CHAPTER IV

HARDY'S TREATMENT OF TRAGEDY
IN
THE WOODLANDERS (1887)

I

Hardy had a special weakness among his novels for

The Woodlanders and "in after years he often said that in
some respects The Woodlanders was his best novel". ¹

Elsewhere he notes: "On taking up The Woodlanders and
reading it after many years I think I like it as a story, the
best of all. Perhaps that is owing to the locality and scenery
of the action, a part I am very fond of. It seems a more
quaint and more fresh story, than The Mayor, and the characters
are very distinctly drawn.²

¹ F. E. Hardy: The Life of Thomas Hardy, p. 195.
² Ibid., p. 358.
Hardy thus seems to have derived considerable satisfaction from the story, the scenery and the characters of *The Woodlanders* and, at the very beginning of the novel, he notes the possibility of a tragic story unfolding itself amid this scenery: "It was one of those sequestered spots outside the gates of the world where ....... from time to time, dramas of a grandeur and unity truly Sophoclean are enacted in the real, by virtue of the concentrated passions and closely-knit interdependence of the lives therein"3(p.10).

Evelyn Hardy sees in this passage "the force of Hardy's antithesis — in this essential contrast of the homely with the grand, the minute with the vast, the temporal with the eternal; in this way he tethers our emotions while projecting our imaginations through space onto distant battlefields, to the Polo, or into stellar crevasses".4

As in *The Return* the emphasis is once again on passions and it would seem that *The Woodlanders* was modelled on what Hardy once wrote about Tragedy, a few months before the publication of *The Return*: ".......Tragedy should arise from the gradual closing in of a situation that comes of ordinary human passions, prejudices and emotions, by reason of the characters taking no trouble to ward off the disastrous events produced by the said

3 Thomas Hardy: *The Woodlanders*, London, Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1961. All further page references will be to this book.
passions.  

Joseph Warren Beach, however, thinks that it is the want of those concentrated passions that give their grandeur to Sophoclean tragedy, as they do to the tragedy of Bystacia Vye, of Jude the obscure.  

He goes on to say that "Edred Fitzpiers and Felice Chamond are persons of weak character and voluptuous imagination who suffer themselves and cause pain to others...... But in neither case are we given the impression of a large and deep nature capable of the stirring of a grand passion."

Quite true, but how about the passion that Marty harbours for Giles or the passion that Giles harbours for Grace? It would be wrong to dismiss them as mere sentiments as Professor Beach does. The passion that Marty harbours for Giles has a grandeur of its own though it is quiet and unobtrusive and so it is with the passion that Giles harbours for Grace. These are grand passions and in the course of this chapter it will be shown that the tragic predicament of Marty and Giles is due to the fact that "they take no trouble to ward off the disastrous events" produced by the said passions. The tragic machinery of the tale is heightened by "the question of matrimonial divergence,

5 F.E. Hardy: The Life of Thomas Hardy, p. 120.
the immortal puzzle — given the man and woman, how to find
a basis for their sexual relation .... the depravity of the
erratic heart who feels some second person to be better to
his or her tastes than the one with whom he has contracted
to live.......

Thus in a way, The Woodlanders looks forward to Jude the
obscure, where the same problem is tackled without mincing
matters, boldly and courageously. The marriage between, Grace
and Fitzpiers is a mismatch, and even when she returns to
Fitzpiers a second time after Giles' death, they are not
going to live happily ever after. In the novel Hardy merely
hints at it, but in a letter he makes this point more explicit:

"You have probably observed that the ending of the story —
hinted, rather than stated — is that the heroine is doomed to
an unhappy life with an inconstant husband. I could not
accentuate this strongly in the book by the reason of the
conventions of the libraries, etc. Since the story was written
however, truth to character is not considered quite such a
crime in literature, as it was formerly, and it is therefore
a question for you whether you will accept this ending or prefer to
obscure it."

7 Thomas Hardy: The Preface to The Woodlanders, p.5.
8 F.E. Hardy: The Life of Thomas Hardy, p.222.
From "something rotten" in the town of Casterbridge to the sylvan surroundings of The Woodlanders is a step away from the "madding crowd". Here again the harmony between the plot and the background is almost complete, and the woodlands are unobtrusively knit into The Woodlanders. But there is a new aspect to the familiar trees and woods, for these, as well as Mother Nature, are hostile in behaviour and intent. The tree which John South has watched since it was a sapling "threatens his life" and seems to possess the intention of "dashing him into the grave" (p.97).

"Here, as everywhere, the Unfulfilled Intention, which makes life what it is, was obvious as it could be among the depraved crowds of a city slum. The leaf was deformed, the curve was crippled, the taper was interrupted; the lichen ate the vigour of the stalk, and the ivy slowly strangled to death the promising sapling" (p.56).

9 "So permeating is the atmosphere of the trees that you can define the characters in terms of it: Felice Charmont at one extreme 'the wrong sort of woman for Hintock, hardly knowing a breath from a weakness'; and at the other Marty, a child of nature, skilful and patient whose ear can catch the first musical sighing of the young fires which even Giles, the unrivalled planter of them does not notice."
Arthur MacDowell : Thomas Hardy : A Critical Study, Ch. IV.
A new and ominous note has crept into the treatment
of nature in English literature. It is not Wordsworthian
dification of Nature, it is the "survival of the fittest" in
Nature.

This is true of the human beings that inhabit the woodlands.
The good but the weak (Giles) pass away, the bad but the strong
(Fitzpiers) survive.

What strikes us most about these characters in *The Woodlanders*
is their consciousness of class. The characters, from the social
point of view, are graded with an extreme nicety: Marty, the
cottage girl; Giles Winterborne, the yeoman; Melbury, the timber
merchant; his daughter Grace, who has received a culture that
balances her in mid air, between two levels of society; young
Dr. Fitzpiers, the gentleman of old country stock, but a
professional man for all that; and Mrs. Charmond, the great lady
of the place, though a Bohemian in her nature. Here is a group,
and even (leaving out the paternal Melbury) a chain of lovers,
each bound somehow to the next above.

These characters are not only acutely conscious of
class distinctions, they are also neurasthenics, suffering from the
modern disease of the mind. This is true of Grace Melbury, Felice
Charmond and Edred Fitzpiers.
Hardy increasingly felt it to be an injustice that the nervous system had developed to an alarmingly high degree in creatures never intended to bear the consciousness of pain. Here this conviction is personified by Grace Melbury, tormented by her husband's infidelities and the equivocal position in which she is placed by his disappearance. Hardy calls her "an impressionable creature, who combined modern nerves with primitive feelings, and was doomed by such coexistence to be numbered among the distressed and to take her scourgings to their exquisite extremity".10 (p. 306).

Here is Sue Bridehead foreshadowed. We have had the "modern face, and "modern spirit" and now we have "modern nerves".

The true woodlanders, Giles Winterborne and Marty South are not neurotics. As tragic protagonists of the novel they partake of the same quality of self-destroying impulses as do the tragic protagonists in Hardy's other novels. In fact, Marty South has strong kinship with Tess, whereas Giles Winterborne is made of the same stoical stuff as Gabriel Oak, though he carries his stoicism rather far and becomes in the end the instrument of his own death.

10 Cf. Henry James' heroines, sensitive and fine yet a bundle of nerves, Isabel Archer, for example, in the Portrait of a Lady.
As in *The Return*, the plot is rather weak, but there is compensation by way of beautiful vignettes of the woodland. As Irving Howe says: "Indeed, the biggest weakness of the novel is a lack of organic connection between plot and picture. Plot goes its own trundling way, while the picture is often very beautiful."

Melbury, the timber merchant, as possessive a father as Mrs. Yeobright, a mother in *The Return*, harbours high hopes and aspirations for his only daughter Grace, who has received schooling in town. But he is sad to think that he has to give up this prized possession to uneducated, uncultivated Giles Winterborne, who is in apple and cider trade, according to a promise that he had made to stone for the wrong done to Giles' father. The party that Giles gives in the hope of "hastening on things" with Grace is a humorously horrible failure and soon Melbury realizes that his prize piece is too good to be wasted on Giles and orders Grace to have as little to do with Giles as possible.

Giles not only loses the girl but loses his dwelling place as well, for it depended on the life of Marty's father. John South, John South's life in turn, depended on a tree: "The shape of it seems to haunt him like an evil spirit" (p. 97). He says that it is exactly his own age, that it has got human sense, and sprouted

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11 Irving Howe: *Thomas Hardy*, p. 103.
up when he was born on purpose to rule him and keep him as his slave. Giles cuts it down on Dr. Fitzpiers' advice and immediately afterwards John South dies.

As Giles goes out of Grace's life, Dr. Fitzpiers comes in. He is an interesting philanderer, a versatile student, numbering among his subjects alchemy, astronomy, astrology, literature, metaphysics and anatomy, with a keenly appreciative, modern unpractical mind and a real taste for abstract philosophy. As a philanderer he has kinship with Sergeant Troy but compared to Fitzpiers, Troy appears in a better light for he at least loved Fanny Robin truly. But Fitzpiers flits from one piece of feminine flesh to another. It does not take him long to break down Grace's defences though she tries her best to maintain her solid regard for Giles. Immediately after he has had Grace in his arms at the midsummer Eve manoeuvres, he is chasing Suke Danson, "a hoydenish village maiden" (p. 154) with bare arms, into a hayfield where they spend the night under the midsummer moon.

Fitzpiers' love for Grace is little but physical desire touched up with the bait of Melbury's money. He is not only a philanderer but a snob as well, and considers marriage with Grace a social lapse. However, the marriage does take place and Fitzpiers' snobbism infects Grace and she feels superior to Giles at his cider making.
After Fitzpiers meets Felice Chamond, not only a boyhood acquaintance but a kindred spirit, romantic, idle daring, Grace's marriage goes to the rocks. Fitzpiers elopes with Mrs. Chamond to the continent and Giles comes back into Grace's life a second time. Both hope that a divorce can be obtained against Fitzpiers. Here Giles shows almost superhuman restraint in his relationship with Grace; for Grace, thinking the divorce is as good as got, wants him to be loving to her, while he having had information that it cannot be obtained, but not daring to shatter her hopes, must needs refrain.

After the attempt at divorce has failed, Melbury asks his daughter to go back to Fitzpiers, who has returned to the woodland after the death of Mrs. Chamond in the continent. For once, Grace defies her father and runs away when she hears her husband's voice, and takes shelter in Giles' hut. Giles, in spite of an illness that he hides from Grace, sleeps outside in the rain to shield her name, and so comes to his death—killed as "Grace realizes by "cruel propriety" (p. 322). Fitzpiers now re-moons Grace with skill and patience but ultimately it is the skilful use of the man-trap by Hardy that brings them together.12

This surrender wipes Grace out of the picture and we are left with

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Marty mutually faithful to the memory of Giles. And the novel closes with Marty mourning over the grave of Giles Winterborne — a passage of beautiful poetry.

III

The Woodlanders is the novel that most comprehensively expresses Hardy’s feeling towards agricultural life. The woods are not only dark and deep, they are lonely too — one of those sequestered spots outside the gates of the world. The seasons pass visibly through the woods, and Hardy notes them as they go: it is winter evening when the story opens; suddenly spring is there, so that “the rush of sap in the veins of the trees” (p.139) can almost be heard; soon it is summer and the woodland seems to change from an open filigree to a solid opaque body of and infinitely larger shapes/importance; then early autumn with orchards encrusted with scarlet and gold fruit under luminous

13 The effect of this loneliness on Dr. Fitzpiers: “...the loneliness of Hintock life was beginning to toll upon his impressionable nature .........The spot may have beauty, grandeur, salubrity, convenience; but if it lack memories it will ultimately pall upon him who settles there without opportunity of intercourse with his kind” (pp.128-129).
lavender mist, and late Autumn, with fallen leaves getting redder and rotting underfoot; and so to Winter again, and March and May and June and on to the wet cold second Autumn.

Like the Heath in *The Return*, there is a permanence about this woodland, untouched by the inroads of modern scientific advances. There is not only a sense of loneliness, there is a sense of nostalgia as well; yet one feels something like exultancy in the nostalgia: "Day after day waxed and waned; the one or two woodmen who sawed, shaped, or spokeshaved on her father's premises at this inactive season of the year, regularly came and unlocked the doors in the morning, locked them in the evening, supped, leant over their garden-gates for a whiff of evening air, and to catch any last and furthest throb of news from the outer world, which entered and expired at Little Hintock like the exhausted smell of a wave in some innermost cavern of some innermost cleft of an embayed sea ......." (pp. 177-178).

The true inhabitants of this woodland are one with it, with its sights and sounds, its myths and fables, fears and superstitions. Marty South and Giles Winterborne, Farmer Cawtree and Tim Tangs, Robert Creedle and Grammer Oliver are very much a part and parcel of this woodland, whereas Edred Fitzpiers and Pelice Charmond are alien intruders, "Mephistophelian Visitants", 
Hardy would have called them.\textsuperscript{14}

Giles and Marty feel perfectly at home at Little Hintock for, as Hardy points out, they have "an almost exhaustive, biographical, or historical acquaintance with every object, animate and inanimate". They "know all about those invisible ones of the days gone by, whose feet have traversed the fields which look so grey from his windows; recall whose creaking plough has turned those sods from time to time; whose hands planted the trees that form a crest to the opposite hill; whose horses and hounds have torn through that underwood; what birds affect that particular brake; what bygone domestic dramas of love, jealousy, revenge, or disappointment have been enacted in the cottages, the mansion, the street or on the green" (pp. 123-129).

Time seems to stop as Grace listens to Fitzpiers "while he drew from her father and the bark-rippers sundry narratives of their fathers', their grandfathers', and their own adventures in these woods; of the mysterious sights they had seen — only to be accounted for by supernatural agency...." (p. 143).

Here Hardy seems to penetrate to the very heart of the woodland, as it were, and gives us a very idyllic picture indeed. As he himself says: "It was a pleasant time. The smoke from the little fire of peeled sticks rose between the sitters and the\textsuperscript{14}

14 The spirit of a place invading and invaded, as O’Neill might put it: a "tragedy of ancient and modern life".
sunlight, and behind its blue films stretched the naked arms of the prostrate trees. The smell of the uncovered sap mingled with the smell of the burning wood, and the sticky inner surface of the scattered bark glistened as it revealed its pale madder hues to the eye" (pp.143-144).

This passage has an old-world atmosphere about it, an attempt to recapture the "tender grace of a day that is dead", we, seem to be indeed, "outside the gates of the world", with its fever and fret of life.

But there are sadder pictures too. This one for example, Grace and her father looking for Fitzpiers: "They halted beneath a half-dead oak, hollow and disfigured with white tumours, its roots spreading out like claws grasping the ground. A chilly wind circled round them, upon whose currents the seeds of a neighbouring lime-tree, supported parachute-wise by the wing attached, flew out of the boughs downwards like fledglings from their nest" (p.219).

Or this one, when Melbury sets out to look for Giles:
"...on a rainy evening when the woods seemed to be in a cold sweat; beads of perspiration hung from every bare twig; the sky had no colour, and the trees rose before him as haggard, grey

15 Cf. Henry James' identification of corruption in the sophistication of Europe.
phantoms whose days of substantiality were passed" (p. 232).

And this picture of the wood after Giles' death: "The whole wood seemed to be a house of death, pervaded by loss to its uttermost length and breadth. Winterborne was gone, and the copse seemed to show the want of him; those young trees, so many of which he had planted, and of which he had spoken so truly when he said that he should fall before they fell, were at that very moment sending out their roots in the direction that he had given them with his subtle hand" (p. 336).

IV

As a tragic protagonist Giles Winterborne shows the same self-destroying impulses as Clym Yeobright and Michael Henchard. There is much that is fine in Giles, and Lascelles Abercrombie is one of the first critics to notice this: "The steadfast lover, so faithful that personal disappointment is of no account matched with the welfare of the beloved, is the natural flowering here of plain heroic magnitude of mind"; of a life whose whole conduct is simple unquestioning patience, a tolerant fortitude
deeply rooted in the earth, and directly nourished by the imperceptible vigours of impersonal nature." 16

But modern critics like George Wing and Irving Howe find him rather insipid. As George Wing says: "He belongs to that race of the astonishingly good Hardyan characters who live in an astonishingly evil and hostile world. Apart from Marty and Tess, such characters are male, but curiously unmasculine men; not sexually perverted but lacking in aggressiveness; in sex conflict they are out-manoeuvred, and their attractive women are often disappointed by their passive chivalry: a little more caddishness and assertiveness at opportune moments would have paid dividends. They are too honourable, too self-effacing, too long suffering ........." 17

Irving Howe says: ".......... the crucial scene in which the badly treated Giles Winterborne lies shivering with fever outside his own hut because, having yielded it as a shelter for Grace Melbury, he does not wish any word of scandal to pass, seems close to absurd. And not only absurd. It induces in readers, unvexed by aspirations to saintliness, a response very different from that which Hardy intended: no one, neither man nor dog, should have to be that loyal". 18

17 George Wing: Hardy, p. 59.
18 Irving Howe: Thomas Hardy, p. 104.
Irving Howe here seems to miss the point of Hardy's portraiture of Giles, for loyalty here is self-destructive loyalty and George Wing seems to hit the point when he says: "......there is a flaccid, inhuman martyrdom in his restraint as he lies in the wet and cold outside the cabin he has surrendered to Grace".19

There are many other instances of his impulse towards martyrdom and self-sacrifice.

Early in the novel Hardy speaks of his "self-deprecatory sense of living" and after the failure of his party, the realization dawns on him that educated and cultivated Grace Melbury is much too high for his standard of living.

The fact is, Giles is too placidly good, for when Grace informs him "not to think too much of that — engagement or understanding, between us (them)" , he can only say, "'Very well' " and stay on on the tree whose branches he has been lopping. Here Hardy remarks: "Had Giles, instead of remaining still, immediately come down from the tree to her, would she have continued in that filial, acquiescent frame of mind which she had announced to him as final? If it be true, as women themselves have declared, that one of their sex is never so much inclined

19 George Wing: Hardy, p.61.
to throw in her lot with a man for good and all as five
minutes after she has told him such a thing cannot be, the
probabilities are that something might have been done by the
appearance of Winterborne on the ground beside Grace" (p. 100).

Even after he has lost his dwelling place and knows that
he will lose Grace as a consequence, "Winterborne subdued his
feelings, and from that hour whatever they were, kept them
entirely to himself" (p. 112).

From the above passages it would appear that the fatal
flaw in his character is his romantic idealism, a fineness
that militates against normal successful or happy living.

He suffers sorrow passively and one is reminded of Tess.
He relinquishes all claims on Grace even though she "was warming
to more sympathy with, and interest in, Winterborne than ever she
had done while he was her promised lover; that since his
misfortune those social shortcomings of his, which contrasted
so awkwardly with her later experiences of life, had become
obscured by the generous revival of an old romantic attachment to
him" (p. 115).

Winterborne however, is not aware of the change that
was taking place in Grace's heart and with his self effacing
nature effaces himself completely out of Grace's life: "From this day of his life onward for a considerable time Winterborne, though not absolutely out of his house as yet, retired into the background of human life and action thereof—-a feat not particularly difficult of performance anywhere when the door has the assistance of a lost prestige" (p. 116).

With all his self-destroying energy, Giles is above all a woodlander. Giles, in practice, represents the worth of the agricultural life and skills and the worthiness of the traditional virtues—chivalry, loyalty, devotion.

Giles is always associated with all that is plenty in agricultural life, apples and orchards and as "Autumn's very brother" (p. 213).

Here, for example, is Grace's first view of Giles after her return from school: "... standing, as he always did at this season of the year, with his specimen apple-tree in the midst, the boughs rose above the heads of the farmers, and brought a delightful suggestion of orchards into the heart of the town" (p. 40).

He is also portrayed as a master workman: there is a sort of sympathy between Giles and nature. 20

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20 Irving Howe calls it "the interpretation of nature and humanity". Irving Howe: Thomas Hardy, p. 104. Steinbeck has a few stories and novels of this kind, cf. To a God Unknown.
It is a pity that the object of his love, Grace Melbury, does not share his sympathy with nature, while Marty whose love for Giles is mute but steadfast is far closer to Giles in this respect than Grace. The casual glimpses which the ordinary population bestowed upon that wondrous world of sap and leaves called the Hintock woods had been with these two, Giles and Marty, a clear gaze. They had been possessed of its finer mysteries as of common-place knowledge, .........to them the sights and sounds of night, winter, wind, storm, and those dense boughs, which had to Grace a touch of the uncanny, and even of the supernatural, were simple occurrences whose origin, continuance, and laws they foreknew. They had planted together, and together they had felled; ........ They knew by a glance at a trunk if its heart were sound, or tainted with incipient decay; and by the state of its upper twigs the stratum that had been reached by its roots" (pp. 340-341).

As a tragic protagonist he is far above meanness and shows a quality of magnanimity not to be found in other characters. Then after Fitzpiers' disappearance, Melbury seeks him out and tells him he should have had Grace, this is his reaction.

21 "'Don't Brownley's farm-buildings look strange to you, now they have been moved bodily from the hollow where the old one stood to the top of the hill?'

She admitted that they did, though she should not have seen any difference in them if he had not pointed it out.

'They had a good crop of bitter-sweets; they couldn't grind them all.' He nodded towards an orchard where some heaps of apples had been left lying ever since the ingathering.

She said 'Yes,' but looking at another orchard.
"Winterborne was far too magnanimous to harbour any cynical conjecture that the timber-merchant, in his intense affection for Grace, was courting him now because that young lady, when disunited, would be left in an anomalous position, to escape which a bad husband was better than none." (p.285).

The supreme example of his self-sacrificing mood comes at the end of the novel, when he dies unprotected to shield Grace's good name, who has taken shelter in his hut: "The purity of his nature, his freedom from the grosser passions, his scrupulous delicacy, had never been fully understood by Grace till this strange self-sacrifice in lonely juxtaposition to her own person was revealed" (p.323).

In the modern context so much self-control and self-sacrifice appear uncalled for, and though Giles with his "freedom from grosser passions", is the very apotheosis of Victorian self-discipline, he is not heroic in the sense Hamlet or King Lear is. He lacks just that heroic grandeur, which is the hallmark of a tragic protagonist. This tragic grandeur is present in the character of Henchard and Tess. Henchard appears larger than

'Why, you are looking at John-apple trees! You know bitter-sweets — you used to well enough?'

'I am afraid I have forgotten, and it is getting too dark to distinguish.'

Winterborne did not continue. It seemed as if the knowledge and interest which had formerly moved Grace's mind had quite died away from her." (p.45).

About this passage Douglas Brown says: "The nerve of her insensitiveness to Giles and Giles' world has been touched" (p.82).
life in his blundering primitivity and his relentless struggle with forces within and without, Giles' struggle is mainly within his own soul. His mood of self-sacrifice is reinforced by his powers of self-control and only once do his defences break down and he likens himself to Cain. 22 Henchard and Tess show an intensity of passion which Giles lacks. As has been shown, the romantic idealist that he is, he finds himself in a tragic predicament because he does not "take trouble to ward off the disastrous events produced by the passion" he harbours for Grace.

V

Grace Melbury, led by her father, is partly responsible for Giles' tragedy. She is essentially her father's daughter and one is reminded of Shakespeare's Ophelia. 23 Here is not a tragic predicament as Giles', though occasionally in the novel

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22 "Winterborne, though fighting valiantly against himself all this while — though he would have protected Grace's good repute as the apple of his eye, was a man; and, as Desdemona said, men are not gods...... Since it was so — since it had come to this, that Grace, deeming herself free to do it, was virtually asking him to demonstrate that he loved her ......... he gave way to the temptation, notwithstanding that he perfectly well knew her to be wedded irrevocably to Fitzpiers" (pp. 299-300).
23 The fact that she assents to whatever her father says is due to a weakness in her character, of which Hardy speaks
she finds herself in tragic circumstances.

She is a rather sad example of what parental ambition has done to a simple, unsophisticated village maiden. Education in a big city has cut her off from the mainsprings of rustic life and at the very beginning of the novel, we realize that her world and Giles’ are poles apart: "........ where he was seeing John-apples and farm-buildings she was beholding a much contrasting scene: a broad lawn in the fashionable suburb of a fast city, the evergreen leaves shining in the evening sun, amid which bounding girls, gracefully clad in artistic arrangements of blue, brown, red, and white, were playing at games with laughter and chat in all the pride of life, the notes of piano and harp trembling in the air from the open windows adjoining. Moreover they were girls—and this was a fact which Grace Melbury’s delicate femininity could not lose sight of—whose parents Giles would have addressed with a deferential Sir or Madam. Beside this visioned scene the homely farmsteads did not quite hold their own from her present twenty-year point of survey" (pp45-46).

at the outset: “Her look expressed a tendency to wait for others’ thoughts before uttering her own; possibly also to wait for others’ deeds before her own doings. In her small, delicate mouth, which had hardly settled down to its matured curves, there was a gentleness that might hinder sufficient self-assertion for her own good” (p.42). She lacks that assertiveness and courage of conviction which characterize Bathsheba, Eustacia and Tess, and her self-assertion comes rather belatedly when her life has almost been ruined by the licentious Dr Fitzpiers.

24 "........cultivation had so far advanced in the soil of
She has thus inherited the consciousness of belonging to a superior social class from her father, and this is one of the reasons why her attitude to Giles is that of a friend and not of a lover.

Her interest in Giles wanes in the same proportion as her interest for Mrs. Charnond of the Great House and the philosophic Dr. Fitzpiers waxes. At the Christmas party given by Giles, though she does not openly criticize the rustic ways of his factotum, she behaves too much like a lady and does not exert herself to make the party a success. And her father is always at hand to sow seeds of dissension: "'It is hardly the line of life for a girl like Grace, after what she's been accustomed to. I didn't foresee that, in sending her to boarding-school and letting her travel and what not, to make her a good bargain for Giles, I should be really spoiling her for him'" (p. 82).

That is the truth: simple, unspoilt Grace has been too spoilt by her father to be the wife of homely Giles. It is he who prevents Grace, to settle down to the homely Hintock life. He is anxious not only of the effect rustic manners and seclusion from the nice world, may have on her — "her bounding walk becoming the regular Hintock shall-and-wobble" (p. 85) —

Miss Melbury's mind as to lead her to talk of anything save of that she knew well, and had the greatest interest in developing herself. She had fallen from the good old Hintock ways" (p. 47).
but of the formidable assimilating power of the earth, of which he himself is perfectly conscious. "We living here alone, don't notice how the whitey-brown creeps out of the earth over us!" (p. 95).

After a ramble in the woods where Grace is not treated as a lady because she is seen in the rough company of her father and not in the company of a squire or a parson, as Melbury wrongly thinks, he tries his best to sow in her heart cravings for social position, and is almost determined that she will not marry Giles Winterborne. All this leaves Grace very much troubled indeed: "She wished that she was not his worldly hope; the responsibility of such a position was too great .......
"If I had only come home in a shabby dress and tried to speak roughly, this might not have happened" (p. 93).

Though Melbury obtains a promise from Grace that she will not meet Giles again, he cannot prevent her from sighing of sympathy with Giles — "a sigh of sympathy complicated by intractability of circumstances" (p. 95).

What disappoints us in Grace is the way she follows her father's instructions like putty, given whatever would Mr. Melbury wants to. She does not take counsel from the furthest recesses of her own heart where true love for Giles resides. As she herself says: "For myself I would have married you — some day —
I think. But I give way for I am assured it would be unwise" (p. 99).

After Winterborne has effaced himself out of Grace's life and Dr Fitzpiers has usurped his position, we find that the sentiment that she had harboured for Giles has turned into pity, and admiration for Fitzpiers has taken its place. So she can say to Marty: "'Giles Winterborne is nothing to me'" (p. 148).

Though Fitzpiers gets Selbury's assent to pay court to Grace, she does not really love him: "She could not explain the subtleties of her feeling .... That Fitzpiers acted upon her like a drug, exciting her, throwing her into a novel atmosphere which biassed her doings until the influence was over, when she felt something of the nature of regret for the mood she had experienced ...." (p. 164).

Even after her engagement she is not in love with Fitzpiers. As Grace waits for the day of her marriage, "There was in Grace's mind sometimes a certain anticipative satisfaction, the satisfaction of feeling that she would be the heroine of an hour: moreover, she was proud, as a cultivated woman, to be the wife of a cultivated man". Everything had been clear then,

25 "'That was Giles', said Marty, when they had gone by. 'Was it? Poor Giles,' said she (Grace)" (p. 144).
in imagination; now something was undefined. She had little
carking anxieties; a curious fatefulness seemed to rule her
and she experienced a mournful want of someone to confide in"  
(p.179).

It is a different Grace that we see after her marriage.
It would seem that she has been infected with some of her
husband's snobbery. She feels superior to Giles, who is busy
superintending cider-making, as she sits in a room in a hotel
in Sherston Abbas: "Giles and all his belongings seemed sorry
and common to her for the moment — moving in a groove so far
removed from her own of late that she could scarcely believe
she had ever found congruity therein" (p.183).

This snobbery makes her open the window and address Giles,
who is cut to the quick by Grace's attitude. It is like rubbing
salt to old wounds.26

This marriage can not and does not last long, for very
soon Fitzpiers, the philanderer, falls a prey to Pelice
Charmond's charms and Grace finds herself in a graceless position —
"The scrupulous civility of mere acquaintance-ship crept into

26  "'Why do you call me?' he said, with a sternness that took
her completely unawares, his face being now pale. 'Is it not
enough that you see me here moiling and muddling for my
daily bread while you are sitting there in your success, that
you can't refrain from opening old wounds by calling out my
name?' " (p.183).
his manner" (p. 208).

It does not take Grace long to find out the cause of this change in her husband. But the revelation fills her with but mild anger. Hardy supplies the reason and gives us an insight into the true relationship between Grace and Fitzpiers: "It told tales of the nature of her affection for him. In truth, her ante-nuptial regard for Fitzpiers had been rather of the quality of awe towards a superior being than of tender solicitude for a lover. It had been based upon mystery and strangeness — the mystery of his past, of his knowledge, of his professional skill, of his beliefs. When this structure of ideals was demolished by the intimacy of common life, she found him as merely human as the Hintock people themselves ......." (p. 210).

A little later Hardy draws a beautiful picture of the bountiful earth and contrasts it with the blighted life of Grace: "In all this proud show some kernels were unsound as her own situation, and she wondered if there were one world in the universe where the fruit had no worm, and marriage no sorrow" (p. 212).

It is in this frame of mind she meets Giles and the effect is electric: "Her heart rose from its late sadness like a

27 Here, in a nutshell, is the very tragic sense in Hardyean novels. The protagonist fighting against some fatal flaw in his own character and also an essential evil in the very scheme of things.
released bough; her senses revelled in the sudden lapse back to Nature undecorated. The consciousness of having to be genteel because of her husband's profession, the veneer of artificiality which she had acquired at the fashionable schools, were thrown off, and she became the crude country girl of her latent early instincts" (p.313).

This is the moment of truth for Grace, the dawning of self-realization: "She had looked into her heart, and found that her early interest in Giles, Winterborne had become revitalized into growth by her widening perceptions of what was great and little in life. His homeliness no longer offended her acquired tastes; his comparative want of so-called culture did not now jar on her intellect; his country dress even pleased her eye; his exterior roughness fascinated her" (p.227). Grace's feelings thus undergo a transformation. She wants to draw closer to the soil of her birth, she wishes she were like Marty South. In deep anguish she cries out to her father: "I wish you had never sent me to those fashionable schools you set your mind on. It all arose out of that......" 28 (p.230).

After Fitzpieries elopes with Mrs. Charmond to the continent she thinks more and more of Giles: "There was, in truth, a

28 This is an example of romantic idealism with its corollary of frustration.
lovebird yearning to fly from her heart; and it wanted a
lodging badly" (p. 277).

Her heart does find a lodging and she is goaded by her
father to find this lodging — it is Winterborne’s much-scarred
heart once again. For Melbury has seen in their hearts the hope
of a divorce, and in her exultation at the freedom which is so
near at hand, she wants Giles to throw all scruples to the
wind and to love her as a man loves a woman. But her snobbery
still remains. This is evident from the depth of depression
in which she finds herself while dining at a scrupulously clean
and humble and inexpensive tavern in Sherton Abbess at
Winterborne’s suggestion: "He had noticed in a moment that she
shrank from her position, and all his pleasure was gone. It was
the same susceptibility over again which had spoiled his
Christmas party long ago" (p. 293).

Melbury’s mission to obtain divorce against Fitzpiers
is a failure and for the second time Grace leaves Giles under
her father’s instructions. But she does love Giles and on
learning about Fitzpiers’ impending arrival, she leaves the
house: "A Daphnean instinct, exceptionally strong in her as
a girl, had been revived by her widowed seclusion; and it was
not lessened by her affronted sentiments towards the comer,
and her regard for another man" (p. 307).
Chance brings her to Giles' hut and it is her "cruel propriety" as well as Giles' mood of self-sacrifice that makes Giles sleep outdoors under beating rain and cause his death; "her timid morality had indeed, underrated his chivalry till now, though she knew him so well." (p.323) Hardy also emphasizes the fact that "Grace had more of Artemis than of Aphrodite in her constitution" (p. 323). One wishes that she had more of Aphrodite and less of Artemis which might have saved Giles. The final ironic sneer lies in the fact that not long after the cabin-death scene, the lascivious Fitzpiers has won Grace back to him. The man-trap placed for Fitzpiers by Tim Tangs whose married life is embittered by Suke's pining away for Fitzpiers, serves in causing a moment of tense emotion which is necessary to get Grace and Fitzpiers round the point. It has the effect of rendering Grace's surrender less displeasing than it otherwise would have been. Nevertheless, the surrender wipes Grace out of the picture, not quite, for we know that this surrender would have its tragic reverberations and her life with Fitzpiers, who flits from one woman to another, will never be happy. The heroine is lost in an unheroic surrender and we are left face to face with Marty's boundless love for Giles.
The _Woodlanders_ is tragic but Grace does not have the necessary tragic grandeur.

VI

Marty South, on the other hand, has that grandeur. Uncommunicative, uncomplaining and unobtrusive, she stands head over shoulders above Grace Melbury. She ranks among the noblest of Hardy’s woman characters. According to Abercrombie she is by far the greatest and noblest of Hardy’s types of simple natured womanhood. Her psychology is an imagination as inspired as that of Eustacia herself; and for sheer beauty of character there is no one like her through all the Wessex Novels.” 29

Her steadfast love for Giles is in sharp contrast to Grace’s vacillations and snobbery. She is brimful of love for Giles but she keeps it to herself—in the innermost recesses of her heart, under lock and key, as it were. It is only at the end of the novel when Giles is dead and gone and Grace is carried away by Fitzpiers that she speaks

out her heart.

She is poor, but it is not poverty but a conviction that Giles is for Grace and not for her (p. 23) that makes her sell her abundant chestnut locks of hair to Barber Percumb.

From often working together among the trees, Giles and Marty have a vast common knowledge of nature's ways in woodland earth, but Marty's is the more delicate apprehension. It is she, for instance, who notices the young pines begin to sigh as soon as they are held upright: "'........they sigh because they are very sorry to begin life in earnest' " (p. 69). Giles must be a stumpy not to have fathomed the enormity of her love for him.

She is truly a daughter of the soil. Like Gabriel Oak, she knows every mood of the woodlands and she contrasts the pleasant life of the birds with her own sad life. Here is a fine passage: "She looked towards the western sky, which was now aglow like some vast foundry wherein new worlds were being cast. Across it the bare bough of a tree stretched horizontally, revealing every twig against the evening fire, and showing in dark profile every beck and movement of three pheasants that were settling themselves down on it in a row to roost."
'It will be fine to-morrow,' said Marty, observing them with the vermillion light of the sun in the pupils of her eyes, 'for they are crouched down nearly at the end of the bough. If it were going to be stormy they'd squeeze close to the trunk. The weather is almost all they have to think of, isn't it, Mr. Winterborne? And so they must be lighter-hearted than we.'" (p.73).

When her father dies and Giles Winterborne loses his dwelling place, Hardy remarks: "Everybody thought of Giles; nobody thought of Marty" (p.111). So true. She presents a picture of utter sorrow: ".....lying in her little bed in the silence of a repose almost as dignified as that of her companion—the repose of a guileless soul that had nothing more left on earth to lose, except a life which she did not overvalue" (p.111).

She has a wonderful vision of the woodland life, and even Grace Melbury acknowledges that at the end of the novel: "You and he (Winterborne) could speak in a tongue that nobody else knew—not even my father, though he came nearest knowing—the tongue of the trees, and fruits and flowers themselves" (p.341).

She merges herself completely with woodland life—it is the very breath of her life: "Marty South was an adept
at peeling the upper parts; and there she stood encaged
amid the mass of twigs and buds like a great bird, running
her ripping-tool into the smallest branches, beyond the
furthest points to which the skill and patience of the men
enabled them to proceed — branches which, in their lifetime,
had swayed high above the bulk of the wood, and caught the
earliest rays of the sun and moon while the lower part of the
forest was still in darkness* (p. 140).

But there is a touch of sorrow too, when she tells
Fitzpiers: " 'tis only that they've less patience with the
twigs, because their time is worth more than mine" (p. 141).
Sorrow is the word, for she seems to be the very apotheosis
of sorrow. As Abercrombie remarks: "Sorrow and bitter hard work
and humiliation have been with her all her life; but the
sweetness of her mind and the iron endurance of her spirit
are not to be hurt by such tings."

She is always "doomed to sacrifice desire to obligation" (p. 153) and is always to stand aside to enable Giles to woo
Grace. During the midsummer night manoeuvres Grammar Oliver
suggests "that she should walk forward at the heels of Grace,
and 'tote' her down the required way if she showed a tendency

to run in another direction" (p. 153).

There is much that is fine in Marty—her unselfishness and generosity touch our hearts: She would rather, see Mrs. Chamazon damned than let Fitzpiers ruin Grace's life by a passion most terrible. So she sits down to pen a letter to Fitzpiers declaring that the beautiful hair that adorns Mrs. Chamazon's head is not her own. But this trump-card that she plays—Hardy calls it "her only card" (p. 253)—is seen by Fitzpiers only after Mrs. Chamazon has carried him off to the continent. They eventually quarrel and Fitzpiers leaves her. But the damage to Grace has been done already and Marty, in her own sweet way, has tried to prevent it.

Hardy draws this beautiful character in very few lines and it is only at the end of the novel that she takes up her rightful place through the eyes of Grace: "Marty South alone, of all the women in Hintock and the world, had approximated to Winterborne's level of intelligent intercourse with Nature. In that respect she had formed his true complement in the other sex, had lived as his counterpart, had subjoined her thoughts to his as a corollary" (p. 340). And Grace is convinced that Giles should have married Marty, but the reply that Marty gives is imbued with a childlike simplicity, yet touched with sorrow—it takes us to the very core of Marty's tragedy: "'In all our
outdoor days and years together, ma'am, the one thing he never spoke of to me was love; nor I to him. " (p. 341).

Once Marty had tried to save Grace's marriage by penning that letter about her hair, now that Fitzpiers has come back a second time into Grace's life, she wants to make his course easier for him by telling him of Giles' generosity to Grace in giving up his house to her at "the risk, and possibly the sacrifice, of his own life" (p. 344); for when Fitzpiers had seen Grace by the dying Giles' side, he was given to infer the worst about her.

Marty has much more penetration than Grace. When she comes to pray with Grace over the dead body of Giles, and Grace says, "He died for me" Marty replies, "He belongs to neither of us now, and your beauty is no more powerful with him than my plainness. He never cared for me and he cared much for you but he cares for us both alike now."
(p. 341).

And when Grace objects that they must not pray for Giles' soul, Marty says, "Nobody would know", and Grace cannot resist the argument.

It is in the fitness of things that the novel closes with Marty for she is the only unflawed character in the novel. Hardy notices a certain sublimity in her character as she stands over Giles' grave: "As this solitary and silent girl stood there
in the moonlight ...... the marks of poverty and toil effaced by the misty hour, she touched sublimity at points, and looked almost like a being who had rejected with indifference the attribute of sex for the loftier quality of abstract humanism" (p. 379).

The immortal passage in which she speaks her love over Giles' grave is a testimony not only to Giles' goodness but her own innate goodness of heart: "'.......whenever I get up I'll think of'ee, and whenever I lie down I'll think that none can plant as you planted; and whenever I split a gad, and whenever I turn the cider wring, I'll say none could do it like you. If ever I forget your name let me forget home and heaven! ...... But no, no, my love, I never can forget'ee; for you was a good man, and did good things! ' " (p. 390).

As R.A. Scott-James says: "Marty's patient love serenely in the background throughout the story, breathed only to the young larches, is immortalized in the book's silences and in the lyrical whispered cry with which it ends."

VII

Felice Chamond and Edred Fitzpiers do not belong to the woodlands. In fact they help to ruin its peace. They have come from an urban environment and spell ruin for the tragic protagonists. 32

Both of them are romantics, and emotional and highly strung, and that explains the attraction one has for the other. Both of them are acutely class conscious, and their snobbery envelopes the woodlands like "miasmatic fog" — infecting the simple unsophisticated lives of the woodlanders.

Like all his "foreign" characters, who enter the paradisial Wessex land to disturb and destroy its serenity, Felice Chamond has come from, and is going, abroad; furthermore she has an Italianate nature.

There is an aura of mystery about her but in her feelings and emotions she is but human: "........though behind those deep eyes was a mind of unfathomed mysteries, beneath them there

32 Very often in Hardy's tragedies evil comes to the rural environment by the effect of the city, emblematic of modern life, which brings to some sequestered corner the fatal whiff of alien mores. This may act either through a city person (Troy, Fitzpiers) who is an "outsider" or from within a person (town upbringing) for example Eustacia, Bathsheba (with a weakness for sophistication).
beat a heart capable of quick, extemporaneous warmth — a heart which could indeed be passionately and imprudently warm on certain occasions" (p. 44).

She finds life in Little Hintock boring enough, "She has been used to such wonderful good life" and finds it dull here" (p. 44) and she concedes that the woodland life plunges her to the depth of inertia : " 'I am the most inactive woman when I am here,' she said, 'I think sometimes I was born to live and do nothing, nothing, nothing but float about, as we fancy we do sometimes in dreams' "(p. 64).

That she has a heart that can be passionately and imprudently warm is evident from the fact that she takes a fancy to Grace but when she realizes that Grace might be a rival in looks, and hence in love, she ceases to care for her.

The relationship between Felice Charmond, the capricious hedonist and Fitzpiers, the licentious physician with metaphysical yearnings is a counterpoint to the relationship between Grace and Giles. Irving Howe calls this relationship "a romance of candy sticks". 33

"Romance of candy sticks" may be; but under frivolous archness she hides passions of no mean strength — "strange,

33 Irving Howe: Hardy, p. 104.
smouldering, erratic passions, kept down like a stifled conflagration, but bursting out now here, now there—the only certain element in their direction being its unexpectedness" (p. 201).

Fitzpiers is borne along on the crest of these waves of passion with disastrous consequences, for Felice Charmond "was a woman of perversities, delighting in piquant contrasts. She liked mystery in her life, in her love, in her history." (p.202).

She is a woman of moods, gay and frivolous today, steeped in melancholy tomorrow: "The morning had been windy, and little showers had scattered themselves like grain against the walls and window-panes ....... Felice was in a little boudoir or writing-room on the first floor, and Fitzpiers was much surprised to find that the window curtains were closed and a red-shaded lamp and candles burning, though out of doors it was broad daylight. Moreover a large fire was burning in the grate, though it was not cold.

'What does it all mean?' he asked......

'O,' she murmured, 'it is because the world is so dreary outside! Sorrow and bitterness in the sky, and floods of agonized tears beating against the panes .......O! why were
we given hungry hearts and wild desires if we have to live in a world like this?" (pp. 203-204).

Fitzpiers, on the other hand, is more subtly drawn, a capable man forced to live in the woodland. He is a doctor of no mean promise but the flesh is weak and so he flits from one piece of feminine flesh to another.

This is how Hardy describes him: "Either from his readily appreciative men, or his reflective manner, his presence bespoke the philosopher rather than the dandy —...... he seemed likely to err rather in the possession of too many ideas than too few; ............he was undoubtedly a somewhat rare kind of gentleman and doctor to have descended, as from the clouds, upon Little Hintock" (pp. 106-107).

It is on his advice that Winterborne cuts down the tree and it kills John South but he is more interested in life than in death. So with perfect nonchalance he asks Winterborne: "'Who was the young lady we looked at over the hedge the other day?" (p. 109).

The irony is that he meets Grace before he meets Felice, and because his love must have lodging, it lodges in Grace.

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34 This is what he says to Grammer Oliver, which is reminiscent of what the rustic chorus say about Damon Wildeve in The Return: "'I was made for higher things'" (p. 33).
He explains it like a philosopher: ".....people living insulated, as I do by the solitude of this place, get charged with emotive fluid like a Leyden jar with electric, for want of some conductor at hand to disperse it. Human love is subjective thing — ...... it is joy accompanied by an idea which we project against any suitable object in the line of our vision, just as the rainbow iris is projected against an oak, ash, or elm tree indifferently. So that if any other young lady had appeared instead of the one who did appear, I should have felt just the same interest in her ...." (pp.121-122).

But he wants to do better things than get married and settle down. But when Grace comes to his cottage on Grammer Oliver's behalf, we find that he is as adroit a flatterer as Sergeant Troy of Far From The Madding Crowd. But then his flattery is mixed with philosophy while Troy's is not and hence goes down better: "I fancied in my vision that you stood there, 'he said, pointing to where she had paused. 'I did not see you directly, but reflected in the glass. I thought, what a lovely creature! The design is for once carried out. Nature has at last recovered her lost union with the Ideal" (pp.133-136).

Though Grace attracts him, he does not think of marriage just yet, for he is terribly class conscious: "'This phenomenal
girl will be the light of my life while I am at Hintock; and the special beauty of the situation is that our attitude and relations to each other will be purely casual. Socially we can never be intimate. Anything like matrimonial intentions towards her, charming as she is, would be absurd. " (p. 133).

He ultimately marries Grace for her money, but once Felice Charmond enters the orbit of his life, the marriage goes to the rocks. After Mrs. Charmond's death, his interest in Grace is renewed because as Hardy puts it — "the man whom Grace's matrimonial fidelity could not keep faithful was stung into passionate throes of interest concerning her/avowal of the contrary" (p. 342).

Whether he is as repentant as Angel Clare is doubtful, but the fact that he manages to win back Grace leaves a bad taste in the mouth and Hardy hints that their marriage is a mismatch.

For all his faults, Fitzpieris is not the villain of the piece and Hardy has tried to justify the abnormal propensities of his character by making him out to be a philosopher: "Fitzpieris was in distinct degree scientific, being ready and zealous to interrogate all physical manifestations; but primarily he was an idealist" (p. 133).
But the trouble is that, as an idealist he is always in search of fulfilment of his Idea, first it finds its fulfilment in Grace, later in Mrs Charmond, and after she is dead and gone, back to Grace again.

When he speaks of a different kind of love for Grace, while re-wooing her, he appears stagey and hypocritical: "'It is a different kind of love altogether,' said he, 'less passionate; more profound. It has nothing to do with the material conditions of the object at all; much to do with her character and goodness, as revealed by closer observation.'" (pp 350-351).

It is strange that Grace succumbs to this "new kind of love".

VIII

We miss the rustic chorus of *The Return* in *The Woodlanders*, making shrewd comments on life and the tragic protagonists. Robert Creedle and Grammer Oliver are a poor substitute for Joseph Poorgrass and Mother Cusson. But there is one character who endeavours to give direction to the tragic current that
sweeps away Giles Winterborne and Grace, to some extent.
He is Mr. Melbury, Grace's father. Though he comes from the rural
stock he nurtures high social ambitions, if not for himself,
for his dearest daughter Grace. He sows seeds of culture in
Grace's simple unsophisticated heart with what disastrous
consequences, we have already seen. Mr. Melbury is a perfect foil
to Mrs Yeobright. The possessive mother of The Return has given
way to the possessive father of The Spenders. He thinks
he does everything right for Grace but knows not how much he
wrongs her. He has sent Grace to school, has made her
refined and cultured, yet she must marry Giles Winterborne,
for this is the only way in which Mr. Melbury can atone for
his falsity to Giles' father. But having seen that Giles'
rough life is too much for the refined Grace, he must now
encourage Grace to set her sights higher.

By his blundering idiocy and his feeling of social
superiority he does more harm to Giles and Grace than he is
aware of. After Fitzpiers has gone off-stage, Melbury asks
Grace to encourage Giles, even though he does not fully
believe that the marriage between his daughter and Fitzpiers
can be dissolved: "To put his long delayed reparative
scheme in train had become a passion with him now" (p. 283).

He gives Giles the cup to drink from but snatches it
away cruelly before he can do so, for the marriage between
Fitzpiers and Grace remains, and Melbury can only ask Giles to remove his arm from Graces'.

After Giles' death and Graces' illness, Melbury appears very much chastened indeed. He has had his lesson and is now a sadder but a wiser man: "'I shall never advise 'ee again. you are your own mistress — do as you like'" (p. 353).

"But let her bear in mind that the woman walks and laughs somewhere at this very moment whose neck he'll be calling next year as he does hers tonight" (p. 376). Wisdom has at last dawned on Melbury's one-way traffic mind.

IX

As a tragedy The Woodlanders is far from satisfactory for many of the elements of tragedy are missing.

Though Giles Winterborne, with his self-destroying impulses, stands out as a tragic protagonist in the same line as Clym and Eustacia and Henchard, and looks forward to Tess and Jude and Sue, The Woodlanders lacks those "certain cathartic effects" of which Hardy speaks in his preface to Jude. It may excite our emotion of pity but it does not excite our emotion of terror. Nowhere in the novel is the feeling that Giles is

35 Thomas Hardy: Preface to Jude the Obscure, p. vii.
caught up in the vast scheme of things — there is a not a single note of rebellion against Destiny — Hardy does not, as is his wont, thicken the plot with coincidences; and there is only one chance occurrence which has its effect on Giles’ life. This is, when he refuses to make way for Mrs Charming’s carriage: "Then occurred one of the very incidents against which the bells were an endeavour to guard ...... In fine, nothing could move him, and the carriages were compelled to back till they reached one of the sidings or turn-outs constructed in the bank for the purpose" (pp.101-102). In doing so he has lost the last chance of saving his dwelling place.

The tragedy in *The Woodlanders* is rather subdued. As Abercrombie says: "The tragedy of the book is subdued compared with that of *The Return of the Native*; but it has a terribly moving climax in the death of Giles and a close of keenest pathos, of sorrow intolerably sweet, in Marty’s lament over his grave."

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