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Unfolding the self : ideas of vocation in Jude the obscure and New Grub Street

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**Unfolding the self: Ideas of vocation in "Jude the Obscure" and
"New Grub Street"**

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San Jose State University, 1993

U·M·I

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UNFOLDING THE SELF: IDEAS OF VOCATION
IN JUDE THE OBSCURE AND NEW GRUB STREET

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of English

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Jo Ann Heydron

May, 1993

APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT

UNFOLDING THE SELF: IDEAS OF VOCATION IN JUDE THE OBSCURE AND NEW GRUB STREET

by Jo Ann Heydron

Jude the Obscure, written by Thomas Hardy and first published in 1894-5, and New Grub Street, written by George Gissing and first published in 1891, are found in this thesis to have similar plots and to share a theme and tone. The protagonists of both novels wish to pursue careers as classical scholars but find that class barriers and their own problematic temperaments prevent them from achieving success. Both have troubled relationships with women, and both suffer the deaths of their children before their own deaths, with which the novels end.

These novels test the validity of individualistic ideas about self-realization through vocation that were based in Puritan religious tradition and developed on a secular basis through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The protagonists' failures show the novelists' pessimistic views of the nature of human life and imply a philosophy in which art is the only vocation of any value.

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Chapter 1

The Possibilities

The instances of men, in this and other countries, who, by dint of persevering application and energy, have raised themselves from the humblest ranks of industry to eminent positions of usefulness and influence in society, are indeed so numerous that they have long ceased to be regarded as exceptional.

-- Samuel Smiles, Self-Help, 1859

Two celebrated novels of the late Victorian period, Thomas Hardy's Jude the Obscure, published in 1894-5, and George Gissing's New Grub Street, published in 1891, are tales of the general doom that befalls those who do not fulfill themselves in work. These novels differ significantly from High Victorian works such as Bleak House (1852-3) and Middlemarch (1871-2), which also include characters who fail to discover a life's work or pursue it with single-minded zeal. Hardy and Gissing do not lay the blame for the wasted lives of their protagonists on central flaws in their characters, as Dickens ultimately finds fault with Richard Carstone, or as George Eliot does with Tertius Lydgate. Gissing and Hardy show instead how societal constraints, and in particular how class barriers, make it difficult for talented but imperfect men and women to find any happiness by discouraging them from doing the work they are most fitted for. Nor do Hardy and Gissing balance the stories of their protagonists, Jude Fawley and Edwin Reardon, with the careers of characters who successfully struggle through processes of self-creation, as Dickens and Eliot do--

Dickens in the character of Dr. Woodcourt and Eliot more fully in Dorothea Brooke, Will Ladislaw, and Fred Vincy. Like Carstone and Lydgate, Reardon and Jude die at the end of the novels. Jude's and Reardon's deaths follow the deaths of their children, however, and are drawn as welcome ends to lives in which meaning has been desperately hard to find.

We find expressed in both Jude and New Grub Street a hunger for self-realization through work that is more intense than is characteristic of High Victorian novels, in which passion is as often invested in love or social outrage as it is in pursuing a vocation. We also find that the nature of vocational desire changes, becomes more personal. The protagonists in the novels I consider here want to locate what is essential in themselves and unfold it, rather than place their usefulness in the world above other considerations. If, as Richard Altick argues, "the Victorians revived a major principle of eighteenth-century literary theory: the inward-looking self must be effaced in favor of the outward view" (273), then Gissing and Hardy as late Victorians gave literary expression to a need to test the saving power of the interior life.

Along with this more intense hunger for personal vocation, we find a deeper despair over its frustration. Reardon's despair takes the form of self-blame, sometimes confounded with anger at his socially ambitious wife, but unalloyed with rage or rebellion against society. Jude tries to solace both his despair and the anger it arouses in the love of a woman as painfully unsuited to her lot in life as Jude is to his. Their relationship, rebellious in its unconventionality, fails to save either of them.

In the intensity of their desire to do personally meaningful work, Jude and Reardon reflect an attitude about vocation that is a consequence of the steadily inflating importance attributed to work and career throughout the nineteenth century and is based in the religious ethics of the two previous centuries. In their inability to weather vocational disappointments, these protagonists reflect a sense of the meaninglessness of life without vocation that is characteristic of the fin-de-siecle, in which the traditional comforts of religion and communal identity were turned to with confidence by fewer and fewer people.

It is significant, I think, that the work both Jude and Reardon would have preferred to do was classical scholarship, which would have allowed them to make mental excursions into a remote world where human life seemed to be a finer thing altogether, and where they believed that art, a vehicle for self-expression, was a primary value. Moreover, it would have provided them, in the institution of the university, with more insulation against the perpetual challenges to their value as people, to which they are both temperamentally very vulnerable, than the anonymity of the commercial world in which they work, Jude as a stonemason and Reardon as a professional writer.

In the work that follows I will elaborate the ideas about vocation that Jude and New Grub Street have in common and provide a historical summary of the traditions out of which Hardy's and Gissing's views arose. I will also attempt to account for the vastly different character of these two novels that share both a theme and a tone. I will further suggest that, in these extremely pessimistic works, the faith in art as a particularly

meaningful vocation, which came to provide a raison d'être for some artists and writers in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth, is implicitly, although reticently, endorsed.

Gissing's usual and Hardy's sometime categorization as writers of realist fiction gives us some reason to begin a study of the careers of their protagonists by considering the society, and particularly the economy, in which these protagonists would have come of age. Even if, as Max Weber believed, material conditions do not entirely determine people's lives and ideas but are embedded, along with the ideas, in a "unique cultural totality" (Giddens 3), Hardy and Gissing themselves lay great weight on the force of circumstances in their heroes' lives. In addition, both novels contain autobiographical material; this gives us further reason to be interested in their historical context.

Jude and New Grub Street belong to the end of a century during which the United Kingdom was the dominant force in world trade and the richest nation in Europe (measured in terms of gross national product per capita). British industry--concentrating on the production of inexpensive textiles, for which a wide market existed, and the metal products that it and other nations were using in volume to build an industrial base--made better use than other European nations of the technological developments of the last third of the eighteenth century that initiated what is called the Industrial Revolution. In 1890, when Gissing and Hardy were both in the middle of their careers, Britain's economic supremacy was just beginning to weaken: during the 1880s the United States surpassed the U.K. in GNP per capita (Crouzet 6-8). Behind the personal failures recounted in these

novels, then, and the frantic career building of Reardon's alter ego, Jasper Milvain, may have lain an awareness of declining or embattled national superiority which must have seemed as difficult to assimilate as our own shrinking industrial base seems to some United States citizens of the 1990s.

The largest effect of the Industrial Revolution, in Britain as in other industrializing nations, was the transformation of a predominantly agricultural economy which grew slowly and erratically to an economy whose leading sector was industry and whose growth was sustained and rapid (Crouzet 2). Simultaneously with this economic transformation occurred a dramatic rise in the population of Britain, from 10.5 million in 1801, to 29.7 million in 1881, to 37.0 million in 1901, the year Victoria died (Crouzet 20). Life expectancy increased from 40 for men and 42 for women born between 1838 and 1854 to 52 for men and 55 for women born between 1901 and 1912. Jude, whose dies in his late twenties in a novel we can assume to be set in the 1880s or 1890s, and Reardon, who dies in his thirties in a novel clearly set in the 1880s, both die well before their "time."

A growing economy was thus fueled by a growing work force and pool of consumers. The work taken up by this burgeoning Victorian populace changed over the course of the century, although not as dramatically nor as rapidly as one might think. According to social historian Harold Perkin, in 1840, three years into Victoria's reign but several decades into the Industrial Revolution, more people worked in agriculture than in "any single industry," and more people worked in domestic service than in factories of all kinds. The number of agricultural workers did not begin to fall until 1851, and the number of domestic workers did not begin to decline

until 1891. Factory workers, including miners, never did become a majority of the employed population (Perkin 86).

The manual working class as a whole (contrary to Marx's predictions) began to shrink as the century drew to a close, but still constituted the largest group of employed, declining from 82 percent in 1881 to 70 percent in 1931 (Perkin 96). Despite the growing size and influence of the middle class, "enormous differences of income and living standards between the base and the summit of the social pyramid" (Crouzet 15) continued to exist. According to Perkin, "even by the standards of the nineteenth century, probably between a third and a half of the population lived below the poverty line " (87). Working-class youth moved into the middle class somewhat more easily as the nineteenth century drew to a close because the mature industrial economy began to gradually shift to a service economy. Young men and women became "clerks, secretaries, salesmen, foremen and managers, teachers, nurses and [middle-class but nonentrepreneurial] professional people of all kinds" (Perkin 96). The society as a whole remained hierarchical and inegalitarian, but upward mobility was a possibility true in enough cases that it became a standard against which young people measured their success. Jude's and Reardon's ambitions were extraordinary only in the height of the leap they tried to make--from an orphaned country boy to a don in Jude's case, and from the son of a small-town photographer to a literary lion in Reardon's.

Improved educational opportunity during the last half of the century made some of this mobility possible and is of particular interest to our discussion of two novels about would-be scholars. Poor and working-class

children received such education as they got prior to 1870 from charity schools run by rival religious and philanthropic societies. Hardy, the son of a stonemason, attended such a school in Dorchester, run by the British and Foreign School Society, from 1853 to 1856, between the ages of 13 and 16, after which he was apprenticed (Gittings 24). Perkin attributes to Horace Mann the statistic that in 1851, one child in three under the age of 15 attended a day school. Perkin adds that working-class children (the vast majority of children, as we have seen) typically attended school for one or two years only. By 1901, most children had a school life of six or seven years (49).

After 1850, the state began to share in the cost of public education. In 1870 the state took on the burden of providing universal primary education, but it became free only after 1890. (Universal secondary education was not provided free of charge until 1944.) Jude, who would have been schooled after 1870, had the benefit of a philanthropic society of one, a schoolmaster willing to teach the poor and orphaned at night. Gissing, born into the lower middle class as the son of a pharmacist, was in danger of growing up unschooled following the death of his father in 1870. A subscription was raised for him and his two brothers, and they were sent to a school run by non-sectarian Quakers, which Gissing attended from 13 to 16. Brilliant and very focused, he then won a scholarship to Owens College, which Gissing biographer John Halperin says "offered something between a secondary and a university education" (15), and which Gissing hoped would prepare him for Oxford. He was suspended from Owens because of a complicated incident that involved the stealing of money from a locker room

to support a young prostitute he was in love with. Forced from the moment of suspension to earn a living, Gissing never attempted to resume his formal education. Reardon went to an "excellent local school" (Gissing, New Grub Street 87), but on graduating had no means to attend a university.

The universities which neither Reardon nor Jude and neither Hardy nor Gissing attended, but which loom so large in the imaginative life of the protagonists of these novels, were also changing rapidly during the last three decades of the nineteenth century. Medieval Oxford and Cambridge were "professional training schools for theologians" (Perkin 136). During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries they declined into institutions that were largely finishing schools for young gentlemen. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, however, they responded indirectly to the pressures of the Industrial Revolution.

New "civic" universities--for example, University College, London, founded in 1826, and King's College, London, founded in 1831--were the direct result of industrialization, created to meet the increasing demand for professional services. These alternative institutions introduced new subjects of study, particularly in the sciences, and, unlike Oxbridge, contained the facilities necessary for the development of these curricula. Oxbridge, however, had to supply most of the professors who taught in the new colleges. This required the opening up of Oxford and Cambridge to non-Anglicans in the 1850s and the abolition of religious tests and celibacy rules for dons in the 1870s. The traditional mode of teaching, in which a "recalcitrant and often anti-intellectual gilded youth" was paired with a

tutor who was his "guide, philosopher, and friend" was, nevertheless, largely retained (Perkin 142). Instead of becoming, in Perkin's terms, "mere training schools for the new capitalist bourgeoisie, . . . the sons of the bourgeoisie. . . [were] converted to the aristocratic, classically oriented values of Cambridge and Oxford" (142-3). Perkin makes this further fascinating comment:

Indeed, it might be said that two of the most significant features of later Victorian England, the smooth transition from an aristocratic to a plutocratic society dominated by a wealthy business class with traditional paternalistic ideas, and the not unconnected decline of the innovating entrepreneurial drive of British industry, were largely derived from the "civilization" of the high capitalist middle class by the public schools and the old universities. (143)

Jude and Reardon are neither of them sons of the bourgeoisie, but in longing to pursue classical scholarship, they may have been responding to prevailing attitudes that associated Oxford and Cambridge not only with the professional status that a university education helped one obtain, but with "a noble tradition which did much to put a touch of altruism and noblesse oblige back into the Victorian gospel of self-help" (Perkin 142).

Unfortunately, as the universities were opening up to the middle classes, they were becoming less accessible to the working classes. Between 1870 and 1920, there were "fewer poor students at Oxford and Cambridge than at any time in their history" (Perkin 142). The poverty clauses were removed from most scholarships, which were now awarded on the basis of merit (or achievement as opposed to aptitude) alone. We will see that this obstacle proves insurmountable for Jude.

It was essentially the division of labor, first used in factories--which Adam Smith held was essential to economic progress, since it resulted in the development of specialized skills--that multiplied the range of occupational choices available to British workers and made more widely available and more diverse education necessary. The working class began to undergo a stratification, ceasing to be the "indeterminate mass of 'labouring poor'" it was considered to be when the nineteenth century began (Crouzet 14). As the vertical ties of dependence and paternalism of the eighteenth century were gradually replaced by horizontal identifications of occupation, class awareness began to grow. As E. P. Thompson has chronicled in his book The Making of the English Working Class, this realignment of interests took place mainly during the years 1790-1830 and lay behind the Chartist and other working-class movements of the 1830s.

The gradual entry of some members of the working class into the middle class, together with the social reform programs and partial enfranchisements that took effect from the 1830s onward, probably account for the Late Victorian ascendancy of the Conservative Party, which held office for most of the period between the mid-1880s and 1940. Both Jude and New Grub Street, written during this period, are fundamentally conservative in their politics. Neither New Grub Street, in which "men of letters" barely hold onto their middle-class status and some, like Harold Biffen, sink irretrievably into poverty, nor Jude, in which a skilled artisan is eventually reduced to selling baked goods from his home, suggests that class solidarity offers any hope. However, both novels are highly class-

conscious. Their characters are acutely aware that they differ from their eighteenth-century forebears in the class mobility which is theoretically open to them and in the extreme precariousness of their status once they have improved it. They also find, as I will show, that self-improvement (what Samuel Smiles called "self-help," concentrating on the socially useful means rather than the potentially threatening end) is in their day both held up in theory and discouraged in practice.

At this point I wish to consider some of the ideas about vocation and social mobility at work in the Britain of Gissing and Hardy and to describe my own approach to the concept of vocation as it relates to these novels.

The concept of vocation was initially a strictly religious one. The word itself comes from the Latin verb vocare, to call, and referred to the action of God in calling a person to fulfill a particular function, usually within the Church and often involving a retreat from secular life. Not until the sixteenth century was it used to mean one's ordinary occupation. The notion of a particular role determined by God survives in another secular meaning of the word, "natural tendency or fitness" (OED). In the late-nineteenth-century novels I consider here, finding and pursuing a vocation becomes a center around which other self-actualizing projects congregate. Vocation and these other projects all ultimately become issues of freedom: the freedom to use one's "natural tendencies" in work for which one is recognized and paid; freedom of thought, especially to arrive at one's own moral code and act accordingly; the freedom to love whom one chooses whether or not that choice accords with marriage law and custom. In Jude, vocation becomes the symbol for a larger project that unifies all these

drives. Ruth Danon calls this project the "complicated problem of vocation and the integrated life" (157), but I prefer to think of it as "unfolding the self," a phrase which suggests to me not so much a problem to be solved as a process set in motion by the inborn integrity of the individual. He or she wishes to preserve this integrity, or state of unbrokenness, while finding both a vocational role and love in the world. This process can be aborted by the individual himself, as Reardon to some extent stands in his own way, or by society, which may take a shortsighted view of the efficacy of individuals realizing themselves--especially, in the Britain of the 1880s and 1890s, working-class individuals.

Max Weber's The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, first published in German in 1904-5 and in English in 1930, traces how the idea of Christian vocation became secularized and came to play a causal role in the transformation of traditional feudal economies into capitalist ones and in the successful combining of capitalism and technological development that produced the Industrial Revolution. His thesis, although much disputed, especially in its applicability to countries other than Britain, was determined by Alan Mintz to apply to the novels of George Eliot. In Mintz's book George Eliot and the Novel of Vocation, he argues that "the strain of Puritanism which had the most influence on . . . Eliot" (9) was the English Puritanism from which Weber drew many of his sources. One of these sources was the literary treatment of Puritan ideas in Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress, a work that figures importantly in Jude (and thus makes Weber important to this discussion) as it does in both High Victorian novels by Eliot and Thackeray and novels contemporary with Jude by

Meredith and Butler (Knoepfmacher 209). More important, Weber's description of the personal behavior of those operating under the "Protestant ethic" seems to have been represented quite fully in New Grub Street in the character of Milvain, in comparison to whom we evaluate Reardon. Weber's concluding statements also match the tone of both of the novels too closely to be ignored.

Martin Luther introduced the sense of the Latinate word vocation into the Protestant vocabulary, relying most heavily on the following passage from the Apocrypha:

Be steadfast in thy covenant, and be conversant therein,
And wax old in thy work,
Marvel not at the works of sinners,
But trust in the Lord, and abide in thy labour:
For it is an easy thing in the sight of the Lord,
on the sudden to make a poor man rich. (Ecclus. 11:20-22)

The key concept of "work" Luther translated as "Beruf." The word "calling" began to appear in English translations of the Bible in the first half of the sixteenth century (Mintz 8-9).

Luther's conception of calling was very much of a piece with his revolutionary understanding of grace as an unearnable gift from God. He believed the individual should remain in the "station and calling in which God had placed him" (Weber 79), limiting his work in the world only to those activities which would not alter his fundamental lot in life. Any alterations of his lot were to be the work of God.

Luther's belief in the absolute power of God to save through grace became for Jean Calvin the doctrine of predestination, a rationalization and systemization of what had been for Luther an "emotional" perception, not a

dogma to be carried to its natural conclusions or applied to others (Weber 102). The doctrine of predestination held that God, whose knowledge of all past, present, and future events was perfect, had foreordained some individuals to be saved by grace for eternal life and the rest to perish. Calvinism insisted on "the complete elimination of salvation through the Church and the sacraments" (104) that is central to Catholicism. Luther's promise of grace to those who trusted faithfully in God was now replaced for Calvinists by the ever-present anxiety that their salvation or damnation was out of their hands and could not be known for certain, an anxiety we will see mirrored in the fear of failure that is epidemic in Reardon's circle.

Ironically (I think), predestination again obliged the Christian to perform good works, a crucial point on which Luther had differed from Catholicism. Now the good works served two purposes. First, a person demonstrated his faith that he was among the elect by living a righteous life; the failure to live righteously would prove to his neighbors and himself that he was excluded from the elect. Second, the anxiety of not knowing his fate found an antidote in "intense worldly activity" (Weber 112). The world, created by Calvin's rational God in its "wonderfully purposeful organization and arrangement" (108), was not meant to be escaped from in the monastery, but labored in, for God. The Calvinist God "demanded of his believers not single good works, but a life of good works combined into a unified system" (117). God had prepared a calling for each person, on which his good works should be centered and to which he should devote himself with the same individualistic singlemindedness as Bunyan's Christian shows when he sets out on the road to the Celestial City (23),

running away from his family with his fingers in his ears so he cannot hear their cries. If a person prospered in his calling, even to the point of great wealth, this amounted to no more than additional evidence that he was indeed among the elect. Wealth was only a danger if it encouraged leisure. Indeed, if he accumulated wealth but still worked hard, practiced thrift, made purchases with only utility in mind, and saved or reinvested his excess capital, then there was nothing to fear. And so evolved, eventually, the "hard Puritan merchants of the heroic age of capitalism" (112).

Calvinism was of course only one of several streams of Protestantism that fed into the British ethos, but its ethic came to dominate, perhaps because it promoted the kinds of behaviors that made individuals successful. Weber pointed out that Calvin, for example, regarded the unequal distribution of goods as part of God's dispensation and held that "only when the people, i.e. the mass of labourers and craftsmen, were poor did they remain obedient to God" (177). This easily translated in capitalist economies to the theory of the productivity of low wages, in which workers were believed to work harder if they were paid less than if they were paid more. Working-class people, who tended to belong to Protestant sects less strictly Calvinistic than their employers' (139), thus found it difficult to accumulate any capital themselves. Biblical injunctions to forgive others out of the knowledge of one's own limitations could thus be easily set aside as less socially useful than showing contempt for those who through their personal failures exhibited the signs of damnation. Furthermore, Calvinist casuists held that the waste of time was in principle the deadliest of sins.

And the very notion of individual calling seemed to demonstrate the "providential purpose of the division of labour" (Weber 161), which Marx, John Ruskin, William Morris, and others believed was so destructive to the human personality.

As the religious underpinnings of "intense worldly activity" in one's calling began to be chipped away in the late eighteenth century (what Carlyle called in disgust the "Sceptical Century, in which word there is a whole Pandora's Box of miseries" 207), other rationales began to appear to fill in the gaps. From the vantage point of the late twentieth century, it looks as if it was the need to maintain, first, belief in the ultimate beneficence of capitalist expansion, and, second, the individual behavior so favorable to that expansion that necessitated the succession of ideologies that tried to take up where Calvinism left off.

In Utilitarianism, the progeny of Puritans might have found a philosophy well suited to their temperaments. As initially conceived by Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), Utilitarianism was based on the premise that self-interest is the only force motivating individuals, as Calvinist ethics were built on the need, above all, to prove oneself one of the elect. In the place of salvation, Utilitarians put pleasure: self-interest operated solely to obtain pleasure and avoid pain. Communal good resulted when corporate decisions were made to promote "the greatest possible happiness for the greatest number." Happiness was conceived, however, as an entirely material state, and it was here that Calvin's inheritors--for example, Carlyle--differed wildly from Utilitarians. Where were taken into account the nonmaterial satisfactions? In particular (for Carlyle), where was the

central and abiding experience of being called by God, or at the very least by a fidelity to one's own experience of the "inward sphere of things . . . the True, Divine, and Eternal, which exists always, under the Temporary and Trivial" (189), to a particular work in the world? Among more worldly critics of Utilitarianism than Carlyle, that movement's support of broad social reform, including universal suffrage, may have been reason enough to find other bases than material self-interest (for one's fellow laborers, if not for oneself) for commitment to vocation.

"Usefulness and influence" were the vocational goals held out by Samuel Smiles (1812-1904), an advocate of free trade and small government (that is, he was not a Utilitarian in his politics) who wrote laudatory biographies of great men for popular audiences. He is primarily remembered for his very successful Self-Help, the first edition of which appeared in 1859. This work typified the literature of "How to Get Ahead" and had "an incalculable effect on the ordinary Victorian's value system and moral orientation" (Altick 170). This work contains summaries of the lives of an astonishing number of men from all walks of life, both good and bad examples of the hard work and self-control Smiles preached. Self-interest was never absent in Smiles as a legitimate motivation, but it was subsumed, without any clear philosophical justification being given, in the satisfactions of contributing to and being respected by one's Nation: "National purpose is the sum of individual industry, energy, and uprightness, as national decay is of individual idleness, selfishness, and vice" (23).

What is most interesting in this book, when it is examined in the light of Jude and New Grub Street, is the rather vacuous nature of individual vocation. It almost does not seem to have mattered what a man did, so long as he did it with the proper degree of determination. No particular gift or talent or bent was as important as hard work, and almost any line of endeavor, pursued straightforwardly enough, resulted in usefulness and influence. Smiles, for example, paraphrased Sir Joshua Reynolds as follows: "He held that drudgery lay on the road to genius, and that there was no limit to the proficiency of an artist except the limit of his own painstaking" (353). Indeed, particular gifts could be wasted by men who lacked essential virtues. Smiles determined Southey to be more successful than Coleridge, who "wanted the gift of industry, and was averse to continuous labor" (369). Smiles' example of the stellar literary man was in fact Edward Bulwer-Lytton, who, in spite of the demotivating effect of family money, had "pluck and perseverance, . . . worked on, determined to succeed" (43). Because of Bulwer-Lytton's application, said Smiles, "there are few living English writers [in 1859 Dickens, Tennyson, and Thackeray numbered among the competition] who have written so much, and none that have produced so much of high quality" (43).

Education was for Smiles almost counterproductive:

Daily experience shows that it is energetic individualism which produces the most powerful effects upon the life and action of others, and really constitutes the best practical education. Schools, academies, and colleges, give but the merest beginnings of culture in comparison with it. (26)

And poverty, if it made one industrious, was an advantage:

Indeed, so far from poverty being a misfortune, it may, by vigorous self-help, be converted even into a blessing; rousing a man to that struggle with the world in which, though some may purchase ease by degradation, the right-minded and true-headed find strength, confidence, and triumph. (40)

Energy and perseverance in the face of adversity produced the Shakespeares, the Arkwrights, the Wedgwoods, the Faradays, the Napoleons, and so many other useful and influential men that Smiles' reader must have been convinced by the sheer bulk of the evidence that it was incontrovertibly possible to rise to the heights to which he aspired if only he applied himself. The huge majority of the British populace who never escaped manual labor (82 percent in 1881) apparently remained in the stations to which they were born because their characters were flawed--and here we can see what a small step it was across three centuries from Calvin to Smiles. Perhaps it was the failure of the poor to cultivate "good habits" that was ultimately at fault, suggested Smiles in the final chapter of the 1900 edition of his book, in which he insisted that "even happiness itself may become habitual" (425). It is difficult to imagine propaganda better suited to fuel the factories of mid-Victorian Britain than Smiles' Self-Help.

Social usefulness also lay close to the heart of the Positivism embraced by George Eliot and others. In Middlemarch the impulses that cause Dorothea Brooke to momentarily despair of her future at Lowick because "there was nothing for her to do" there (103) are for Eliot honorable impulses. Positivism, formulated by the French philosopher Auguste Comte (1798-1857), rejected revealed religion, substituting for it a faith in humanity and an altruism that gave deconverted Christians like Eliot a framework in which to practice or preach New Testament (and largely non-

Calvinist) ethics along with liberal politics. Finding a vocation under the umbrella of Positivism essentially involved matching one's inherent gifts to a project that would do some good in the world. Middlemarch, as Mintz has elucidated, traces the attempts of several characters to accomplish this demanding task. Dorothea emphasizes the difficulties of the task when she says early on of what Erik Erickson would call Will Ladislav's moratorium period, in which he is studying art in Europe without serious interest or intent: "After all, people may really have in them some vocation which is not quite plain to themselves, may they not? They may seem idle and weak because they are growing. We should be very patient with each other, I think" (107-8).

What Jude and Reardon are looking for is work that provides them with self-respect, based in part on the respect of others, and deep and abiding interest. Jude ultimately relies on the help of magic or the miraculous to confirm what he already knows about himself, whereas Reardon more passively relies on chance and the workings of a market economy to determine his future. The outward focus, the element of social usefulness, is a very small part of Jude's internal dialogue and is explored in New Grub Street by and in the character of Marian Yule, who desires to be socially useful as a wife and mother and whose fate is perhaps the most unhappy in a book loaded with unhappy endings. In Gissing, social usefulness is found to be unimportant or dangerous to the central task of realizing oneself. In Jude, it is found to be impossible in the modern world. For the roots of this attitude we must back up a bit, to Carlyle.

Carlyle's On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History, a series of lectures delivered in 1840 and published in book form in 1841, has as its thesis that "Universal History, the history of what man accomplished in this world, is at bottom the History of the Great Men who have worked here" (4; emphasis added). Carlyle's great men pursue different vocations as the conditions of life and the stage of consciousness of humanity change through time (Carlyle paints with a very broad brush, borrowed from German idealist philosophy). The Norse god Odin is for Carlyle a hero merely understood by his race as a god. He gives Mohammed as an example of the hero as prophet. Heroes also operate in the world as poets (Dante and Shakespeare), priests (Luther and John Knox), "men of letters" (Samuel Johnson, Rousseau, Burns), and kings (Cromwell and Napoleon). What they all have in common is the primacy they give to their awareness that "this so solid-looking material world is, at bottom, in very deed, Nothing; is a visual and tactual Manifestation of God's power and presence,--a shadow hung-out by Him on the Bosom of the void Infinite; nothing more" (84). (We will later hear this sentiment echoed in Gissing's essay "The Hope of Pessimism," as we will see evidence of Gissing's affinity for Carlyle throughout New Grub Street.) The man who answers the call is not a mere mouthpiece of God; he is a person so permeated with true awareness that he must "speak out what he feels intensely" (7), but "without self-awareness" (31). We are a long way from Jude and Reardon in the conviction and self-abnegation which Carlyle's heroes ultimately bring to the tasks they are called to. Reardon, in fact, fails in terms that are very clearly those of Carlyle: he does not understand the importance of

a clearly conceived vocation. But Carlyle's heroes resemble Jude and Reardon much more closely than anyone we meet in Smiles. They are more likely than not melancholy men, imperfect in important ways: Mohammed is "sensual" (90); Dante is too "intense" (115); Rousseau is "morbid, excitable, spasmodic." For Carlyle the important question we must ask of a man is "not how much chaff is in you, but whether you have any wheat" (76). In the dignity with which they portray the imperfect Jude and Reardon, Hardy and Gissing clearly show that their protagonists are deeply valuable, indeed precious men.

In the world's reception of the man with a keenly felt vocation, Carlyle predicts the experiences of Jude. Although the mass of men ultimately recognize the true nature and message of heroes--"we all of us reverence and must ever reverence Great Men" (19)--the era in which a hero lives may not appreciate or understand him, and this is the fault of the era, not the man. Indeed, "the world's manner of dealing with [a hero] is the most significant feature of the world's general position" (188). Smiles' free-market usefulness and Positivism's good works may thus be denied a hero. But this is the world's fault, not his--and it is a trivial loss.

Pursuing a vocation chosen by God, without concern for personal gain or social result, is a great deal to ask of a person. Jude and Reardon, not caring perhaps to be heroes, both feel a normal desire to find some happiness in what they believe to be the only lives they have. The idea that work should bring joy develops as religious or pseudoreligious justifications for behavior slowly disappear. An early promulgator was John Ruskin, whose thought is in the background of Jude as Carlyle's is in the

background of New Grub Street. Ruskin wrote in "The Nature of Gothic" (a chapter of the The Stones of Venice, published 1851-3) that something rather wonderful happens to a worker, in this case a stonemason, when he is asked not to copy a design created by someone else but to bring his own imagination to bear on his work:

Let him but begin to imagine, to think, to try to do anything worth doing, and the engine-turned precision [of copy work] is lost at once. Out come all his roughness, all his dullness, all his incapability; shame upon shame, failure upon failure, pause after pause: but out comes the whole majesty of him also . . . (162)

The deeply conservative Ruskin believed, with the revolutionary Marx, that the working-class agitation of the first half of the century had its root in the joyless and rote nature of the laborer's work:

It is not that men are ill fed, but that they have no pleasure in the work by which they make their bread and therefore look to wealth as the only means of pleasure. It is not that men are pained by the scorn of the upper classes, but that they cannot endure their own; for they feel that the kind of labor to which they are condemned is verily a degrading one, and makes them less than men. Never had the upper classes so much sympathy with the lower, or charity for them, as they have at this day, and yet never were they so much hated by them . . . (164).

But what if the man in question does not care to be a laborer, does not care, in the hierarchy of Marx's concerns, to make common cause with other laborers? When his calling is not necessarily defined by birth, when the voice of God is absent or inaudible, when the society in which he lives does not need or care to have the contribution he feels he might make--then choosing and pursuing a vocation becomes a process centered in the self and vitally important to the self, but, after all, rather mysterious, an exploration of unmapped territory.

Chapter 2

Jude: Trying to Realize the Vision

For early didst thou leave the world, with powers
Fresh, undiverted to the world without.
Firm to their mark, not spent on other things;
Free from the sick fatigue, the languid doubt,
Which much to have tried, in much been baffled, brings.
O life unlike to ours!

-- Matthew Arnold, "The Scholar Gypsy," 1853

For many scholars the first task in interpreting Jude the Obscure has been to decide what it is primarily about. Albert Guerard, for example, has judged that the novel does not cohere as an artistic whole because of the "multiplicity of separate and detachable problems it represents" (qtd. in Giordano, 580). Guerard provides an even more exhaustive list of these problems than does Hardy, who in 1895 wrote to Edmund Gosse:

Of course the book is all contrasts--or was meant to be in its general conception. Alas, what a miserable accomplishment it is, when I compare it with what I meant to make!--e.g. Sue and her heathen gods against Jude's reading the Greek testament; Christminster academical, Christminster in the slums; Jude the saint, Jude the sinner; Sue the Pagan, Sue the Saint; marriage, no marriage, etc., etc. (F. Hardy 272)

In a letter written at about the same time, however, Hardy also seemed to argue that the novel has one ruling theme: the "'grimy' features of the story go to show the contrast between the ideal life a man wished to lead, and the squalid real life he was fated to lead. . . . The idea was meant to run through the novel. It is, in fact, to be discovered in everybody's life, though it lies less on the surface perhaps than it does in my poor puppet's" (272).

The author's own confusion about his work is made further apparent in his preface to the first edition of the complete novel (1895). Hardy writes here that his book

attempts to deal unaffectedly with the fret and fever, derision and disaster, that may press in the wake of the strongest passion known to humanity; to tell without a mincing of words, of a deadly war waged between flesh and spirit; and to point the tragedy of unfulfilled aims. . . (5)

The first element in what appears to be a three-part list, the "strongest passion," we might take to refer to Jude's love for Sue Bridehead, and the third to Jude's failure to enter the university. One wonders to which part of Jude's unhappy life Hardy refers when he speaks of the "deadly war between flesh and spirit," which seems to echo Tennyson's summing up of the theme of "Idylls of the King." Is this deadly war part of love? Hardy, perhaps more than any Victorian novelists since Emily and Charlotte Bronte, was an advocate for the cooperation of flesh and spirit in love. Perhaps he was speaking in opposition to Tennyson of the unnatural conflicts created in people by marriage laws and customs. But he consistently denied that this novel was any kind of manifesto on the "marriage question" (e.g. F. Hardy 271). Does the "war" belong instead to the "tragedy of unfulfilled aims," or does Hardy mean to place it in a category by itself? It is possible that Hardy does not intend to imply two, or possibly three, themes at all, but one rather complex theme. This central theme may set flesh, or "real" life lived under the pressure of societal constraints, against spirit, or "ideal" life. Even read this way, the novel coheres badly, as Hardy was aware, admitting in his journal, "On account of the labour of altering Jude to send the magazine, and then having to alter

it back, I have lost energy for revising and improving the original as I meant to do" for book publication (F. Hardy 269). Patricia Ingham has shown that this is too simple a picture: Hardy made important changes in Jude at this stage. In any case, Jude remained a rough work, like the Gothic carving Hardy loved. Indeed, Ruskin's "characteristics of Gothic" seem to describe Jude quite aptly: the book is both changeful and rigid, savage, naturalistic, grotesque, and redundant (155).

Ingham's investigations into the changes Hardy made between serial and book publication have led her to conclude that "from the beginning [Jude] had an obsessive core to which other elements were attracted and by which they were transmuted" (169). This "core" was "an autobiographical description of Hardy's boyhood temperament" which "grew into a consideration of what was by the 1890s his own deep concern: the relationship between the sexes as played out by a complex man who only partly understood himself and a woman ill at ease with her own sexuality" (169). Ingham refers here to the unhappy stage which Hardy's marriage to Emma Gifford had reached by the time he was in his fifties. (They were married from 1874 until Emma's death in 1912.) Ingham further contends that to this obsessive core, around which clung mainly sexual issues, "was added a more superficial and rather immature treatment of [Jude's] academic aspirations and their frustration. The latter came to seem more symbolic as the writing progressed" (169).

This is not at all my reading of the novel, even after considering Ingham's textual history. Sue and the university seem to me to be part of the one project of unfolding the self. Sue is not only the object of Jude's

sexual passion but serves as a guide in his project of self-realization, as I will discuss in chapter 4. The failure of Sue and Jude to remain together in the face of vocational disasters is part of, and intensifies, those disasters. If any matter of the novel is treated "immaturely," it is surely Sue and Jude's relationship, which in the too long middle of the book sometimes degenerates into interminable, circular conversations. I am not sure how to interpret Ingham's statement about the increasingly "symbolic" treatment of the vocational theme. Is she making the true assertion that Hardy's use of symbol was almost entirely confined to those portions of the book that deal exclusively with his academic aspirations? That would seem to me to argue that those aspirations are central to the book, symbol having been poet-before-novelist Hardy's special gift, as balanced character portrayal was Gissing's. If what Ingham is arguing is that Jude's desire to go to the university becomes symbolic of a more general need for self-realization, then I agree with her in part. Jude never loses sight, however, of the university as a real and particular goal, a non-symbol.

Both Jude and New Grub Street can be usefully viewed as bildungsromans of a rather telescoped kind. We might compare their plots to the following summary of a bildungsroman by G. Robert Stange, in an essay on Thackeray's Henry Esmond (1852):

The hero of a Bildungsroman is usually an orphan (though he may be only spiritually orphaned); he is personally gifted, but of an ambiguous, or, at any rate, not entirely secure social position; in the course of the novel he undergoes initiation, moving from innocence to experience, often from a simple rural life to a sophisticated urban one. He falls in love, usually more than once (the stereotype would be one false love and--ultimately--one true). He is devastated by a reversal of fortune, but from this suffering

he learns the moral or social truth that makes it possible for him to rise and live again. (qtd. in Giordano, 582-3)

Jude and Reardon's courses differ from Stange's summary most obviously in their outcomes: Jude and Reardon fail to "rise and live again." A more important difference, however, lies in what comprises the body of both books and exhausts the greater part of the heroes' energy. This is not in either novel the finding of a false love, then a true--as Dorothea Brooke's progress is, for example. It is the attempt to pursue a vocation and the failure of that attempt. After the failure, little "moral or social truth" is available. New Grub Street spins quickly to a close. Jude tries some substitute vocations, in which he is also "baffled," as is the speaker in "The Scholar Gypsy," quoted above. His "true" and "false" loves have one and the same object and are part of his bafflement.

Frank Giordano has contrasted the characteristic intellectual moods which governed the differences between the bildungsroman written at mid-century and Jude:

Now, traditionally, the orphan embarks on his quest for personal development as a means to or preparation for some role in the public world. This effort . . . implies . . . a conviction that the world is a comprehensible . . . whole into which the developing individual member may be accommodated. . . . Through the cultivation of the whole personality, the hero attains a goal that is a happy blend of the material and the spiritual. . . . But as the nineteenth century wore on, enlightened men became less sanguine . . . from Carlyle onward, the central conflict involved a young man against a dehumanizing society. (587)

Both Jude and Reardon begin very sanguine. Let us see how Jude makes his initial choice of vocation.

Hardy introduces us to Jude as a child of 11, whereas in Gissing's novel we meet Reardon when he is 32. We are told that Jude is a boy "crazy

for books" (10) and upset by the brutality of nature. At 11 he has a job scaring birds away from a cornfield. When he follows the schoolmaster Phillotson's parting advice to be kind to animals and birds and deliberately lets his birds eat a little corn, he is beaten and dismissed. He concludes "that mercy towards one set of creatures was cruelty towards another" (12) and that with maturing comes "a sort of shuddering" at the forces arrayed against one: "All around you there seemed to be something glaring, garish, rattling, and the noises and glares hit upon the little cell called your life, and shook it, and warped it. If he could only prevent himself growing up! He did not want to be a man" (17). Later, Jude's son with Arabella, Little Father Time, will find a way to prevent himself growing up.

Even more fundamental to Jude's nature than his love of books and his sensitivity is his longing for love. The deaths of his separated parents and his aunt's view that "it would ha' been a blessing if Goddy-mighty had took thee too . . . poor useless boy" (12) probably explain this longing. We feel Jude's loss when Phillotson, who has shown him some kindness, moves away to Christminster. Phillotson's reason for wanting a university degree is a very practical one, spoken in words that would not seem out of place in Milvain's mouth: "My scheme, or dream, is to be a university graduate, and then to be ordained. By going to live at Christminster . . . I shall be at headquarters . . . on the spot" (10). Jude's desire for a university education is less practical from the beginning: he associates his hopes with affection, and as he matures, his love of books and ideas includes a desire for intimacy with like-minded people. Not until he meets Arabella, however, is he fully aware of the strength of his need for love; and only in

the wake of this marriage does he understand that for him physical love must be accompanied by intellectual compatibility.

To the boy whose only friend has traveled there, Christminster easily becomes invested with strong emotion. Jude likens it, in fact, to "the heavenly Jerusalem" of the Book of Revelation (18). Christminster first appears to Jude in answer to a prayer he has just voiced: the fog lifts between it and the hill in Marygreen where he stands. Its "points of light like the topaz" (19) recall the "shining light" which the Evangelist tells Christian to follow in The Pilgrim's Progress (23). Following this "vision," Jude utters a series of non sequiturs about Christminster that amount to a leap of faith, beginning with, "It is a city of light," and ending with, "It would just suit me" (23).

Weber offers the following sweeping summary of the rise of rationalism in the West:

The great historic process in the development of religions, the elimination of magic from the world which had begun with the old Hebrew prophets and, in conjunction with Hellenistic scientific thought, had repudiated all magical means to salvation as superstition and sin, came here [in Calvinism] to its logical conclusion. The genuine Puritan even rejected all signs of religious ceremony at the grave and buried his nearest and dearest without song or ritual in order that no superstition, no trust in the effects of magical and sacramental forces on salvation, should creep in. (105)

Jude recreates in himself, as Reardon does not, man's history of belief, sometimes juxtaposing epochs. Although a damaged child, he retains a child's belief in magic, transforming a natural experience (the fog lifting) into a miraculous or revelatory one. In its allusion to Bunyan, however, his "miracle" takes on a Puritan coloring. It is proof that the vocational

predilections he has already recognized in himself have external, even supernatural validation, as Weber's Puritan merchants maintained that membership among the elect made their worldly success possible. While Jude's religious faith is still intact, he is able to see his particular vocational drives as part of a plan designed for him by God--and this scene is the moment in which he is "called." Later, his desire to unfold himself in work and love will fully substitute for the hope of salvation, and will be abandoned with a great deal more sorrow than his loss of faith causes him.

Remaining with Weber a little longer, let us see how Jude's belief in magic persists. Finally able to obtain Greek and Latin grammars, Jude opens these volumes sure that he will find within them "a secret cipher which, once known, would enable him, by merely applying it, to change at will all words of his own speech into those of the foreign one" (26). The narrator points out that the boy's notions "were further advanced than those of his grammarian," being only an aggrandized version of Grimm's Law (26). But Jude finds that the absence of such a magical key requires that every word be "individually committed to memory at the cost of years of plodding" (27). "The charm he had supposed was in store for him" in becoming acquainted with classical languages and worlds "was really a labour like that of Israel in Egypt" (27). Thus he associates magic (and charm) with classical antiquity, following Matthew Arnold's equation of Hellenism with beauty more closely than Weber's identification of Hellenism with science. He associates "plodding" labour with the Hebraic, and Puritan, tradition.

It is plodding labor he eventually subscribes to, trying to construe Latin and Greek teacherless, while delivering bread for his aunt. His horse follows the delivery route without a driver, Jude being absorbed in his studies, and this procedure becomes a metaphor for the "purblind, stumbling way" in which Jude is forced to draw meaning from his texts (28). The inhabitants of Marygreen complain that this practice is dangerous and set the police on him, but since the time he spends making his deliveries is his only opportunity to study, Jude manages to persist, adding to his burdens the necessity of looking out for the police.

David De Laura has shown how important Arnold's views on Hebraism vs. Hellenism were to Hardy (and with how much disgust Hardy looked on Arnold's later position that agnosticism could be combined with traditional Christian morality). Jude has one final boyhood experience with Hellenism, in the same place as he was standing when he had his "vision" of Christminster. He recites the "Carmen Saeculare," a poem by Horace which begins with an invocation to the moon. He cannot, however, make his association between Hellenism and Christminster stick. He regrets the "strange forgetfulness which had led to such a lapse from common-sense and custom in one who wished, next to being a scholar, to be a Christian divine" (29). He quickly decides to pursue scholarship along different lines: to give over Horace and Homer and take up the New Testament in Greek and the Church fathers in Latin. This apparently increases his fund of Calvinistic "common sense" to the degree that he can choose a temporary trade with the following logic:

What was most required by citizens? Food, clothing, and shelter. An income from any work in preparing the first would be too meagre; for making the second he felt a distaste; the preparation of the third requisite he inclined to. They built in a city; therefore he would learn to build. He thought of his unknown uncle, his cousin Susanna's father, an ecclesiastical worker in metal, and somehow medieval art in any material was a trade for which he had rather a fancy. He could not go far wrong in following his uncle's footsteps, and engaging himself awhile with the carcasses that contained the scholar souls. (30)

But notice that this "logic" goes beyond the antimagic of Calvinism. It jumps right to the Smilesian, in which the content of one's work is less important--here it is virtually accidental, although already entangled with Sue--than the spirit in which the work is pursued.

Jude thus chooses a vocation with the help of a "miracle" but sets about pursuing it by Puritanical means. Although he is greatly limited by his orphaned and teacherless state, and by his poverty, he hopes to be rewarded by the worldly success Smiles, if not Calvin, promises. Jude's progress is of course interrupted by his marriage to Arabella, in which he discovers the attractions and limitations of carnality. After Arabella has left him and having finally arrived in Christminster, he is further distracted by the problems Sue presents. Still reading Greek and Latin as regularly as his obsession with Sue and his work as a stonemason allow, he is struck one day with a "true illumination; that here in the stone yard was a centre of effort as worthy as that dignified by the name of scholarly study within the noblest of the colleges" (69). We might mistake this for a philosophy of vocation alternative to the unfolding of one's natural talents, in which the "worth" of work roughly corresponds to its social usefulness. Jude cannot be happy as a stonemason, says the narrator, because of the

"stress of his old ideas . . . this was the modern vice of unrest" (69). Hardy undercuts Jude's "illumination," however, in the next paragraph:

[Jude] perceived that at best only copying, patching, and imitating went on here; which he fancied to be owing to some temporal and local cause. He did not at that time see that medievalism was as dead as a fern-leaf in a lump of coal; that other developments were shaping the world around him, in which Gothic architecture and its associations had no place. (69)

This passage obviously owes a great deal to Ruskin, who drew a sharp distinction between the irregularity and ugliness, but inherent value of the product of the Gothic stonecutter and the valueless imitative accuracy of the copy work done by the Victorian stonemason. Jude's wavering about his vocation may also owe something to Hardy's own lifelong wrestling with this problem.

Hardy also wished as a young man to go to university. At 16 he had studied both Latin and French and showed some academic promise. His father felt that since money was short and Hardy showed no inclination to take orders (and thus set himself on a clearly defined path after graduation), the university would be impractical. Robert Gittings, in his biography of Hardy, says that "chance and the building boom provided the next move" (30). Hardy was apprenticed for 40 pounds to an architect in Dorchester for whom his father happened to be working, and to whom the young Hardy's native intelligence was obvious. Thus his first vocational "decision" was made for him. The choice of profession was not entirely accidental, for a stonemason might well wish his son to remain in a building trade but advance further in it than his father. Gittings hints that Hardy's mother, previously so solicitous that her son become classically

educated, was eager for the apprenticeship because it would remove Hardy from their home in Puddletown, where he had embarrassed the family by making sexual advances toward a cousin (30).

Hardy pursued architecture with some success in Dorchester and later in London with a successful firm that served mainly upper-class clients. He eventually came to feel that his class origins limited his chances to build a strong practice (Gittings 63-68), but he had been considering other alternatives all along. Gittings has shown that the young architect also looked for magical means to make vocational decisions, habitually trying to apply to his life Biblical texts that happened to show up in the Anglican lectionary, almost as if they were horoscopes (53).

During the 1860s, he reconsidered entering the university (from which he was discouraged by his friend, Horace Moule, who felt that Hardy was unexceptional as a scholar) and eventually settled on literature, having lost his faith in God at some point during the deliberations of this decade. He applied himself with great determination to the reading and writing of poetry, while still working at architecture. His first novel was published in 1872; he finally gave up architecture in 1884.

Hardy's second wife relates that in 1928, shortly before he died, he remarked that if he could live his life again, he would choose to be an architect with a small practice in a country town (F. Hardy 443). She reports further that he said "he had done all that he meant to do, but he did not know whether it had been worth doing" (444). In the 1890s, while in his fifties, Hardy was also deeply involved in a reconsideration of his vocation. Hardy is usually supposed to have stopped writing novels after

Jude because of the public outrage both it and Tess of the D'Urbervilles provoked and the strong criticism these two novels received from some critics and colleagues. Henry James, for example, called Tess "vile." But it may be that Hardy felt freer to offend in these last books because he was in the process of finding that novel writing no longer meant very much to him. (It is additionally true that he was financially able to give up novel writing at this point in his career.) His vocational deliberations and confusion may have found a vehicle in Jude.

Jude's reconsideration of what he ought to do with his life follows years of devoted, if not continuous, independent study. It marks a progress beyond both the magical and the Puritanical to a region in which building and maintaining one's integrity becomes more important than anything else. Suspecting that perseverance might not after all be enough to get him into the university, he writes to the heads of several colleges to ask their advice, meanwhile doing some practical thinking on his own. He concludes that he must follow one of two courses: either he must take an open examination for a scholarship, for which he feels independent study could never adequately prepare him; or he must save enough money on his own to pay his university expenses, which would require at least 15 years of work as a stonemason. Having anticipated his defeat himself, he receives a reply from one of the dons to which he has written, who gives him extremely anti-Smilesian advice: "I venture to think," says the don, without any indecorous insistence, "that you will have a much better chance of success in life by remaining in your own sphere and sticking to your trade than by adopting any other course" (95).

Jude is not the story of a man who rises above his failure by revaluing the object of his ambition. Hardy's choice of the fictional name of Christminster for Oxford may have reflected his dismay that the home of the university was, as the narrator puts it, "the most Christian city in the country" (77), an "ecclesiastical romance in stone" (30). Among the voices Jude hears when he arrives in Christminster is Matthew Arnold's, praising Oxford (in 1865) for its role in "'ever calling us to the true goal of all of us, to the ideal, to perfection.'" The narrator reminds us, however, that Arnold would later refer to Oxford as "'the home of lost causes'" (66). Sue is also a spokesperson for an alternative "reading" of Christminster and its role in modern life: "At present intellect in Christminster is pushing one way, and religion the other; and so they stand stock-still like two rams butting each other" (121). Christminster is infected with the Puritan tradition Jude finally jettisons, but he never does jettison his regret that he has missed having a university career and that he has missed having it at Christminster. His drunken attempt to demonstrate his learning before Christminster undergraduates after he has received the don's letter is perhaps his only attempt--and it is a failed attempt--to legitimate an individualistic standard of learning independent of society's standards. Jude knows at the end of the novel (he dies on Remembrance Day), as he knows at the beginning, that Christminster, for all its flaws, is the true goal of a man who wants to advance in classical learning and to be recognized for his achievements.

One means of interpreting Jude might be to gauge at various points how much hope the hero has and on what his hope is based. Before

receiving the don's letter, Jude sometimes wonders whether he will become a scholar--before Arabella leaves him, for example--but he always recovers hope. After the letter, Jude defiantly chucks a passage from the Book of Job on the wall of the college whose Head has written to him: "I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you; yea, who knoweth not such things as these?" (97) Defiance quickly gives way, however, to the desire to maintain some belief in the future, and Jude tries to base his hope in other pursuits. He will never be as hopeful again as he was before reading the don's assessment of his prospects; the letter is the turning point after which only substitute vocations can be tried. First he wishes to enter the church as a "licentiate" (that is, without a degree), but his attachment to Sue, who has married and abandoned Phillotson, and his own wavering faith, make this impossible. He continues working as a stonemason, but his anomalous relationship with Sue becomes known, and he has difficulty getting work. He and Sue at last eke out a living for themselves and their children making cakes that are, in Sue's words, "reminiscences of the Christminster Colleges. Traceried windows, and cloisters, you see, It was a whim of his to do them in pastry" (248). All this time he has less and less substance on which to base hope, until the deaths of his children and the loss of Sue leave him denuded of hope. Some other process is taking place in his mind during this downward slide, however. He is discovering that his initial, miraculous call to Christminster amounted to a true intuition of what lay in himself. Shortly before his death he says to Arabella:

"Every man has some little power in some one direction. . . . I was never really stout enough for the stone trade. . . . But I felt I could do one thing if I had the opportunity. I could accumulate ideas, and impart them to others. I wonder if the Founders had such as I in their minds--a fellow good for nothing else but that particular thing? . . . I hear that soon there is going to be a better chance for such helpless students as I was. There are schemes afoot for making the University less exclusive . . ." (317)

Although Jude's final thoughts, also quotations from Job, show utter desolation, some hope is reserved for us in this passage. Better things may be in store for future Judes. More important, we have seen Jude achieve an integrity based on understanding and valuing the vocational drive that is at the core of him, which is independent of circumstances and the valuations of dons, employers, Arabellas, or even Sues.

Chapter 3

Reardon: Navigating without a Compass

There is confusion worse than death . . .

--Tennyson, "The Lotos Eaters," 1832

The world of New Grub Street is an even more desolate one than Jude's. It is more concretely presented and more invasive of the personality than is Jude's world of neo-Gothic churches and the spectral university. The values of the market completely replace whatever personal code Milvain may have begun with, and they stand between Reardon and any clear understanding of what his vocation really is.

Milvain and Reardon are dialogic characters: the hope and loss of hope that Jude undergoes we experience in Gissing's novel by contrasting Milvain's career, ascending when we meet him and throughout the book, and Reardon's career, always descending. As readers, however, we are never in doubt as to what or whom this novel is about. Reardon's struggle with vocational confusion is at the center of the book.

Gissing puts a great deal more distance than Hardy between the reader and the protagonist. Reardon is a more narrated character than Jude: we have many fewer opportunities to hear his inner thoughts and self-assessments and to observe him in intimate dialogue with others. We do not even meet Reardon until chapter 4 and then, as I have said, as a man of 32, already past his early success--suffering, in fact, from writer's

block. His boyhood and moment of vocational choice are subsequently told to us.

In the earlier chapters we hear others' views of Reardon. Milvain describes Reardon as "the old type of unpractical artist; I am the literary man of 1882. . . . Literature nowadays is a trade. . . . People have got that ancient prejudice so firmly rooted in their heads--that man mustn't write save at the dictation of the Holy Spirit. . . . Things are going badly with him. He is just the kind of fellow to end by poisoning or shooting himself" (36-43). Reardon's fate is foreshadowed in a more complex way than Jude's. In the opening scene, a man is being hanged in London while Milvain breakfasts with his mother and sister. With the ease of a man who believes himself to be set on the path to success, Milvain points to the Carlylean nature of the world he and Reardon live in: "A man who comes to be hanged . . . has the satisfaction of knowing that he has brought society to its last resource. He is a man of such fatal importance that nothing will serve but the supreme effort of law. In a way, you know, that is success" (36). But Reardon will not even achieve this success. His death will be private and only dimly illumined, nearly a total defeat.

From Milvain we learn that Reardon is unfit for the profession in which he finds himself. An even less flattering assessment comes from John Yule, an aging manufacturer who takes an almost fascist interest in the curtailment of public education and what he believes to be its corollary, the growth of the popular press. Yule, who is the rich uncle of Reardon's wife, believes that the masses "ought to spend their leisure hours in open air exercise" (54). He says of Reardon:

"Just for curiosity I had a look at one of his books; it was called The Optimist. Of all the morbid trash I ever saw, that beat everything. I thought of writing him a letter advising a couple of antibilious pills before bedtime for a few weeks. . . . That man deserves penal servitude, in my opinion [as opposed to hanging, perhaps]. . . . I'm not sure that it isn't my duty to offer him a couple of hundred a year on condition that he writes no more."
(55)

Yule will leave part of his estate to Amy Reardon, but only after she has left her husband.

We meet Amy in the company of her husband, two years into their marriage, and ten months after they have had a son. We meet them both, in fact, at "the hour of sunset" (77) in the midst of an argument over Reardon's increasing panic that he will not be able to continue producing fiction. Amy counsels her husband to follow Milvain's example: "You could do fairly good work, and work which would sell, if only you would bring yourself to look at things in a more practical way" (81). But her criticism of Reardon is also more personal, and more damning: "You are weaker than I imagined. Difficulties crush you, instead of rousing you to struggle" (80).

In this, as in others of Gissing's finer novels, we admire the fairness with which he draws his characters. Milvain is never a villain, not even when he deserts Marian Yule to marry Reardon's newly rich widow. At worst he is an opportunist whose crime is survival. Amy is also the product of her environment. Although Gissing's misogynistic tendencies were given free rein in some of his novels--The Whirlpool is a particularly egregious example --Amy is at times drawn quite sympathetically. The effect on the reader of these characters' early condemnations of Reardon is

rather subtle. We do immediately side with him and against his detractors. On the other hand, we suspect they may be partly right about him. Perhaps he isn't realistic or hardy enough to survive in a world in which one must be a John Yule or a Milvain to prosper.

Although it contains much more autobiographical material than does Jude, New Grub Street is a clearer and cleaner book. It is, perhaps not paradoxically, a lucid book about confusion and its price. It does not try to show us the whole arc of man's life as Jude does, or suggest how a man's integrity may survive what Hardy calls in Tess "the ache of modernism." As we will see, it offers no solutions except the regarding of life as an illusion from which we will all eventually, and mercifully, be disabused.

There is no moment of vocational choice in this novel, no primeval magic with which to validate a natural predilection. Instead, implicit in the narrator's account of Reardon's childhood, is the twentieth-century debate over the primacy of nature or nurture in the formation of the personality. (This debate is implicit in many earlier Victorian novels--for example, in Bleak House in the tension between Richard Carstone's strength of will and the corrupting influence of Jarndyce vs. Jarndyce.) Gissing finds nurture to be the more powerful force. Reardon's childhood and the invasion of market values into his adult personality determine his course more than any inborn tendencies, and he pays the price for this not only in the lack of a clear vocation but in not knowing precisely what is wrong with him.

Edwin Reardon is educated at a school which at eighteen gives him "a far better acquaintance with the classics than most lads who have been

expressly prepared for a university" (87). But his father is a man "who had followed many different pursuits, and in none had done much more than earn a livelihood" (87); he is able to do no more for Edwin than place him in the office of an estate agent, where it is hoped his delicate health will be improved by outdoor work. Following the deaths of his father and his more worldly and ambitious mother, Reardon receives a small legacy:

... he had no difficulty in deciding how to use this money. His mother's desire to live in London had in him the force of an inherited motive; as soon as possible he released himself from his uncongenial occupations and betook himself to the metropolis. To become a literary man, of course. (88)

The infinitive phrase with which this passage ends stands alone as a paragraph. This flat statement is very different from the complex miracle Jude experiences on the hill in Marygreen. It seems we are expected to know why a young man like Edwin, a promising linguist in bad health, would choose the taxing life of a literary man. A contemporary reader of Gissing's would have witnessed the phenomenal growth of the periodical press, both of those journals aimed at sophisticated audiences such as the Saturday Review (which Hardy read devotedly throughout his adult life), and of the mass market publications which comprised what Perkin (47) calls the "Harmsworth revolution" (after Alfred Harmsworth, who wrote for George Newnes' Tit-Bits and later founded Answers and the Daily Mail, all in the 1880s). This reader might have understood the attraction of an industry growing at a fabulous rate and making a few men rich. But this phrase is also heavily weighted with thematic meaning. It marks the turning point of Reardon's life, and we are called on to consider that a man's vocation ought not to be decided so quickly, or for a reason so

superficial. Perhaps we are also to consider that what is not superficial in Reardon (although it may have been nurtured rather than inherent), his love of classical scholarship, is now very difficult for him to pursue.

It is interesting to wonder what prevents Reardon from nursing the same kinds of hopes as Jude does of entering the university in some way other than through the offices of his parents. Gissing's own story is of some help here.

As we saw earlier, Gissing's strong career as a student was interrupted by a series of small thefts he committed in a campaign to "save" a prostitute, Nell Harrison, whom he loved and later married. Gissing attributed some of the blame for his self-destructive behavior during this period to the lack of parental or other guidance. Halperin quotes from a letter Gissing wrote to a friend years after the incident: "It was a cruel . . . thing that I, at the age of sixteen, should have been turned loose in a big city, compelled to live alone in lodgings, with nobody interested in me" (15). Gissing's mother outlived him, but their relationship, according to Halperin, was unusually distant from his childhood on. After his dismissal from Owens, his mother "was quick to blame but slow to understand her eldest son" (19).

This episode was the determining one in Gissing's life; it retained for him an impenetrable, unassimilable character. Halperin finds it responsible for "the confluence . . . of sex, money, and class" (18) that often confuses the reader of Gissing, and for the fact that "again and again his fiction portrays the martyrdom of the outsider" (19). Gissing's own moment of vocational choice was a clouded, extremely painful one in which

a sudden decision may have been made in defiance, or to save face, or simply to begin the healing process as soon as possible. Of this incident and its aftermath, Halperin offers the following assessment:

This disaster--which led to others in Gissing's life, though none quite like this--deprived the world of a brilliant classical linguist, but it just as surely guaranteed, by forcing him to begin earning a living almost immediately, that a significant contribution to English fiction would be made instead. Literature has prospered rather than suffered from this arrangement. (19)

The weight and opacity of this event may have made its way into Gissing's portrayal of Reardon.

The most affecting scenes in the novel take place between Reardon and Harold Biffen as they pore over classical texts together and Reardon reminisces about his travels in Greece and Italy: "Poverty can't rob me of those memories. I have lived in an ideal world that was not deceitful, a world which seems to me, when I recall it, beyond the human sphere, bathed in diviner light" (407). Reardon tries at first to put his interest in the classics to use in his literary career. After four years of independent study, during which he is poor but at liberty to pursue his interests (here as elsewhere we see the class difference between him and Jude), he begins to produce "essays on literary subjects" (89). When asked by a wealthy novelist for an example of such a project, Reardon gives an essay he has just written on Tibullus, a Latin poet of the first century B.C. The novelist replies that it is no wonder he is having little success and urges him to try fiction. Reardon, stunned by the man's prosperity, changes his course--again with little appreciation of the importance of such choices--and begins to write fiction. Eventually, says the narrator, he "began to develop the

power that was in him" (93), but he neither possesses Jude's initial faith in his vocation nor achieves Jude's final certainty that it was the correct one.

At first he has so little success that he nearly starves (as Gissing nearly starved in America during his first attempts to write fiction). He is rescued by chance. His letter in application for a clerkship at a hospital happens to be the first and only letter the hospital secretary chooses to open. Now certain of at least a meager income, he can concentrate in the evenings on writing and finally produces three novels which bring him some success. A legacy from his grandfather gives him the chance to travel to the Italy and Greece whose ancient cultures he loves. Returning, he marries Amy, a beautiful and well-read middle-class girl, mainly on the strength of his hope of literary success.

Gissing's narrator is quite specific about the nature of Reardon's novels:

They dealt with no particular class of society (unless one makes a distinct class of people who have brains), and they lacked local color. Their interest was almost purely psychological. It was clear that the author had no faculty for constructing a story, and that pictures of active life were not to be expected of him; he could never appeal to the multitude. But strong characterisation was within his scope, and an intellectual fervor, appetising to a small section of refined readers, marked all his best pages. (93)

No passage in the novel more directly echoes Carlyle than this one.

Carlyle, in his analysis of Shakespeare (an example of hero as poet), makes this assertion:

How a man, of some wide thing that he has witnessed, will construct a narrative, what kind of picture and delineation he will give of it--is the best measure you could get of what intellect is in the man. Which circumstance is vital and shall stand prominent, which unessential, fit to be suppressed; where is the

true beginning, the true sequence and ending? To find this out, you task the whole force of insight that is in a man. (126)

Reardon could never be a Carlylean hero. He lacks, as Amy says and he himself agrees, the capacity to "struggle against adverse conditions" (93). It is perhaps his failure to identify a clear vocation that has also robbed him of the ability to sequence events. Amy presents the Smilesian position of the publishing industry when she says in exasperation, "The plot may be as silly as you like. . . . What does the subject matter?" She would equally have reflected the character of the industry, and perhaps the eighties and nineties as well, if she had said, you could be anyone at all . . . what do you matter?

Reardon is a man very like Jude. His solitude during the years he is making his way fosters a Jude-like "sensitiveness, which to begin with was extreme" (90). Like Jude, he is happiest with books and ideas. He feels that if his wife were not so cold to him he might find the strength to finish the projects he only begins and discards. In his hunger for Amy's love, he also resembles Jude.

Amy, however, undermines Reardon's vocation in a way that Sue does not undermine Jude's. Amy requires more than support, more even than middle-class comforts: after two years of marriage, she is well aware that "no degree of distinction in her husband would be of much value to her unless she had the pleasure of witnessing its effect upon others; she must shine with reflected light before an admiring assembly" (163). Amy leaves Reardon when he finally abandons his efforts to maintain them solely by writing and goes back to work as a clerk at the hospital. Whereas Sue's love gives Jude courage at the same time as it entraps him, Reardon's inability

to struggle against adverse conditions seems to coincide with the period of his marriage. Before Amy, Reardon earned his modest success through hard work. After Amy, even as he spirals down toward death, he seems more comfortable, more courageous, more himself. He does not stop loving Amy--indeed most of the "literary men" in the novel, Milvain, Whelpdale, and the wonderful Biffen, nurse a desire for Amy--but he regains his dignity in a way he could never have done while Amy was determining his needs. Amy is, as are many of the women in Gissing's novels, an enemy of true vocation. (Perhaps to Gissing's credit, in The Odd Women, men are enemies of vocational fulfillment in women.) In Marian Yule's story, which we will discuss in the next chapter, we see that Gissing's view of love itself is a very pessimistic one.

About to lose Amy, Reardon finds some clarity about the relationship of money and class: "The difference between the man with money and the man without money," he says to Amy, "is simply this: the one thinks, 'How shall I use my life?' and the other, 'How shall I keep myself alive?'" (232). Reaching into his fund of classical allusions, Reardon adds, "You remember the line of Homer I have often quoted about the demoralising effect of enslavement; poverty degrades in the same way" (233). For Reardon, not birth but money or the lack of it determines class. Money also apparently provides the luxury of pondering a vocational choice. Poverty plays an important role in breaking up Amy and Edwin's marriage: "It was the dread and shame of penury that made her heart cold to him" (256). Marriage, indeed, is an extremely tricky business for an aspiring literary man: either he marries an equal too early and becomes poor and exhausted

from trying to support her, as is the case with Edwin and Amy, or marries an inferior and cannot promote himself as he should, eventually becoming poor anyway. Disaster is the result of the several examples of marriage across class barriers in the novel: the Hinks, Gorbuts, Christophersons, and of course Alfred Yule and his wife are all finally reduced to desperate poverty because they cannot engage in the kind of social activity which Milvain contends is necessary to get ahead in the publishing industry. This kind of socializing is denied them because the women are unpresentable. Gissing's novels are nevertheless full of advice to would-be artists that they marry only undemanding working-class women. Reardon says, "I ought to have looked about for some simple, kind-hearted work-girl; that was the kind of wife indicated for me by circumstances" (404).

The confusing "confluence . . . of sex, money, and class" in Gissing's novels, which may have been established by the episode of the novelist's suspension from college, also played itself out in his experiences with marriage. To avoid the poverty that might result from trying to support a middle-class wife, and because he saw himself as "unworthy of any 'respectable' woman" (Halperin 5), Gissing himself twice married working-class women, the first of whom was Nell Harrison. In both cases he was utterly miserable. The only satisfying relationship of his life was an extramarital one, with the middle-class and intellectual Frenchwoman Gabrielle Fleury.

The importance of the class difference between Reardon and Jude is an interesting question to ponder. Reardon's more elevated class background earns him a much better education than Jude receives.

Perhaps it helps him achieve his early modest success as a novelist. It does not save him from terribly hard work, however, as we see in this scene:

For several years a succession of influenzas, sore throats, lumbagoes, had tormented him from October to May; in planning his present work and telling himself that it must be finished before Christmas, he had not lost sight of these possible interruptions. But he said to himself: "Other men have worked hard in seasons of illness; I must do the same." All very well, but Reardon did not belong to the heroic class. A feverish cold now put his powers and resolution to the test. Through one hideous day he nailed himself to the desk--and wrote a quarter of a page. The next day Amy would not let him rise from bed . . . in the night he had talked about his work deliriously, causing her no slight alarm. (160)

Nor does his class save him from the poverty which follows career failure.

Halperin describes Gissing's own class background in this way:

Today we would undoubtedly classify him as lower-middle-class and be done with it, but in the middle of the nineteenth century his position was ambiguous: he had the education and the intellectual pretensions of the comfortable bourgeois and the income (never very much) of an ordinary worker. George Gissing grew up in a household in which such distinctions were often spoken of, and very early in life seems to have picked up from his father the exaggerated interest in class that was to be a lifelong characteristic. . . . Certainly Gissing was not born into the lower classes, as some (perhaps those who have read only the early slum-life novels) have assumed, but rather into that twilight zone between "middle" and "working"--a guarantee in itself that one's life will be devoted at least in part to sorting the problem out. (13).

One way Gissing tries to "sort out" the problem of class in this novel is through the character of Biffen, an image of Reardon that is finer, as Milvain is coarser:

To judge from his appearance [Biffen] did not belong to the race of common mortals. His excessive meagreness would all but have qualified him to enter an exhibition in the capacity of living skeleton. . . . but the man was superior to these accidents . . . In

his gait there was a singular dignity; only a man of cultivated mind and graceful character could move and stand as he did.
(171)

Biffen does have a vocation, a "mission of literary realism" (529): he is writing a book called Mr. Bailey, Grocer, an exercise in "absolute realism in the sphere of the ignobly decent" (173). (We might be tempted to think Gissing is making fun of such a project, but in 1905 he would publish Will Warburton, about a middle-class man fallen on hard times who becomes a grocer.) Biffen's situation is similar to Reardon's, but his lot is consistently more dire. He is Reardon's only true companion. In Biffen, however, we see no imperfections. He may be writing realism, but his character is provided as an unrealistically unflawed counterexample that argues a point: in the tension between societal and individual responsibility for personal failures like Reardon's, society is most to blame. Society can, after all, reduce a natural aristocrat with a clear vocation like Biffen to a man forced to sell his clothes to eat and eventually driven to suicide.

Reardon's own death, which precedes Biffen's, is heavily ironic. But just as Reardon does not understand his vocational confusion as the reader does, so he does not rage against the irony of his death. And he is of course dead when its ironic sequel, the marriage of Amy to Milvain, takes place. Amy, whom Reardon still loves, is now rich and could provide him with the leisure to write at his own pace, perhaps about the classical subjects that fascinate him, if only they could be reconciled. When their son contracts diphtheria, he rushes to the seaside town where Amy and the boy are staying, and, in Amy's extreme grief at the child's death, she confesses that she still loves her husband. Already terribly ill from what is probably

pneumonia, Reardon is put to bed, grows rapidly worse, and sends for Biffen. Before he dies, Reardon makes three remarks to his friend. First, he says, "It doesn't matter what happens; she is mine again." That he is dying when she and comfort return to him does not move him to the kind of fury implicit in Jude's deathbed quotation of Job. Second, he says, "I shall never go with you to Greece," an admission perhaps that something vitally important has been missing from his life, although he may not realize that it is the determined clinging to a vocation. Finally he begins to quote Prospero's lines from The Tempest, "We are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little life is rounded with a sleep," but cannot complete them, falling into a "lethargy" from which he never awakes (490). If we have trouble taking this last, incomplete quotation as a serious summation of Reardon's or Gissing's philosophy, Biffen corrects our mistake. Several months later, he recites the lines in total just as the drug he has taken overcomes him with death.

Chapter 4

Second Selves: Sue Bridehead and Marian Yule

And now I see with eye serene
The very pulse of the machine;
A Being breathing thoughtful breath,
A Traveller between life and death . . .

--Wordsworth, "She Was a Phantom
of Delight," 1804

Sue Bridehead and Marian Yule appear to have nothing at all in common, unless it is their ability to exasperate the modern reader. Sue is a woman with advanced views on sex who frequently cannot bear to be touched, a professed Hellenist who ultimately chooses to do penance for the deaths of her children in a rigidly Puritanical way. Marian, with a powerful intellect and a promising career, self-destructively gives work second place to love, vacillating between sacrificing herself for her father out of duty and sacrificing herself to Milvain out of folly. But if these characters annoy us, we are finally able to acknowledge the dignity of their struggles. Their experiences extend our understanding of the ideas of vocation in the novels, particularly of the importance of retaining integrity, or the condition of being unbroken or whole, in the process of unfolding the self.

The serial title of Hardy's novel was in its first installment The Simpletons and in the second and subsequent installments Hearts Insurgent. Both titles imply plural protagonists. Robert Paterson has

shown that in early manuscript versions Sue entered the book well before Part II and, rather than Phillotson, motivated Jude's desire to go to Christminster (331). She remains vitally important to the book in the form in which we now have it, and not just as Jude's lover. Jude's desire for Sue is multifaceted, as Hardy's longing for a more satisfying relationship than he had with Emma may also have been multifaceted. (The great puzzle of the book, Sue's frigidity, probably also has autobiographical roots.) Sue is a fellow traveler, a second self trying to find meaning through vocation alongside Jude.

At first, Sue and Jude's feelings for each other are of the obsessional type, centered more in self and self-exploration than the beloved. Sue is Jude's double in several important ways. She is his first cousin and shares his heredity influences, chiefly a tendency to rebel against marriage. Both Sue's and Jude's parents' marriages failed, and Aunt Drusilla warns that "the Fawleys were not made for wedlock. There's sommat in our blood that won't take kindly to the notion of being bound to do what we do readily enough if not bound" (59). Jude also learns that as a child Sue shared his bookishness and active imagination. Drusilla's companion recounts Sue's recitation of poems such as Poe's "The Raven" at school functions. Drusilla herself adds, "She'd bring up the nasty carrion bird that clear . . . as she stood there in her little sash and things, that you could see un a'most before your very eyes. You too, Jude, had the same trick as a child of seeming to see things in the air" (91). They seem to be two parts of an androgynous whole. Sue possesses in Jude's eyes a "curious unconsciousness of gender" (119). She says of herself, "My life has been entirely shaped by what people

call a peculiarity in me. I have no fear of men, as such, nor of their books" (118). In Existentialist terms, Sue asserts herself as the "One," refusing to be categorized as the "Other" and demanding to be treated with reciprocity by other "Ones" (e.g. De Beauvoir xvi-xxi).

In this last quotation we see how Sue could have replaced Phillotson in early versions as the motivator of Jude's pilgrimage to Christminster. Sue's childhood was somewhat better than Jude's: her father lived to raise her and sent her as a day student to the village school in Marygreen (91), later taking her to London and Christminster. When Jude meets her, she may be a "country girl at bottom," but she has had the "rawness" taken out of her. She is "a long way removed from the rusticity that was his" and is "of the type dubbed elegant." Jude wonders how "one of his cross-grained, unfortunate, almost accursed stock" could "have contrived to reach this pitch of niceness" (73-74). If schooling, London, and Christminster changed someone so fundamentally like Jude as Sue, would they also change him, give him "niceness," alter almost, it is implied, his class?

Jude's relationship with Sue, which occupies the long, repetitious middle of the novel, is not finally an exercise in self-exploration but a stage in Jude's progress toward integrity. After falling in love with Arabella, Jude exclaims, "It was better to love a woman than to be a graduate, or a parson; ay, or a pope!" (41). Ruth Danon says that "because Jude is a conventionally split Victorian, he believes the erotic attachment to be antithetical to the vocational" (173). With Sue, however, he begins trying to put these two parts of his life together. He quickly realizes that his feelings for Sue are "unmistakably of a sexual kind" (80), but he resists them:

"After all," he said, "it is not altogether an erotolepsy that is the matter with me, as at that first time. I can see that she is exceptionally bright; and it is partly a wish for intellectual sympathy and a craving for loving-kindness in my solitude." (80)

He feels that his vocational ambitions are not enough for him; he also needs "something to love" (80). It is interesting that he does not say "someone" to love. Without knowing it, he associates Sue with the "things," the projects, of work. He does not yet realize that his sexual attachment to Sue "grows out of" his vocational interest in her (Danon 173). He will have to attempt to heal this division in order to retain his integrity.

Sue can take Jude part of the way toward integrity because she is on a parallel path, trying to find meaning and status in work in spite of the double burden of her class background and her limited opportunities as a woman. She moves from a low-level teaching job in London to doing a species of the ecclesiastical metal work she learned from her father, to deciding to go to a normal school to become a certificated teacher. As a trained teacher, Jude contends, she will "get twice as large an income as any designer or church artist, and twice as much freedom" (85). She at first hopes that Phillotson will help her find a position in a good school once she has earned her certificate; later they plan to open a school together as husband and wife. Gittings reminds us that Hardy's sister, Mary, trained as a teacher, "the one legitimate way for a working-class girl to break through social and economic barriers" (56). (A vocation equal to Sue's abilities is never available, even as a remote and impracticable hope, as it is to the better educated and connected Marian Yule.) Sue's fellow students at the school "formed a very mixed community, which included the daughters

of mechanics, curates, surgeons, shopkeepers, farmers, dairymen, soldiers, sailors, and villagers" (112), that is, young women from both the working classes and the lower middle class from which Gissing sprang. Sue, however, cannot wait for the increased freedom which Jude says the life of a teacher will bring her: she finds the physical confinement and conventional Christian morality of the school suffocating and runs away from it. Her failure there, combined with the shock of learning of Jude's marriage to Arabella, precipitates her marriage to Phillotson--that is, she marries for economic as well as emotional reasons, trying, rather blindly at this point, to keep her life whole. The emotions she feels, however, are not centered on Phillotson but on Jude, and this conflict drives her to extreme behavior: at one point she jumps out of the second-story window of Phillotson's house when he mistakenly tries to enter her bedroom at night (180). We might interpret Sue's reluctance to have sex with Phillotson as a fear of loss of integrity: she does not want to consent to sex for legalistic reasons but out of a readiness that comes from love and desire she herself feels.

Sue's confused attempts to integrate love and vocation are not unlike those of some of Gissing's women. In Gissing, however, women tend to be exploiting, as Amy Reardon sometimes is, or exploited: Milvain's sisters write religious stories for girls in order to free up more of the family money for their brother's support; and Marian consents to write articles for which her father takes credit. Sue tries hard to be neither exploited nor exploiting. After she leaves Phillotson, her relationship with Jude comes to involve shared work that is mutually beneficial:

Sue was assisting Jude very materially now: he had latterly occupied himself on his own account, in working and lettering headstones, which he kept in a little yard at the back of his little house, where in the intervals of domestic duties she marked out the letters full size for him, and blacked them in after he had cut them. It was a lower class of handicraft than were his former performances as a cathedral mason, and his only patrons were the poor people who lived in his own neighborhood, and knew what a cheap man this "Jude Fawley: Monumental Mason" (as he called himself on his front door) was to employ for the simple memorials they required for their dead. But he seemed more independent than before, and it was the only arrangement under which Sue, who particularly wished to be no burden on him, could render any assistance. (206)

The return of Arabella moves Sue to intimacy with Jude. She still resists legal marriage, however, fearing that it will jeopardize the precarious equality she and Jude have established. When their relationship is at its most physical, they move beyond work that simply maintains them to create together models of the Christminster colleges. The arrival of Little Father Time calls attention to their unconventional relationship, and they begin to lose stonemasonry work. "Against the will of a community, an integrated life is virtually impossible to sustain," says Danon of this development (188). When the burdens of underemployment and the need to feed three children weigh heavily on them, they are forced to trivialize Jude's former aspirations by baking and selling Christminster cakes.

In several important ways, Sue is ahead of Jude and serves as his guide. First of all, she does not see herself as a type: she says to Phillotson, "I hate to be what is called a clever girl" (87). This is of no small help to Jude as he searches for a vocational identity to replace the lost one of the university. Although she wishes to better her status, she never mistakes it

for the core of herself as Jude for a time does. She loves Jude for his manual skill as much as for his mental gifts: "I think it's noble to see a man's hands subdued to what he works in" (106-7). And she consistently argues for the inborn wisdom of working men as against the learning of university men. It is Sue's kiss that convinces Jude of the folly (clear for some time to the reader) of trying to become a clergyman: "It was glaringly inconsistent for him to pursue the idea of becoming the soldier and servant of a religion in which sexual love was regarded as at its best a frailty, and at its worst damnation" (172).

As Jude's guide, however, Sue leads him on a circuitous one. Once he discovers that Christminster is not the new Jerusalem, Jude's travel is never again "direct and linear" (Knoepfmacher 209). Following Sue, Jude journeys through Melchester, Shaston, "Aldrickham and elsewhere," and returns to Christminster only to experience the deaths of his children, then his own death. "The disappointed Jude discovers that for Sue and himself, there is no one road, no straight and narrow way to the ideal" (Knoepfmacher 210).

When their lives begin to disintegrate, and they find they must move frequently just to keep themselves in work, Sue tries to help Jude keep his vision of himself whole: "'You struggled nobly to acquire knowledge, and only the meanest souls in the world would blame you!'" (258). But her faith in the desirability of maintaining integrity cannot withstand the shock of her children's death. She comes to view herself as "a poor wicked woman who is trying to mend" (285) and embraces the conventions she earlier viewed as in absolute conflict with wholeness. She returns to Phillotson

and remarries him to expiate her guilt: "My children--are dead--and it is right that they should be! I am glad--almost. They were sin-begotten. They were sacrificed to teach me how to live!--their death was the first stage of my purification. That's why they have not died in vain!" (288). This course understandably astounds and enrages Jude, who feels that to prepare for death he must end his relationship with Sue. Hardy's final judgment of Sue is, however, a generous one. We sense from the extremity of her words and actions at the end of the book that she has gone mad: it was all finally too much for a woman whom Jude first described as "all nervous motion" (73).

Sue's and Jude's stories are inseparable. Marian Yule and Edwin Reardon, on the other hand, never become lovers; in fact, they never meet. David Grylls correctly claims that one way New Grub Street works is by contrasting the relationship of Reardon and Amy to that of Milvain and Marian (85). It is also true, however, that the novel works on a more subtle level, using what would seem to be a twentieth-century technique. It allows the shadow of the relationship Marian and Reardon might have had to accompany the reader through the book, to provide a silent commentary on the story as it is unfolding. For Marian is the wife Reardon longs for, the second self that would not stop loving him because of hard times, the one middle-class woman in "fifty thousand" who "would share poverty" with a "genius" (124). Marian's vocation is love, and she is not at all confused about this. She pays a very high price, however, for choosing a vocation that is either incomplete or false.

Let us see what Marian's obstacles are. Her class status is, first of all, more uncertain than Reardon's. Her father, Alfred Yule, is a middle-class "man of letters." He has followed a career path similar to Reardon's but slightly more successful, spending years on self-education, then applying himself with the dogged effort recommended by Smiles and by Yule's special genius, Samuel Johnson. Yule makes the same mistake Gissing made in his own life, however--he marries a working-class girl. Marian is well educated, much better educated than most Victorian girls, partly because Yule wants to separate her from her mother. "Any sacrifice of money" was made "to insure her growing up with the tongue and manners of a lady. It can scarcely have been a light trial to the mother to know that contact with her was regarded as her child's greatest danger; but in her humility and her love for Marian she offered no resistance" (125). Despite Marian's education, however, she is still unable to travel in the circles that would allow her to meet a suitable husband--for her mother remains unpresentable. As a result, when she meets Milvain, "the first man who had ever evinced a man's interest in her" (219), she has no one to compare him to. Her father's tactics have also put an emotional distance between mother and daughter. Marian's mother is unable to help her put Milvain's character into perspective before she falls in love with him. Nor is her father looking out for her real interests, obsessed as he is with his own failing literary career and the help Marian might provide him. Like the orphaned Becky Sharp in Vanity Fair, Marian has to look out for herself. She is the spiritually orphaned protagonist of her own bildungsroman.

Marian appreciates the weight of vocational choice. Reardon never clearly asks himself whether he has a subject for which fiction is the best medium; this is part of his vocational confusion. He concentrates half-heartedly on "workmanship" instead, suspecting himself of "superstition" when, "though knowing my work can't be first-rate, I strive to make it as good as possible" (84). Marian, a disciple of Carlyle, believes that writing is a heroic vocation only fit for those with something to say: "To write--was not that the joy and the privilege of one who had an urgent message for the world?" (137). She knows her father has no such message: "he had abandoned all thought of original production, and only wrote about writing" (137). Marian is quite adept at the literary criticism her father has taught her to write, and her prose is characterized by the grace her father's lacks (111). She knows that although she might eventually become independent through her writing, she lacks a vocation for it:

When already there was more good literature in the world than any mortal could cope with in his lifetime, here was she exhausting herself in the manufacture of printed stuff which no one even pretended to be more than a commodity for the day's market. What unspeakable folly! (137)

Part of Marian's eagerness to embrace love as a vocation may stem from the life she wishes to abandon, symbolized for her by the British Museum Reading Room. The reading room is one of Gissing's rare extended metaphors. With it he tries to achieve something Dickensian, something akin to Miss Flite's birds in Bleak House or Krook's rag and bone shop. (Gissing admired Dickens very much and in 1898 published a

volume of literary criticism of Dickens that is still highly regarded.)

Marian compares the reading room to both a spider web and a prison:

... her eye discerned an official walking along the upper gallery, and in pursuance of her grotesque humour, her mocking misery, she likened him to a black, lost soul, doomed to wander in an eternity of vain research along endless shelves. Or again, the readers who sat here at these radiating lines of desks, what were they but hapless flies caught in a huge web, its nucleus the great circle of the Catalogue? Darker, darker. From the towering wall of volumes seemed to emanate visible motes, intensifying the obscurity; in a moment the book-lined circumference of the room would be but a featureless prison-limit. (138)

The reading room is a place where people begin to disintegrate. In trying to find someone to sponsor his application for a reader's ticket to the museum, Reardon meets the successful novelist who suggests he writes fiction and sets him on the path which we have seen ends in his premature death. In the reading room, Marian speaks to Milvain for the first time since their first meeting in Finden. Yule goes to the museum to "read up" his cataract condition, and Biffen learns there the precise combination of chemicals with which to kill himself. It may be that Gissing, who before his expulsion from Owens wished to be a classical scholar, viewed the reading room as a symbol of his life after this irrevocable disaster. Indeed, it was often seen as the poor man's university; Marx, for example, wrote Das Kapital there (1867).

Marian wants no part of the reading room and the life it represents. She longs for a task that is socially useful: "Oh, to go forth and labour with one's hands, to do any poorest, commonest work of which the world had truly need!" (138). In choosing love as her vocation, Marian perhaps hopes to be useful as wife and mother, and in this way to maintain her integrity.

But here she departs dangerously from Carlyle, whose ideas we have seen to be important to this novel. Carlyle, as discussed in chapter 1, held that the social usefulness of a hero's work will ultimately be recognized but cannot be the criterion by which the work is chosen: a true vocation is an inner answer to a calling from God. We know when Marian begins to make her vocational choice based on its social usefulness that she will make the wrong one, for she is making it on false principles.

Marian is not drawn to love blindly: she eventually sees the objects of her love with great clarity. Her relationship with her father has in fact prepared her to see Milvain in clear terms. She thinks in this way of her father: ". . . it had often surprised her that a man of his temperament should be so dependent upon the praise and blame of people whom he justly deemed his inferiors" (122). Despite her love for him, she is able to wonder whether Milvain is telling the truth when he claims he did not write the unsigned, unfavorable review of her father's book that has caused her first open confrontation with her father:

He might have weighed profit against other considerations, and have written in that way of her father; she had not felt that absolute confidence which defies every argument from human frailty. And now she asked herself if faith of that unassailable kind is ever possible; is it not only the poet's dream, the far ideal? (218-219)

Marian is "not readily the victim of illusion," but "could abandon herself to a belief in human virtues when their suggestion seemed to promise her a future of happiness!" (219). She makes a leap of faith not unlike the one Jude makes on the hill at Marygreen: ". . . she had made a careful study of [Milvain's] faults. Each conversation had revealed to her new weakness

and follies. With the result that her love had grown to a reality" (219). She would have preferred not to fall in love with a literary man with no special message for the world. But since Milvain is a such a man, she is grateful that he has not deluded himself into believing otherwise. Milvain aims "with frank energy at the joys of life" (219). He seems to take comfort in Marian's perception of his character flaws; with her, he does not have to pretend (e.g. 59).

We are in a more skeptical world than Hardy's now, however. Gissing compares Marian's view of love as a leap of faith followed by an absolute and unshakable commitment to the views of Milvain, Amy and Reardon himself. Milvain holds the following opinion:

"The days of romantic love are gone by. The scientific spirit has put an end to that kind of self-deception. Romantic love was inextricably blended with all sorts of superstitions--belief in personal immortality, in superior beings, in--all the rest of it. What we think of now is moral and intellectual and physical compatibility; I mean, if we are reasonable people." (340).

Reardon, disappointed in love, compares it to his experiences of things classical:

"The best moments in life are those when we contemplate beauty in the purely artistic spirit--objectively. I have had such moments in Greece and Italy; times when I was a free spirit, utterly remote from the temptations and harassings of sexual emotion. What we call love is mere turmoil. Who wouldn't release himself from it for ever, if the possibility offered?" (406)

Amy speaks most directly to Marian's vocational choice, predicting that it will be short-lived:

"What downright lies are accepted as indisputable! That about love being a woman's whole life; who believes it really? Love is the most insignificant thing in most women's lives. It occupies a

few months, possibly a year or two, and even then I doubt if it is often the first consideration." (396)

It is difficult to work out where Gissing is in this debate. Is love as vocation a false choice? Or is it merely an incomplete one, fragmenting integrity if it is taken up as one's sole hope and work? As Marian draws away from her father, she grows stronger. In the beginning she is "submissive and timid" (206) and speaks with a voice that lacks "emphasis" but lends itself "very naturally and sweetly to the expression of warm feeling" (147). But near the end of the book she is able to stand up to her father in defense of Milvain, her mother, and finally herself. Her father tries to persuade her to put her small legacy from John Yule at his disposal so that he can start his own magazine and threatens never to see her again if she, instead, marries Milvain and lets him use the money to further his career. This at last leads Marian to ask the all-important question, "Is there a natural law, then, that a daughter must be sacrificed to her father?" (439). In questioning the importance of filial love and in choosing a different object for the love she hopes will be her vocation, Marian makes an important step toward unfolding herself. She grows as no other character in the novel is allowed to. In the end, however, she does not grow enough. Indeed, her self-chosen love for Milvain makes her miserable. Her legacy fails to materialize; Milvain postpones their marriage; Alfred Yule is found to be going blind from cataracts; Marian becomes her parents' only means of support. Milvain, of course, does not wish to risk both a poor wife and her destitute parents, but he appears to lay the decision in Marian's hands: "Decide my fate for me, Marian . . . Are you content to lead a simple, unambitious life? Or should you prefer your husband to be a man of some

distinction?" (509). Marian knows very well which of these two alternatives Jasper prefers, and because she loves him, she releases him from their engagement.

The Carlylean ethic does not, of course, require that heroes be rewarded or recognized for their heroism, but Marian has long since departed from that ethic. It seems to me that Gissing concludes that Marian has made an incomplete choice. She is constrained less by limited opportunities than by the traditional filial duties that fall to women more often than to men. Marian overcomes her slavish loyalty to her father only to transfer it to someone else. Gissing, whose relations with women were largely unhappy, was nevertheless not ready in New Grub Street to condemn love. Biffen, who is the vocational exemplar of the book, is also the spokesperson for the efficacy of realism in love: "The art of living is the art of compromise. We have no right to foster sensibilities, and conduct ourselves as if the world allowed of ideal relations" (477). Marian may be realistic about Milvain's faults, but she is unrealistic about the measure of happiness he or any other person can grant her. Love without work ultimately offers as partial a fulfillment as work without love. As Reardon ought to have been more conscious of what he was about, so should Marian: both ought to have thought more carefully about their vocational choices.

In the end Marian's life consists of supporting her parents in a provincial town from her wages as a librarian, she who detests the British Museum Reading Room above all other things. Wanting only love, she is left with only work. If Reardon had met and married Marian, he might have survived to rethink his vocational choice, but Marian's fate, Gissing

implies, would have been just as harsh, the slow death of a woman who expected too much from love.

Gissing and Hardy seem to have in common a willingness to question what was sacrosanct in Dickens and reluctantly accepted by Eliot, the idea that love is woman's vocation. Marian's and Sue's lives are seen multidimensionally as Esther Summerson's and Amy Dorritt's are not (imagine Little Dorritt asking if a daughter's life should be sacrificed to her father). Dorothea Brooke's story begins with a discussion of the dilemma of women whose efforts "tremble off and are dispersed among hindrances, instead of centering in some long-recognizable deed" (Eliot 26), but Dorothea, for all her particularity, makes a life well within the moral boundaries of Middlemarch. Hardy and Gissing reflect the intellectual climate of their day, in which the "rights of man," so dear to eighteenth-century rationalists, had at last come to be seen to apply to women as well. But these novelists go further: they imagine the reality of women for whom vocation is as central a need as it is for men. Although Gissing is elsewhere seen to be hypercritical of women who neglect their domestic duties to pursue a career (e.g. Alma Rolfe in The Whirlpool), in Marian Yule Gissing gives us a woman whose need to unfold herself in all her complexity, even if she herself remains insufficiently aware of it, is as deep as the reciprocal needs of the men she lives among. (In 1893, with the publication of The Odd Women, Gissing would create a woman character, Rhoda Nunn, who was fully aware of and engaged in her vocational struggle.) In this important sense, women are no longer the Other for Gissing. Likewise, Hardy, in Sue Bridehead, gives us a woman who

understands the need to preserve her integrity while she tries to fulfill herself. If she goes mad trying to do this, we hope for better things for future Sues, as we do for future Judes.

Chapter 5

Pessimism vs. Meliorism: Stumbling into the Twentieth Century

Ours is essentially a tragic age, so we refuse to take it tragically. The cataclysm has happened, we are among the ruins, we start to build up new little habits, to have new little hopes. It is rather hard work: there is now no smooth road into the future: but we go round, or scramble over the obstacles. We've got to live, no matter how many skies have fallen.

-- D. H. Lawrence, Lady Chatterley's Lover, 1928

In Jude and New Grub Street we experience a double cataclysm. First, life is seen to be reduced to the individual's struggle to unfold himself. We could equally say, of course, that concentration on this process represents an expansion of life. How a citizen of the late nineteenth century viewed the new order would have depended, probably, on how satisfying he found the former means of fulfillment, such as religion, family, and community. The second cataclysm is the removal of even the consolation of self-realization. For just as unfolding the self is recognized to be the central task of life, it is also shown to be a doomed task for the Judes and Reardons, Sues and Marians, whose opportunities are limited by barriers of class, gender, or temperament. In these novels a basis for hope is identified and eliminated almost in the same moment. Is there also some suggestion of the "new little habits" and "hopes" Lawrence feels survivors always identify to help them go on living? Before we examine the novels for the presence of a twentieth-century survival kit, we must hear out the death knell of the

nineteenth, which is sounded more for the deaths of the children in the novels than for the protagonists themselves.

Near the end of the novel, Jude says of his ambitions:

... it was my poverty and not my will that consented to be beaten. It takes two or three generations to do what I tried to do in one; and my impulses--affections--vices perhaps they should be called--were too strong not to hamper a man without advantages; who should be as cold-blooded as a fish and as selfish as a pig to have a really good chance of being one of his country's worthies. (257)

At this point Jude is a man with children who, despite his own failures, is entitled to watch future generations of his own flesh and blood attempt to realize their ambitions. When Little Father Time, his son with Arabella, first arrives, he says joyously to Sue, "I have an idea! We'll educate and train him with a view to the University. What I couldn't accomplish in my own person perhaps I can carry out through him?" (220). The child himself already knows better, for his childhood has been a greatly reduced version of Jude's own. Family and religion have already failed him. Little Father Time is not orphaned, but neither is he wanted. Not only does his mother wish to be relieved of the burden of raising him, but she does not bother to acknowledge the existence of his individual soul through the naming ritual of baptism. He was not christened, Little Father Time says, "because if I died in damnation, 'twould save the expense of a Christian funeral" (221). Jude seems hurt that Arabella has not named the child after him, but after a moment realizes the tragedy of the child not having been given a proper name at all: "'We'll have him christened,'" he says to Sue, "'the day we are married'" (222). They are, however, never married, and Little Father Time ends as he began, unindividuated, without a "self" to unfold.

All that is finally left of this child is the suicide note in which he explains why he killed his siblings and himself: "Done because we are too menny" (266). With this act he tries to restrict the proliferation of life, a process the pregnant Sue has told him she "couldn't help" (264). Also, of course, he ends his and the other children's individual experiences of the meaninglessness of human life. Each of the three dead children was too "menny" as together they were too "many." Perhaps Little Father Time has been "seized" with the same "sort of shuddering" (17) that the child Jude felt as he grew up in an indifferent world. Jude tries to persuade Sue that she has not brought about the tragedy by what she has said to the boy:

It was in his nature to do it. The doctor says there are such boys springing up amongst us--boys of a sort unknown in the last generation--the outcome of new views of life. They seem to see all its terrors before they are old enough to have staying power to resist them. He says it is the beginning of the coming universal wish not to live. (266)

But this is almost exactly what the narrator says of Jude, that he is a child "who has felt the pricks of life somewhat before his time" (11). Jude himself does not seem to identify with his son or to feel the loss of him or the other children; compared to losing Sue, the deaths of the children are unimportant. He abandons his personal investment in future generations without a backward glance.

Little Father Time says he received his "nickname" because he "looked so aged" (221). Edward Said, who also finds in the similarity between Jude and New Grub Street important instances of late Victorian sensibility, points out that the boy is "neither really a son nor, of course, a father. He is an alteration in the course of life, a disruption of the

archaeology that links generations one to the other" (139). It is almost as if the child is Jude reconceived, a destiny for Jude alternative to Jude's final affirmation of himself as a man who knew what his vocation was, even if he did not successfully pursue it. Whereas U. C. Knoeflmacher asserts that Little Father Time is Hardy's "pessimism personified" (222), "the expression of the novelist's belief in cosmic pain" (223), it seems to me that Hardy's final uncertainty as to the value of Jude's experience is expressed in the puzzling character of this homicidal child. If at the end of the novel Jude retains his dignity and his sense of himself, so does he also say, quoting Job 3, "Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived." Little Father Time is spared precisely the unfolding of the self that feels desire and the disappointment of desire. His fate may sometimes have seemed to Hardy to be a better one than Jude's.

Compare this scene of the death of children to the analogous one in New Grub Street, the death of the Reardons' child, Willie. Edwin has previously said in bitterness to Amy that "the child is nothing to me, compared with you. It is you, who loved me, who became my wife--you only I care about" (388). When he learns of the child's death, he feels his loss only momentarily:

His heart sank, and for a moment so great a terror was upon him that he closed his eyes and seemed to pass into utter darkness . . . Poor little Willie had been the cause of the first coldness between him and Amy; her love for him had given place to a mother's love for the child. Now it would be as in the first days of their marriage; they would again be all in all to each other. (486)

Like Jude, he seems little moved by the death of his child or the breaking of the link with the future this child represents. These two scenes are very different from the depictions of the deaths or mistreatment of children in Dickens--the death of Jo in Bleak House or of Little Nell in The Old Curiosity Shop, the beating of Smike in Nicholas Nickleby or the deprivation of Oliver Twist in the workhouse. The High Victorian period's double view of children as expendable workers in factories but the sentimental favorites of novelists and their readers seems to have been replaced in the 1890s by the hard-nosed conclusion that life was so far from being a privilege that children were well out of it.

Consider, for example, Gissing's prediction of the views of death and the birth of children which will ensue when humanity gives up trying to clothe the true nature of life in the false garments of optimism:

The grave will become a symbol of joy; those who have departed will be spoken of as the happy ones, and the tears of the mourner will be checked by his bitter reason. Pity is alone for the living.-- Unless by the eyes of faith we may look onward to that day when compassion will extend itself to generations yet unborn. To create a being predestined to misery will come to be deemed a crime, even as the passion concerned is recognized as a sin. And so perchance, where the condemnation of reason could not overcome, the dictates of emotion will be strong to chasten; a childless race will dedicate its breath to the eternal silence, and mercy will have redeemed the world. (97)

This extraordinary paragraph is the concluding one of "The Hope of Pessimism," a work in which the novelist turns away from the Positivist philosophy of his "youth"--the essay was written in 1882 when he was 25 years old--and arrives at conclusions based largely on his reading of Schopenhauer. It takes the view that life is a terrible burden to its natural conclusion: the extinction of the human race. Gissing is astonishingly

hopeful, however, about the effect of a fully acknowledged pessimism on the behavior of people (for as long as they may be around). For the sake of comparison, here is the conclusion to The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, in which Max Weber makes the following dark prediction about the loss of religious motives for human conduct:

. . . the idea of duty in one's calling prowls about in our lives like the ghost of dead religious beliefs. Where the fulfillment of the calling cannot directly be related to the highest spiritual and cultural values, or when, on the other hand, it need not be felt simply as economic compulsion, the individual generally abandons the attempt to justify it at all. In the field of its highest development, in the United States, the pursuit of wealth, stripped of its religious and ethical meaning, tends to become associated with purely mundane passions, which often actually gives it the character of sport. (182)

Gissing personifies this result in Milvain, for whom vocation is synonymous with the pursuit of wealth and both take on the coloring of sport. In his essay, Gissing contends that the Milvains in the world are necessarily also the optimists:

To the agnostic optimist [synonymous for Gissing with Positivist] life is something good in itself and for its own sake; the mere circumstance of birth into the world endows [a man] with a right to a share in the world's happiness. Let this constitute a man's creed, and, consciously or unconsciously, he will inevitably make it his first object to secure possession of his birthright. The social results . . . are only too plain . . . Hence this scheme of commercial competition tempered by the police-code, to which we are pleased to give the name of a social order. The motto of our time is: Every man for himself, and the Devil take the hindmost. (90)

"Egotism," therefore, and the optimism that results from it are the roots of immorality. Christianity was a right-minded philosophy only insofar as it

insisted that salvation depended on "un-will[ing] the instinct of life" (92), as in "Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it" (Luke 17:33). The truly wise man, "he who has experienced the second birth of philosophical consciousness," realizes that "in the grave is the goal" of the optimist's striving, that pessimism is the only rational view. Furthermore, from a rationally pessimistic view of his own fate, the individual learns charity (92-93). "The compassion which each man first feels for himself, let him extend to his fellow sufferers" (94). What little happiness can be achieved in life will be the direct result of pessimism: "compassion will so far weigh against egotism as to abolish the system of competitive greed, and make no longer socially applicable that terrible phrase: the battle of life" (96).

Pessimism and meliorism are connected for Gissing: meliorism, the slow bettering of the human lot, is the direct result of pessimism. Neither is as satisfying an alternative as the wish for extinction expressed in the words of Prospero that Reardon quotes incompletely and Reardon-improved-upon, Biffen, quotes in their entirety. What was clear to Gissing in the 1890s was not so clear to Hardy, however. Interpreters of Hardy have long argued over which world view, pessimism or meliorism, was preeminent in his philosophy. The meliorism that is evident in Jude in Hardy's efforts to describe injustice and its possible cures coexists with a strain of pessimism manifested in Jude's inability to identify with or mourn his children. David Daiches argues that Hardy's pessimism was not primarily the result of religious skepticism, but the fruit of his awareness of the "suffering that seemed inherent in the combination of

chance, natural law, and environment operating in human affairs" (69), that is, of the misery of human life. This is certainly Gissing's starting point also, but he takes it further than Hardy, ending New Grub Street, not at all tentatively, with the marriage and success of the least worthy of the characters, Jasper and Amy, the life sentence of Marian Yule, and the blessed release of Biffen, Reardon, and Reardon's son. Hardy, for all the grisly character of the deaths of the children, leaves us hoping, in a quite mundane way, for the reform of the university system. These two novelists held many of the same ideas about the nature of human life, but Gissing, we are forced to conclude, held them with more conviction.

If these novels about the doomed drive toward self-realization have autobiographical elements, in the most important sense they are not autobiographical at all. For Hardy and Gissing did not allow pessimistic philosophies to prevent them from pursuing their own vocations. Gissing published 27 volumes of prose in the 26 years of his writing career. Hardy published 14 novels, eight volumes of poetry, over 40 short stories, and two dramas. If Hardy was, as I have speculated, considering a change in vocation during the writing of Jude, this change turned out to be not an abandonment of art, but merely a change in genre. In another quotation from "The Hope of Pessimism" we find an explanation for the remarkably consistent work life of two devotees of pessimism:

There is, in truth, only one kind of worldly optimism which justifies itself in the light of reason, and that is the optimism of the artist. The artistic mind . . . is . . . the subject contemplating the object without disturbing consciousness of self. In the mood of artistic contemplation the will is destroyed, self is eliminated, the world of phenomena resolves itself into pictures of absolute significance, and the heart rejoices itself before images of pure

beauty. Here, indeed, good does prevail over evil, and there is excellence in the sum of things. Herein is one explanation of the optimism of the Hellenic religion. It was the faith of a people of artists. (95).

Neither novel contains any clear testimony to the saving role of art. We might suspect that this idea lies in the background of the novels, however, if for no other reason than that once the idea that vocation should be socially useful is rejected, art as vocation, as Daiches has suggested, cannot be far behind (40). I find art as vocation to be implicit in New Grub Street, in the dignity afforded to the character of the conscientious, almost Flaubertian artist, Harold Biffen. It is also implicit in the devotion of both Jude and Reardon to the classics, and in the allegiance of Sue, Jude's guide, to the Hellenistic ideal. In their love for the classics, Jude and Reardon are expressing not only a nostalgia for a past era they perceive to be superior to their own, an era characterized by what Matthew Arnold called "sweetness and light," but also their desire to associate themselves with an aesthetic philosophy that is divorced from the tradition of Hebraism and Puritanism.

Alan Mintz points out that Stephen Dedalus, the hero of A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, "resacralizes" the notion of calling, going back to the "pre-Protestant" roots of vocation in which the artist is a person apart, withdrawn from mundane life and answering a calling "from beyond rather than from within" (180). The "pre-Protestant" world synonymous with art for both Hardy and Gissing is the world of Greece and Rome. Gissing's plain style evaporates when he has Reardon tell of his

travels to these countries. In the following passage Reardon sees the sky above Athens at sunset with the eyes of a painter:

I turned eastward, and there to my astonishment was a magnificent rainbow, a perfect semicircle, stretching from the foot of Parnes to that of Hymettus, framing Athens and its hills, which grew brighter and brighter--the brightness for which there is no name among colours. Hymettus was of a soft misty warmth, a something tending to purple, its ridges marked by exquisitely soft and indefinite shadows, the rainbow coming right down in front. The Acropolis simply glowed and blazed. As the sun descended all these colours grew richer and warmer; for a moment the landscape was nearly crimson. Then suddenly the sun passed into the lower stratum of cloud, and the splendour died almost at once, except that there remained the northern half of the rainbow, which had become double. In the west, the clouds were still glorious for a time; there were two shaped like great expanded wings, edged with refulgence. (406)

It is interesting to compare this sunset with the undescribed one Reardon is looking at when we first meet him (77). He is then engaged in an act of creation--he is writing a novel--but he is aware that art cannot be the vocation of a man who must write for a living in a world in which market value is dominant.

Sue contends near the end of Hardy's novel that Jude should not have learned the Gothic style, which Ruskin celebrated because it allowed the individual stonecutter the power to express himself:

"You ought to have learnt Classic. Gothic is barbaric art, after all. . . . Remember the interior of Christminster Cathedral--almost the first place in which we looked in each other's faces. Under the picturesqueness of those Norman details one can see the grotesque childishness of uncouth people trying to imitate the vanished Roman forms, remembered by dim tradition only." (243)

Gothic art is not characterized by individual expression at all, Sue believes, but by the same slavish imitation Ruskin found in its neo-Gothic

descendant. Sue feels that the classical tradition must be reclaimed, as she tries in her powerless way to reclaim it when she buys statues of Venus and Apollo for her tiny room in Christminster (77-78).

George Gissing and Thomas Hardy were correspondents for a time in the 1880s and renewed their friendship in 1895 at a dinner given in London for George Meredith. Shortly afterward, Hardy invited Gissing to spend a weekend at his home, Max Gate, in Dorchester. The visit was not a very successful one. Gissing, who did not take his working-class wife, Edith, into company at all, nevertheless allowed himself to feel critical of Hardy's middle-class wife, Emma, whom he called a "paltry woman" (Young 206). Hardy seemed to Gissing to be obsessed with social mobility. "He is drawn into merely fashionable society, talks of lords and ladies more than of ordinary people" (Young 206). And, "to my great surprise," said Gissing, "I found that he did not know the names of the flowers in his own fields!" (206). Michael Millgate gives us Hardy's slant on the botanical question:

It was later that same year that Hardy made to another friend his observation about the way in which the town-bred boy [Gissing] would, in his self-conscious appreciation of nature, "rush to pick a flower which the country boy does not seem to notice. But it is part of the country boy's life. It grows in his soul--he does not want it in his button-hole." (366-367)

A comparison of the lives of Gissing and Hardy reveal some ironies that bear interesting relationships to our two novels. Hardy, whose birth was more humble than Gissing's, achieved financial security, living in comfort and even happiness (Emma died in 1912 and Hardy remarried) to the age of 88. (He died in 1928, the year of the quotation with which I began

this chapter.) Gissing, on the other hand, exploded out of the world at a tragically young age after a life of unceasing labor. If New Grub Street more consistently questions the value of the process of unfolding the self than Jude, Gissing was addicted to that very process in his own life. He tried throughout his life to compensate in industry for the early blow to his dignity represented by his expulsion from college, even to the point of madly botanizing across Hardy's Dorset estate. But following his death from pneumonia in 1903 at age 46, his brother, Algernon, had to be given a pension by the Royal Literary Fund to educate Gissing's two sons and pay Edith's expenses at the asylum in which she lived from 1902 until her death in 1917 (Halperin 359).

From a vantage point of relative failure, it is not surprising, perhaps, that Gissing was quick to despise Hardy's attempts to cross class barriers. Perhaps because he was more successful than Gissing, Hardy could describe vocational ambition more organically than Gissing, in terms of the life of one character. Gissing's several main characters tend to deemphasize Reardon's tragedy, but Hardy's loquacious Jude tells all about the feelings of a man who has been defeated at every turn. Hardy, who enjoyed very tangible fruits of success, could not decide whether or not Jude's final affirmation of his calling constitutes a triumph. Reardon's failure to clearly conceive a calling and Biffen's relief when at last he gives up the vocational struggle suggest an utter pessimism that Hardy, a highly successful citizen of his era, could not quite accept. Both books implicitly endorse art, the vocational choice of their authors, as the only vocation worth pursuing, predicting the position of James Joyce and other

twentieth-century artists. In A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (1914-15), Joyce describes artistic calling as a vision of a "winged form . . . a hawklike man flying sunward above the sea" (169). Stephen Dedalus interprets this "symbol" or "prophecy" as follows:

His soul had risen from the grave of boyhood, spurning her graveclothes. Yes! Yes! Yes! He would create proudly out of the freedom and power of his soul, as the great artificer whose name he bore, a living thing, new and soaring and beautiful, impalpable, imperishable. (169-70)

One is reminded of the "great expanded wings, edged with refulgence" Reardon claims to have seen in the sunset over Athens. But neither Jude's initial apotheosizing of Christminster as a "city of light" nor Reardon's raptures about Greece and Italy approach the level of hyperbole that we find here in Joyce on the subject of art as a saving vocation. Gissing and Hardy's view of art might indeed be described in Lawrence's terms: it represents "a new little habit," a "new little hope" for conducting life after the cataclysm.

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