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SOME ASPECTS OF THE USE OF CLASSICAL ALLUSION
IN THE NOVELS OF THOMAS HARDY

I

It was one of those sequestered spots outside the gates of the world where may usually be found more meditation than action, and more listlessness than meditation; where reasoning proceeds on narrow premisses, and results in inferences wildly imaginative; yet where, from time to time, dramas of a grandeur and unity truly Sophoclean are enacted in the real, by virtue of the concentrated passions and closely-knit interdependence of the lives therein (p. 39-40).

This description of Little Hintock, appearing in the first chapter of "The Woodlanders", provides a very direct indication of the kind of relationship that one may expect to find between the novels of Thomas Hardy and that vast area of the mythological, literary, cultural, and historical heritage of ancient Greece and Rome that is generally referred to as the classical tradition. Indeed, it has for a long time now become almost a critical commonplace to admit that Hardy, in the best of his novels, did manage to fulfil the claim expressed in "The Woodlanders" and to give to his work a tragic dignity and power basically comparable to the "grandeur and unity" characteristic of the great Greek tragedy of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripi-

¹ The quotation from "The Woodlanders" is taken from the New Wessex Edition, Macmillan London Ltd., London and Basingstoke 1975.

des. Thus, affinities with Greek tragedy have been observed in Hardy's vision of man as helpless against fate (however different his concept of fate itself might have been from that held by the ancients), as well as in the very construction of his novels; it seems sufficient to mention here the generally recognized choral function of the peasant characters, appearing very distinctly in most of Hardy's best novels. In certain cases, the affinities and parallels have been found to be characteristic enough to permit readings of some of the novels as direct reflections or echoes of particular classical texts. Thus, for example, close similarities have been discovered between the general scheme and organization of "The Mayor of Casterbridge" and Sophocles' "Oedipus Rex"².

Characteristically, however, the significance of Hardy's use of certain elements of the classical tradition has so far been observed in relation to his general vision of man in the universe as conveyed through the more highly organized elements of the texture of his novels, such as the plot, the construction of the characters, etc., relatively little attention having been paid to the way classical motifs are employed in his fiction on a lower level of the organization of the text - in the numerous allusions to mythology, in the references to ancient Greek and Roman authors, in the use of images created on the basis of particular classical associations. Those elements, though not always very prominent and, consequently, not always easily discernible, seem, however, on closer consideration, to form some more complex structures, an analysis of which may be of some importance to the full understanding and appreciation of Hardy's narrative art.

The present paper is, therefore, an attempt to characterize the way Hardy's use of different elements of the classical tradition at the level of allusion and imagery develops throughout his career as a novelist, from the relatively early "Far from

² Cf. J. P a t e r s o n, "The Mayor of Casterbridge as Tragedy", *Victorian Studies*, III, December 1959, p. 151-172; ed. A. J. Guerard, *Hardy. A Collection of Critical Essays*, Prentice-Hall Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N. J. 1963, *Twentieth Century Views*, p. 91-112.

the *Madding Crowd*", through "The Return of the Native", to the final achievements of "Tess of the d'Urbervilles" and "Jude the Obscure". These four novels seem to represent four characteristic phases of the process in question and have therefore been selected for closer scrutiny; as for the remaining three of Hardy's major fictions, "Under the Greenwood Tree" and "The Woodlanders" employ classical motifs too rarely and not consistently enough to permit larger generalizations; in "The Mayor of Casterbridge", in turn, classical patterns, as has already been mentioned, operate powerfully at the level of the general scheme of the novel; considered, however, from the point of view of the problems constituting the subject of this paper, the book does not seem to differ essentially from the earlier novels, particularly "The Return of the Native". To take a simple example, the numerous references to the Roman past of Casterbridge are not basically different in quality from the reference to "an old vicinal way, which branched from the great Western road of the Romans, the Via Iceniana, or Ikenild Street" (p. 56-57)³, to be found in the Egdon Heath chapter of "The Return of the Native". The effect is, in both cases, that of evoking a sense of continuity between the past and the present and of placing the characters in the historical perspective of the preceding generations, which contributes to the overall generalization and archetypization of the conflicts presented in the novels.

It might at this point be observed that the above-mentioned references to the history of Roman Britain are not allusions proper and, consequently, do not belong to the subject-matter of the present paper. Indeed, if one chooses to define allusion exclusively in terms of relationships existing between literary works, between an adopted text ("a work or part of a work from which material is borrowed in the act of quoting or referring"⁴) and an adoptive text ("a work in which that [mate-]

³ All quotations from "The Return of the Native" are taken from the Penguin English Library Edition, Penguin Books 1982.

⁴ M. Wheeler, *The Art of Allusion in Victorian Fiction*, Macmillan Press Ltd., London Basingstoke 1979, p. 2.

rial is placed"⁵), then the references to the Canterbury Amphitheatre and to the Icknield Way, as associated with certain historical and civilizational phenomena and not with particular literary texts, turn out to fall beyond the limits of the definition and thus not to be allusions in the above sense of the word⁶. At the same time, however, the references in question are important elements of some larger patterns of associations based, in general terms, on the traditions of ancient Greece and Rome and as such should not be discussed in isolation from the more strictly literary allusions.

In consequence, it seems necessary for the purposes of this paper to redefine the notion of allusion in such a way as to include in it not only allusions based on direct links between particular texts, but also references to some extraliterary spheres of human thought and activity, such as mythology, philosophy, history, civilization, etc., particularly as here all the allusions share the common classical background, existing in the mind of 19th and 20th century man as a certain indivisible unity rather than as a group of isolated areas. Thus, the term "classical allusion" will be understood, throughout this paper, as any quotation, reference, or image based on literary texts, myths, ideas, historical facts, etc., belonging to the heritage of the civilizations of ancient Greece and Rome.

II

"Far from the Madding Crowd", the author's fourth novel, is clearly the one which, for the first time in Hardy's career,

⁵ Ibidem.

⁶ A similar approach is suggested by Konrad Górski, who defines literary allusion as "an allusive reference to the text of another literary work, owing to which the given work exploits, in a greater or lesser degree, the contents of the other text as a way of expressing its own meaning" (K. G ó r s k i, *Aluzja literacka. Istota zjawiska i jego typologia*, [in:] *Z historii i teorii literatury. Seria druga*, PWN, Warszawa 1964, p. 7-8, transl. JJ).

displays the full range of his art and the most characteristic aspects of his vision of life. There is in the novel the typical rural setting of south-western England (interestingly, it is in "Far from the Madding Crowd" that the name of Wessex is used for the first time to denote the area where the action of the novel takes place); there are the typical characters, originally little more than small farmers or agricultural labourers, ennobled and elevated to the level of grandeur and heroism through the intensity of their passions and the complexity of their experience; there are the typical complicated love relationships forming the basis of the plot; there is the typical stress on the role of fate, exercising its influence over human life by means of coincidence; there is, finally, the typical tone and mood, detached, but at the same time highly emotional, often leisurely and meditative, but sometimes, as in the scene of Gabriel's saving Bathsheba's ricks, achieving great dynamism and dramatic power. All that granted, "Far from the Madding Crowd" remains, in contrast with the later novels, a relatively light and optimistic work, in which the tragic motifs, associated with Bathsheba, Boldwood, and Fanny Robin, are finally overshadowed, not only by the happy ending, in which the faithful hero marries the now mature and fully self-conscious heroine, but also, and primarily, by the marvellous, humorous presentation of the Wessex background, which fills the novel with an atmosphere of vitality and optimism unparalleled in the much darker worlds of "The Return of the Native" or "Less of the d'Urbervilles".

This effect of lightness and humour is undoubtedly due, among other factors, to the way Hardy introduces into the novel, from its very first chapters, numerous allusions to classical mythology and civilization. Interestingly, the allusions usually accompany the narrator's descriptions of ordinary, everyday human activities, often connected with the life and work of Wessex farmers and shepherds. Thus, for instance, in a description of Gabriel peeping at Bathsheba and her aunt through a hole in the roof of a cowshed, the narrator observes:

The cow standing erect was of the Devon breed, and was encased in a tight warm hide of rich Indian red, as absolutely uniform from eyes to tail as if the animal had been dipped in a dye of that colour, her long back being mathematically level. The other was spotted, grey and white. Beside her Oak now noticed a little calf about a day old, looking idiotically at the two women, which showed that it had not long been accustomed to the phenomenon of eyesight, and often turning to the lantern, which it apparently mistook for the moon, inherited instinct having as yet had little time for correction by experience. Between the sheep and the cows Lucina had been busy on Norcombe Hill lately (p. 63)⁷.

The reference to Lucina, the Roman goddess of childbirth, provides in this context a humorous counterpoint to the description of the cows and the calf and, consequently, contributes to the creation of the light-hearted, comic atmosphere of the early chapters of the novel. A similar effect results, in the scene of the sheep-shearing, from the comparison of a newly-shorn sheep to Aphrodite:

The clean, sleek creature arose from its fleece - how perfectly like Aphrodite rising from the foam should have been seen to be realized - looking startled and shy at the loss of its garment, which lay on the floor in one soft cloud, united throughout, the portion visible being the inner surface only, which, never before exposed, was white as snow, and without flaw or blemish of the minutest kind. (p. 198)

A different kind of allusion is to be found in the scene of Oak's journey from Casterbridge to Weatherbury, in the description of his falling asleep on a lonely waggon by the roadside at the foot of Yalbury Hill:

Eating his last slices of bread and ham, and drinking from the bottle of cider he had taken the precaution to bring with him, he got into the lonely waggon. Here he spread half of the hay as a bed, and, as well as he could in the darkness, pulled the other half over him by way of bed-clothes, covering himself entirely, and feeling, physically, as comfortable as ever he had been in his life. Inward melancholy it was impossible for a man like Oak, introspective far beyond his neighbours, to banish quite, whilst conning the present untoward page of his history. So, thinking of this misfortunes, amorous and pasto-

⁷ All quotations from "Far from the Madding Crowd" are taken from the Penguin Classics Edition, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth 1985.

ral, he fell asleep, shepherds enjoying, in common with sailors, the privilege of being able to summon the god instead of having to wait for him. (p. 91)

The world of Wessex becomes an Arcadia (characteristically, a few paragraphs earlier the reader has been told that "Oak could pipe with Arcadian sweetness" (p. 90)), where gods and humans live side by side, in a harmony that is only occasionally interrupted by unlucky events (like the "pastoral tragedy" of Gabriel's loss of his flock) which, however, though affecting individual fortunes, do not, on the whole, change the essentially optimistic vision of rural life presented in the novel.

The relationships between the Arcadian gods and the people of South Wessex, though close, are not, however, those of full equality; the protagonists of the novel are, in a way, children or youths playing their games in the presence of their elders and often, consciously or unconsciously, imitating their behaviour. Thus, Bathsheba is openly described, in the scene of the Casterbridge cornmarket, as "a little sister of a little Jove" (p. 41); a few chapters earlier, in the scene of Bathsheba's first meeting with her labourers, a classical reference provides a humorous comment on the heroine's haughtiness and pretentiousness:

"Quite well, I thank you, Miss Everdene," said Shepherd Oak from the doorpost. "If I don't, I'll inquire." Gabriel was rather staggered by the remarkable coolness of her manner. Certainly nobody without previous information would have dreamt that Oak and the handsome woman before whom he stood had ever been other than strangers. But perhaps her air was the inevitable result of the social rise which had advanced her from a cottage to a large house and fields. The case is not unexampld in high places. When, in the writings of the later poets, Jove and his family are found to have moved from their cramped quarters on the peak of Olympus into the wide sky above it, their words show a proportionate increase of arrogance and reserve. (p. 131)

Another interesting aspect of Hardy's use of classical allusion in "Far from the Madding Crowd" is the association of some of the allusions with the group of characters most clearly representing the humorous vein of the novel - the labourers

working at Bathsheba's farm. In the chapter presenting the shearing supper the reader is shown how

Bob Coggan was sent home for his ill manners, and tranquillity was restored by Jacob Smallbury, who volunteered a ballad as inclusive and interminable as that with which the worthy toper old Silenus amused on a similar occasion the swains Chromis and Mnasyllus, and other jolly dogs of his day. (p. 207)

This allusion, referring to Virgil's sixth eclogue and establishing a parallel not only between Jacob Smallbury's ballad and Silenus' song, but also between the characters and the situations involved, is another example of the narrator's humorous commentary on the events described. The comic effect is strengthened when, a few paragraphs later, the shearers are presented and commented upon again, at a later stage of the party:

[...] they sat, and talked on, and grew as merry as the gods in Homer's heaven. (p. 207-208)

The primarily comic function of classical motifs in "Far from the Madding Crowd" becomes even more evident if considered from the point of view of the distribution of the allusions in the text of the novel. Characteristically, most of the references in question, including all those quoted so far, appear in the first half of the book, which is dominated by the romantic and social comedy centred upon Bathsheba and Gabriel; on the contrary, later in the novel, as the conflicts between the characters become more and more entangled and the atmosphere darkens, the allusions not only become less and less frequent, but also tend to lose their more general significance and look more like mere embellishments which are not always very successful artistically. A good example is provided here by the description of Bathsheba after she has dressed Troy's body in grave-clothes: "Her looks were calm and nearly rigid, like a slightly animated bust of Melpomene" (p. 443).

It seems worthwhile to observe at this point that Hardy's tendency to impress the reader with the richness of his associations and the width of his knowledge, so evident in his

numerous references to painting, is also to be discerned in some of his classical allusions, which, though apparently heightening the tone of the novel, turn out, on closer examination, to be either irrelevant or relevant only superficially. This is the case with the quotation from Horace's "Satires" (Book 1, Ode 1), used as the heading of the chapter describing Boldwood's Christmas party and his killing of Troy - "Concurratur - Horae Momento" (p. 429) - "Battle is joined, [and] in a moment of times / Comes speedy death or joyous victory". In Horace's text, the words are those of a merchant comparing his lot with that of a soldier and envying him the simpleness and directness of his experience; thus far, the parallel both with the scene described in the chapter and the characters of Boldwood the farmer and Troy the soldier seems to be genuine and the reference relevant. Considered, however, in the context of the whole of Horace's satire, which is basically a discussion of the "Money does not bring happiness" theme and is rather easy and conversational in tone, the quotation strikes the reader as incongruous with the overall atmosphere of the chapter and its great dramatic and emotional intensity. [Thus, paradoxically, the allusion is much more effective for a reader unaware of all its implications; examined more closely, it turns out to exemplify the difficulties Hardy occasionally gets involved in in his efforts to elevate the tone of his book and to impress his audience.

The very fact that Hardy uses a quotation from Latin literature as a chapter heading is symptomatic of one more important aspect of the way classical allusions are employed in "Far from the Madding Crowd" - they are almost exclusively associated with the voice of the narrator. Characteristically, throughout the novel, there is to be found only one instance of a character's direct use of a classical reference - Troy's description of Bathsheba in his conversation with Pennyways: "this haughty goddess, dashing piece of womanhood, Juno-wife of mine (Juno was a goddess, you know)" (p. 423). Interestingly, although Bathsheba is the character with whom classical motifs are associated most often (though much less exclusively than is the case with certain characters in the later novels), she

never, in spite of her relatively good education ("she was going to be a governess once" (p. 76)) and her wide experience as a reader, uses a single classical allusion herself; even where certain notions or images originating from the classical tradition are used in descriptions of Bathsheba's thoughts, they seem to have been inserted there by the narrator, Bathsheba's own ideas being spontaneous, concrete, and non-verbalized:

"Never! do you?" said Bathsheba, slightly laughing, though somewhat seriously alarmed by this Amazonian picture of herself. (p. 255)

[...] Although she scarcely knew the divinity's name, Diana was the goddess whom Bathsheba instinctively adored. (p. 334)

In consequence, this concentration of classical allusions in the narrator's voice results in stressing the sense of distance between the narrator and the world he describes, as well as in strengthening his central position in the overall compositional pattern of the novel.

III

In contrast to the warm and essentially quietly optimistic vision of life evoked by "Far from the Madding Crowd", the picture of the world presented in "The Return of the Native", the next of Hardy's major novels, strikes the reader not only as much more sombre and gloomy, but also as considerably more intense, not only emotionally, but also dramatically and imaginatively. Most of the comic apparatus used so effectively in the earlier novel is now discarded; the most significant of the elements that are retained, the chorus of peasants, represented here by a group of furze-cutters, loses, as compared with the chorus of the Weatherbury labourers, a good deal of its cheerfulness and vivacity and is, at the same time, removed farther into the background, leaving the stage, more clearly than in "Far from the Madding Crowd", to the central group of characters among whom the main conflict of the novel is played out. In consequence, the most characteristic features of Hardy's fiction are to be observed, in "The Return of the Nati-

ve", in a relatively pure and distinct form, making the book in many aspects the most representative, though possibly not the best, of the author's works^B.

Considered from the point of view of the way Hardy introduces into the novel various allusions to classical mythology and literature, "The Return of the Native" turns out to mark some important developments, indicative not only of the author's growing pessimism, but also of his evolving consciousness as an artist. Admittedly, Hardy's notorious tendency to show off his historical and literary knowledge and to indulge in high-sounding comparisons does make itself felt in a few passages in the novel; even, however, the less successful references are, on the whole, used quite consistently and, in consequence, create a relatively clear and well-defined pattern.

Some of the most interesting of the novel's classical allusions are to be found as early as in its first few chapters, in the famous description of Egdon Heath and in the following scenes of the Fifth of November celebrations. Thus, Egdon Heath is referred to as possessing a "Titanic form" (p. 54); a Celtic barrow projecting over the level of the heath is compared to "a wart on an Atlantean brow" (p. 62); some time later, Mrs Yeobright and Dilly Dowden are described, during their lonely walk across Egdon at night, as being in a "Tartarean situation" (p. 86). All these allusions, closely interrelated in the "adopted text" of Greek mythology, and others, such as the references to "a tract of country unaltered from that sinister condition which made Caesar anxious every year to get clear of its glooms before the autumnal equinox" (p. 104) and to "travellers from the South" (p. 104) describing England as "Homer's Cimmerian land" (p. 105), serve the same purpose—that of stressing the primeval character, power, darkness, and indifference of Egdon Heath. The heath is an area that functions in the novel as something more than a mere setting; it is an important factor defining, through its very existence and

^B Cf. W. A l l e n, *The English Novel*, Penguin Books 1979, p. 247, and G. W o o d c o c k, *Introduction to the Penguin English Library edition of "The Return of the Native"*, Penguin Books 1982, p. 11.

everlasting presence, the characters of its inhabitants and, consequently, their fortunes. The world of Egdon is no longer the Arcadian Wessex of Gabriel Oak and Bathsheba Everdene; on the contrary, the empty and wild landscape of this modern Thule is clearly presented as one more congenial to the natures of Hardy's characters than the Tempe-like pastures of "far from the Madding Crowd":

[...] Men have oftener suffered from the mockery of a place too smiling for their reason than from the oppression of surroundings oversadly tinged. Haggard Egdon appealed to a subtler and scarcer instinct, to a more recently learnt emotion, than that which responds to the sort of beauty called charming and fair.

Indeed, it is a question if the exclusive reign of this orthodox beauty is not approaching its last quarter. The new Vale of Tempe may be a gaunt waste in Thule: human souls may find themselves in closer and closer harmony with external things wearing a sombreness distasteful to our race when it was young. The time seems near, if it has not actually arrived, when the chastened sublimity of a moor, a sea, or a mountain will be all of nature that is absolutely in keeping with the moods of the more thinking among mankind. And ultimately, to the commonest tourist, spots like Iceland may become what the vineyards and myrtle-gardens of South Europe are to him now; and Heidelberg and Baden be passed unheeded as he hastens from the Alps to the sand-dunes of Schoveningen. (p. 54-55)

Characteristically, the difference between the two worlds is stressed also through the more technical aspect of the use of the above-mentioned allusions; in contrast to the earlier novel, in "The Return of the Native" these are often introduced in direct reference to the landscape described, with little or no mediation on the part of the characters.

Another significant aspect of Hardy's use of classical allusions in "The Return of the Native" is their growing importance in the characterization of the novel's protagonists, primarily Clym Yeobright and Eustacia Vye. In "Far from the Madding Crowd", the classical motifs associated with Bathsheba operate mainly as ironical comments or as relatively minor local adornments; in the later novel, on the contrary, the allusions are used in direct descriptions, providing an important insight into the characters of Eustacia and Clym.

Some of the most characteristic examples of Hardy's appli-

cation of this technique are to be found in the presentation of Eustacia Vye in the chapter entitled "Queen of Night" (p. 118). Thus, in the very first paragraph of the chapter, the reference to the Olympian gods helps to convey the idea of the essential instability and irrationality of Eustacia's character:

Eustacia Vye was the raw material of a divinity. On Olympus she would have done well with a little preparation. She had the passions and instincts which make a model goddess, that is, those which make not quite a model woman. Had it been possible for the earth and mankind to be entirely in her grasp for a while, had she handled the distaff, the spindle, and the shears at her own free will, few in the world would have noticed the change of government. There would have been the same inequality of lot, the same heaping up of favours here, of contempt there, the same generosity before justice, the same perpetual dilemmas, the same captious alternation of caresses and blows that we endure now. (p. 118).

In another passage, the description of Eustacia's attitude towards life is intensified by the use of the allusions to Hades and Tartarus, which, at the same time, provide an important link between the imagery and associations centred upon Eustacia and those related more directly to the novel's locale, Egdon Heath:

But celestial imperiousness, love, wrath, and fervour had proved to be somewhat thrown away on netherward Egdon. Her power was limited, and the consciousness of this limitation had biassed her development. Egdon was her Hades, and since coming there she had imbibed much of what was dark in its tone, though inwardly and eternally unreconciled thereto. Her appearance accorded well with this smouldering rebelliousness, and the shady splendour of her beauty was the real surface of the sad and stifled warmth within her. A true Tartarean dignity sat upon her brow, and not factitiously or with marks of constraint, for it had grown in her with years. (p. 119-120).

It has been argued that many of the numerous classical allusions used in the chapter "could have been omitted without undermining their main function: to emphasize Eustacia's pride and ambition, and her frustration at being an earth-bound prisoner in Egdon"⁹. This view seems, however, to be only partly

⁹ Wheeler, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

true; the allusions, even if occasionally somewhat superfluous, serve also the purpose of stressing Eustacia's sense of isolation from her natural and social environment: she is, with the exception of Clym, the only character in the novel presented in terms of historical and literary associations; the vision of life she represents is thus different from and basically alien to that of the more homely and, in all their goodness and sincerity, less imaginative characters such as Thomasin, Wildeve, or Diggory Venn.

Characteristically, the Olympian imagery seems to isolate Eustacia even from Clym, the only other character in the novel with whom classical motifs are associated. Interestingly, Clym is never presented in terms of an Olympian god; in most cases, he is compared to the great heroes of ancient mythology and history, such as Aeneas ("Thus he proceeded, like Aeneas with his father" (p. 357)) or Alexander the Great ("In consequence of this relatively advanced position, Yeobright might have been called unfortunate. The rural world was not ripe for him. A man should be only partially before his time: to be completely to the vanward in aspirations is fatal to fame. Had Philip's warlike son been intellectually so far ahead as to have attempted civilization without bloodshed, he would have been twice the godlike hero that he seemed, but nobody would have heard of an Alexander" (p. 230)). Significantly, the only deity associated with Clym is Prometheus:

[...] "Now, don't you suppose, my inexperienced girl, that I cannot rebel, in high Promethean fashion, against the gods and fate as well as you. I have felt more steam and smoke of that sort than you have ever heard of." (p. 315)

This allusion is made more prominent by an earlier reference to Prometheus, associated with the Fifth of November bonfires:

Moreover to light a fire is the instinctive and resistant act of man when, at the winter ingress, the curfew is sounded throughout Nature. It indicates a spontaneous, Promethean rebelliousness against the fiat that this recurrent season shall bring foul times, cold darkness, misery and death. Black chaos comes, and the fettered gods of the earth say, Let there be light. (p. 67)

The Promethean emphasis is extremely important as an example of Hardy's direct use of a classical allusion in order to define an important thematic strand in the novel.

The distance between the goddess-like Eustacia and the essentially human Clym is made particularly clear in the scenes in which the two characters are metaphorically juxtaposed. Thus, the scene of Clym's meeting with Eustacia during an eclipse of the moon makes him realize the essential discrepancy between their worlds and their ideals:

And as he walked further and further from the charmed atmosphere of his Olympian girl his face grew sad with a new sort of sadness. A perception of the dilemma in which his love had placed him came back in full force. (p. 259)

Earlier, in the scene of the mummers' play, the first meeting of Clym and Eustacia, now dressed up as the Turkish Knight, is described in the context of the meetings of Aphrodite and Aeneas:

Did anything at this moment suggest to Yeobright the sex of the creature whom that fantastic guise inclosed, how extended was her scope both in feeling and in making others feel, and how far her compass transcended that of her companions in the band? When the disguised Queen of Love appeared before Aeneas a preternatural perfume accompanied her presence and betrayed her quality. If such a mysterious emanation ever was projected by the emotions of an earthly woman upon their object, it must have signified Eustacia's present to Yeobright now. (p. 199)

Admittedly, the analogy is rather awkward: the relationship between Aphrodite and Aeneas - mother and son - is totally different from that between Eustacia and Clym; nevertheless, the basic opposition is here retained and the sense of distance between the characters, in consequence, strengthened.

Finally, the difference between Eustacia and Clym is underlined in the famous passage describing Yeobright as a man of the future:

In Clym Yeobright's face could be dimly seen the typical countenance of the future. Should there be a classic period to art hereafter, its Pheidias may produce such faces. The view of life as a thing to be put up with, replacing that zest for

existence which was so intense in early civilizations, must ultimately enter so thoroughly into the constitution of the advanced races that its facial expression will become accepted as a new artistic departure.

The truth seems to be that a long line of disillusionive centuries has permanently displaced the Hellenic idea of life, or whatever it may be called. What the Greeks only suspected we know well; what their Aeschylus imagined our nursery children feel. That old-fashioned revelling in the general situation grows less and less possible as we uncover the defects of natural laws, and see the quandary that man is in by their operation. (p. 225)

For all her ennui and hatred of the life on the heath, Eustacia, with her zest for existence, her Olympian personality, ambition, pride, and imagination, does essentially belong to the world of Wessex, the only area in which "the Hellenic idea of life" has so far survived, even though it is already being displaced by people like Clym, who, even if temporarily surrendering to the influence of the old ways, are gradually, like Aeneas and Alexander, introducing the New - the New which, when fully established in "Jude the Obscure", will finally bring an end to Hardy's Wessex world.

IV

If "Far from the Madding Crowd" and "The Return of the Native" exemplify the most typical aspects of the author's narrative art, "Tess of the d'Urbervilles" presents Hardy the novelist undoubtedly at his best. Though retaining most of the characteristic elements that make up a quintessential Hardy novel, the story of the Marlott dairymaid seems to differ from the earlier novels in the clarity and simplicity of its design and in its symbolic, metaphorical, and emotional intensity. None of Hardy's other major works includes so little of what is bad in his fiction: the plot of the novel is relatively uncomplicated and free from improbable coincidences, lapses into sentimentality or cheap symbolism are comparatively rare, and the narrator's descriptions and comments are not too copiously interspersed with polysyllabic coinages nor too often inter-

rupted by jarring allusions to second-rank Dutch painters. On the contrary, "Tess of the d'Urbervilles" offers an intense and moving vision of the tragedy of human life, which it expresses through an extremely rich and, at the same time, very concentrated pattern of symbols and metaphors; in consequence, the book becomes, for all the simplicity of the story itself, not only the author's masterpiece, but also one of the most powerful and complex novels in English literature.

This complexity of "Tess of the d'Urbervilles" is to be discerned also in the ingenious way Hardy handles the classical allusions that he introduces into his novel. Less numerous and, primarily, much less prominent than, for instance, in "The Return of the Native" (there is in the book no passage comparable to the "Queen of Night" chapter in the earlier novel), the allusions seem, however, to be on the whole more closely integrated into the overall structure of the book, often being indicative of certain thematic strands or providing significant comments on characters and situations depicted in the novel.

Thus, for instance, as has been pointed out by Michael Wheeler, the theme of change, which, according to him, "proves to be central to Hardy's portrayal of Tess's relationships with both Alec and Angel"¹⁰, is evoked by references to Ovid's "Metamorphoses" in the passage describing the dance in the outhouse of a Chaseborough hay-trusser:

When she came close and looked in she beheld indistinct forms racing up and down to the figure of the dance, the silence of their footfalls arising from their being overshoe in "scroff" - that is to say, the powdery residuum from the storage of peat and other products, the stirring of which by their turbulent feet created the nebulosity that involved the scene. Through this floating, fusty débris of peat and hay, mixed with the perspirations and warmth of the dancers, and forming together a sort of vegeto-human pollen, the muted fiddles feebly pushed their notes, in marked contrast to the spirit with which the measure was trodden out. They coughed as they danced, and laughed as they coughed. Of the rushing couples there could barely be discerned more than the high lights - the indistinctness shaping them to satyrs clasping nymphs - a multiplicity of Pans whirling a multiplicity of Syrinxes; Lotis attempting to elude Priapus, and always failing.

¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 151.

Some Silent of the throng sat on benches and hay-trusses by the wall; and one of them recognized her. (p. 95-96)¹¹

To interpret the classical references in this scene exclusively in terms of the theme of change would, however, be rather inaccurate; change is, both in the allusions and in the novel itself, presented as an aspect and a consequence of pursuit rather than as something important for its own sake and taking place at random. Tess, as well as Syrinx and Lotis, changes only when and because she is pursued by Alec or Angel; otherwise, she remains essentially passive and tends to accommodate her subsequent selves to the requirements of her environment. Thus, the passage in question seems to be evocative not so much of the theme of change as of the theme of pursuit that brings about change (characteristically, the scene of the dance takes place at Chaseborough, whatever the possible formal derivation of that name might be). Moreover, interpreted in this way, the Ovidian references turn out to shed some more light on some other images used in the novel; such as the images presenting Tess as a trapped animal - ("Her breathing now was quick and small, like that of a lesser creature than a woman" (p. 447)).

Another interesting example of Hardy's use of classical allusions in order to illustrate an important element of the structure of the novel is to be found in the description of Angel Clare, after his return from Brazil, reflecting on his previous attitudes and conduct towards Tess:

[...] He had undergone some strange experiences in his absence; he had seen the virtual Faustina in the literal Cornelia, a spiritual Lucretia in a corporeal Phryne; he had thought of the woman taken and set in the midst as one deserving to be stoned, and of the wife of Uriah being made a queen; and he had asked himself why he had not judged Tess constructively rather than biographically, by the will rather than by the deed? (p. 419)

¹¹ All quotations from "Tess of the d'Urbervilles" are taken from the New Wessex Edition, Macmillan London Ltd., London, Basingstoke 1981.

The allusions to the notoriously promiscuous Faustina, wife of the Emperor Antoninus, and to the courtesan Phryne, as juxtaposed with the virtuous Cornelia, wife of Pompey, and Lucretia, who committed suicide after being raped by Tarquinius, underline Angel's inability to see and to properly understand the real nature of Tess and the true proportions of her guilt and expiation. At the same time, the passage strengthens the ironical meaning of an important classical allusion appearing earlier in the novel, in the section describing the development of the relationship between Angel and Tess during their stay at Talbothays Dairy:

[...] He called her Artemis, Demeter, and other fanciful names half teasingly, which she did not like because she did not understand them. (p. 170)

Angel does not realize that Tess is an Artemis and a Demeter only in a sense that is different from what he assumes - she is an Artemis because she is pure spiritually, even though no longer intact physically; she is a Demeter because she has actually proved her fertility and been a mother, not only because she is an ideal dairymaid, "physically and mentally suited" (p. 168) to the environment of the Valley of the Great Dairies. Thus, the allusions stress the fact that Angel's image of Tess, before the critical experience of his stay in Brazil, is based exclusively on his superficial understanding of her personality; ironically, the recognition of the mistake comes only when Tess has technically become a Phryne - after Alec d'Urberville has won her back.

It is by no means accidental that the above-mentioned allusions, as well as most of the other references to the classical tradition that are to be found in "Tess of the d'Urbervilles", should be associated with Angel Clare. Like Eustacia Vye in "The Return of the Native", Angel is the key figure around whom most of the novel's classical allusions are centred. The similarity between the two characters exists, however, in this respect, only on the surface; Eustacia is, in her role as the focus of the classical imagery of the novel, essentially passive; it is the narrator who establishes and controls the

whole pattern of associations, which exists, in a way, outside the character; on the contrary, in the case of Angel, the classical motifs, introduced mainly by himself, into his words and thoughts, are indicative of his vision of life and his attitudes towards other people in a more direct way.

Indeed, after his renunciation of Christianity, Angel seems to live in the world of his classical imaginings; the Valley of the Great Dairies is for him an Arcadia, in which he can enjoy his experience of "the aesthetic, sensuous, pagan pleasure in natural life and lush womanhood" (p. 199). He calls Iess Artemis and Demeter, he talks with her "about pastoral life in ancient Greece" (p. 164); later, in his confession, he quotes, alongside St Paul, a Horatian ode:

[...] "Whatever one may think of plenary inspiration, one must heartily subscribe to these words of Paul: "Be thou an example - in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity". It is the only safeguard for us poor human beings. "Integer vitae", says a Roman poet, who is strange company for St Paul -

The man of upright life, from frailties free,
Stands not in need of Moorish spear or bow". (p. 267)

Angel's idea of the classical tradition is, however, only fragmentary; he does not feel its spirit of tolerance, just as he does not understand the Christian spirit of compassion. The situation changes in Brazil, with his recognition of his having wronged Iess:

The cursory remarks of the large-minded stranger, of whom he knew absolutely nothing beyond a commonplace name, were sublimed by his death, and influenced Clare more than all the reasoned ethics of the philosophers. His own parochialism made him ashamed by its contrast. His inconsistencies rushed upon him in a flood. He had persistently elevated Hellenic Paganism at the expense of Christianity; yet in that civilization an illegal surrender was not certain dis-esteem. Surely then he might have regarded that abhorrence of the un-intact state, which he had inherited with the creed of mysticism, as at least open to correction when the result was due to treachery. A remorse struck into him. (p. 389)

In this way, Angel's attitude towards the classical world, as an aspect of his vision of life, turns out to parallel his

attitude towards Tess, providing, in consequence, a significant insight into his character and playing, therefore, an important role in the overall structure of the novel.

The last and probably most famous classical allusion in "Tess of the d'Urbervilles" is to be found in the last paragraph of the book, following the mention of the black flag announcing the execution of Tess:

"Justice" was done, and the President of the Immortals, in Aeschylean phrase, had ended his sport with Tess. (p. 449)

The phrase stresses once again the essential passivity of Tess and is an ironic comment on the society and the system of values to which she finally falls victim. At the same time, as has been observed by J. Hillis Miller, since "the idea of a malign god who sports with man [...] is neither integral to the text of "Tess" nor reinforced by the rest of Hardy's work"¹², the allusion may be interpreted also as "a suggestion that Tess reincarnates a pattern of tragic experience already present in the earliest masterpieces of Western literature"¹³.

V

"Jude the Obscure", the last of Hardy's novels, is, as has often been observed, considerably different from the author's earlier works, both in its subject-matter and in its overall construction and style¹⁴. Various interpretations, for instance, as an indictment of the cruelty and heartlessness of the "respectable" Victorian society¹⁵, and as an analysis of the destructive power of sexuality¹⁶, the book is undoubtedly the

¹² J. H. M i l l e r, Thomas Hardy. Distance and Desire. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. 1970, p. 104.

¹³ Ibidem, p. 105.

¹⁴ Cf. W. A l l e n, op. cit., p. 255.

¹⁵ Cf. T. E a g l e t o n, Introduction to the New Wessex Edition of "Jude the Obscure", Macmillan London Ltd., London, Basingstoke 1975, p. 9-20.

¹⁶ Cf. M. P a g e, Thomas Hardy, Routledge and Kegan Paul London 1977, p. 43.

darkest of the Wessex novels and the one in which the tragic vision of the hopelessness of the human lot is presented with the greatest bitterness and despair. Much of this sense of the emptiness and desolation of the world of Jude Fawley and Sue Bridehead is due to the characteristic simplicity and even coarseness of the design of the novel; this is evident, as has been noticed by Walter Allen, in "the way in which the rich rustic chorus has disappeared in "Jude" (with the exceptions of Jude's aunt and the widow Edlin) and [in] how thin, by comparison with "The Return of the Native" and "Tess", the whole texture of the writing, of the world described, and the links that bind men to nature and the nature of things, has become"¹⁷. As a result, the foreground is, more clearly and more exclusively than in the previous novels, occupied by the few principal characters and the events they are involved in; consequently, the plot and the characters not only themselves constitute the most important elements of the symbolic structure of the novel, but also function as centres focusing the most significant aspects of the novel's imagery, including, among others, the allusions and images based on classical literature and mythology.

The most prominent feature of Hardy's use of classical allusions in "Jude the Obscure" is certainly their close association with the character of Sue Bridehead. Indeed, almost from her first appearance in the book, Sue is shown as a woman fascinated with ancient history and culture, which represent for her, as they do for Angel Clare in "Tess of the d'Urbervilles", a point of reference and a system of values alternative to that based on the principles of Christianity. Characteristically, again as in the case of Angel, most of the classical motifs associated with Sue are introduced into the novel directly, in the words and actions of Sue herself rather than by the narrator; in consequence, they become more directly significant of certain features of her personality and of her peculiar turn of mind.

A very typical example of this technique is provided by the

¹⁷ Allen, op. cit., p. 255-256.

passage in which Sue is described buying plaster images of Venus and Apollo:

"How much are these two?" she said, touching with her finger the Venus and the Apollo - the largest figures on the tray.

He said she should have them for ten shillings.

"I cannot afford that," said Sue. She offered considerably less, and to her surprise the image-man drew them from their wire stay and handed them over the stile. She clasped them as treasures.

When they were paid for, and the man had gone, she began to be concerned as to what she should do with them. They seemed so very large now that they were in her possession, and so very naked. Being of a nervous temperament she trembled at her enterprise. When she handled them the white pipeclay came off on her gloves and jacket. After carrying them along a little way openly an idea came to her, and, pulling some huge burdock leaves, parsley, and other rank growths from the hedge, she wrapped up her burden as well as she could in these, so that what she carried appeared to be an enormous armful of green stuff gathered by a zealous lover of nature.

"Well, anything is better than those everlasting church fai-lals!" she said. But she was still in a trembling state, and seemed almost to wish she had not bought the figures. (p. 113-114)¹⁸

The scene is indicative not only of Sue's rebelliousness and religious nonconformity; it also stresses the characteristic instability of her character and the ambiguity and inconsistency of her attitudes.

The most important function of the motif of Venus and Apollo becomes, however, clear only at the end of the chapter, when Sue is looking at the statuettes, which she has put on her chest of drawers, on the two sides of a Calvary print hanging on the wall:

She was of an eye which usually sleeps soundly, yet to-night she kept waking up, and every time she opened her eyes there was enough diffused light from the street to show her the white plaster figures standing on the chest of drawers in odd contrast to their environment of text and martyr, and the Gothic-framed Crucifix-picture that was only discernible now as a Latin cross, the figure thereon being obscured by the shades. (p. 115-116)

¹⁸ All quotations from "Jude the Obscure" are taken from the New Wessex Edition, Macmillan London Ltd., London, Basingstoke 1975.

The passage is a symbolic representation of what Hardy himself describes as the main theme of the novel - "a deadly war waged between flesh and spirit"¹⁹; at the same time, it also predicts the future conflict in which Sue herself will become involved - that between her sense of duty towards Phillotson and her love for Jude (interestingly, it seems possible to see, in the coolness and artificiality of the figures, an allusion to the characteristically strained quality of Sue's approach to the problems of sex in general and of her attitude towards Jude in particular).

The chapter in question is significant in one more important respect; it introduces, for the first time in the novel, the idea of contrast between the personalities of Sue and Jude as conveyed through the contrast of their intellectual dispositions and their ways of thinking, expressing themselves in their contrasting associations, choice of reading, or stylization of language. In the passage, Sue is reading Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" - characteristically, "the chapter dealing with the reign of Julian the Apostate" (p. 115) - and Swinburne's "Hymn to Proserpine", which are both symbolically representative of her rejection of Christianity; on the contrary, Jude is depicted, on the same evening, as reading, with zeal and enthusiasm, the Greek version of the New Testament:

[...] At the very time that Sue was tossing and staring at her figures, the policeman and belated citizens passing along under his window might have heard, if they had stood still, strange syllables mumbled with fervour within - words that had for Jude an indescribable enchantment: inexplicable sounds something like these: -

"All hemin heis Theos ho Pater, ex hou ta panta, kai hemeis eis auton:"

Till the sounds rolled with reverent loudness, as a book was heard to close: -

"Kai heis Kurios Iesous Christos, di hou ta panta kai hemeis di autou!" (p. 116)

¹⁹ Th. Hardy, Preface to the first edition of "Jude the Obscure", in New Wessex Edition, Macmillan London Ltd., London, Basingstoke 1975, p. 23.

The same juxtaposition of classical and biblical motifs, associated, respectively, with Sue and Jude, is to be found several more times in the novel, as, for instance, in the scene of the exhibition of the model of Jerusalem:

"I fancy we have had enough of Jerusalem," she said, "considering we are not descended from the Jews. There was nothing first-rate about the place, or people, after all - as there was about Athens, Rome, Alexandria, and other old cities".

"But my dear girl, consider what it is to us!" [Philotson]

She was silent, for she was easily repressed; and then perceived behind the group of children clustered round the model a young man in a white flannel jacket, his form being bent so low in his intent inspection of the Valley of Jehoshaphat that his face was almost hidden from view by the Mount of Olives. "Look at your cousin Jude," continued the schoolmaster. "He doesn't think we have had enough of Jerusalem!"

"Ah - I didn't see him!" she cried in her quick light voice. "Jude - how seriously you are going into it!" (p. 126-127)

A similar effect is created in the passage describing the morning of the day of Jude and Sue's planned wedding:

The next morning Sue, whose nervousness intensified with the hours, took Jude privately into the sitting-room before starting. "Jude, I want you to kiss me, as a lover, incorporeally," she said, tremulously nestling up to him, with damp lashes. "It won't be ever like this any more, will it! I wish we hadn't begun the business. But I suppose we must go on. How horrid that story was last night! It spoilt my thoughts of to-day. It makes me feel as if a tragic doom overhung our family, as it did the house of Atreus."

"Or the house of Jeroboam," said the quondam theologian. (p. 302)

Sometimes, allusions exemplifying the pattern under analysis are at the same time suggestive of the nature of the relationship between Jude and Sue:

[...] To an impressionable and lonely young man the consciousness of having at last found anchorage for his thoughts which promised to supply both social and spiritual possibilities, was like the dew of Hermon, and he remained throughout the service in a sustaining atmosphere of ecstasy.

Though he was loth to suspect it, some people might have said to him that the atmosphere blew as distinctly from Cyprus as from Galilee. (p. 112)

Characteristically, towards the end of the novel, after Sue's decision to return to Phillotson, the pattern is reversed; her return to Christianity is reflected in her frequent use of biblical allusions, whereas Jude's loss of faith is accompanied by his growing tendency to perceive the world through its classical rather than biblical associations:

"Very well. It will help me home, for I feel the chilly fog from the meadows of Cardinal as if death-claws were grabbing me through and through. As Antigone said, I am neither a dweller among men nor ghosts. But, Arabella, when I am dead, you'll see my spirit flitting up and down here among these!" (p. 412-413)

Finally, it seems pertinent to observe that "Jude the Obscure" is the only one of Hardy's major novels in which classical allusions are used as mottoes prefacing three of the book's six parts. In each case, the references to classical authors function as thematic pointers, indicating the development of the relationship between Sue and Jude:

"Notitiam primosque gradus vicinia fecit;
Tempore crevit amor." - Ovid
("Contiguity caused their first acquaintance;
Love grew with time.") (p. 95)

"For there was no other girl, O bridegroom, like her!"
- Sappho (p. 147)

or underlining the more general thematic strands of the novel":

"Thy aerial part, and all the fiery parts which are mingled in thee, though by nature they have an upward tendency, still in obedience to the disposition of the universe they are over-powered here in the compound mass the body." - M. Antoninus (p. 275)

VI

In the light of the above discussion, the Wessex novels of Thomas Hardy, as considered from the point of view of the function played in them by allusions to classical literature, hi-

story, and mythology, turn out to exhibit some characteristic developments, reflecting the major changes that Hardy's narrative art undergoes between the early novels, as "Far from the Madding Crowd", and the final achievements of "Tess of the d'Urbervilles" and "Jude the Obscure". The changes seem to take place along two major lines: firstly, the allusions, initially introduced exclusively by the narrator and in this way underlining his dominant position in the structure of the novels, become in the later works associated more and more closely with the characters and so more and more closely integrated into the plot, with the result that they are more independent and direct; secondly, the allusions, which are originally of little more than local importance, providing some ironic or humorous commentary on the events and characters described, or functioning as mere embellishments or as evidence of the author's learnedness, become, in "Tess of the d'Urbervilles" and "Jude the Obscure", closely associated with the main themes and problems of the novels and, as such, rise to an important place in their general symbolic structures. In this way, the evolution of the function of classical motifs and images in the novels of Thomas Hardy proves to be significant of the growing complexity of his fiction and of the development of his view of the aesthetics of the novel as a literary genre.

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WYBRANE PROBLEMY ZASTOSOWANIA ALUZJI KLASYCZNYCH
W POWIEŚCIACH THOMASA HARDY'EGO

Powieści Thomasa Hardy'ego, ze względu na swoją problematykę i strukturę często przyrównywane do tragedii antycznych, zawierają również liczne aluzje do szeroko rozumianej kultury klasycznej - do historii, mitologii, literatury, sztuki i cywilizacji starożytnej Grecji i Rzymu. Aluzje te, mające z początku charakter komiczno-ironicznych lub erudycyjnych kome-

tarzy ze strony narratora ("Z dala od zgiełku" - "Far from the Madding Crowd"), stają się z czasem coraz bardziej konsekwentnie związane z postaciami bohaterów i otaczającym ich światem ("Powrót na wrzosowiska" - "The Return of the Native"), by w ostatnich utworach ("Jessa d'Urberville" - "Jessa of the d'Urbervilles", "Juda nieznany" - "Jude the Obscure") zyskać, dzięki ściślemu powiązaniu z ich ogólną tematyką i symboliką, rolę istotnych elementów kompozycyjnych powieści.