, p. 125). The death of Tess especially affirms this. Tess accepts her fate as just, and so does Angel; yet Angel goes on with Liza-Lu to find a life for themselves, perhaps together. Jude, though, at least partially denies this aspect of faith in life, though Jude proves equal to the challenge of existence as he interprets it. (Perhaps it is an inability to affirm again, in another novel, that drove Hardy away from fiction to other genres, where he gave the affirmation in different ways—for example, through the Spirit of the Pities and through the Chorus at the end of *The Dynasts*.)

If we are to apply definitions of tragedy in a hard-and-fast manner, however, perhaps Hardy would be excluded from Krutch's because of his view that the higher mental life, the Immanent Will, is unconscious, even though the operation of the Will is not greatly different from that of Fate or the gods in *King Lear*. William Van O'Connor, another theorist like Krutch skeptical about the possibilities of tragedy in the modern age, combines historical and substantive arguments. "If a glance at individualism in Greece and Elizabethan England indicates serious defects in our [modern, un-tragical] society one at least is this: Individualism has been either unrestricted or all but totally repressed. There has been no sustained effort to cultivate restricted individualism, that in its flowering rises above mind to spirit. Dramatic tragedy has not flourished in any other soil".⁶ But, as with Krutch's ideas, Hardy fares rather well under O'Connor's jurisdiction. Certainly Hardy tills the "ideal" soil for tragedy: restricted individualism. His characters have "freedom",⁷ but it is a freedom modified by external circumstances, such as the moral codes of the society, the necessity to submit to natural power to gain a measure of happiness and content, and the restrictions imposed on action by other characters' free choices. It is less clear whether Hardy deals with the "flowering" of restricted individualism that O'Connor looks to; Hardy's genius lies more with the concrete, even though symbolic and expansive, than with the subtly intellectual or with the "spirit". In *Tess* Hardy surpasses nearly all limitations that had existed previously in his art; indeed, that book's central expression is spirit, and spirit is released in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and perhaps in *Jude* and *The Return of the Native* as well. But the major degree of "spirit" in Hardy's works other than *Tess* depends upon the receptivity of the reader, rather than, as O'Connor intends, upon the communicableness of the narrator.

The most stimulating of recent theories on the tragic spirit, and in some

ways the most challenging to apply to Hardy, is that by Richard B. Sewall.⁸ Sewall's analysis is sensitive and too complex to be fully paraphrased here; but for our purposes it is sufficient to give one of his central criteria for tragedy, that the universals in conflict in the work of art must remain in perpetual and ambiguous tension—not in a state of balance,⁹ and certainly not in a resolvable form. What the tragic writer imparts is his sense of ineluctable bafflement at the true conditions of life; to make judgments is to simplify, and thus to falsify.

On the face of it, this paraphrase of Sewall's idea would appear to exclude Hardy from any possible Sewall canon of tragic writers. For if a century of journalistic and academic writing about Hardy has taught us nothing else, it is that he is a writer of "ideas," who wants to persuade readers of the adequacy or even superiority of his versions of social law and "divine" justice. To the present day, critics as a matter of course refer to Hardy's "attacks upon," "diatribes against," and "excoriations of" religious precepts and social mores. But in the greater novels, Hardy manages his art so that the ideas themselves are constantly under fire. They are treated with irony, modified and even shown false by the context in which they occur, or contradicted by the outcome of the novels. To put it briefly, Hardy is indeed a writer of doctrines, but he is not a *simple* writer of *simple* doctrines. Rather, his skepticism extends to himself as much as to others. Moreover, it is commonly forgotten—because it has been so hard for the Mandarin literary intelligence for the past century to accept—that Hardy is primarily an artist, not a propagandist. Hardy was aware of the difference, and it was this that made him so furious and discouraged that people insisted on "tagging" him with a pseudo-philosophical label, as "pessimist," "fatalist," and so forth. He frankly and repeatedly denied claims to intellectual consistency, declaring in the prefaces to *Late Lyrics and Earlier* and to *Jude the Obscure* that he wrote "impressions" and trusted that whatever consistency they bore with each other would be made clear through a perusal of the entirety of the work in hand. In other words, in considering the "tensions [ambiguities] of tragedy," that are difficult to sustain,¹⁰ it is relevant that Hardy's reliance upon "impressions" allows him to form the tragic tension simply by adhering to the exigencies of his own nature. His nature tends toward universal skepticism, as I have already indicated—skepticism toward the meaning or stature of "bad" as well as of "good," and so the tension is irresolvable. Even in *Jude*, when Jude's despair about his personal life overrides his own intelligence, the tension is maintained because the personal despair is not borne out by his—and Hardy's—look into the future fifty years hence. On the other hand, the optimism implicit in Hardy's meliorism is severely restricted

by the immediate evidence that a most worthy person has made so little progress toward the presumably attainable Utopia.¹¹

Explicit or tacit in the plethora of modern theories on the tragic, including the representative ones of O'Connor and Sewall, are two further ideas as to what is necessary for a literary work to be "tragic." One is that the suffering leads to education, or insight into some sort of immanent truth or immutable condition of existence that transcends mere material surroundings or restrictions, frequently referred to as the "discovery" of the particular work. Concomitant to this requirement is a second: that the artist make evident that he himself is aware of the immensity of the confrontation, even though his characters (as in Faulkner) may not be. The "insight" usually is implied; does it not become the "theme" or "moral," if indeed tragedy can be said to have a "theme" other than man coming face to face with the fact of existence in all its ambiguity and fearsomeness. When this insight is expressly delineated, as it is in *Adam Bede*, the work takes on a moral tone that diminishes it as tragedy because we are forced to absorb intellectually the insight rather than to intuit it. (In the case of *Adam Bede*, the "tragedy" is almost entirely formal, in its display of the educative process; it never rises, as greater tragedy does, to apprehension of insights that cannot be communicated linguistically.¹²) Both the insights and the sense of confrontation are frequent in Hardy's works, and are the more successful when they are not given with ponderous self-consciousness by the narrator as they are in *The Return of the Native*.

What distinguishes Hardy as an expresser of tragic vision is the variation in emotional and aesthetic context that he employs. Whether it was because he lived in a skeptical age, because he was a deracinated heathman in an increasingly urban society, or because he could not overcome a native diffidence, no one can say; but, although Hardy was unremittingly serious and level-visioned in his posture toward the unknowable in human and universal affairs, he felt no necessity to restrict himself to a tone of high seriousness in expressing his vision. There is no felt obligation to dignify his protagonists beyond their deserved stature, to either romanticize, aggrandize, or pardon their failings. They are, simply, individuals caught in a web of interrelated lives and influences, as we all are—as Hardy himself was, who attempt to make their way in the most satisfactory way they see before them. (This is not to say that they or their traits are not universal or that Hardy does not turn their travails into encompassing *exempla* of the most ostensibly ennobling sort.) There is also no felt necessity to employ a single, most appropriate "tragic" technique or form. Each of his novels comprises a separate experiment in form. Thus

the difficulty in trying to define a "model" to fit Hardy's works.

A condensation—and probably unjustifiable simplification—of modern theories on tragedy would read something like this:

An individual, caught in the conflicting claims of freedom and necessity, is made by the suffering and agonizing (either mental or physical, but essentially mental in its climactic moments) to perceive an underlying rationale (i.e., justification) for the suffering he is experiencing, and also for the action he has undertaken that has led to that suffering. He must see this rationale in relation to universals—e.g., God or Law.

This definition—which, far from being innovative, restates the essential matter of traditional definitions—seems operable. It implies that tragedy is suffused by an awareness that there is no such thing as an accident. Insofar as a thing is accidental, or gratuitously motivated as the result of a deed of a secondary character (instead of being the result of a facet of the secondary character's personality that is germane to the personality of the sufferer), the piece is the less tragic, the less resonant with significances, the less relevant to the audience's perception of themselves in the action and situation of the "drama." The absence of accident in the tragic existence does not mean that the individual is master of his fate in the total sense that he can prevent, or bring to a halt, the suffering he undergoes in the time-and-space world of the story. Mrs. Yeobright cannot prevent the adder from biting her, nor can Tess be blamed because her confessional letter to Angel has been slipped under the carpet. But Mrs. Yeobright's impulsive flight from Clym's house that has exhausted her, and Tess' timorous insistence that she tell all to Angel rise from their inner natures. The adder and the placement of the carpet so close to Angel's door have no existence independent of the human personalities they interact with, and become adjuncts to. Even Egdon Heath, often—and meretriciously—considered a "character," only sets a scene or situation, in much the same way that the plague-ridden Thebes does in *Oedipus Rex*, or provides a context for the *agon* in the same manner as the storm-battered heath in *King Lear*.

The "freedom and necessity" in the definition refers to the conflict between free will and the necessary consequences subsequent upon an act of free will. The "necessity" is not necessitarian, not fatalistic, but logical in the sense of cause-and-effect. No act that is meaningful to man's comprehension of his state of existence can be thought to be independent of its causal antecedents.¹³ The tragic hero, then, comes to recognize (or, in some situations, just to express) the generalized significance of these "consequences" of an action he has

materially contributed to, or serves as a judge upon, or which judges his own selfhood (as in *Adam Bede*). The particular significance will vary, according to the conditions of the work, as in *Middlemarch*, *The Brothers Karamazov*, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, or *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, but the upshot is the same: the justifiability of intense experience depends upon the dignity and perspective of a man whose actions are not inconsequential, actions which indeed affect the web of the universe, since the logic of the premises I have sketched requires that all existence have an inherent interrelationship and unity. Likewise, to turn the equation around, the consequential man can become the locus of a tragic expression (i.e., the formulator of a tragic action) only if he can experience intensely, or, what is equally important in fiction at least, if he can sustain an intense analysis or rendering by the author.

This element of "intensity" is the crucial quality in the tragic personae. Unless the protagonist(s) can feel deeply, and unless the author is able to make us feel that the protagonist is feeling deeply and suffering keenly, the reader is unlikely to become involved enough to catch a glimpse of the nature of existence that propels the protagonist. There is no limit to the methods by which the author can create this intensity—it is surely present in *Oedipus Rex* or *The Mayor of Casterbridge* as it is in *The Brothers Karamazov* or *Hamlet*—and so my stressing this point should not be construed as an advocacy of one sub-genre of tragedy over another, "tragedy of character" over "tragedy of plot" or "tragedy of circumstance." In Hardy the intensity of a character's perception of his situation is the principal bolstering factor in his expressing an element of tragic existence. Indeed, without this factor Eustacia could not begin to be taken seriously as a confronter of nature's enigma, much less as a character whose creator intended her to create empathy. With *Tess*, Hardy's noblest and most original creation, it is almost solely her intensity of consciousness that makes her more than a Chance-blasted milkmaid.

I believe that the condensed definition of tragedy that I have offered has peculiar relevance to all of Hardy's tragic novels, especially to the most problematic of them all, *The Return of the Native*. As the fine psychological analysis by Charles Child Walcutt shows,¹⁴ the characters' motivations are remarkably closely related. Clym and Mrs. Yeobright are both self-destructive, as is Eustacia in a different manner; Wildeve, I might add on my own account, impulsively causes his own death at the weir-pool. To go still further beyond Walcutt's argument, it can be seen that Eustacia and Clym have inextricably similar positions in regard to the heath, or, more broadly, to their situations. Neither is happy, neither reflects fully his environment, both want to change

it, and both frustrate themselves more than being frustrated by someone else—Clym by marrying the unsuitable Eustacia and by reading too much and by alienating Eustacia by working on the heath; Eustacia by exchanging Wildeve for Clym on an ill-thought-out premise and by marrying Clym and by failing to care enough about her situation to make up with Mrs. Yeobright. There are also of course forces working against both of them, including the accusatory Mrs. Yeobright and Wildeve's waverings.

Apparent breaks in the cause-and-effect logic lessen the "education" the protagonists and audience undergo. The atmosphere of pervasive coincidence, climaxed by the intricate comings-and-goings outside Clym and Eustacia's cottage on the day of Mrs. Yeobright's belated visit, is difficult to overcome, as attested by the fact that almost all critics decry the implausibility of this concatenation of circumstances. But no critic who refers to the novel closely denies that the actions of each character are adequately motivated. Critics who criticize Hardy on the basis of this scene, but who yet admire him as a "tragic" novelist, are being inconsistent. No one carps at Sophocles for the delicacy of language that permits Jocasta to refer to the death of her first husband at the meeting-spot of three roads and that permits Oedipus to remember, after all these years, this circumstance in his battle with Laius that had had no significance to him before. There are, of course, differences in the conventions of the use of coincidence in fiction and drama; but with Hardy, as with Sophocles, the tragic vision incorporates this sense of closeness, of interrelatedness of actions and words and meanings. At least part of what makes tragedy is the horrific-ness of decision-making in a situation or world-view that permits no incidentals. What seems accidental—Clym's murmuring "Mother" in his dream-obsessed sleep of exhaustion—is an index to the cohesiveness of his life that he is trying to deny by marrying Eustacia over his mother's objections and by allowing the schism with his mother to remain despite his affection for her that—it would appear—is deeper than his love for Eustacia.

The novels by Hardy are distinguished by their frank show of intellectuality and their simple directness of narration, a combination responsible for the aura of sophisticated folklore that Hardy so often achieves. They also make an environment compatible with the momentousness of tragedy. These conditions differ sharply from those in Conrad and Faulkner, two other modern novelists who have attempted, and in varying degrees succeeded in composing, tragic fictions. The latter writers' subtleties of style and presentation of philosophies evoke more complex reactions than do Hardy's qualities, though it has been argued that subtleties like theirs diffuse reader involvement rather than

encourage it, that their characters and situations are too sharply individualized to achieve the kind of reader abandonment of self that is needed for the profound empathy of tragedy.¹⁵

The extent of Hardy's efforts—and perhaps his success—as tragedian is suggested by the perennially enlarged body of literature on Hardy's "tragedies". Scarcely a book on Hardy lacks a section on tragedy, from the first by Lionel Johnson to the greatly respected academic study by Beach to the latest, semi-pedagogical studies by Carpenter and Howe.¹⁶ Few articles reach their conclusions without having employed "tragedy," "hero," "tragic flaw," "fall," or some other such term, even though the articles and books may well be on quite different topics than tragedy or have quite different emphases. Certainly not lacking in the crowded literature on "the tragic novelist Thomas Hardy" are general theories to explain the tragic atmosphere characteristic of Hardy. To the most able of these—Beach's entire book, John Paterson's "*The Mayor of Casterbridge as Tragedy*," and Harvey Curtis Webster's rebuttal to Paterson¹⁷—future critics are in great debt, for they have provided important clarifications of Hardy's uniqueness. I am perhaps in greater agreement with Webster, who offers an eclectic and humane analysis of the basic confrontation between man and environment, than with Paterson, who argues that classical allusion and traditional setting establish the primacy of a natural law that Henchard can violate and thereby bring about his own doom; but both views have much to recommend them. Webster approximates my own view, which is that absoluteness is fatal to tragedy, as it is to all non-propagandist art, and that Hardy thus succeeds (*when* he succeeds) through his ability to carry forward in dramatic tension opposing concepts and to keep both concepts viable in characterization and action.

Even with the number of reports on Hardy's tragedy, and efforts to relate Hardy to traditional views of tragedy—classical, Elizabethan, Christian, naturalistic—there remains much to be said. Alterations in mood or in handling of subject; the idea of a sequential development in tragic characters, situations, settings, from the first to the last "tragic" novel; experimentation in technique; differences in the "tragic action" from one novel to the next; explanations for the tragedies *manqués*—all these matters, and more, remain unresolved, and some of them unexplored or even unnoticed in critics' and readers' fascination with more exotic themes. In a word, what has gone unexplored is the *form* of Hardy's tragic novels; Beach's classification of them as "chronicle," "cinematic," and "dramatic" is enlightening and stimulating but is of only limited aid in understanding them. Broad classifications indicate general qualities but

overlook the finer features of form that ultimately determine reader reaction and the unique effects of the individual novels.

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FOOTNOTES

1. Critics who have carried on this initial reaction, which is probably the most instinctive and thus in a certain sense the most human and literary, are Carl Weber, esp. in *Hardy of Wessex* (New York, 1940, 1965); David Cecil, *Hardy The Novelist* (London, 1943), and Harvey Curtis Webster, in *On a Darkling Plain: The Art and Thought of Thomas Hardy* (Chicago, 1947), and in his long letter to the editors of *Victorian Studies*, IV (September, 1960), 90-93, esp. 92. It should be noted that while Webster explicitly eschews New Criticism, and while his is a traditionalist if non-formalist view, his statement in the letter as to what is tragic in Hardy's novels is not far from what I would expect from Richard B. Sewall (for whom see below in text).
2. Both quotations in this sentence are from Joseph Warren Beach, *The Technique of Thomas Hardy* (New York, 1922), pp. 94, 97, the most influential critic of Hardy until Albert Guerard. Beach's judgments were repeated by a generation of commentators and teachers.
3. See Frank Chapman, "Hardy the Novelist," *Scrutiny*, III (June, 1934), 22-37; Arthur Mizener, "Jude the Obscure as Tragedy," *Southern Review*, VI (1940), 193-213 [revised and reprinted in *The Sense of Life in the Modern Novel* (Boston, 1964)]. Even Albert Guerard in *Thomas Hardy: The Novels and Stories* (Cambridge, Mass., 1949) seems surprised that such a clumsy writer could write novels he can admire.
4. One can see in the chapter on Hardy by George S. Fayen, Jr., in *Victorian Fiction: A Guide for Research*, ed. Lionel Stevenson (Cambridge, Mass., 1964), pp. 349-87, the number of critical and scholarly projects that has occurred to one mind alone. (Among other *desiderata*, Fayen calls for a study of Hardy's idea of "tragedy" [Fayen, p. 385].)
5. *Thomas Hardy: The Will and the Way* (Kuala Lumpur, 1965).
6. William Van O'Connor, *The Climates of Tragedy* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1943), p. 3.
7. Hardy's idea of free will is a moot issue, probably not finally definable. But it is instructive to look at the view of John Stuart Mill, the thinker who after Darwin had the strongest lasting influence upon Hardy's ideas and phraseology. In the *Autobiography* Mill compresses his opinion in order to state briefly the formative stages in his life:

I perceived, that the word Necessity, as a name for the doctrine of Cause

and Effect applied to human action, carried with it a misleading association; . . . I saw that though our character is formed by circumstances, our own desires can do much to shape those circumstances; and that what is really inspiring and ennobling in the doctrine of freewill, is the *conviction that we have real power over the formation of our own character; that our will, by influencing some of our circumstances, can modify our future habits or capabilities of willing*. All this was entirely consistent with the doctrine of circumstances, or rather, was that doctrine itself, properly understood. From that time I drew, in my own mind, *a clear distinction between the doctrine of circumstances, and Fatalism*; discarding altogether the misleading word Necessity. The theory, which I now for the first time rightly apprehended, *ceased altogether to be discouraging*, and besides the relief to my spirits, I no longer suffered under the burthen, so heavy to one who aims at being a reformer in opinions, of thinking one doctrine true, and the contrary doctrine morally beneficial. (John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography and Other Writings*, Riverside Edition, ed. Jack Stillinger [Boston, 1969], p. 102; italics and ellipsis mine.)

See also "Liberty and Necessity" in *The System of Logic*, and "Of Individuality" in *On Liberty*, for longer discussions by Mill of this idea.

Since Hardy was also under the influence of less benign observers of the limitations upon human choice, such as Matthew Arnold and Leopardi, it is not reasonable to expect to find all features of Mill's definition of free will within Hardy's works. Nonetheless, the idea of "circumstances" in Hardy obviously loses some of its bleakness in the context of Mill's definition. Hardy's proud claim that he knew *On Liberty* "almost by heart" (*Later Years*, pp. 118-19) needs to be applied to his concept of free will as much as it does to his independence of thought (see Carl J. Weber, *Hardy of Wessex*, 1965, p. 41).

Unlike Mill, Hardy did not give up the term, nor even the idea, of Necessity (see *Later Years*, p. 128); he was also fond of fatalistic metaphors, as this one from his *Notebooks*, ed. Evelyn Hardy (London: Hogarth, 1955), p. 32:

October 30th [1870]. Mother's notion (and also mine)—that a figure stands in our van with arm uplifted, to knock us back from any pleasant prospect we indulge in as probable.

But he also held in his conscious philosophy to a limited free will at least until 1914 (*Later Years*, pp. 162, 165-66). After 1914, his remarks were more clearly deterministic (*Later Years*, pp. 271-73).

In sum, it is probably wisest to avoid dogmatism about the degree or intensity of Hardy's belief in free will. He himself claimed to use "impressions" while writing, with no pretension that the totality of his impressions

constituted a consistent philosophy. What this leads to, in the context of fiction's plotting and characterization, is *de facto* free will and meaningful choice between alternatives that can be either well or ill understood by those who face the choice.

8. *The Vision of Tragedy* (New Haven, 1959).
9. As Henry Alonzo Myers, *Tragedy: A View of Life* (Ithaca, New York, 1956), argues.
10. See Sewall, p. 81; also fn. 77.
11. This is the resolution that I think Arthur Mizener has all the evidence to make, and probably could have made had he not been writing at a time when Hardy's reputation as a thinker was at its apogee, however amateurish an expressor he was thought to be.
12. See E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (New York, 1927), pp. 128-33, for a discussion of *Adam Bede's* limitations as "prophecy." Forster's remarks apply equally to "tragedy."
13. What I mean here is developed at length by George Levine, "Determinism and Responsibility in the Works of George Eliot," *PMLA*, LXXVII (1962), the clearest and most sensible treatment of this basic problem in tragedy (and fiction) that I know of.
14. *Man's Changing Mask: Modes and Methods of Characterization in Fiction* (Minneapolis, 1966), pp. 162-74.
15. See John Paterson, "Hardy, Faulkner, and the Prosaics of Tragedy," *Centennial Review of Arts and Sciences* (Michigan State University), V (Spring, 1961), 156-75, for a fuller discussion of stylistic differences that make Hardy's novels more successful as tragedies than Faulkner's. Bonamy Dobree's analysis of the centrality of plot in creating the tragic mode is a broad and theoretic elucidation of Aristotle that substantiates Paterson's more detailed exploration (*The Lamp and the Lute* [Oxford, 1929], p. 31).
16. Lionel Johnson, *The Art of Thomas Hardy* (London, 1894, 1923); Beach [see n. 2]; Richard C. Carpenter, *Thomas Hardy* (New York, 1964); Irving Howe, *Thomas Hardy* (New York, 1967).
17. John Paterson, "The Mayor of Casterbridge as Tragedy," *Victorian Studies*, III (December, 1959), 151-72; Webster's rejoinder is in the letter to the editors of *Victorian Studies* that I refer to in n. 1. Paterson's reading of *The Return of the Native* uses the same method of analysis as his reading of *Mayor*, though he does not label *Native* a "tragedy"—"The 'Poetics' of *The Return of the Native*," *Modern Fiction Studies*, VI (Autumn, 1960), 214-22.