SOCIAL CRITICISM IN THE ENGLISH NOVEL:
DICKENS TO LAWRENCE

by

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ABSTRACT

The thesis studies the social criticism in five English novels written between 1850 and 1913. All the novels can be located in the central tradition of realistic English fiction. The thesis focuses on the thematic similarities of three Victorian novels: *Great Expectations*, *Hard Times*, and *Middlemarch*, and two early modern novels: *Jude the Obscure* and *Sons and Lovers*. The novels voice the authors' criticisms of social, and more specifically family, conditioning. The novelists portray the arbitrary ethical norms that define and regulate behavior within specific social environments. Each novel describes the individual's aspirations which are ultimately frustrated by external forces. Although more than half a century separates the publications of *Hard Times* and *Sons and Lovers* the critical perspectives of the novelists are essentially the same.

The thesis isolates aspects of the novels which realistically portray the attitudes and values of mid and late Victorian society. One avenue of investigation discusses those institutions which enforce the prevailing social doctrine. The dramatic conflict analyzed in this thesis is often between the adolescent and characters, usually older, who personify the repressive doctrine. Much of the anxiety experienced by the
protagonists is a result of the confrontation of individual desire and internalized social norms.

In *Great Expectations* and *Hard Times* Dickens portrays the childhood and adolescent consciousness as it emerges within a given moral climate. The thesis analyzes how Dickens isolates and criticizes those aspects of Gradgrindery which are dehumanizing and soul-destroying.

The first chapter also compares the experiences of the protagonists in *Middlemarch* to those of *Great Expectations* and *Hard Times*. George Eliot heightens the psychological realism by detailing the subjective conflicts within characters.

The second chapter describes how *Jude the Obscure* and *Sons and Lovers* maintain the focus on the external manipulation of individual desire. The thesis compares how Hardy and Lawrence chronicle the crucial childhood and adolescent experiences of Jude Fawley and Paul Morel respectively.

The second chapter analyzes those relationships and conflicts of the major and minor characters which amplify the theme of social repression.

The final chapter of the thesis discusses another manifestation of social repression in *Jude the Obscure* and *Sons and Lovers*. In these novels this theme is expressed, for the first time in English fiction, in explicit sexual terms. The thesis isolates those external influences, both social and domestic, which inhibit the psycho-sexual development of Jude Fawley and Paul Morel. The family, largely maternal, conditioning of Sue Bridehead and Miriam Leivers is also analyzed as another amplification of the central thematic focus on social conditioning.
**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER ONE</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER TWO</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER THREE</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

The two decades preceding the outbreak of the Great War are often cited as a period of political and social unrest. The general breakdown of Victorian attitudes and conventions at this time was reflected by innovation and experimentation in the arts. In an essay locating a causal relationship between society and literature Virginia Woolf defines the novelist's particular involvement with this era. Woolf declares somewhat arbitrarily that human nature changed in 1910 and presupposes a concomitant change in the novel's form and function:

All human relations have shifted -- those between masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children. And when human relations change there is at the same time a change in religion, conduct, politics, and literature.¹

Certainly human relations were changing but I would suggest that a good many of the changes were anticipated by earlier English novelists and prefigured in earlier Victorian fiction. Some of the most disturbing realities of English society between 1850 and 1914 were reflected in novels of social criticism published between those years. This thesis studies one of the
central thematic concerns of D. H. Lawrence and Thomas Hardy and traces its direct connection to earlier Victorian novels. The thesis examines a familiar theme in Victorian fiction -- the growth of the individual consciousness within a repressive social environment. The representative novels by Charles Dickens and George Eliot, selected for analysis in the first chapter, criticize the social manipulation of the individual.

I have attempted to show the centrality of this theme within the broader tradition of social criticism in the English novel. This theme informs the tone and structure of two later novels -- *Jude the Obscure* (1895) and *Sons and Lovers* (1910). These two novels certainly reflect the startling innovations in the English novel described by Virginia Woolf. However, they are thematically and structurally connected to the earlier fiction of Dickens and Eliot. It is this crucial connection that is often overlooked by commentators who make arbitrary distinctions between Victorian and "modern" novels. The purpose of this thesis is to establish an important thematic and structural connection between selected Victorian and early modern novels of social criticism.

Dickens and Eliot are by no means the only Victorian artists to anticipate the anxiety of twentieth century artists about the social determination and corruption of the individual consciousness. In "Morality and the Novel," D. H. Lawrence argues persuasively that this focus is a fundamental aspect of imaginative
The business of art is to reveal the relation between man and his circumambient universe, at the living moment. As mankind is always struggling in the toils of old relationships, art is always ahead of the "times", which themselves are always far in the rear of the living moment.²

The relationships between man and his social environment constitute the general thematic frameworks of the novels studied in this thesis. Lionel Trilling emphasizes the centrality of this theme and its relative importance because in its essence literature is concerned with the self; and the particular concern of the literature of the last two centuries has been with the self in its standing quarrel with culture.³

All four of the novelists concern themselves with the self and the threats to the self posed by external social institutions and mores. The tone of all the novels is determined to a greater or lesser degree by the novelists' deep distrust of social forces that repress individual desires. All four novelists depict their characters in a specific social context. The emergence of a healthy individual identity is contingent upon family and social influences. Although some critics have identified this open distrust of social conditioning as an exclusively twentieth century preoccupation,⁴ I think it reflects a broader focus that characterizes much of 19th century literature:

At some point in the history of the West -- let us say, for convenience, at the time of Rousseau -- men began to think of their fates as being lived out in relation not to God, or to the individuals who are their neighbours, or to the material circumstances,
but to the ideas and assumptions and manners of a large social totality.

The central thematic focus first appearing in Dickens is an intense analysis and criticism of the repressive effects of these "assumptions" and "manners." The concern with this social conditioning determines certain formal considerations in the novel. The pervasive effect of parental and social conditioning is imaginatively expressed in narrative structures that chronicle the adolescence and even early childhood of the protagonists.

There was a good deal of literature in the late nineteenth century that resembled the growth of consciousness novel or Bildungsroman. Great Expectations, Jude the Obscure and Sons and Lovers manifest the formal requirements of this particular genre. However, the crucial similarities studied in this thesis are not only the method of character development but also the specific determinants of personality and identity. Dickens, Hardy, and Lawrence indirectly criticize the repression of individual desires by established authorities.

The most recurrent example is parent-child relationship, but not always in a strictly familial situation. The corruption of the youths in Great Expectations is sometimes by parental "figures" (Miss Havisham, Mrs. Joe, and Magwitch), who are not really parents. Thus the theme can be expressed in many situations in which a dominant figure suppresses an innocent one. In this sense the relationships in Middlemarch are also relevant. Dorothea is repressed, not only by her conventional upbringing, but also
by her particular subservience to Casaubon, who functions in a parental role towards her. I hope to show that her struggle for freedom is comparable to Jude's or Paul Morel's in that each must refute his or her socialized identity and attitudes in order to establish an individual identity.

The formal comparison of Eliot's *Middlemarch* with the novels of Lawrence and Hardy introduces another important consideration. Character development in *Middlemarch* appears within a social context, but its significant aspects are invested in psychological rather than social identity. The introspective conflicts and anxieties reflect more sophisticated narrative techniques than those appearing in most Victorian fiction. Dorothea, for example, does not achieve an easy assimilation within a given social framework, that would resolve a conventional comic dilemma. Her conflict is "with" the social structure and her eventual liberation is a psychological one, away from the prevailing social milieu. Those formal conventions in the novel (which had been for the most part comic conventions), were for Eliot now dispensable. Paul Morel also reaches a subjective harmony and liberation, but they are largely extraneous to any social role he may or may not be fulfilling. Dickens, Eliot, Hardy, and Lawrence all address the problem of individual repression by social agents or agencies. Each novelist probes the subtle dynamics of domestic and social relationships. The general theme of social regression is expressed in several dimensions
that explore Victorian concepts of human nature, morality, and sexuality.

The thematic structures contain re-appraisals and criticisms of Victorian morality. The crucial conflicts in each of the novels usually are generated by the individual's confrontation with established ethical authorities. Again the formal innovations reflect the thematic priorities. The conflicts are not always expressed dramatically but are more often subjective conditions.

The sentiments of the four novelists are clearly with the protagonists who resist external manipulation. Victorian morality is portrayed as an active threat to individual liberty. One can safely generalize in this manner because the literary (at least novelistic) atmosphere of the time often presupposed a departure from Victorian dogma:

> And we must certainly note the revaluation in morals which took place at the instance (we might almost say) of the Bildungsroman, for in the novels fathered by Wilhelm Meister we get the almost complete identification of author and hero, and of the reader with both, and this identification almost inevitability suggests a leniency of moral judgement.7

Each novelist studied in this thesis manifests a direct involvement with his or her social environment and a sense of social purpose. This focus on contextual as well as textual criticism presupposes a social generation and function of these literary works. The imaginative worlds created by the four novelists are a realistic portrayal of several social realities in Victorian England. As Malcolm Bradbury suggests:
... none the less, the inescapable fact remains: literature is an aspect of society. It coheres, structures, and illuminates many of its most profound meanings.

The five novels studied in this thesis portray different dimensions of one particularly disturbing reality of Victorian England: the awesome social machinery that distorts and corrupts individual desire and identity. This is the central consideration that determines which particular novelists and novels are representative of this thematic focus.

The novels selected clearly reflect an essentially Romantic postulate that acknowledges the moral relativity of man's instincts. The fictions under discussion establish the innocence of individual impulses and describe the corruption which these instincts are subject to. The opposing forces that threaten individual expression are imaginatively portrayed as parental figures, teachers, or social agencies and institutions. The absolute primacy of this focus on social conditioning is correlated in psychological analyses of personality development. Psychological theory does not explain or justify a work of fiction, but it can provide a model by which to clarify the seemingly disparate elements of a particular character. The childhood experiences of Pip or Paul Morel serve not only a purely narrative purpose but function also as the crucial factors which generate and condition the psychological growth of the characters. Childhood experiences are portrayed as influencing subjective psychological variables which are the origin of
subsequent desires and anxieties. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* is more compelling than most biographical novels published at that time because he locates the psychological significance of what appear to be random childhood experiences. In this sense all the novelists articulate the crucial interaction of cultural mores and individual identity. Trilling's comment on Freud's focus on social conditioning also identifies the major innovative concerns of these novelists:

By what he said or suggested of the depth and subtlety of the influence of the family upon the individual, he made plain how the culture suffuses the remotest parts of the individual mind, being taken in almost literally with the mother's milk. His psychology involves culture in its very essence — it tells us that the surrogates of culture are established in the mind itself, that the development of the individual mind recapitulates the development of culture.9

Great Expectations and Hard Times are imaginative portrayals of how the "surrogates of culture are established in the mind itself." As expressions of this psychological theory the two novels would not be especially unique today. However, what makes them a unique achievement is that Dickens postulated the subtle dangers of adolescent socialization long before its psychic dynamics were recognized or understood. The corruption of the individual spirit in the name of "culture" or "morality" had not been criticized so emphatically before Dickens' indictment of this repressive conditioning.10

The narrative structures of Dickens (Great Expectations and Hard Times) and Eliot's Middlemarch objectify this corruption
of the spirit. The pattern that emerges is one in which the individual is coerced into denying or postponing the gratification of vital instincts. The novels carefully identify the prevailing social authorities. In each case the values are personified by social agents who readily administer the moral status quo. The ensuing conflict between individual desire and the collective authority is a familiar one in all literature. Certain nineteenth century assumptions about the artist's function however, give this theme a particular urgency and centrality in Victorian fiction. The Victorian novel generally and generously reflects the didactic purpose usually attributed to nineteenth century English art. English fiction in the nineteenth century often articulates criticism and condemnation of specific social ills. Bradbury notes that "the English writer in the nineteenth century was uniquely able to function somewhere near the centre of society and felt capable of intervening in the direction it took".  

The technological and industrial growth of England largely determined the social realities of the era. If Dickens and George Eliot felt capable of intervening, it was in opposition to the institutionalized abuses that the individual endured in the name of "civilization" or "progress." Dickens and Eliot addressed themselves to the problem of portraying the internal psychic damage wrought by external social forces.

The focus shared by Dickens and Eliot is on the roles assigned family members to reinforce the societal conventions. Some of
the most incisive social criticisms of Dickens and Eliot analyse
the repressive functions of certain domestic and social relation-
ships. This avenue of inquiry leads to the even more penetrating
analyses of Hardy and Lawrence. Hardy and Lawrence reflect an
even deeper distrust of the societal authorities that condition
our psycho-sexual growth. In *The Victorian Frame of Mind*
Houghton summarizes this philosophy that became a major theme
in nineteenth century literature:

> The whole attitude is exactly what we call Romantic, and it was, in fact, a direct inheritance from
Romanticism: partly from its naturalism, which
found the instincts good and appealed to the feelings
or the heart as the supreme guide to conduct and
wisdom, partly from its idealism.

This central assumption informs the thematic and narrative structures
of the relevant novels. In an era that was still generally
suspicious of instinctual demands and pleasures, some artists,
including Dickens, legitimized the natural desires and impulses.
The novelist no longer located the source of evil within the
individual soul of the protagonist. The internal conflict is
not between the good and evil parts of one's nature but between
his innocent natural impulses and the arbitrary laws internalized
from the social environment.

All four novelists discussed in this thesis structure their
fiction so that the reader identifies with the young protagonist
struggling against these societal imperatives. The social
manipulation of the adolescent consciousness is imaginatively
recreated in several dimensions. The external influences not only administer moral standards but also condition individual values and aspirations.

The corruption of Pip for example is a two-fold process. In one sense his natural identity is easy prey for Miss Havisham's pretentious social priorities. Pip abandons his clumsy boots in an attempt to fill the shoes of some socio-economic ideal who has abandoned Miss Havisham. When he does receive his mysterious allotment he is further corrupted by social imperatives and conventions. He assumes the role of a free-spending pro-digal and his attendant snobbery smothers his affection for Joe. The pattern that emerges is a familiar one in the novels of all four writers discussed in this thesis. The journey to the city is a spiritual as well as a geographical odyssey. Pip, Jude, and Paul Morel each adopt the social conventions of the city and struggle to assimilate these distorted values within their more benevolent selves.

An important critical consideration of these thematic structures focuses on the increasingly sophisticated psychological realism. Trilling suggests that "the surrogates of culture are established in the mind itself, that the development of the individual mind recapitulates the development of culture."13

The four novelists discussed in this thesis portray the social relationship and the dynamics of personality development which are the outward manifestation of this development of the
individual mind. The young protagonists struggle with seemingly natural desires and inclinations that are forbidden by the cultural requisites. The protagonists eventually criticize and refute the cultural priorities. In some cases, a greater innocence and personal integration are achieved (Dorothea, Pip, Paul). In some cases the protagonist never achieves the elusive identity or freedom (Jude, Lydgate, Tom Gradgrind). The novelist no longer develops carefully-rounded figures as moral and psychological certainties. Rather than assuming these certainties and developing a plot from them, the novelist probes the aspects of character which were heretofore convenient assumptions.

Dickens intensifies the examination of moral identity, not only as it motivates dramatic action or feeling, but also as a literary subject in itself. **Hard Times**, as I hope to show, is a significant achievement in this sense. Although the plot develops around Tom Gradgrind's crime, the central concerns of the novel are the collective crimes of the elders (Gradgrind, Bounderby) perpetrated on the young (Gradgrind Children, Sissy Jupe). Dickens investigates and refutes the ideologies personified by Gradgrind and Bounderby. He condemns the prevailing Victorian code that he indirectly suggests is founded on inadequate conceptions of human nature. In spite of these criticisms, neither Dickens nor any of the other novelists presents any coherent alternatives to the flagrant abuses they portray in their novels. Whatever achievements the protagonists do attain are tentative (Paul, Morel, Dorothea).
However, the selection of novels for the thesis was determined not by narrative similarities as much as by specific thematic interests. The imaginative worlds of *Great Expectations* and *Hard Times* include detailed social and moral systems that generate a good deal of the action and anxiety within the novels. Pip's development as a character is contingent upon external circumstances as much as inherent qualities within him. Dickens probes the variables that determine our conduct, and comments indirectly on the necessarily limited scope of an arbitrary social law.

Dickens initiates a reappraisal of bogus assumptions about human nature that had permeated the Victorian consciousness. He develops characters who embody or often refute the culturally sanctioned stereotypes. His characters function symbolically to reflect Dickens' attitudes towards various abstractions within Victorian society. Thus characters represent various social and psychic alternatives confronting the protagonist. The other three novelists also utilize this method that Dickens perfects in *Hard Times*. I have noted the psychic changes that correlate with the geographical movements which the protagonists experience. The novels (especially *Jude the Obscure* and *Hard Times*) portray experiences which objectify various spiritual alternatives. Similarly, the central dichotomy in the characterization is the general antagonism between the natural vitality of the individual and the collective agencies of convention, restraint, and normality. All four novelists present a broad spectrum of personality variables,
but one underlying principle generates an unmistakable polarity in the presentation of character. The novelists portray conventional roles and relationships, but there is a fundamental juxtaposition indirectly adhered to by the novelists which forms a vital connection among their works. In his discussion of D. H. Lawrence in Cavalcade of the English Novel, Wagenknecht identifies the opposition that is the central thematic focus of the five novels:

The machine is materialism; to it the true physical stands forever opposed. Husbands, fathers, mine-owners, and vicars (to borrow Professor Tindall's effective summary) are the great servants of the machine; to escape their dominance you must turn to grooms, game-keepers, gypsies, crooners, and even horses.\textsuperscript{15}

The four novelists structure their novels around the psychic growth of individuals in a Victorian social environment. They utilize a formal realism because they are addressing themselves to existing social problems and attitudes in Victorian England. In this sense they exemplify a comprehensive movement in English fiction in which some critics locate the central focus in the English novel.\textsuperscript{16}

In the first chapter of the thesis I hope to show how Great Expectations and Hard Times imaginatively portray the systematic distortion of childhood innocence and freedom. The rigid conventions and ideologies imposed upon the adolescents in both novels distort their values and identities. The dominant chords are sounded that reverberate through Middlemarch, Jude the Obscure and Sons and Lovers. Certain human relationships,
usually parent-child, hopelessly impair the instinctual desires of the individual in the name of various cultural priorities.

The broadest avenue of investigation leads to a comparison of thematic connections in each novel. However, I hope to show the significant technical achievements of each novelist in his or her handling of the major themes. The thematic focus on each novel can hopefully establish the salient connections among the novelists. The general achievements of these novels are perhaps indicated by one commentator's remarks on Lawrence's fiction which seems especially applicable to all four writers:

And yet it is clearly Lawrences's fiction that present to us his views and ideas, his critical "analysis" of the workings of society, in a manner which through the force of symbol and metaphor, character and situation, moves us as the non-fiction cannot.17

The one recurrent pattern that emerges in the novels is how the "workings of society" preclude certain immediately gratifying indulgences -- emotional and sensuous. Each of the protagonists faces a series of socially approved options and obstacles that he or she is pressured into confronting or compromising with. These societal priorities are in tacit agreement with the Victorian moral code. The characters are carefully conditioned so they aspire to various socio-economic or intellectual plateaus that become woefully elusive. At the same time these cultural guidelines require the suppression of several natural desires and impulses. Often, especially in the characters of Dickens and
George Eliot, the qualities or emotions that are repressed are displaced into an emotional dimension that is acceptable but self-destructive. Sissy Jupe and Dorothea Brooke, for example, suffer the suppressive influences of parental figures who prevent any expression of general vitality or spontaneity except in carefully channelled directions. The same syndrome is recreated in *Jude the Obscure* and *Sons and Lovers*, where its most insistent expression is in realistic sexual terms.

In all the novels the plot is not something extraneous to character development, but is largely determined by the dramatization of the individual's search for identity. Character, as George Eliot says, "is a process and an unfolding" and this ongoing process informs the thematic and formal structures of the novels.

The novels thus reflect a departure from forms which the English novel had largely adhered to. The character development in *Great Expectations*, *Jude the Obscure* and *Sons and Lovers* does not lead the protagonists into harmony with a given social or moral structure. The three protagonists of these novels are rather in a prolonged conflict with the social and moral structures. As Hardy states in a Postscript to *Jude the Obscure* (1912):

> Artistic effort always pays heavily for finding its tragedies in the forced adaptation of human instincts to rusty and irksome moulds that do not fit them.18

Dickens, Eliot, Hardy, and Lawrence directly criticize certain "rusty and irksome moulds" that were Victorian strongholds. In the novels discussed in this thesis the authors portray
the destructive effects of Victorian attitudes towards love, sex, and moral conduct. My discussion of Victorian ethical and philosophical tenets is a focus on cultural and psychological repression. That is, my study investigates the various dramatic scenes that realistically portray the obvious prejudices and elitist aspects of the environments created in each novel. However, the thesis will investigate, especially in the second and third chapters, how the societal laws are internalized within the individual. The subsequent condition of the protagonist is one of anxiety, resulting from his stifled repressed desires and guilt as the social imperatives re-emerge as his conscience. While one needn't revert to psychological models to verify or analyze the novels, I think it is useful to compare the similar psychological syndromes that are depicted in the novels. The analyses of Jude the Obscure and Sons and Lovers are mainly a study of the psycho-sexual realism perfected by Hardy and Lawrence. The theme of social repression is expressed in these varied dimensions. All four novelists portray the psychological damage wrought by repressive conceptions and conventions of human experience. The study of this theme is initiated in Chapter One which analyzes Great Expectations and Hard Times.
FOOTNOTES


5 Trilling, p. 104.


9 Within and Beyond Culture, p. 105.

10 Karl, p. 23.

11 Bradbury, p. xv.


13 Within and Beyond Culture, p. 105.
14 Ibid., p. 104.


CHAPTER ONE

*Great Expectations* and *Hard Times* portray Dickens' most insistent indictment of institutionalized abuses of social and moral authority. The two novels depict crimes committed against the child and adolescent in the name of civilization, normality, and morality. The centrality of this theme is reflected in the tone and narrative structures of the novels. This carefully directed criticism is a more unified social analysis than those appearing in earlier novels of Dickens and his contemporaries.

In his discussion of *Hard Times*, F. R. Leavis states that:

> ordinarily Dickens' criticisms of the world he lives in are casual and incidental -- a matter of including among the ingredients of a book some indignant treatment of a particular abuse. But in *Hard Times* he is for once possessed by a comprehensive vision, one in which the inhuman- ities of Victorian civilization are seen as fostered and sanctioned by a hard philosophy; the aggressive formulation of an inhumane spirit.¹

This is not to suggest that Dickens' portrayal of societal determination and frustration was itself a radical innovation. Jane Austen's "two inches of ivory" present an energetic, and often ironical, portrait of the social fabric. However, as she
acknowledged, her focus was necessarily limited to the manners and conventions of a particular social class. Dickens' purposes are more ambitious in that he evaluates the social structure as well as individual character.

Austen's purpose is no less serious. However, the conflict in *Pride and Prejudice* for example is generated within a given social and moral framework which is never threatened. After all, "it is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife." At no time in *Pride and Prejudice* is this truth questioned. Austen details how characters are defined and regulated by the social environment. Even though the individual is unthinkable without the social environment "in the Austen world that environment has been given once and forever -- it is unchangeable and it contains the only possibilities for individual development."2

Marriage, in the Austen world, symbolizes and finalizes the individual's acceptance into and compromise with that social environment. At no time does Austen suggest that the very nature of the social structure, and not individual excess or indulgence, is the source of conflict. Dickens, on the other hand, depicts the tension between the individual and a repressive social environment. Raymond Williams contends that this type of conflict is a departure from earlier Victorian novels where "there is a kind of moral analysis in which society is a background against which the drama of personal overtures and vices is enacted."3 Williams
identifies the thematic structures in Dickens' novels in which society functions as an active coercive force against individual liberty.

In *Great Expectations*, for example, Magwitch, Miss Havisham and Mrs. Joe personify certain social attitudes and prejudices in Victorian society. They socialize Pip and Estella in such a way that certain vital childhood and adolescent impulses are distorted or repressed.

The central narrative structure of *Great Expectations* is a careful plotting of the growth of personality and identity. The conflicts are not between characters so much as they are between evolving adolescent identities and the societal forces that would control these identities.

Similarly, *Hard Times* is an imaginative structure that chronicles the confrontations of individual desire with certain social imperatives. The repressive influences of these social ideologies generate the conflicts and thematic centrality of *Hard Times*. Leavis' own analysis of *Hard Times* supports my contention that Dickens orchestrates the movements in *Hard Times* with this central conflict in mind. He remarks that Dickens structures *Hard Times* by "opposing the life that is lived freely and richly from the deep instinctive and emotional springs to the thin-blooded grease-mechanical product of Gradgrindery".  

Dickens reflects an attitude that assesses human personality and conduct not according to arbitrary ethical ideologies but
to more relative, individualistic criteria. Moral virtue is no longer a pre-ordained given in Dickens' imaginative worlds but an evolving product of multifarious external influences and individual desires. The character of Pip exemplifies this attitude. Dickens' ironic criticisms of Pip's affectations are tempered by the implicit condemnation of those adults in the novel who foster his pretensions. Pip grows in stature because he eventually rejects these social pretensions.

In some earlier comic forms the protagonist eventually purges his vices in order to establish a harmonic relationship with the social status quo. The final resolution of the Darcy-Elizabeth plot in Pride and Prejudice is achieved when the characters are purged of their prejudices. The reconciliation is within a given social environment. Elizabeth's final acceptance of Darcy is also an acceptance of the civilized world of Pemberley.

In Great Expectations, on the other hand, the discordant tone is only checked when the protagonist rejects the social status quo and achieves a measure of self-knowledge and independence. This social conditioning of the individual is the primary subject of Great Expectations. The various relationships in Great Expectations dramatize cultural conditioning through representative social agents. This reflects the novelist's social criticism which, as Raymond Williams suggests, becomes increasingly important in the development of nineteenth century literature -- in which society is the creator
of virtues and vices; its active relationships and institutions at once generating and controlling or failing to control, what in the earlier mode of analysis could be seen as faults of the soul.4

Dickens depicts certain family and social relationships which manipulate the natural spontaneous feelings of the two youths — Pip and Estella. Pip's affection for and devotion to Joe are displaced by the pretensions he adopts to complement his great expectations:

Truly it was impossible to dissociate her [Estella] presence from all those wretched hankerings after money and gentility that had disturbed my boyhood — from all those ill-regulated aspirations that had first made me ashamed of home and Joe — from all those visions that had raised her face in the glowing fire....5

Estella's sensibilities have similarly been stunted by Miss Havisham's systematic conditioning. In these two characters, and in subsequent characterizations by Eliot, Hardy, and Lawrence, the young protagonists are cajoled or tempted into self-destructive pursuits. Pip's crucial struggle in *Great Expectations* is against the social conspiracy that displaces his natural feelings. In this sense the plight of Pip symbolizes the broader dehumanizing forces that controlled the everyday world of Victorians. Dorothy Van Ghent's study of *Great Expectations* acknowledges the various dimensions of this manipulation of the individual consciousness:

Dickens lived in a time and an environment in which a full scale demolition of traditional values was going on, correlative with the uprooting and dehumanization of men, women, and children by the millions — a process brought about by industrialization, colonial imperialism, and the exploitation of the human being as a "thing" or an engine or a part of
an engine capable of being used for profit. 6

This commercial exploitation is a correlative process to the emotional and psychological exploitation practiced by Miss Havisham and Magwitch. Van Ghent's discussion of the exploitation of the individual introduces one of the most ironic aspects of Dickens' essentially comic vision. The family and social agencies who practice this exploitation do so in the name of decency, sanity, and progress. The socializing of Pip as a young gentleman and his subsequent condemnation of his earlier life with Joe reflect the biased social attitudes that prevailed. Pip's assumption of the prejudices and manners of a social elite facilitates his complete assimilation within this system. The "civilized" role he adopts negates the spontaneous goodness that he manifested in his life at the forge. Pip's natural impulses are gradually stifled by the manipulating influences of Miss Havisham and his fairy godfather. Van Ghent comments that this socialization is a process "which abrogated the primary demands of human feeling." 7 The "games" Pip "plays" for Miss Havisham represent the behavioral stereotyping in the social arena he aspires to.

Pip's emotional growth is misdirected by repressive parental figures. The narrative chronicling of his relationships prefigures the experiences of Paul Morel and Jude Fawley. Each protagonist must compromise individual desire with cultural imperative. In each case the young man must suppress a vital part of his nature to satisfy the dictates of a rigid social
reality. In each case the societal imperatives are administered by an alarming array of authoritative figures.

In her essay on *Great Expectations* Van Ghent identifies the two dominant themes. Her general cataloguing of parental and social crimes also establishes some vital connections with the novels of Hardy and Lawrence:

Two kinds of crime form Dickens' two chief themes, the crime of parent against child, and the calculated social crime. They are formally analogous, their form being the treatment of persons as things, but they are also inherent in each other, whether the private will of the parent is to be considered as depraved by the operation of a public institution, or the social institution is to be considered as a bold concert of the depravities of individual "fathers".

In *Pip's* early life with Joe and his sister he is subjected to her tyranny and the assorted indignities perpetrated by visitors such as Pumblechook. Mrs. Joe is the legitimate authority in *Pip's* life. Mr. Pumblechook's subservient pandering to her reinforces the absolute power she wields in that household. Dickens is explicit in his criticisms of this domestic tyranny:

In the little world in which children have their existence, whosoever brings them up, there is nothing so finely perceived and so finely felt as injustice. It may be only small injustice that the child can be exposed to; but the child is ... Within myself, I had sustained, from my babyhood, a perpetual conflict with injustice. I had known, from the time when I could speak, that my sister, in her capricious and violent coercion, was unjust to me.

[G.E. 59]

*Pip's* escape from this environment, however, is not towards a more enlightened self-realization. He aspires to satisfy the
cultural demands prescribed by Estella and Miss Havisham. In this sense the individual (Pip) becomes immersed in a vast spectrum of societal values that are neither fulfilling nor even attainable. Magwitch and Miss Havisham personify two particular dimensions of what Van Ghent calls the "depravities of individual fathers". Both of these figures manipulate Pip according to a superficial narrow definition of human achievement: Magwitch's in an economic sense, and Miss Havisham's in a social sense.

Van Ghent's suggestion that the crimes are "inherent in each other" introduces further thematic and structural similarities among all the novels studied in this thesis. The public institutions, mainly marriage, the church and the family, repress the protagonists through their arbitrary ethical laws. Thus, the "parental" figures, including husbands like Bounderby, Phillotson, and Casaubon, act as agents for these rigid, repressive institutions. The crimes committed against Pip by Magwitch and Miss Havisham are generated, therefore, not only by their idiosyncratic perversities, but by broader social attitudes that foster their distorted conceptions of reality.

There is one other dimension to the cultural conditioning of the young protagonists. Pip, Paul Morel, and Jude Fawley are inspired by various social, professional, or intellectual ideals. In each case the young man must aspire to a disciplined life style that is a requisite of any socio-economic achievement.

In Pip's case his benefactor is snatched away from him and
he is left with his social pretensions and lavish habits but without the means of sustaining either. It is only when Pip loses his expectations that he can be purged of the attendant affectations that complement his gentlemanly status. He is ultimately purged of his sins through the "baptism of fire" that his fever symbolizes.

The relationships of Pip and Estella with Miss Havisham similarly undergo a purging of Miss Havisham's destructive influence. A case can be made for interpreting her fiery end as another symbolic purgation of evil spirits from Pip's consciousness. Miss Havisham functions in the novel as a catalyst for Pip's social pretensions. He quite logically assumes she is his mysterious benefactor because she had tantalized him with social and material expectations that would enable him to transcend his humble origins. He cannot be freed from these aspirations until they are totally and finally consumed. The death of Miss Havisham symbolizes this purgation.

It is the particular dynamics of Miss Havisham's influence on Pip and Estella however that connect her with other parental figures. Miss Havisham functions as a perverse fairy godmother for Estella. Her manipulation of Pip, although she is not his mysterious benefactor, is no less sinister or repressive. Pip subjects himself to a rigorous, often humiliating, socializing process in order to satisfy Miss Havisham and, in turn, Estella. What emerges is a syndrome in which Pip's initial desires are
directed, or rather misdirected from a purely emotional objective to the socio-economic prestige that supposedly will win Estella. Pip's affection for Estella is displaced into a longing for the gentility that seems to be a requisite virtue. Pip confesses to Biddy that his social pretensions are a direct residue of his struggle for Estella's (and Miss Havisham's) approval:

The beautiful young lady at Miss Havisham's, and she's more beautiful than anybody ever was, and I admire her dreadfully, and I want to be a gentleman on her account.

[G. E. 124]

Pip and Estella cannot experience each other on an unaffected emotional level. Miss Havisham, like other parental figures studied in this thesis, has diverted her spontaneous urges into repressive socio-economic channels. When Pip meets an even more accomplished Estella some time later this entanglement of values is even more pronounced:

Truly it was impossible to dissociate her presence from all those wretched hankerings after money and gentility that had disturbed my boyhood -- from all those ill-regulated aspirations that had just made me ashamed of Joe and home -- from all those visions that had raised her face in the glowing fire . . . .

[G. E. 226]

Thus the superimposed values of Miss Havisham, added to the coercive efforts of "them that raised him by hand", produce a considerable degree of anxiety in Pip. He is goaded by these parental figures into a destructive search for a socio-economic identity that will preclude any psycho-sexual fulfillment.
Like Paul Morel and Dr. Lydgate, Pip's true nature is repressed under an artificial value system which he has been conditioned to idealize. Mathew Arnold refers to this syndrome as Mrs. Gootch's Golden Rule. The burden of obligation Pip and Paul shoulder is similar to that shouldered by Arnold's Daniel Gootch who trudged to work every day with Mr. Gootch's encouragement that he was to

Ever remember my dear Dan that you should look forward to being some day manager of that concern.  

Estella is also emotionally crippled by these values. Dickens carefully discriminates between the natural temperament of Estella and those characteristics of her that are the residue of Miss Havisham's conditioning. Like Louisa Bounderby and Dorothea Brooke, Estella denies her natural sensibility in a sacrificial marriage. Estella's explanation to Pip capsulizes the distorted sensibility of all three women:

"It is my nature", she returned. And then she added with a stress upon the words, "It is in the nature formed within me". [G. E. 212]

Estella acknowledges the repressed identity that has been thrust upon her. Like Louisa Bounderby she fulfills a social, legal responsibility with the provision that she not be required to actually love her husband.

Pip's aspirations have several other interesting connections with those of Jude Fawley and Paul Morel. The psychological and intellectual growth of the protagonists is portrayed within a
specific socio-economic context. Pip, Jude, and Paul are tempted by the beckoning intellectual or commercial advancements. Each is aware of, and prepared to endure the requisite sacrifices that these rewards are contingent upon. This culturization however presupposes the repression or displacement of certain primary desires -- emotional and sensual. The social or academic goals that all three protagonists aspire to include moral imperatives which are contrary to their instinctual impulses.

The obvious manifestation of the dichotomy between repressed desire and conditioned role is dramatized in *Great Expectations* by the contrast between public and private aspects of personality. Although the changes in Pip's personality when he leaves the forge are the most striking illustrations, several minor characters amplify Dickens' attitude towards the repressive effects of socialization. Wemmick is the most immediate and significant example. There is a vast difference between the affable host at the castle and the curt, conditioned clerk at Little Britain. Wemmick's home is indeed a fortress against the repressive influences that determine his public role. The plot of *Great Expectations* moves towards Pip's realization that there exists within himself a similar fortress of benevolence and humanity.

One final type of relationship links *Great Expectations* to *Sons and Lovers*. This relationship informs the formal and thematic structures of both novels. The relationship I refer to is the crucial one that both young men have with a "father"
figure. More significantly, the two relationships both involve an initial repulsion from the father figure and then, as the protagonists mature, a resolution of that conflict.

Pip's attitude towards Magwitch is initially one of condescension and disgust. When Pip discovers that his mysterious benefactor is really a convict, he reacts with the prejudice that is characteristic of his general snobbery. The adopted values that are an integral part of Pip's socialization generate a repugnance towards Magwitch that is similar to Pip's attitude towards Joe. Pip's modification at the revelation that Magwitch is his patron reveals his limited comprehension of his obligation towards the felon. Pip's response to Magwitch recapitulates his selfish, callous attitude towards Joe, who has been spurned for lack of the superficial requisites that Pip has been conditioned to emulate and respect. I would suggest that the climax of the book is not Pip's eventual union with Estella, but his humble acknowledgement and payment of the debt he owes Magwitch.

Paul Morel achieves a degree of self-realization through a similarly ambivalent relationship with another "father" figure -- Baxter Dawes. Both Magwitch and Baxter Dawes have a purely narrative function in the plot structures of Great Expectations and Sons and Lovers, respectively. However, as I will discuss in Chapter Three my particular concern is with the conflicts and changes that these two "father" figures generate in the protagonists.
Great Expectations typifies the bildungsroman that was so popular in the nineteenth century fiction. Although Dickens' plotting of the novel emphasizes the romantic aspects of the story (especially the re-written ending), there are thematic considerations which it shares with Jude the Obscure and Sons and Lovers. As I have tried to indicate, Great Expectations is an indictment of those Victorian values and prejudices which are foisted and practiced on the young.

Turning to Hard Times one can see perhaps an even more scathing attack on those Victorian values which frustrate and destroy the young consciousness. Written some ten years before Great Expectations, the novel is focussed, thematically and structurally, on those destructive ideologies which threaten the freedom and identity of the young. What Leavis identifies as the "comprehensive vision" of Hard Times is this very focus on the repressive ideologies from which the young characters in the novel must free themselves.

The main thrust of Hard Times is its attack on those socializing forces that repress individual liberty and vitality. Leavis' summary of the central contrast that structures Hard Times is worth reconsidering. He suggests that Dickens structures Hard Times by "opposing the life that is lived freely and richly from the deep instinctive and emotional springs to the thin-blooded, grease-mechanic product of Gradgrindery."

The contrasting conditions are exemplified by the exuberant
vitality of Sims and the circus people and the passive products of Gradgrindery. Because Dickens describes in detail the attempted manipulation of her free spirit through her exposure to Gradgrindery, Sissy Jupe is an especially important character. Like Pip, Sissy is involved in a struggle for self-realization that will allow her basic vitality and innocence to re-assert themselves. Dickens develops the thematic thrust of these repressive ideologies by contrasting Sissy with two characters already suffocated by Gradgrindery -- Bitzer and Louisa. Dickens adroitly develops a seemingly realistic description into a metaphorical contrast of Bitzer and Sissy:

But, whereas the girl was so dark-eyed and dark-haired that she seemed to receive a deeper and more lustrous colour from the sun, when it shone upon her, the boy was so light-eyed and light-haired that the self-same rays appeared to draw out of him what little colour he ever possessed.12

Sissy possesses an emotional identity that remains intact in spite of Gradgrind's socializing regimen.

Louisa, on the other hand, has been drained of whatever vitality she might have had. She suffers from an emotional anemia that one suspects is a similar ailment to the one that destroyed Mrs. Gradgrind. Louisa could not have contemplated marriage to such a creature as Bounderby unless her natural desires had been buried under layers of her father's facts. Like Estella, Louisa decides quite dispassionately that although she could never love her future husband, marriage will satisfy certain expedient objectives.
In Louisa's case it is the advancement of her pathetic brother that stimulates the sacrifice. Had these young women been in touch with their deep emotional, instinctive needs they would never have abandoned themselves to the boors they marry. In this sense, Estella and Louisa suffer the same condition as that endured by Dorothea Brooke in *Middlemarch*, who in a mistaken sense of devotion sacrifices herself to a man (Casaubon) who is as completely oblivious of her genuine needs as she is.

In the first book of *Hard Times* Dickens refers metaphorically to Louisa's repressed nature. In a scene with her father, Louisa is deciding whether or not to sacrifice herself to Bounderby. She defers to her father's admonition that it is a plain question of fact, but she suggests, seemingly incongruously, as she gazes over the Coketown works that

"There seems to be nothing there but languid and monotonous smoke. Yet when the night comes, fire bursts out, father!".

[H. T. 76]

Louisa's fires sputter feebly under the damp layers of facts foisted on her. She personifies the stunted product of repressive social conditioning. In the final book of the novel Dickens picks up the fire metaphor again and comments on the devastating psychological effects of this repression:

She did not raise her head. A dull anger that she should be seen in her distress, and that the involuntary look she had so resented should come to this fulfillment, smouldered within her like an unwholesome fire. "All closely imprisoned forces rend and destroy."

The air that would be healthful to the earth, the
water that would enrich, the heat that would ripen it, tear it when caged up. So in her bosom even now; "the strongest qualities she possessed, long turned upon themselves, became a heap of obduracy that rose against a friend." [Italics mine] [H. T. 170-171]

Louisa's repressed condition, besides being self-destructive, generates an anxiety and "a heap of obduracy that rose against a friend". Paul Morel's treatment of Miriam and Sue Bridehead's treatment of Phillotson are manifestations of a similar psychological syndrome. Dickens' portrayal of her disintegration illustrates his increasingly perspicacious development of character.

In *Hard Times* Dickens uses characters to personify the multifarious external influences that define and regulate these relationships and the more general evaluation of personality. Gradgrind is perhaps the most striking representation of an inhuman ideology and at the same time, in his subscription to it, perhaps its most pitiable victim. Gradgrind effects the almost complete emotional debilitation of his children. Dickens, although making Gradgrind a ridiculous figure, never tempers his castigation of this particular educational and domestic tyrant. The novel investigates the whole spectrum of emotional, social, and intellectual barreness that Gradgrind produces. His ideology and Bounderby's hypocritical self-interest reflect what Dickens felt were the worst abuses of Victorian society. Dickens tears off the veneer of "progress" and "culture" that legitimized such
abuses and in this sense accepts the new responsibility of the novelist, as Raymond Williams puts it, in "defining the society, rather than merely reflecting it." Dickens defines the maladies of Victorian society by personifying those contrasting qualities. On the one hand Gradgrind and Bounderby deny human vitality, and, on the other hand Sleary and the horse people live spontaneously and instinctively. If one examines the catalogue of human characters that comprises the "circus people", one can appreciate Dickens' focus on this central contrast between human vitality and repression. This distinction is similar to the dichotomy Wagentanecht cites in Laurence's fiction. The reader can contrast "husbands, fathers" like Gradgrind and Bounderby to "gypsies and crooners" like Sleary and the horse people.

The similar juxtaposition of character types by Dickens and Lawrence is another reflection of their similar concern with character conditioning, and the Victorian values are attitudes that determine the directions this socializing takes. Much of *Hard Times* focuses directly on the dynamics of social and parental manipulation of the young. These thematic elements reflect Dickens' commitment to analyze a period, which Raymond Williams suggests,

> in which what it means to live in a community is more uncertain, more critical, more disturbing as a question put both to societies and to persons than ever before in history.

One final consideration directly links Dickens' social criticism with that of George Eliot, Hardy, and Lawrence: the
portrayal of the repressive aspects of specific institutions. I have limited the following discussion to an appraisal of how Dickens criticizes the marriage institution in a manner prefiguring the attitudes of Eliot, Hardy, and Lawrence.

The particular abuses of marriage are generally related to the parental crimes or crimes against the individual. The sacrifice of Louisa to Bounderby exemplifies the manipulation of sentiment for economic or social expediency. Louisa's disinterest in her own emotional life is a telling enough comment on her condition. Her father's performance as Pandarus suggests Dickens' ironical contempt for the distorted values that justify and even encourage such a marriage.

Dorothea Brooke's commitment to Casaubon exemplifies another marriage motivated by a mistaken sense of service and devotion. At this point I would only mention the peculiar function marriage serves as a socially approved institution for female subjection. Dorothea Brooke's excessive spirituality and idealism ultimately betray her into her marriage to Casaubon. He is portrayed as more of a father-figure than a husband. Like Louisa Gradgrind, Dorothea Brooke cannot conceive of an innate desires or needs that preclude marriage to an older, egotistical tyrant.

Sue Bridehead's marriage to Phillotson is, in this sense, also a sacrifice. Her neurotic guilt generates her sense of obligation to Phillotson, who also functions as more of a father-figure than a husband. Each of these three marriages has a
distinct quality of its own so I would not over-extend the comparisons. However, it is significant that the novelists share a similar attitude to the marriage institution, insofar as it exploits the misplaced sentiments of individuals who are too dimly aware of their vital needs to make such a crucial choice. Marriage represses the individual not only by exploiting naive inclinations but by rigidly enforcing the legal letter of the marriage law when one or both of the individuals is actively struggling to escape it.

Dickens clearly opposes the arbitrary enforcement of marriage law when it represses the freedom of the individual. Stephen Blackpool's predicament is a forceful, if somewhat sentimental, imaginative treatment of this theme. "Saint" Stephen's marriage precludes any consummation of his noble love for Rachel. Dickens leaves little doubt where his sympathies lie as he renders Blackpool's wife as disgustingly obscene as Richel is virtuous.

Stephen's predicament is also that of Lawrence's gamekeeper -- Mellors. He also lives in fear of the intermittent appearances of a wife whose presence is legitimized by marriage law. Although neither Blackpool's nor Mellors' wife plays any significant role in either novel, the authors have used their presence to re-iterate a central thematic concern. The wives personify the harsh social laws that regulate and define what is considered moral or immoral behavior. Blackpool and Mellors struggle to fulfill an "immoral" relationship with Rachel and Catherine
respectively. Thus, the novelists indirectly criticize the social laws which ironically enough recognize only the "moral" unions of the two men with their wives.

In this sense Hardy similarly criticizes an institution which binds Sue Bridehead to Phillotson and Jude to Arabella. Both of these marriages are also totally antithetical to the desires and needs of Sue and Jude. As I hope to indicate in a textual analysis of *Jude the Obscure*, the prevailing social code plays a crucial role in the individual and collective anxiety of these characters as they are between individual desires and the ethical status quo that conditions and judges those desires.

In turning to George Eliot's *Middlemarch* I hope to maintain a consistent focus on this theme of social repression. In portraying particular relationships Eliot's tone reflects an attitude similar to that of Dickens. While focussing on the social conditioning of the individual, I hope to isolate some of Eliot's significant achievements in portraying the ensuing psychological and dramatic conflicts. *Middlemarch*, besides being a social cross-section, is a psychological dissection of certain characters. Eliot creates not only dramatic character, but the genesis and growth of individual personality. The significant characters in *Middlemarch* are not a "given" set of moral or psychological generalities. They evolve, as Eliot says, "as a process and an unfolding." This process and enfolding largely determines the themes and structure of *Middlemarch*. 
Concomitant with this approach to character is Eliot's concern with the interaction of individuals and the social realities that influence them. Her comment in *Felix Holt* that "there is no private life which has not been determined by a wider public life" serves as a useful theorem in analyzing her studies of character. The social determination of character is a fundamental presupposition of Eliot's portrayal of human experience. Her characters are defined and qualified not only by external influences but also by internalized mores of their social environment.

For example the portrayals of Lydgate's and Dorothea's marriages are carefully developed so that the subsequent conflicts and frustration are conceivable and carefully prefigured. That is, we are given the multifarious causes of what becomes a dramatic events: the collapse of these two marriages. However, Eliot's art is so carefully orchestrated that in reading the book we ask what will happen to the characters and we reflect on what has happened to the characters and how past conditions have determined the present experiences. One dimension of our understanding of Dorothea and Lydgate must be informed by the socially generated illusions which distort their understanding of their needs and desires. Both of these characters have ill-conceived notions of their own identity and the kind of social and marital role which will best complement that identity.

Dorothea, because of her social station and heritage, has been denied access to those primary instinctive aspects of herself
that a genuine love could fulfill. She has spiritulized her desires and idealized her great expectancies. Thus her submission to Casaubon seems, to her, a promising alternative to the other likely prospect -- Sir Chettam. Eliot's ironical reference to St. Theresa in the Preface capsulizes a certain temperament which would be susceptible to the onslaught of a Casaubon:

Their [women like Dorothea] failure, we gather, was a case of a certain spiritual grandeur ill-matched with the meanness of opportunity.16

What Eliot refers to as a "spiritual grandeur" is, in Dorothea's case, at once generated and regulated by her social environment. As long as she displaces her passions into a concern for cottages for the poor, she is tolerated by her immediate family and friends, who function as agents for the social status quo. In finally acknowledging her passion for Ladislaw, Dorothea offends these social norms and is treated with the customary derision afforded those who deviate from culturally sanctioned behavioral norms.

Lydgate is similarly entranced by an ideal which is unattainable in the medical profession as it exists in Middlemarch. His idealization of his intellectual aspirations ultimately leads to a disappointing compromise with the governing realities. Like Pip and Jude, Lydgate's "great expectations" are tragically curtailed by certain socio-economic contingencies to which he has not given sufficient consideration. Wagenknecht cites aspects of Middlemarch which emphasize this focus on frustrated desire:
Both Lydgate and Dorothea Brooke start out with the highest ideals, and both fail through circumstance; for George Eliot believed that "there is no creature whose inward being is so strong that it is not greatly determined by what lies outside it."^17

The humanistic impulses are but one dimension of the total libidinal energy of Dorothea or Lydgate. Eliot amplifies her analysis by depicting the subtle inter-relation of these altruistic public ideals with the personal relationships and marriages of the two characters. The public endeavours of Dorothea and Lydgate are paralleled by the equally naive, idealistic aspects of their romantic experiences. The deterioration of both marriages accompanies an emergence of self-realization for both of them.

Eliot carefully creates not only the subjective experiences of Dorothea and Lydgate but more significantly the external social influences that determine these experiences. As Wagenknecht suggests:

> Her novels, constructed around ideas, are not entertainment; they are a serious interpretation of life. In them for the first time, the modern novel widens its horizon to the intellectual breadth of the modern world.18

Inherent in Eliot's "serious interpretation of life" is a discriminating investigation of those social conventions which threaten individual freedoms. As in *Hard Times* the conflicts are not between clearly observable "good" (moral) or "bad" (immoral) characters. The crimes committed against individual freedoms are perpetrated by social agents fulfilling roles that have been legitimized by the prevailing conventions and values. Eliot's attitude is similar to that of Dickens, whose concern
is with the social coercion that conditions the vulnerable emerging consciousness. Speaking of the general concerns of Dickens and Eliot, Frederik Karl comments that although in previous novels

the individual has to be changed to save the institution...

.... now the social order itself must be changed to save the individual.19

Certain comic conventions in the traditional English novel effect an ending with appropriate dramatic resolutions (wedding, renewed social harmony). In Middlemarch (and Jude the Obscure and Sons and Lovers) however the narrative climax includes a departure from the convenient social rituals rather than a reaffirmation of them.

Pip and Lydgate, for example, must live through a culturally inspired illusion of great expectations before either achieves the self-knowledge that transcends any external definition of himself. Although Lydgate never achieves his scientific goal, he does finally acknowledge the social and professional realities that have largely determined his fate. The prejudices that ultimately destroy him professionally are not entirely unlike those which preclude Jude's fulfillment as an artisan. Their predicaments are but one dimension of the general social crimes which were located in Dickens' fiction. Indeed, what Karl contends is the central theme of Dickens' final novels serves as a motif to investigate Eliot's novel:

the injustice of the adult to the child becomes the injustice of society to its individual members, the injustice of government to its subjects, and, finally, the injustice of an economic system to its workers.20
Karl might have added the injustice of one sex to another. Dorothea, Miriam Leivers, and Sue Bridehead are frustrated by the clearly sexist biases that prevent the independent life styles that tempt these women. Furthermore, the kind of sacrifice these three women make to male figures seems generated by a wish to achieve vicariously objectives that are an impossibility in their own lives.

The thematic structure of *Middlemarch* invites a more detailed examination of how Eliot depicts the more general frustrations of youth manipulated by repressive forces. The main avenue of investigation begins at Eliot's own summation of this theme:

> they were the mixed result of young and noble impulses struggling amidst the conditions of an imperfect social state, in which great feelings will often take the aspect of error, and great faith, the aspect of illusion. For there is no creature whose inward being is so strong that it is not greatly determined by what lies outside it. [M. 612]

Eliot portrays the interpersonal experiences which determine the directions which the "process" of an "unfolding" of character takes. Dorothea learns about herself as we learn about her -- through her relationships with people and processes in a specific social environment. Her eventual enslavement to Casaubon is not so much a matter of his deception or hypocrisy as it is a product of her own illusions. Dorothea, from our first glimpse of her, has displaced her passions into a highly spiritual, vaguely altruistic sense of dedication and purpose. She is out of touch with her deeper sensibilities and, like Louisa Gradgrind, sacrifices
herself to an older demagogue in the hope that she can ultimately do some good for somebody. Like Sue Bridehead, Dorothea begins to see the repressive aspects of a spiritual dedication to an older man. Dorothea and Sue are startled to feel the emergence of passions other than those directed towards a life of submission and service. So intrusive are these unaccountable passions that Dorothea and, as we shall later see, Sue Bridehead both suffer the anxiety and guilt generated by these transgressions.

George Eliot is emphatic in her portrayal of the repressive environment which regulates Dorothea's life:

The intensity of her religious disposition, the coercion it exercised over her life, was but one aspect of a nature altogether ardent, theoretic, and intellectually consequent: and with such a nature, struggling in the hands of a narrow teaching, hemmed in by a social life which seemed nothing but a labyrinth of petty causes, a walled in maze of small paths that led no whither . . .

[M. 21]

The novel also focuses on characters other than Dorothea to develop these themes. Often the impediments are the older generation who administer the ethical and social laws of each particular class. Fred Vincy, for example, is tormented by two aspects of parental manipulation. On the one hand, he is tantalized by Peter Featherstone's will-shaking; and on the other, he is burdened by the somewhat grandiose socio-economic expectancies of his parents. They condemn his more frivolous indulgences and reject any possible excursions on his part that deviate from the respectability befitting any sone of theirs.
Perhaps the most effective means of establishing the centrality of these conflicts between the older establishment and rebellious youth is to isolate how a few major characters experience them. Eliot has carefully described the different dimensions in which the struggle for freedom and fulfillment is enacted. A character such as Lydgate suffers socially, professionally, and psychologically. Lydgate's professional career is a cogent illustration of how noble ideals and aspirations are besmirched and ultimately stifled by existing social circumstances and biases. Lydgate's struggles against the archaic attitudes of his colleagues deepen the impression of how inflexible a social group becomes when its conventions are threatened by a "deviant" force. Long before his involvement in Raffles' death, Lydgate has alienated the majority of his colleagues who generally react on an emotional level to what should be a purely professional conflict. Lydgate entered this professional sphere completely oblivious to the ultimately political ramifications of his seemingly altruistic decision not to dispense drugs. Like Jude's ill-fated attempts to succeed as a stone mason, Lydgate's endeavours are curtailed not by his inferior skills, but by failure to effectively appease the institutionalized forces that govern his chosen field. Once again the aspirations of a young character are stigmatized by the prejudices of an establishment.

In the second book of *Middlemarch* (appropriately entitled *Old and Young*), Farebrother wisely counsels Lydgate:
You have not only got the Old Adam in yourself against you, but you have got all those descendants of the original Adam who form the society around you.

Farebrother's remarks emphasize the bigoted attitudes that are pervasive in Middlemarch's medical community. In Lydgate's case the professional jealousy and animosity generate a more realistic understanding of his identity and social function as a doctor. Lydgate's predicament recalls that of Stephen Blackpool whose noble intentions and occupational competency were no match for the prejudicial hysteria that incited his own colleagues against him.

Lydgate's particular dreams of contributing significantly to medical science are constantly impeded by the day to day contingencies in his social and professional environment. Lydgate, like Jude, is eventually hounded into submission and exile by the petty considerations of a social group. Jude and Lydgate cannot manipulate existing conditions for their own benefit. In contrast, Arabella is a significantly robust figure who uses existing social prejudices and conventions to her own ends and like another notable heroine, Moll Flanders, ultimately survives while more virtuous characters flounder. In the first major test of his principles Lydgate allows himself to be compromised by more powerful figures in the community:

the affair of the chaplaincy remained a sore point in his memory as a case in which the petty medium of Middlemarch had been too strong for him.
Once again George Eliot emphasizes not the relative moral failing of a character, but his corruption by external social forces. The petty considerations that decide the chaplaincy are comparable to the subsequent prejudices that plague Lydgate's career. Lydgate's intellectual goals are increasingly obscured by the prosaic social intrigues which confront him. Eliot's summary of Lydgate's predicament suggests the tragic implications of his career:

Only those who know the supremacy of the intellectual life -- the life which has a seed of ennobling thought and purpose within it -- can understand the grief of one who falls from that noble activity into the absorbing soul-wasting struggle with worldly annoyances. [M. 540]

However, the character of Lydgate is given a greater thematic significance in the novel through Eliot's presentation of his relationship with Rosamund. The social conventions and personal illusions that generate, define, and ultimately destroy their relationship are depicted with Eliot's penetrating psychological understanding which directly anticipates the psycho-sexual realism of Hardy and Lawrence. The reader acknowledges how the multifarious social influences called Middlemarch "counted on swallowing Lydgate and assimilating him very comfortably". [M. 114] What demands closer consideration is how the psycho-sexual conflicts of his relationship with Rosamund are another dimension of the social determination of individual identity and freedom.
Lydgate anticipates marriage with illusion and expectations which ultimately are as selfishly naive as even Casaubon's:

Rosamund thought that no one could be more in love than she was; and Lydgate thought that after all his wild mistakes and absurd credulity, he had found perfect womanhood -- felt as if already breathed upon by exquisite wedded affection such as would be bestowed by an accomplished creature who venerated his high musings and momentous labours and would never interfere with them; who would create order in the home and account with still magic, yet keep her fingers ready to touch the lute and transform life into romance at any moment; who was instructed to the true womanly limit and not a hair's breath beyond docile, therefore, and ready to carry out behests which came from beyond that limit.

[M. 258]

The inescapable irony of this passage is heightened by the previous description of Lydgate's somewhat bizarre infatuation with Laura. Lydgate now longs for a suitably lyrical romance to complement his scientific achievements. He does not consider the socio-economic heritage and expectations of Rosamund, which are a crucial aspect of her identity. Her parents have instilled a dangerous elitist attitude in Rosamund, who equates her eventual social prestige with appropriate economic and material indulgences. To Rosamund, Lydgate's sophisticated appearance and aristocratic heritage are symbols of the gentility she envisions for herself. The expectations generate the meticulous strategems that she prepares for Lydgate.

At the beginning of Chater Twenty-Seven Eliot constructs an analogy between the circle of events around one's consciousness
and the concentric circles that appear around a candle:

Your pier-glass or extensive surface of polished steel made to be rubbed by a housemaid, will be minutely and multitudinously scratched in all directions; but place now against it a lighted candle as a center of illumination, and lo! the scratches will seem to arrange themselves in a fine series of concentric circles round that little sun. . . . These things are a parable. The scratches are events, and the candle is the egoism of any person. . . .

[M. 194-95]

Eliot's image also suggests another carefully arranged series of concentric circles — a spider's web. The social events are arranged by the spider (Rosamund) to ensnare a bedazzled moth. As a product of parental and societal conditioning Rosamund functions as an agent for the "wider public life" that will have a drastic influence on Lydgate.

This conflict within Lydgate originates in the socio-economic contingencies that are inherent in this romantic involvement. Like Pip, Lydgate succumbs to a love for a woman who demands certain economic standards and social refinements. Estella and Rosamund have both been socialized in such a manner that their emotional sensibilities are informed by certain worldly considerations. When Lydgate succumbs to Rosamund, he unknowingly commits himself to the requisite variables of this socio-economic definition. The character of a Lydgate or a Rosamund is thus subject to external influences which inform whatever instinctive qualities the individual may possess. Eliot's attitude tempers the reader's moral judgement of character with the realization that domestic
and social conditioning has largely determined individual behavior:

character is not cut in marble -- it is not something solid and unalterable. It is something living and changing, and it may become diseased as bodies do, for character too is a process and an unfolding.

[M. 538]

The relationships of Dorothea Brooke are the most vivid illustrations of a social environment distorting and frustrating individual desire. Within the social context of the novel, Dorothea's repressed condition is not especially unique. The general passivity of Dorothea's passionate longings is not as chilling as that of Dicken's Estella or Louisa. However, Dorothea has distilled her emotional identity into an altruistic role as public benefactor and a sacrificial servitude to Casaubon. Her abstracted spirituality is one of few passionate indulgences permitted in her particular social milieu. A crucial consideration, and one to be studied in greater detail in reference to Miriam Leivers and Sue Bridehead, involves the fact that Dorothea pledges herself to a stringent spirituality that becomes self-destructive. George Eliot emphasizes Dorothea's ascetic suppression of sensuous indulgences in the initial descriptions of her:

Riding was an indulgence which she allowed herself in spite of conscientious qualms; she felt that she enjoyed it in a pagan sensuous way, and always looked forward to renouncing it.

[M. 7]

Dorothea's vitality is systematically displaced so that she expresses it by looking forward to renouncing sensuous experiences. Her energies are channeled into a self-suppressive
zeal that denies vital primary desires. When Naumann contrasts the sensuous perfection of a statue to Dorothea's stark asceticism, he alludes to her repressive spiritualism as a beauty with "the consciousness of Christian centuries in its bosom." [M. 140]

A few minutes later Naumann cogently summarizes Dorothea as a "sort of Christian Antigone -- sensuous force controlled by spiritual passion". [M. 141]

This delicate balance is eventually upset when Dorothea realizes a genuine emotional longing for Ladislaw. This passion transgresses the socially approved channels of feeling which she had carefully adhered to previously. Her union with Ladislaw promises to be a fulfilling one because she satisfied her individual desires rather than the socially determined ones that had led her to Casaubon. Her initial attitude towards Casaubon had been a submissive one which exalted him to god-like status:

> the really delightful marriage must be that where your husband was a sort of father, and could teach you even Hebrew, if you wished it.

[M. 8]

Like other parental "husbands" discussed in this thesis, such as Bounderby and Phillotson, Casaubon is all too ready to assume the role of the Hebrew Fathers. Dorothea is easy prey for his desperate egoism. Eliot ironically recalls this image in Dorothea's plea to Casaubon:

> could I not read Latin and Greek aloud to you, as Milton's daughters did to their father, without understanding what they read?

[M. 47]
Had Dorothea reflected on the conflicts between Milton and his daughters she might have tempered her enthusiasm to serve a husband blinded by his own insecurities.

Dorothea's initial subjection to Casaubon is generated from her own naiveté as well as his arrogance. She has been socialized to fulfill a variety of feminine roles but is unaware of primary needs which marriage to Casaubon could never satisfy. The conventional attitudes that have been instrumental in foisting this fraudulent self-image are those which define and regulate her union with Casaubon. The social institutions and their agents react with varying degrees of unrest when she seeks individual fulfillment in a relationship with Ladislaw that is stigmatized by convention and Casaubon's legal codicil. Eliot here indirectly criticizes the arbitrary social laws that collectively determine the relative morality of individual experience. The legality and morality of Dorothea's marriage to Casaubon were outwardly indisputable. What Eliot suggests, and what Hardy and Lawrence proclaimed more emphatically, is that individual experience rather than an external set of norms defines the morality of a given relationship. The next chapter of the thesis explores the expression of this coercion of individual desire in the thematic structures of *Jude the Obscure* and *Sons and Lovers*. 
FOOTNOTES


3 Leavis, p. 279.

4 Williams, p. 44.


7 Van Ghent, p. 158.

8 Van Ghent, p. 165.


10 Leavis, p. 274.

11 Leavis, p. 278.

12 Charles Dickens, Hard Times (New York: Norton, 1966), p. 3. All subsequent quotes are from this edition.

13 Williams, p. 11.

14 Wagenknecht, p. 501.

15 Williams, p. 12.
16 George Eliot, Middlemarch (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1956), p. 3. All subsequent quotes are from this edition.

17 Wagenknecht, p. 326.

18 Wagenknecht, p. 329.

19 Karl, p. 142.

20 Karl, p. 152.
CHAPTER 2

The second and third chapters of the thesis have two broad objectives. The first is to locate the thematic similarities between *Jude the Obscure* and *Sons and Lovers* and the works of Dickens and Eliot discussed in the first chapter. In the first chapter I attempted to identify how Dickens and Eliot portray different dimensions of social conditioning which endanger individual freedom. The tone of each of these two novels suggests that Hardy and Lawrence also mistrust the encroachment of institutionalized dogma on the developing consciousness. The specific social conventions and ideologies that stifle Dickens' and Eliot's characters also threaten the freedom of the protagonists in *Jude the Obscure* and *Sons and Lovers*. Perhaps Lawrence's comments are the most cogent appraisal of these central thematic concerns. Although writing specifically of Hardy's novels, Lawrence also reflects the attitudes of Dickens and Eliot:

... the division of a man against himself in such a way: first: that he is a member of a community, and must, upon his honour, in no way move to disintegrate the community, either in its moral or its practical form; second, that the convention of the community is a prison to his natural, individual desire, a desire that compels him, whether he feel justified or not, to break the bounds of the community, lands him outside the pole, there to stand alone, and say: "I was right, my desire was real and inevitable; if I was to be myself I must fulfill it, convention or no convention ... "

- 57 -
Jude Fawley is initially frustrated by the "practical form" of his community. His intellectual aspirations are confounded by the socio-economic contingencies that plague him throughout the novel. From his earliest struggles with Latin he is constantly oppressed until he finally acknowledges the impossibility of achieving his goal:

It was next to impossible that a man reading on his own system, however widely and thoroughly, even over the prolonged period of ten years, should be able to compete with those who had passed their lives under trained teachers and had worked to ordained lines. [J. O. 123]

Jude also computes the financial burden involved in such a task (fifteen years' savings) and concludes the "the situation was hopeless." [J. O. 123]

These very practical considerations were not a part of Jude's boyhood dreams. Like Dr. Lydgate, Jude focuses on some distant achievement and not on the social or professional realities which will ultimately prevent the achievement. Sue's more realistic, and somewhat cynical, attitude reflects the true state of affairs:

You are one of the very men Christminster was intended for when the colleges were founded; a man with a passion for learning, but no money, or opportunity, or friends. But you were elbowed off the pavement by the millionaire's sons. [J. O. 158]

Although a rather simplistic formula, Sue's theory is the one which Jude finally resigns himself to:

There are schemes afoot for making the university less exclusive, and extending its influence. I don't know much about it. And it is too late, too late for me. [J. O. 413]

Jude's academic aspirations are another manifestation of the social realism in Jude the Obscure. It was at the particular moment in English
history portrayed in the novel that educational horizons were widening for the working classes. Unfortunately, academic mobility is not available to Jude although he has the intellectual passion and potential. In this sense, Jude's predicament is similar to that of Paul Morel. Both men are exposed to the available intellectual resources. As Frank Kermode has suggested, the "regional working class people felt they had a right to national and international culture."\(^2\) Although similarly mired in social and sexual conflicts, Paul Morel, unlike Jude, seems to have achieved the possibility of fulfilling these aspirations at the end of *Sons and Lovers*.

There is an important thematic connection between Jude's intellectual, ecclesiastical, and sexual frustrations. The conflicts of each of these spheres of human experience are socially generated. The different dimensions of Jude's struggles are expressed through a confrontation with repressive institutions and conventions. Sue Bridehead alludes to these forces in a significant passage which emphasizes the general theme of social repression:

Jude listened "No -- they are not talking of us," he said. "They are two clergymen of different views arguing about the eastward position. Good God -- the eastward position, and all creation groaning!" Then another silence, till she was seized with another uncontrollable fit of grief. 'There is something external to us which says, "You shan't." First it said, "You shan't learn!" Then it said, "You shan't labour!" Now it says, "You shan't love!"'

[J. O. 349]

The text of *Jude the Obscure* carefully locates the Victorian prejudices which constitute the quality of the "something external" which Sue refers to. The rigid obstacles confronting Jude and Sue are a social product and not a cosmic coercion. Hardy's social vision reflects
an inversion of the conventional comic formula. The tone of Jude the Obscure suggests a plea, not for the individual's adaptation to society, but for the radical alteration of a society which destroys the individual. Jude the Obscure is a grim indictment of those forces in society which destroy individual desire. In all facets of Jude's aspirations he is stifled by these forces. Even his artistic predilections are antithetical to the prevailing norms:

The deadly animosity of contemporary logic and vision towards so much of what he held in reverence was not yet revealed to him.

[J. O. 91]
The prevailing cultural establishment ruthlessly condemns individuals such as Jude who transgress its laws. This central truth is amplified by Jude's intellectual, religious, and sexual experiences.

Frederick Karl discusses this particular thematic affinity between Dickens and Hardy:

Hardy, like Dickens in his later novels, attempted to create a society in which the extremist, what Dostoevsky considered the criminal and later French novelists the rebel, clashed with the social norm.³

Hardy takes this theme and develops it through the experiences of Jude Fawley. Karl suggests that this theme appears in Hardy's novels generally:

Often, the conflict in Hardy protagonists is between social convention, which restricts, and the individual need to be free, which can never be fulfilled in the terms the individual expects.⁴

While Karl's comments are applicable to Hardy's novels in a strictly social sense, they also suggest the psychosexual ramifications of this conflict. Sue Bridgehead alludes to the "something external" which prevents learning, labour, and love. The repression of individual desire is a fundamental postulate of psychological theories of human society.
Freud states that

the two processes of individual and of cultural development
must stand in hostile opposition to each other and mutually
dispute the ground.\textsuperscript{5}

This "opposition" generates the dramatic conflict in \textit{Jude the Obscure},
but it is also the genesis of the psychological conflicts and anxieties.

The portrayal of these subjective conflicts within the individual
demands a close consideration of Hardy's psychological realism. The
prevailing moral and social norms are internalized by the individual so
that any departure from those norms is accompanied not only by external
social censure but by internal guilt as well. Sue Bridehead is the
most striking exemplification of this syndrome. Although she professes
a conscious rejection of the prevailing moral and social doctrine, she
has so completely internalized that doctrine that it re-asserts itself
in an alarming array of neurotic symptoms. Sue has been socially
conditioned to such a degree that, in spite of her revolutionary
spirit and theory, her psychological identity remains a product of
that conditioning.

This consideration of character development emphasizes the importance
of the realistic social context of \textit{Jude the Obscure}. Hardy, like
George Eliot, portrays the individual private consciousness as a product
of the "wider public life." Trilling's comments, quoted earlier, that
"the culture suffuses the remotest parts of the individual mind" and
that the "surrogates of culture are established in the mind itself," are
particularly applicable to the psychological anxieties of Sue Bridehead.
Sue denies that the repressive "surrogates of culture" inhibit her individual
desires. In one of her earliest geographical and psychological excursions
with Jude Sue boldly asserts her independence:

"I rather like this," said Sue, while their entertainers were clearing away the dishes. "Outside all laws except gravitation and germination . . . ." I crave to get back to the life of my infancy and its freedom." 

[J. O. 145]

However, in spite of this rebellious spirit, Sue remains within the grasp of the repressive laws she outwardly rejects. Immediately after her comments quoted above, Jude contradicts Sue with a statement that tragically anticipates her future neurotic anxieties:

"You only think you like it: you don't: You are quite a product of civilization."

[J. O. 145]

Sue's predicament is not portrayed as being a unique situation in the novel. Hardy has carefully structured the novel to depict all dimensions of repressive social conventions.

Hardy chronicles the aborted career of Phillotson to prefigure Jude's endeavours which are similarly frustrated by socio-economic contingencies. However, aside from his academic aspirations, Phillotson suffers from the pervasive moral prejudices which plague the characters in Jude the Obscure. One particular manifestation of this social prejudice is portrayed within Hardy's more ironic focus.

Phillotson, by granting Sue her freedom from their mutually frustrating marriage, manifests a reasonable benevolence. However, in spite of his enlightened motives, he is ruthlessly condemned by the arbitrary social laws which refute the particular circumstances of the case:

"They have requested me to send in my resignation on account of my scandalous conduct in giving my tortured wife her liberty -- or, as they call it, condoning her adultery."

[J. O. 257]
Those respectable citizens who damn Phillotson function as agents of the letter of the law and, as Jude says later, "the letter killeth." Like the conditioned products of Gradgrindery, these people judge Phillotson according to the indisputable facts of the case. Any compassionate interpretation of the facts that would temper or refute this judgement is irrelevant to them.

It is interesting to consider from what quarters a sympathetic response is elicited:

All the respectable inhabitants and well-to-do natives of the town were against Phillotson to a man. But somewhat to his surprise, some dozen or more champions rose up in his defence as from the ground.

Hardy contrasts the spontaneous benevolence of people who "rose up . . . as from the ground" with the emotional sterility of the "respectable" citizens. This contrast emphasizes the difference between natural and socially conditioned responses.

Dickens uses the same contrast in *Hard Times* for much the same purposes. The motley group that rises to Phillotson's defence is as startling a group as Slearey's circus people. Hardy catalogues this group in an "epic" list that includes

- two cheapjacks, a shooting gallery proprietor and the ladies who loaded the gun, a pair of boxing masters, a steam-roundabout manager, two travelling broommakers, who called themselves widows, a gingerbread-stall-keeper, a swing-boat owner, and a "test-your-strength" man.

Dickens' fiction is also recalled by the ensuing mock epic battle between these travellers and the respectable townsmen.

Jude and Sue also feel the effects of this kind of open social chastisement. Although their most severe problems are psycho-sexual,
Hardy reinforces the general theme of social repression through several scenes of open confrontation. Sue is particularly sensitive to the artificial roles that individuals are condemned to. The social conflicts experienced by Sue and Jude illustrate one of her early prophetic statements:

"I have been thinking", she continued still in the tone of one brimful of feeling, "that the social moulds civilization fits us into have no more relation to our actual shapes than the conventional shapes of the constellations have to the real star patterns."

[J. O. 214]

Like Louisa Gradgrind, Estella, and Dorothea Brooke, Sue Bridehead is conditioned into a tragically misshapen "social mould." Each of these women, through mistaken concepts of duty or obligation, resigns herself to a sacrificial marriage. Each fails to consider how her marriage denies certain emotional needs that have been dormant or actively suppressed. Marriage, because of its legal finality and traditional sanctity, is the most obvious social institution governing the lives of Sue and Jude. However, there are several other active social forces that frustrate Jude.

Even Jude's career as a "monumental" mason is restricted and ultimately curtailed by social prejudice. Hardy realistically chronicles Jude's career as a mason, but enhances his thematic concerns with metaphorical allusions. Jude's work is, at one point, an attempt to restore "crumbling institutions." At this time Jude is struggling against the repressive letter of social law. Hardy objectifies this struggle in the physically correlative work in stone:

A portion, crumbled by damp, required renewal, and when this had been done, and the whole cleansed, he began to renew the lettering.

[J. O. 310]
Jude is engaged in a lifelong struggle to renew and cleanse the lettering of social law that is his constant adversary. But as Jude prophetically comments late in the book, "the letter killeth." The pathos evoked by Jude's failure and death is reinforced by this acknowledgement of the lethal quality of social law.

Jude is similarly frustrated on a realistic social level. He is expelled from the church where he had been restoring the "letters" of the Commandments. His struggles at restoration are similarly frustrating on a realistic level. Jude comments on his expulsion from the church and his dismissal from the job of restoring the "letters" of the Commandments:

"I can't bear that they, and everybody, should think people wicked because they may have chosen to live their own way! It is really these opinions that make the best intentioned people reckless and actually become immoral!"

[J. O. 313]

The relentless social persecution of Jude continues until even the seemingly enlightened "Artizan's Mutual Improvement Society" rejects him. These experiences are of thematic significance in that they illustrate how a wide range of social groups and agencies function as the enforcers of a repressive social code. These various manifestations of societal repression amplify the dominant thematic chord of Jude the Obscure. Those who deviate from conventional behavioral or ethical standards suffer swift punishment and, often, irremediable exile.

Those who would survive and profit from the social realities must remain in subjection to them. Even the seemingly indestructible Arabella acknowledges the inflexibility of the social structure. She wisely counsels Phillotson on the existing social order and its ultimate
power over Sue's rebellious tendencies:

She'd have come round in time. We all do! Custom does it . . . . There's nothing like bondage and a stone-deaf taskmaster for taming us women. Besides, you've got the laws on your side. [J. O. 329]

Arabella herself operates safely within the social laws by manipulating them to her own ends. Her durability recalls other feminist champions like the Wife of Bath and Moll Flanders. Arabella functions as a contrast to the protagonists who openly refute existing standards and are punished for these transgressions. D. H. Lawrence comments on the thematic centrality of these conflicts in Hardy's novels:

This is the theme of novel after novel: remain quite within the convention, and you are good, safe, and happy in the long run, though you never had the vivid pang of sympathy on your side: or, on the other hand, be passionate, individual, wilfull you will find the security of the convention a walled prison, you will escape, and you will die, either of your own lack of strength to bear the isolation and the exposure or by direct revenge from the community, or from both.6

Lawrence omits one final dimension of the punishment exacted by the social authorities. Sue Bridehead suffers not only "isolation" and "direct revenge", but also the guilt and anxiety generated by the social laws she has internalized. At the beginning of the novel she had defended her individual needs and independent identity. However, by the end of the novel she succumbs to the conventional values that have frustrated Jude and herself. Her final guilt and anxiety are symptomatic of the final triumphant assertion of the social dogma internalized with her. No longer criticizing the laws that constrain her, Sue finally resigns herself to a self-incriminating cosmic interpretation of her experiences:

"We must conform!" she said mournfully. "All the ancient wrath of the Power above us has veen vented upon us. His
poor creatures, and we must submit. There is no choice. We must. It is no use fighting against God."

[J. O. 354]

Sue's statement suggests a stoical resignation: "we must submit;" and a determinism: "there is no choice. We must." However Jude and I would suggest Hardy, are insistent upon the social rather than the cosmic generation of these conditions:

"it is only against men and senseless circumstances," said Jude.

[J. O. 354]

The "senseless circumstance" of Jude the Obscure is directly connected to the social repression portrayed by Dickens and Eliot. Jude's career has several interesting similarities with those of two particular characters in Middlemarch. Both Fred Vincy and Will Ladislaw aspire to a freedom from the paths more or less preordained for them by birth, class, and domestic circumstances. Although the two men in Middlemarch are of a higher socio-economic station than Jude, they suffer the same kind of frustrations. Fred Vincy is burdened by the expectations of parents who would see him safely posing as a minister of the church. His chosen vocation under Caleb Garth, although challenging and fulfilling, is criticized because it does not complement his social heritage.

In the same sense Jude's aspirations are criticized because they do not conform with those that are deemed appropriate for a man of his humble origins. He is advised by the esteemed scholar to remain in the station prescribed for him by birth. Jude is discouraged from improving his station in life as Fred is discouraged from descending below his.

The attitudes towards Jude reflect a social prejudice reminiscent of that directed towards Ladislaw. Ladislaw's position in Middlemarch
is clouded by his dubious origins and unconventional life style. Like Jude, he elicits mistrust, scorn, and hostility from people with no knowledge of his moral or intellectual worth. Like Jude, he undertakes a variety of endeavours without the financial security to guarantee their realization.

The socio-economic considerations which largely determine Jude's failure are a major aspect of Hardy's social criticism. His concerns with psychological and sexual identity are directly related to the general social criticism. The final portion of this thesis is a discussion of the psycho-sexual themes of Jude the Obscure and Sons and Lovers. However, before that discussion I want to analyze some of the more general social conflicts in Sons and Lovers. Through this analysis of Sons and Lovers I hope to establish its relevance to the thesis by comparing Lawrence's social criticism to that of Dickens, Eliot, and Hardy, and to correlate the social and domestic conflicts with the psycho-sexual conflicts in the novel.

The relationship of the individual and what Trilling calls a "social totality" is often one of conflict and mutual mistrust. Often dramatic conflict is enacted between an individual and one or more other characters who function as the agents for the social totality. Mothers, fathers, and teachers personify the repressive elements within the Victorian social structure. Lawrence shares Dickens' distrust of those social institutions and customs which repress the individual. Although his central concerns are with psycho-sexual conflicts, Lawrence locates them within a specific social context. Sexual repression is, for Lawrence, one manifestation of a broader cultural repression. In a letter to
A. D. McLeod (Oct. 27, 1913) Lawrence bluntly expresses his deep mistrust of the "social totality":

I am sure every man feels first, that he is a servant -- be it martyr or what, of society . . .

Sons and Lovers is a realistic depiction of a particular social environment that enslaves its inhabitants.

Sons and Lovers reflects a particular moment in English social history when the massive industrialization was leading young men from country homes and traditions to a more modern urban life style. The commercial and educational opportunities for working class youth had never been so promising. Young men such as William and Paul Morel could anticipate a socio-economic mobility never available to working class youth before.

However, certain aspects of their domestic and social environments restrict their intellectual and psychological growth. The obligations and pressures placed upon the young Morels by family are the primary sources of anxiety. Lawrence intensifies the examination of parental and societal repression of the young which Dickens and Eliot had initiated. Van Ghent's hypothesis that parental and societal crimes are inseparable is as applicable to Sons and Lovers as to Great Expectations. The characters of the two mothers, Mrs. Morel and Mrs. Leivers, and the values and prejudices they personify are the most insistent illustrations of this theme.

The meticulous description of the Morel household is not merely significant as a realistic literary convention. The opening chapters carefully define the relationships that determine Paul Morel's identity and expectations.
Mrs. Morel, bitterly disappointed with her own lot in life, foists her aspirations and hopes upon her sons. Her own life has been marred by a marriage to someone she feels is intellectually and socially far beneath the level befitting a husband of hers. Like Miss Havisham and Magwitch, Mrs. Morel manipulates her children so they may achieve what she feels was unjustly denied her. She is willing to suffer through her own miseries if she can vicariously experience the achievements of her children:

The world seemed a dreary place, where nothing else would happen for her -- at least until William grew up. 

The sons are burdened with the responsibility of their own destinies, and indirectly, their mother's also. Their individual identities and inclinations are constantly compromised by the intermingling of their mother's expectations:

She loved him so much! More than that, she hoped in him so much. Almost she lived by him. [S. L. 72]

Mrs. Morel's expectations are for the most part socio-economic; but they are coupled with a prejudice against certain instinctive desires and pleasures personified by her husband. She struggles to repress these aspects of her sons' identities. This influence generates a portion of the psychological and sexual confusion in Paul especially. Walter Morel, whom she married for his vitality (so full of colour and animation), is eventually regarded as the very antithesis of what she wishes her sons to be. Frank Kermode discusses the destructive atmosphere of this domestic arrangement wherein

The old miner left the moulding of his children to his wife, who turned the boys into the kind of husband she herself wanted -- docile, well under her thumb.
Only at the end of the novel does Paul achieve an independent, integrated identity which promises a re-assertion of the instinctive energies his mother had denied him. If one reconsiders the opening chapters of the novel one can locate Lawrence's tolerant attitude towards the miner. Lawrence defines the genuine vitality of the miner as a foil to Mrs. Morel's cultural pretensions:

Therefore the dusky, golden softness of this man's sensuous flame of life, that flowed off his flesh like the flame off a candle, not baffled and gripped into incandescence by thought and spirit as her life was, seemed to her something wonderful, beyond her.

[S. L. 18]

Inherent in Paul's struggle for identity is not only a rejection of the mother's social aspirations, but an assertion of his own "sensuous flame of life."

Lawrence, as Dickens did in *Hard Times*, establishes a central contrast between the stifled behavior of a socialized automaton and the life that is lived freely and instinctively. Paul Morel seeks an identity that will free him from the emotional sterility that characterizes other notable Lawrencian figures. Clifford Chatterley and Gerald Crich are two examples that come to mind immediately. Thus, Paul Morel, although a distinct, highly individualized character, is typical of young men who Lawrence thought were threatened by excessive social repression. In a discussion of Lawrence's central concerns, G. S. Fraser writes:

His characters react toward or against each other instinctively, without argument, as animals and children so surface 'attitude' or 'personality' he thought of as pose or convention; he looked for the deep drives, hated invalids and cripples in whom these drives have gone sick: romanticized gamekeepers, miners, all kinds of healthy and inarticulate men in whom the expression of emotional and physical need is direct.9
Paul Morel's "deep drives" are repressed by his mother's social and commercial expectations and Miriam's idealized spirituality. His mother defines fulfillment in purely socio-economic terms which preclude an intimacy with Paul's original friends or physical environment. Paul endures the commercial world only out of financial expediency and a feeling of obligation for his mother's desires:

Then he looked wistfully out of the window. Already he was a prisoner of industrialism . . . . Already his heat went down. He was being taken into bondage. His freedom in the beloved home valley was going now . . . And he seemed to feel the business world, with its regular system of values, and its impersonality, and he dreaded it.  

[S. L. 113-16]

However, Mrs. Morel's vision is not darkened by such clouds for

Now she had two sons in the world. She could think of two places, great centres of industry, and feel that she had put a man into each of them, that these men would work out what she wanted; they were derived from her, they were of her, and their works also would be hers.  

[S. L. 127]

Mrs. Morel remains totally absorbed in her sons, even when her domination of them threatens their individual identity. One must look back to Miss Havisham and Mr. Gradgrind to find parental figures as ruthlessly dominating as Mrs. Morel. Lawrence carefully tempers his direct criticisms of her but there is no mistaking her aggressive possessiveness:

There was much to come out of him. Life for her was rich with promise. She was to see herself fulfilled . . . all his work was hers.  

[S. L. 227]

This method and function of character development in Sons and Lovers are similar to character portrayal in other realistic English novels. Dickens in Hard Times and Butler in The Way of All Flesh portray parental figures who personify some of the more dangerously repressive attitudes
of Victorian society. In this sense *Sons and Lovers* can be located in not only the realistic tradition in English fiction but also in the tradition of social criticism in the English novel. Lawrence became more insistent in his criticism of Victorian attitudes in later novels. His own comments on *Lady Chatterley's Lover* are a more strident denunciation of several social ills also portrayed in *Sons and Lovers*:

But in public, in the social world, the young are still entirely under the shadow of the grey elderly ones. The grey elderly ones belong to the last century, the eunuch century, the century of the mealy-mouthed lie, the century that has tried to destroy humanity, the nineteenth century.

In Lawrence's fiction, the opposition of old and young is often another manifestation of the broader opposition of social convention and individual desire. In *Sons and Lovers* all of the young characters remain, to a greater or lesser degree, in subjection to parental authority or internalized parental values. Mrs. Morel is the dominant influence on Paul. However, inherent in her expectations, is an attitude that threatens Paul's social and sexual identity. Mrs. Morel expects Paul to associate with and eventually marry the proper kind of woman who will embellish his economic achievements:

She frankly wanted him to climb into the middle class, a thing not very difficult, she knew. And she wanted him in the end to marry a lady.

[S. L. 314]

His mother's expectations are constantly nagging at Paul. His relationship with Miriam compounds his confusion. At a time when he desperately needs financial and social independence he is burdened with the anxious conflicts generated by these relationships. Often the everyday miseries of finances are added to his problems. His birthday
is one cogent illustration of his predicament. The gift of the paints from the girls at the office should have been a celebration stimulating his artistic potential. However the occasion is suffocated by petty contingencies:

... the house was in trouble. Arthur was just going to be married. His mother was not well. His father, getting an old man, and lame from his accidents, was given a paltry poor job. Miriam was an eternal reproach. He felt he owed himself to her, yet could not give himself. The house, moreover, needed his support. He was pulled in all directions.

[S. L. 327]

Lawrence manifests a penetrating understanding of the psychological damage wrought by everyday financial concerns. Paul's predicament is a realistic assessment of the crucial influence of economic contingencies on an individual. Like Lydgate and Jude, Paul is never truly free to define or assert his individuality as long as he is mired in financial problems.

Lawrence indirectly attacks the system that is so rigidly regulated against an individual. He extends his focus to include other dimensions of the social structure which similarly frustrate young men such as Paul. Paul's distaste for his job is a reflection of his more general rejection of the attitudes and values that prevailed throughout his social environment. Paul's escape from his mother and his job are concomitant with a departure from the traditional values that had been instilled in him:

Religion was fading into the background. He had shovelled away all the beliefs that would hamper him, had cleared the ground, and come more or less to the bedrock of belief that one should feel inside oneself for right and wrong, and should have the patience to gradually realize one's God.

[S. L. 313]
Paul's rebellion, like Stephen Daedelus', is against the constraining nets of home, country, and convention which prevent free flight. Paul's struggles are against a social totality, not individual tyrants.

One cannot ignore the social context of *Sons and Lovers*. The conflicts reflect a general interest in the social problems of Victorian England; an interest also shared by Dickens, Eliot, and Hardy. I have attempted to locate in *Jude the Obscure* and *Sons and Lovers* those criticisms of social institutions and conventions which were similarly manifested in the novels of Dickens and Eliot. The repressive aspects of Victorian society are illustrated in further dimensions of human experience. I have reserved two of these crucial considerations for the final chapter of this thesis. In the third chapter my textual analysis focuses on the social conditioning of romantic relationships and individual sexual identity in *Jude the Obscure*, and *Sons and Lovers*. 
FOOTNOTES


4 Karl, p. 23.


8 Kermode, p. 8.


CHAPTER 3

The first two chapters of the thesis delineated the source and structure of social repression. The problems of individual growth within a prejudiced social or professional institution generated the conflicts and narrative structures of the novels. This final chapter also considers the social determination of human identity and behaviour; particularly the sexual dimensions of human experience.

I contend that the sexual and psychological realism of *Jude the Obscure* and *Sons and Lovers* is a further expression of the more general social themes located in the fiction of Dickens and Eliot. The social institutions and conventions which regulate the behaviour and attitudes of Dickens' characters are informed by certain values and moral presuppositions. These values determine the arbitrary moral precepts which also influence sexual identity and behavior. In *Jude the Obscure* and *Sons and Lovers*, Hardy and Lawrence realistically portray the repressive effects of these moral assumptions and the subsequent conflicts between the social agents and agencies who endorse them and those individuals who deviate from them. The central dramatic conflicts of *Jude the Obscure* and *Sons and Lovers* are between the collective law or custom and the individual desire. In some cases, notably Sue Bridehead, the
conflict is an introspective one between her desires and the social laws she has internalized. The sexual realism of both novels amplifies the central thematic considerations of the other novels studied in this thesis. Once again parental and social authority regulates and judges individual desire.

This examination of sexuality in the two novels includes the novelists' criticisms of the single most repressive institution which regulates sexual experience -- marriage. Hardy and Lawrence investigate the inflexible social dogmatism which can make marriage a repressive, destructive institution.

The sexual realism in both novels is concerned more with the morals of the society than the manners which were the major consideration of earlier English novelists. Hardy and Lawrence portray the sexual impulse and its modification and displacement by those agents and agencies representing the prevailing ethical assumptions. My discussion of the sexual themes in the two novels relates directly to the social themes identified in the novels of Dickens and Eliot, because the sexual repression of the individual is another aspect of social repression. In a discussion of Lawrence's central themes Betsky alludes to these correlative themes:

the individual's potency in the sexual relation reflects directly his potency as a communal being, with a function and a place in his community and his larger society.1

The realistic portrayal of sexual identities and relationships reflects not only thematic considerations but certain formal innovations. Often the conflicts are introspective and dramatic action is symptomatic or symbolic. Paul's antagonism towards Clara, for example, is not generated
by their experience of each other. It is a symptom or a projection of Paul's guilty feelings about what he thinks is an illicit, unethical indulgence on his part.

A second aspect of the sexual conflicts emerges from the nature of the contending forces. Often, individual desire is pitted against elements within the same individual consciousness. The conflict is manifested in feelings of guilt and anxiety. In this case the social dogma has permeated the individual consciousness through parental or institutional conditioning.

Similarly the resolution of these conflicts is not as clearly defined as those of more traditional novels. There is certainly no comic resolution at the end of either novel even though Jude and Paul achieve a significant degree of self-realization. Both protagonists recognize the nature and location of the forces that have frustrated them. Both acknowledge the innocent motives behind their own behavior in spite of external censure or pressure. In neither novel, however, is there any significant achievement of the freedom and fulfillment both characters aspire to. Certainly Paul Morel's final resolution is a promising one but it is only a promise. We are reminded of Lawrence's comments on Hardy's fiction:

In the long run, the State, the Community, the established form of life remained, remained intact and impregnable; Jude and Sue venture beyond and against the "established form of life." Jude is ground down by a conglomeration of circumstances from without; Sue is subdued by the pangs of guilt from within. Paul Morel's survival is more hopeful, but the reader must not mistake Paul's freedom for fulfillment. Lawrence portrays Paul at the end of the novel in a
condition comparable to that of Stephen Dedalus at the end of Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. Both young men have taken the final step of liberation. The novelists have chronicled the social restraints the protagonists have escaped from, but we can only guess at the direction of their flight.

The sexual experiences of Jude and Paul are significant aspects of their struggle for liberation. Sexual behavior was more rigidly enforced than any other dimension of human desire in Victorian England. Dickens and Eliot portray similar conflicts but in non-sexual dimensions of human experience. I intend to show how the sexual relationships depicted by Hardy and Lawrence amplify Dickens' indictment of Victorian attitudes. Houghton suggests:

The whole attitude is exactly what we call Romantic, and it was, in fact, a direct inheritance from Romanticism: partly from its naturalism, which found the instincts good and appealed to the feelings or the heart as the supreme guide to conduct and wisdom; partly from its idealism, whether Platonic or chivalric. The study of Victorian love is the study of how this tradition, embodied mainly in the works of Rousseau, Shelly, and George Sand, was domesticated under the powerful influence of Evangelical and family sentiment ....

The two novels portray young protagonists whose sexuality emerges "under the powerful influence of Evangelical and family sentiment". Although the church exerts only an indirect influence on most characters in the novels, there is a rigid residue of religious dogma that defines the moral atmosphere of both novels.

A considerable degree of religious enthusiasm has been displaced into a sexually repressive spirituality. This spirituality is most clearly personified in Sue Bridehead and Miriam Leivers. The psychological
syndrome is a familiar one. We have considered how Estella, Louisa, and Dorothea displace natural desires and emotions into self-destructive channels. In *Jude the Obscure* and *Sons and Lovers*, however, the theme is expressed in explicit sexual terms. In these two novels Hardy and Lawrence depict the genesis, quality, and enforcement of the prevailing sexual conventions. The structure of each novel chronicles the protagonist's recognition and rejection of these values. Houghton has delineated this attitude in the *Victorian Frame of Mind* and his discussion is an indispensible introduction to the social context of both novels:

> He was to consider nice women (like his sister and his mother, like his future bride) as creatures more like angels than human beings — an image wonderfully calculated not only to dissociate love from sex, but to turn love into worship, and worship of purity.⁴

This attitude is reflected by the sexual confusion suffered by Jude and Paul when they attempt to achieve a harmony with the prevailing sexual code. Parents, parental figures, teachers, and even the objects of their desires constantly remind Jude and Paul of the strict moral laws governing sexual experience. The structures of the relationships in both novels reflect Houghton's hypothesis. Sue Bridehead and Miriam Leivers are the "nice women" elevated to angelic status and therefore untouchable. Inherent in the characterization of female stereotypes is a polarity based on this moral code. Arabella and Clara are the earthy, physical counterparts to the highly spiritual Sue and Miriam, respectively.

Jude's initial idealization of Sue is carefully dissociated from his sexual drive. Unlike his purely physical attraction to Arabella, he sees Sue almost as a "divinity" and "a good angel." Sue's physical
reality has been similarly refined out of even her own consciousness. Jude initially subscribes to this spiritualized idealization of Sue's identity:

living largely in vivid imaginings, so ethereal a creature that her spirit could be seen trembling through her limbs, he felt heartily ashamed of his earthiness in spending the hours he had spent in Arabella's company.

[J. O. 195]

Jude's shame typifies the Victorian condemnation of instinctive physical indulgences as an end in themselves. What follows in the novel is Jude's progressive rejection of these arbitrary moral laws. For the rest of his days Jude is immersed in a struggle to assert his individual desires amidst the influences of the collective social conventions. He never really escapes the clutches of these cultural attitudes that so rigidly dichotomize the "higher" and "lower" desires. Sue's neurotic frigidity is a product of socially generated sexual repression. However, because Jude has been influenced by the same repressive forces he doesn't recognize her predicament. He thinks that their sexual frustration is attributable solely to his "lower", and therefore immoral, desires:

"But you, Sue, are such a phantasmal, bodiless creature, one who -- if you'll allow me to say it -- has so little animal passion in you, that you can act upon reason in the matter, when we poor unfortunate witches of grosser substance can't."

[J. O. 268]

Throughout the novel Jude aspires to repress his "animal passions" to satisfy the moral requisites of various institutions. Jude aspires to first intellectual and then ecclesiastical summits which, by definition, tower above those mortals of "grosser substance." Hardy's point of view emphasizes the arbitrary nature of these moral conventions. Jude's
innocent, honest love for Sue is adulterous and sinful according to the prevailing social and moral laws. Consequently, Hardy refutes any doctrine that would so judge their relationship. He regards Jude's marriage to Arabella as being, although legally sanctioned, a far more destructive and immoral relationship. Hardy's ironic attitude is particularly incisive when he portrays Jude's impulsive excursion with Arabella after their first separation. Even though their brief tryst is sanctioned by their marriage vows, Hardy has Jude comment on the immoral atmosphere surrounding it:

Yet his lawful abandonment to the society of Arabella for twelve hours seemed instinctively a worse thing . . . . [J. O. 202]

There is no apparent solution to Jude's sexual quandary. He finds his legal partner repulsive while Sue, the genuine object of his affection, is incapable of satisfying his sexual longings. He is almost afraid to approach Sue, whose highly spiritualized identity is, as Jude says,

"... more than this earthly wretch called me deserves -- you spirit, you disembodied creature, you dear, sweet tantalizing phantom -- hardly flesh at all;" [J. O. 244]

The character of Sue is more than the personification of this spiritual idealism. Hardy complicates her character by having her espouse some of the most intellectually liberal attitudes of the time. While remaining sexually repressed by social conditioning, she nevertheless asserts her independent spirit. However she never escapes the internalized values that paralyze her sexual drive and throughout the novel is obligated to artfully rationalize her frigidity:
People say I must be cold-natured, sexless -- on account of it. But I won't have it! Some of the most passionately erotic poets have been the most self-contained in their daily lives.

[J. O. 156]

In *Sons and Lovers* Lawrence depicts a similar manifestation of this idealization of love and sexuality. In *The Novel and the Modern World* David Daiches discusses Lawrence's central concerns which re-iterate the themes I have just considered:

He is concerned always with human relationships, with the relation of the self to other selves, with the possibilities of fulfillment of personality, and with exposing all the dead formulas -- about romantic love, about friendship, about marriage, about the good life -- which can cause so much deadness or frustration, or distortion in the life of the individual.5

My discussion of *Jude the Obscure* also considered the "dead formulas" that regulated the lives of Jude and Sue. Similarly, Paul Morel suffers from repressive social conditioning which distorts his sexual identity. In this sense Paul, although a completely individualized character, represents a generation of young men sexually stifled by social conditioning:

He was like so many men of his own age. Sex had become so complicated in him that he would have denied that he could want Clara or Miriam or any woman whom he knew. Sex desire was a sort of detached thing, that did not belong to a women.

[S. L. 337]

Lawrence's focus is, at this point, not on the particular formative experiences of Paul's adolescence, but on the broad social attitudes which define and regulate sexuality. At one point Lawrence depicts Paul musing over the general permeation of this sexual frustration in the entire population. There is no evidence in the novel to suggest
that Paul was so intimate with that many young men so one can assume that the comment is an authorial interjection:

A good many of the nicest men he knew were like himself, bound in by their own virginity, which they could not break out of. They were so sensitive to their women that they would go without them forever rather than do them a hurt, an injustice.

... for a woman was like their mother, and they were full of the sense of their mother. [S. L. 341]

Lawrence's point of view depicts the domestic environments which, largely through maternal influences, confuse the sexual lives of Paul, Miriam, and even Clara Dawes. Mrs. Leivers (Miriam's mother) generates the highly spiritualized attitudes in Miriam and Paul which idealize romantic love into a complicated form of worship. The confused sexual relationship of Paul and Miriam is doomed from the very beginning, largely because of Mrs. Leivers' influence. The sexual impulses of Paul and Miriam are displaced into non-physical channels:

With Miriam he was always on the high plane of abstraction, when his natural fire of love was transmitted into the fine stream of thought. [S. L. 214]

Lawrence's remarkable psychological insights add further dimensions to their relationship. Paul's frustration manifests itself not only in his general anxiety, but also in his explosive hostility towards Miriam. Although he is similarly inhibited, he openly criticizes her excessive spirituality: "you make me so spiritual! ... and I don't want to be spiritual." The true obstacles are the repressive values that have been internalized by Miriam and himself. The dramatic conflicts between Paul and Miriam are no more than symptoms of the deeper psycho-sexual tensions they both experience. Lawrence emphasizes the
symptomatic nature of Paul's attacks against Miriam which are caused when his fretted, tortured soul, run hot by thwarted passion, jetted off these sayings like sparks from electricity. [S. L. 208]

What emerges in the novel is the general opposition, not of personalities, but of the individual impulse and the repressive dogma he or she has internalized. Paul recognizes that to a certain degree he too is inhibited by the rigid morality that he criticizes in Miriam:

I can only give friendship -- it's all I'm capable of -- it's a flaw in my makeup. [S. L. 271]

Paul gropes towards the eventual realization that the perversity is not in the sexual longings but in the unnatural suppression of them:

This about not loving her physically, bodily, was a mere perversity on his part, because he knew that she loved him. [S. L. 272]

This attitude of Paul's reflects his growing estrangement from conventional Victorian morality. He acknowledges that their love, and not necessarily marriage, legitimizes their sexual relationship. However, although he acknowledges this to himself and to her, he never really disposes of the social morality which condemns their sexual experimentation. Paul's predicament resembles Jude's in that both young men must constantly choose between what they see as their flesh and spirit. Neither can foresee any meaningful compromise between the longings for immediate physical pleasures and the spiritual or intellectual aspirations kindled within them. Paul's frustration recalls Jude's lament that the utmost he could hope for was that in a life of constant internal warfare between flesh and spirit the former might not always be victorious. [J. O. 202]
Lawrence says precisely the same. In another authorial intrusion he comments on the relativity of Miriam's rigid morality:

She believed that there were in him desires for higher things, and desires for lower, and that the desire for the higher could conquer. At any rate he should try. She forgot that her "higher" and "lower" were arbitrary.

[S. L. 280]

Miriam personifies the Victorian conscience in her response to Paul's sexual experimentation with Clara. Her reaction, which one would think would be one of jealousy, was more of a moral outrage at what she feels is a foolish, and ultimately meaningless, indulgence:

But Miriam was tortured. Paul could choose the lesser in place of the higher, she saw. He could be unfaithful to himself, unfaithful to the real, deep Paul Morel. There was a danger of his becoming frivolous, of his running after his satisfaction like any Arthur, or like his father. It made Miriam bitter that he should throw away his soul for this flippant traffic of triviality with Clara.

[S. L. 306]

Miriam reflects the Victorian doctrine that looked upon love as an inspired form of worship and dedication, not to be confused or tainted with carnal pleasures. Throughout Sons and Lovers Miriam longs to dedicate herself to a worthy man who, with her faithful inspiration, will achieve the socially designated pinnacles of success. Miriam is quite prepared to endure a variety of hardships in order to win Paul. Miriam's upbringing, largely determined by her mother's values, has conditioned her to sacrifice herself in this manner for the proper man. Even when Paul confronts her with the ultimate "test" of her fidelity -- the sexual consummation of their relationship -- she passively submits "religiously, to the sacrifice". [S. L. 347] Miriam has accepted a socially prescribed role assigned to women. In this case she is conditioned to see herself as a catalyst or inspiration.
In *Sons and Lovers* Lawrence depicts the conditioning of adolescent sexuality towards this "deification of love." Like Dickens, Lawrence thinks that a good deal of adolescent confusion is the direct result of parental manipulation. One significant perpetrator of this destructive meddling is Mrs. Leivers -- a character overlooked in most discussions of the novel. Her crucial influence on Miriam and Paul however, largely determines the quality and expression of their feelings for each other. The most important aspect of Mrs. Leivers is her spiritual idealism. This excessive spiritualism becomes the exclusive emotional outlet for Miriam and is ultimately self-destructive. Lawrence has carefully suggested the dangers of such consciousness:

> Her (Miriam's) great companion was her mother. They were both brown-eyed, and inclined to be mystical, such women as treasure religion inside them, breathe it in their nostrils, and see the whole of life in a mist thereof.

[S. L. 177]

Lawrence doesn't criticize the spiritual enthusiasm but rather the inherent condemnation of any non-spiritual, i.e., sensual, pleasures. Lawrence depicts this penchant for spiritualizing as a purely cerebral indulgence which denies urgent physical realities. In *Apocalypse* Lawrence laments this loss of human physical awareness:

> We have lost almost entirely the great and intrinsically developed sensual awareness, or sense awareness, and sense-knowledge of the ancients. It was a great depth of knowledge arrived at direct, by instinct and intuition, as we say, not by reason.6

Inherent in Mrs. Leivers' assumptions about human nature is a distrust of appetites or desires that cannot be abstracted. In this sense, she functions as a social agent administering the most rigid excesses of Victorian repressiveness. Unfortunately, Mrs. Leivers' influence
extends beyond Miriam's consciousness, for

Paul fell under Mrs. Leivers' spell. Everything had a religious and intensified meaning when he was with her. His soul, hurt, highly developed, sought her as if for nourishment. Together they seemed to sift the vital fact from an experience. Miriam was her mother's daughter. [S. L. 184]

The influence of Mrs. Leivers emerges at a particularly crucial moment in Paul's adolescence. This spiritual conditioning coincides with his first sexual impulses and the subsequent confrontation leads to an ambivalence:

Paul was just opening out from childhood into manhood. This atmosphere, where everything took a religious value, came with a subtle fascination to him . . . . Here was something different, something that he loved, something that at times he hated. [S. L. 183]

For a time Paul is incapable of renouncing the excessive spirituality that Miriam personifies. Even his own mother indirectly reinforces the Leivers' doctrine of postponing or suppressing immediate sexual gratification. Mrs. Morel hopes to displace the instinctive vitality in Paul that she has grown to loathe in her husband. Her anticipation of Paul's socio-economic achievements precludes any frivolous indulgences. She wants Paul to climb into a higher class and hopes he will fall in love "with one of the girls in a better station of life". [S. L. 314]

Thus, although generated from different motives, the parental expectations work in concert to repress certain urgent inclinations in Paul's physical and psychic growth. When he is sexually aroused by Miriam his desires are distorted by the elaborate repressions restricting both of them:

That there was any love growing between him and Miriam neither of them would have acknowledged. He thought
he was too sane for such sentimentality, and she thought herself too lofty. They both were late in coming to maturity, and psychical ripeness was much behind even the physical -- Miriam was exceedingly sensitive, as her mother had always been. The slightest grossness made her recoil almost in anguish.

[S. L. 200]

Even when Paul's sexual urges become more insistent he continues to "take his pitch from her, and their intimacy went on in an utterly blanched and chaste fashion." [S. L. 200-202] The ambiguity of their relationship becomes increasingly frustrating for Paul whose struggle for independence carries him further and further from the values of the Morel and Leivers households. During one of Paul and Miriam's frequent excursions she eagerly anticipates a "communion together -- something that thrilled her, something holy". [S. L. 197] Paul, on the other hand, experiences the tension that arises from the inherent contradiction in his own more physical, sensuous urges. He senses the disparity in their desires at this moment and regretfully submits to the pervasive "cool scent of ivory roses -- a white, virgin scent." [S. L. 198] He is unable to alter the nature of their relationship or even articulate his dissatisfaction with it. In this situation he is only aware that "something made him feel anxious and imprisoned". [S. L. 198]

Much of the sexual fear and confusion depicted in Sons and Lovers can be directly attributed to parental conditioning and rigid social conventions. The character of Paul Morel is developed to exemplify a further Victorian phenomenon. Houghton suggests that

filial love, already increased in the Victorian family by the repression of sexual emotions, was exaggerated in the cause of moral censorship and control.

As Paul's sexual experience grows, so do his attendant guilt feelings
and his ambivalence towards his mother. To a considerable degree Paul
and Miriam, and even Clara, are frustrated by the moral contingencies
imposed upon them by their mothers. Lawrence's focus on specific
parent-child or male-female relationships can be fully comprehended only
if all family relationships are considered in any critical analysis.
For this reason characters such as Mrs. Morel are especially relevant
as a social product, not because of her supposed autobiographical relevance.
Mrs. Morel and Mrs. Leivers function as social agents whose obligations
are to introduce and impose the ethical imperatives of Victorian society.
Although there has been a generous amount of critical appreciation of
the first half of Sons and Lovers, this criticism generally focuses on
the excellence of Lawrence's realistic description. However, these
domestic scenes are especially significant because they portray the
ethical as well as physical environment from which Paul must escape.
The domestic tyrannies portrayed in the novel reflect the moral milieu
in the Victorian home. Houghton discusses this function of the home:

But whether a sacred temple or a secular temple, the
home as a storehouse of moral and spiritual values was
as much an answer to increasing commercialism as to
decaying religion. Indeed, it might be said that
mainly on the shoulders of its priestess, the wife and
mother, fell the burden of stemming the amoral and irreli-
gious drift of modern industrial society.

Mrs. Morel and Mrs. Leivers generate a distrust of the instinctive
appetites and a glorification of socio-economic or spiritual accomplish-
ments. The prevailing social mores in each novel reduce instinctive
or sensual desires to a "lower" order to experience.

Jude's predicament is especially pitiable because the social order
not only frustrates his relationship with Sue but binds him to a completely
disastrous union with Arabella. The general repression of sexual experience portrayed by Hardy contributes to Jude's anxiety and Sue's fears. Their sexual identities are distorted by a barrage of moral and behavioral taboos.

Jude, in one sense, shares Sue's antipathy towards his own emerging sexuality. His sexual naivety, which Hardy criticizes as a manifestation of general Victorian repression, confuses Jude:

In short, as if materially, a compelling arm of extraordinary muscular power seized hold of him -- something which had nothing in common with the spirits and influences that had moved him hither to. This seemed to care little for his reason and his will, nothing for his so-called elevated intentions . . . .

[J. O. 49]

Jude, like most young men of his generation, is woefully ignorant of his own sexual nature. His inability to deal with his own sexuality indirectly causes his bewildered entrapment by Arabella. Arabella, with a little help from her friends, utilizes the rigid Victorian code that demands that Jude marry Arabella as punishment for his physical indulgences. Although Hardy's portrait of her is an unflattering one, Arabella cannot be blamed for Jude's misfortunes any more than he can. She is also a victim of the social environment in which her one chance for escape seems to be the successful capture of Jude. Arabella demonstrates a resourcefulness which insures her survival if not her virtue throughout the novel.

As Jude struggles to define his sexual and intellectual priorities, he approaches the realization that external conventions and not his own sinful nature might be the source of his unhappiness and frustration. Jude eventually recognizes that his own "grossness" is not as immoral
as the rigid laws that repress individual desire. The social prejudices against Jude's intellectual, religious, and romantic aspirations eventually drive him to a desperate cynicism. Jude cannot satisfy the arbitrary demands of the religious or marital institutions. In two intriguing scenes Hardy parodies the rituals of these institutions. In the pub-scene Jude drunkenly recites a Latin oration that he had once studied seriously. In a later scene Hardy's irony is slightly more caustic. Shortly before her marriage to Phillotson, Sue accompanies Jude into the very church she will be married in several hours later. Jude and Sue perform a mock wedding ceremony which satirizes the marriage ritual but at the same time symbolizes their "natural" union.

Jude remains somewhat bewildered by the seemingly insurmountable problems generated by his relationships with Arabella and Sue. Jude never masters the social machinery that works against him. Although Hardy leaves no genuine hope for Jude to escape, he does portray Jude's increasing awareness of the social genesis of much of his suffering. This awareness of Jude's completes his development as a character. At the same time Hardy used Jude as the medium to articulate some of his own most insistent criticisms of Victorian society:

"Is it," he said, "that the women are to blame; or is it the artificial system of things, under which the normal sex-impulses are turned into devilish domestic gins and springes to noose and hold back those who want to progress?"

[J. O. 226]

The question becomes rhetorical if one considers the eventual fates of the characters. Sue succumbs to the repressive moral values ("I have nearly brought my body into complete subjection"). Jude pays the stiff penalties for venturing outside of what Lawrence identifies in Jude the Obscure as "the code of the walled city."
The sexual realism in *Sons and Lovers* recapitulates the tone and thematic concerns of *Jude the Obscure*. Lawrence also investigates the social mores that define and regiment sexuality. For Lawrence the sexual experiences are part of a wider spectrum of human relationships which are frustrated by social convention and hypocrisy. In his introduction to *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Mark Schorer states emphatically that Lawrence's intention was "to make the sex relation valid and precious, not shameful," and that, for Lawrence, sex means "the whole of the relationship between man and woman." For Lawrence, the conditioning of individual sexuality through social mores is damaging both sexually and psychologically.

The focus on Paul's sexuality does not indicate that Lawrence is exclusively interested in this dimension of human experience. Lawrence's concern is with all aspects of a repressive social structure. Although presenting a detailed chronicle of Paul's sexual maturation, Lawrence carefully depicts the social agencies and agents that generate and enforce the prevailing sexual attitudes. The emergence of Paul Morel's sexual appetite is, to him, as startling and intrusive as Jude's was. Although he has been socially conditioned to ignore his sexual longings, Paul discovers that

> he was now about twenty-three years old, and, though still virgin, the sex instinct that Miriam had over-refined for so long now grew particularly strong.  
> [S. L. 308]

Paul has heretofore accepted his mother's social and intellectual priorities, which leave little time or energy for what she feels are frivolous indulgences. Paul's psycho-sexual needs are overlooked. His
"natural" impulses clearly contravene the program envisioned for him by his mother. His relationship with Miriam becomes unbearable when they grope towards a sexual consummation. Paul's ambivalence recalls Jude's confused relationship with Sue:

He was afraid of her. The fact that he might want her as a man wants a woman had in him been suppressed into a shame . . . . And now this "purity" prevented even their first love-kiss.

[S. L. 221]

Acknowledging one of the most insistent Victorian hypocrisies, Paul begins his sexual experimentation with a woman, Clara Dawes, who is already stigmatized by her estrangement from her husband. His love for Miriam is constrained by the Victorian doctrine of chaste romantic love. Paul cannot simply gratify his sexual desires with a woman he might marry one day. Paul's relationship with Clara leads to a realization that his desires are natural and the social laws distorted. Like Jude, Paul begins to trust his instincts and not the arbitrary laws prescribed by society:

"That's what one must have, I think," he continued -- "the real, real flame of feeling through another person -- once, only once, if it only lasts three months".

[S. L. 386]

Paul's baptism in passion with Clara counteracts his spiritual union with Miriam. However, his passion with Clara does not completely satisfy Paul. Both relationships are extreme and are ultimately untenable. His relationship with Miriam represses his physical identity. His relationship with Clara is an exploration that is defined and limited by its exclusively sexual nature. Paul expresses only his dark or repressed needs with Clara. He cannot experience her in an open, honest
manner. She is the medium for his desires that remain alienated from his conscious social identity. Marcuse notes this psycho-sexual syndrome in *Eros and Civilization*:

In only very few people of culture are the two strains of tenderness and sensuality duly fused into one; the man almost always feels his sexual activity hampered by his respect for the woman and only develops full sexual potency when he finds himself in the presence of a lower type of sexual object.\(^\text{10}\)

Compounding Paul's dilemma are his mother's desperate hopes that he will marry a lady from a higher station in life. Thus, not only his sexual escapades with Clara, but also his romantic attachment to Miriam are, according to his mother, totally unsuitable. Clara remains a sexual object for Paul. Lawrence emphasizes the narrow definition of their relationship with images of light and dark, and day and night. Paul only tolerates Clara as a sexual partner. He never acknowledges her identity in anything more than a physical sense:

> Clara was, indeed, passionately in love with him, and he with her, as far as passion went. In the daytime he forgot her a good deal.

[S. L. 427]

Paul still regards his own sexuality as a foreign, intrusive force. By carefully regulating his sexual relationship with Clara "the night is free to you. In the daytime I want to be by myself", Paul hopes to maintain sufficient control over what he calls this "great instinct".

Paul's relationship with Clara has several interesting ramifications. One is Paul's ambivalent relationship with Baxter Dawes. If one can acknowledge the obvious Oedipal aspects of Paul's relationship with his mother, then Baxter Dawes' role is far more significant than most commentators realize. Paul has developed a contempt for his father that
is largely generated by his mother's "genteeel" background and values. Paul has been conditioned to ignore the simple, spontaneous animality of his father. He loathes his father's surliness and grossness. Like, Pip, Paul Morel adopts a snobbish attitude to a less refined "father" figure who becomes more or less an object of contempt. In order to resolve his predicament Paul must somehow come to an understanding of his snobbish prejudices. This syndrome is completed by his eventual benevolence to Baxter Dawes. Dawes is remarkably similar to Walter Morel—physically and in temperament. Paul fulfills an emotional need of Clara's that his mother had him fulfill for her. He takes the place of both husbands (Walter Morel and Baxter Dawes). The sexual consummation of his relationship with Clara is an indulgence which remained an impossibility with his mother. However, like Pip's attitude to Magwitch, Paul's attitude to Baxter Dawes is a prejudiced one that reflects the narrow-minded social condemnation of these pitiable figures. Paul Morel matures when he can resolve his conflict with Baxter Dawes and make some atonement for the selfishness he displayed towards him. Although both "father" figures commit crimes against the protagonists, the two young men grow to see the "fathers" as victims as well as villains.

One final aspect of social, and specifically sexual, repression portrayed in Jude the Obscure and Sons and Lovers is manifested in the psychological realism. The moral dogma of a given social environment first confronts individual desire and often is internalized by the individual consciousness. Whether it is called superego or conscience, the force of the internalized social law generates much of the anxiety
and guilt experienced by characters in both novels. We are given a
detailed chronicle of how external social conventions and assumptions
permeate the individual consciousness. The subsequent conflicts are
subjective and introspective, not overtly dramatic. The characters,
especially Sue Bridehead, struggle against a part of themselves.

In spite of her progressive theories Sue Bridehead is to some
degree, a pitiable product of sexist conditioning. She has learned
that it is virtually impossible to be "one of the boys" at school.
Her subsequent aspirations are somewhat modified and include a desire
to "ennoble some man to high aims." [J. O. 160] Sue, like Mrs. Morel,
can seek fulfillment only indirectly through the achievements of her
husband or sons. Like Miriam, Sue is disappointed by her chosen man
(Jude) who, she learns, can choose the "lower" instead of the "higher".

Both Sue Bridehead and Miriam Leivers are prepared to sacrifice
themselves to some socially generated ideal. They are unconscious of
their own primary desires which must be suppressed so that the women
can fulfill particular cultural roles. This mistaken sense of identity
and dedication is the result of a social environment ill-suited to
the growth of the individual consciousness. We have already considered
in this thesis how Dorothea Brooke and Louisa Gradgrind similarly submit
themselves "religiously, to the sacrifice". They pledge themselves
to marital roles which preclude any emotional or sexual fulfillment.
In all cases the young women are influenced by parental figures or social
authorities. The young women are conditioned into accepting certain
stereotyped roles and life styles which are ultimately self-destructive.
Sue Bridehead ultimately submits to the conventional morality which
her love for Jude challenged and briefly held at bay. At one point in the novel it seems as if she has completely rejected the hypocritical morality that binds her to Phillotson:

I am certain one ought to be allowed to undo what one has done so ignorantly! I daresay it happens to lots of women; only they submit, and I kick . . . .

[J. O. 224]

However, her spirit of defiance gradually disintegrates under the relentless onslaught of internal guilt and external pressure. Throughout the novel she makes gestures towards liberation that are always followed by an exacting penance: "There was no limit to the strange and unnecessary penances which Sue would meekly undertake when in a contrite mood." [J. O. 227] Her return to Phillotson dramatically exemplifies her final submission. By this time she has rationalized away her relationship with Jude as a frivolous indulgence:

We went about loving each other too much -- indulging ourselves to utter selfishness with each other!

[J. O. 350]

Perhaps Hardy's most ironic comment on this outcome is registered when the clergyman blesses not only her return to Phillotson but also the fiasco that ends with the re-marriage of Jude and Arabella. This final irony of Hardy's parodies the conventional comic ending. These final marriages says Jude are "degrading", "immoral", and "unnatural". The fact that the marriages are sanctified by the existing moral authorities makes Hardy's criticisms of them all the more penetrating.

The marriages symbolize the final, seemingly inevitable assertion of the prevailing moral laws. Jude and Sue succumb to the onslaught of these repressive laws. He is destroyed even before he resigns himself to his miserable death. Sue commits psychic suicide by finally
denying those impulses which generated her love for Jude. Sue and Jude suffer not only the overt social persecution but the attendant guilt and anxiety generated from within. Sue Bridehead's predicament is an excruciating extreme of the self-destructive suppression which characterized the young Dorothea Brooke.

The novelists studied in this thesis, although essentially independent innovators, share common literary perspectives. They create images of society within which are inherent criticisms of that society. The novelists stand firmly opposed to Sue's neurotic insistence that "self-abnegation is the highest road." [J. O. 356] They criticize such assumptions of human nature that were more or less accepted by their contemporaries. The repressive social values portrayed in the novels determine the conflicts isolated in this thesis.

The novelists have portrayed individuals and their relationships within a particular social environment. Individual character is influenced by the social environment. Thus the inter-personal conflicts often reflect a larger social problem. Daiches' comments on Lawrence's fiction summarizes this focus of all four novelists:

But for Lawrence problems of civilization must always be focussed through problems of personal relationships, for civilization is judged by the kinds and qualities of human relationship it makes possible.22

The "human relationships" in the novels are made possible or impossible by the "civilizations" or social structures which are an active force in the novels. Similarly, the novelists tell us, human character itself is largely determined by this social conditioning. The four novelists establish a perspective based on their own visions, rather than relying on the assumptions of their Victorian contemporaries.
FOOTNOTES


2 D. H. Lawrence, Selected Literary Criticism, p. 168.

3 Walter Houghton, p. 375.

4 Walter Houghton, p. 388.


7 Houghton, p. 355.

8 Houghton, p. 348.


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