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## HARDY AND ELIOT: THE EYE OF NARCISSUS' LOOKING-GLASS

by Nicola Harris

'And by his own eyes he was undone.'<sup>1</sup>

Hardy was both surprised and offended by the comparisons made between *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874) and the novels of George Eliot; indeed, several critics went so far as to ascribe this new work to the acknowledged master in a complimentary manner but this failed to placate the aspiring newcomer. But most galling of all was the response it elicited from Henry James. From the very beginning, James took exception to the formal technique adopted by the writer who would become his greatest rival. He offered the most acerbic and derogatory commentary when he defined Hardy's first major success as a sorry and 'curious imitation of something better',<sup>2</sup> that is, of a work of Eliot's.

That Hardy was familiar with the work of such an established literary authority as Eliot is certain, though his references to her are few and far between. That he was conscious of the influence she exerted upon his own ideas is more questionable. One thing, however, needs to be emphasized: in no way did Hardy wish to emulate Eliot and actively assumed a position in direct opposition to the realistic creed that both she and James championed. Yet there are two episodes in *Far from the Madding Crowd* which possess a remarkable correspondence to two Eliotean equivalents, while at the same time maintaining their own individuality and integrity. The first is the similarity between Bathsheba's self-adoration in her hand-mirror and Hetty's own ritualized narcissism, also focusing on a hand-mirror, in *Adam Bede* (1859). The second is the resemblance between the awful retinal scorching undergone by Boldwood subsequent to his reception of the valentine and that experienced by Dorothea during her honeymoon in *Middlemarch* (1872). In each instance a profound moral thesis is at work that may, for both artists, discover its origin in a thinker whose theories were admired by both. Ruskin's 'moral retina, by which, and on which, our informing thoughts are concentrated and represented',<sup>3</sup> provides the common focus, though Hardy and Eliot responded to this concept in different ways.

The movement towards a moral theory of perception was best demonstrated by the response Ruskin's *Modern Painters* elicited, the early volumes of 1843 (I) and 1846 (II) in particular exerting a formative influence on current realistic ideology. Eliot's positive critique of volume III, which appeared in the *Westminster Review* in 1856,<sup>4</sup> generated such a radical reformation of her thoughts that it precluded a repetition of the uncompromising programmatic realism followed in *Scenes of Clerical Life*. What Eliot found particularly attractive was Ruskin's contention that before the truth could be looked into, mirror-like, nature had to be studied closely; there could be no recourse to simple, unmediated reproduction. He demanded an 'earnest mental study... which [could] interpret all that is written upon ... and within' (*Works*, IV, 187) the scrutinized object, and his insistence on the immanence of the ideal within the real pointed the way to reproducing the observed, substantial fact while simultaneously investing it with moral depth.

Ruskin's Idealism became the Realism of the later Victorian novelists, and his vindication of imaginative perception drew the attention of Hardy who familiarized himself with *Modern Painters* as early as 1862. Though he was attracted to Ruskin's opinions on perception, and idealism in fiction and painting throughout his career, it was only from the mid 1880s that Hardy began the formal recording of his findings. The similarity between Ruskin's ideology, as it appears in *Modern Painters*, and Hardy's, as it is set out in his notes and novels, is close enough to suggest direct influence. Such citations reveal that what reigned supreme for both was the subjective reinterpretation of the objective as it passed through the crucibles of the 'imagination penetrative' (*Works*, IV, 250). This faculty, one facet of the 'moral retina', 'never stops at crusts ... or outward images' (*ibid.*), and scorns the shackles of 'mere external fact that stand in the way of its suggestiveness' (*Works*, IV, 278). It is at this point that Ruskin comes closest to Hardy, and moves furthest away from Eliot. What underpins Eliot's literary aesthetic, but neither Hardy's nor Ruskin's, is a deference before the substantial components of the external world, and an uncompromising loyalty to 'the religion which keeps an open ear and an obedient mind to the teachings of fact'.<sup>5</sup>

In *Adam Bede*, Eliot makes her inaugural use of the mirror metaphor that became a commonplace in contemporary discussions on realistic fiction. The potential moral significance of this reflective medium was considerable, and its users were obliged to employ it in an edifying, instructional capacity; Eliot was undoubtedly at home in this respect. It is in the famous interlude of Chapter 17 that Eliot interrupts the flow of the narrative to explain the formal function of the mirror; this episode provides her with the perfect opportunity to deliver a figurative exposition of her literary aesthetic:

I aspire to give no more than a faithful account of men and things as they have mirrored themselves in my mind. The mirror is doubtless defective, the outlines will sometimes be disturbed; the reflection faint or confused.<sup>6</sup>

Such a passage identifies this distorting factor as the egoism which is solely concerned with Self<sup>7</sup> – 'my mind' – and which places and glorifies the self as the absolute centre of the (not a) universe. In this respect, both Hetty and Bathsheba fall foul of Ruskin's 'false taste' which

is merely that of falseness or inaccuracy in conclusion, not of moral delinquency ... It may be known by its demands of pomp, splendour ... and by its pride also: for it is ever self-exulting; its eye is always upon itself, and it tests all things round it by the way they fit in'. (*Works*, IV, 60).

Eliot declares that 'the selfish' need to be awakened to those consciousnesses which are 'apart from themselves', and experience 'the raw material of moral sentiment' (*E*, p. 270). Similarly, Ruskin derides the empiricists' tendency to prioritize the role of the perceiver in a spirited attack on 'selfishness' and 'egotism' which anticipates the groundwork of Eliot's own realistic creed of sympathetic observation: for the philosopher, 'nothing ... exists but what he sees or thinks it' (*Works*, V, 202). Like Eliot, Ruskin forwards a persuasive case for the autonomy of material things, and challenges the assumption that seeks to dissolve phenomenal reality

through imaginative art. And both support the necessity of 'moral emotion': 'those who have keenest sympathy are those who look closest and pierce deepest ... Mental sight becomes sharper with every full beat of the heart' and is destroyed by 'egotism, and selfish care' (*Works*, IV, 257, 287). Thus the mirror comes to 'reflect' the moral standpoint assumed in each novel: egoism invariably degrades individuality, exerts an adverse effect on relationships, and perverts the facts of objective reality. Such narcissistic introspection is perceived as a serious state of 'moral stupidity'.<sup>8</sup>

But this is to anticipate. The episode with Hetty takes place two chapters before this authorial intrusion, and only with hindsight can we appreciate fully the inevitable deficiency of a morally-orientated mode of perception. It is telling enough that Hetty's bedroom is dominated by this symbol of egocentricity:

A queer old looking-glass! ... it had a great deal of tarnished gilding about it;... above all, it had a brass candle socket on each side.... But Hetty objected to it because it had numerous dim blotches sprinkled over the mirror, which no rubbing would remove. (*AB*, Ch. 15).

Both subjective and objective mirrors, it seems, are 'doubtless defective' (*AB*, Ch. 17) and prone to imperfection, but such material inconveniences do not dissuade 'devout worshippers ... from performing their religious rites'. That Hetty feels constrained to practice her art 'secretly' demonstrates at least a marginal degree of moral discomfort; she intuitively senses that her self-reflexive proclivities are not quite right, and, supported by the narrator's incisive assessment, she would 'die with shame' were her self-indulgent tendencies discovered. Yet it is also made clear that Hetty's essential character inexorably governs her actions and attitudes. She cannot help but treasure these artefacts, particularly 'a small red-framed looking-glass, without blotches' which is locked out of sight in a lower drawer of the altar-like dressing-table. 'It was into this small glass that she chose to look first after seating herself. She looked into it, smiling' (*AB*, Ch. 15). And, as with Narcissus, that 'look' seals her fate. It is in this diminutive replica of its larger counterpart that Hetty chooses to practise her mimetic pretensions. Her desire to 'look like the picture' she has seen, to reproduce art by holding nature before the distorting and defective mirror, is understood as a destructive, not a creative, process. Yet she is granted success: 'Even the old mottled glass couldn't help sending back a lovely image.' And, as with the case of Bathsheba, the result produced by the contrived coalition of art and nature is a living picture of profound moral import deserving of the title 'Vanity'.

The process of artificial reproduction is not straightforward and involves the presence of an active observer. Though Eliot's conception of reality as existing *a priori*, as anterior to the narrative, is made clear, there is still a Berkeleyan suggestion that *esse est percipi*, to be is to be perceived. Yet, for the most part, Eliot imitates Ruskin's endeavour to persuade us out of a belief in a closed world of sense impressions, and, like him, is concerned with preserving the autonomous quality of external actualities; objects are allowed their own ontological significance, independent of a perceiving consciousness. For both Ruskin and Eliot, violent emotions 'produce in us a falseness in all our impressions of external things' (*Works*, V, 205), and, for

Eliot, 'falsity' (*AB*, Ch. 17) is the ultimate dread. But a perceptual and formal ambivalence remains. Hetty receives not only the direct scrutiny of the narrator and the imaginative participation of the reader; above all, she perceives, and thus creates, herself. She, like Bathsheba, desires herself and is, first and foremost, the object of her own approval. If Hetty were a Hardy heroine and was herself her only audience, the fleeting image reflected in the glass would cease to exist the moment she turned from it. But for Eliot, things and people *are* first and *seen* second. Nevertheless, a witness is always insinuated. And, in addition to Hetty, Eliot and the reader there is the recollection of the appreciative, constructive masculine gaze belonging to 'an invisible spectator whose eyes rested on her like morning on the flowers', the Captain's. This appears in anticipation of Hardy's more contiguous and physically real onlooker, but Donnithorne is only conjured up by a suggestive imagination; and, in the last instance, it is not directly through his eyes that Hetty is defined and determined. That task is shared through the optical co-operation of reader and authorial guide. For Bathsheba, on the other hand, the construction is monopolized by two voyeuristic men, a technique which inevitably generates its own drawbacks: the distance and reticence adopted by Hardy precludes full access to Bathsheba's thoughts and motives; only biased speculation is offered. With Hetty, authorial exposition is thorough; Hardy simply chooses to show at this juncture, and ambivalence is a natural consequence.

Yet Eliot's almost fascinated and meticulous attention to physical detail does not imply that she condones her heroine's actions. Eliot censures and abjures Hetty for her selfishness, and criticizes the insufficiency of the defective, 'dim ill-defined pictures that her narrow bit of imagination can make' (*AB*, Ch. 15). Moreover, the reprimand is optically prescribed and Eliot examines the deceptive discrepancy operating between appearance and reality, between things as they are (concrete facts) and the interpretations of their meaning (abstract ideas). Eyelashes are the objects which excite speculation:

I find it impossible not to expect some depth of soul behind a deep grey eye with a long dark eyelash, in spite of an experience which has shown me that they may go along with deceit, speculation, and stupidity.... One begins to suspect ... that there is no direct correlation between eyelashes and morals. (ibid)

Hetty's principal failing, at least when measured against the ethical code established as the novel's perceptual criterion, is her lack of humanistic sympathy. Her 'false taste', which 'tests all things round it by the way they fit in' (*Works*, IV, 60), means that she looks at and feels nothing for her fellow men except as they relate to her, and her preoccupation with Self fore-shadows the 'moral stupidity' (*M*, Ch. 21) of Dorothea. And it appears that her lack of compassionate perspicacity is inevitable given the nature of what Hardy misogynistically defines as 'Woman's prescriptive infirmity' – 'Vanity'.<sup>9</sup> Eliot allows those suffering from these 'moral deficiencies' to detect this inherent flaw:

It is generally a feminine eye that first detects the moral deficiencies hidden under the 'dear deceit' of beauty: so it is not surprising that Mrs Poyser, with her keenness and abundant opportunity for observation, should have formed a

tolerably fair estimate of what might be expected from Hetty in the way of feeling. (*AB*, Ch. 15)

In *Far from the Madding Crowd*, the power to recognize this imperfection is wholly masculine, both Hardy and Oak in collaboration assuming the 'keenness and abundant opportunity for observation' formerly attributed to Mrs Poyser.

The famous opening chapter of *Far from the Madding Crowd* reveals Bathsheba as she is perceived through a gradual telescoping of the perspective: Hardy watches the reader watching Oak and the animals watching Bathsheba who abruptly halts the pattern when, contemplating herself, she finds in herself a sufficient audience. As with Hetty, she takes precautionary measures by ensuring that no one is near enough to spy on her premeditated action (the waggoner 'was not yet in sight'), and proceeds in the same stealthy, tentative, secretive manner. Neither woman is able to resist the temptation of satisfying a whim grounded in self-adoration. But whereas Hetty confines her display to the privacy of her bedroom, Bathsheba brings the bedroom outside; whereas Hetty is inspired by a work of art, Bathsheba gives way to a more natural impulse:

Her eyes crept back to the package.... At length she drew the article into her lap, and untied the paper covering; a small swing looking-glass was disclosed, in which she proceeded to survey herself attentively. She parted her lips and smiled. (*FMC*, Ch. 1)

Both are pleased with what they see; both smile and delight in themselves. But here there is no imaginary Donnithorne to stimulate, excite and explain this action, this unmitigated pleasure in herself. Bathsheba herself provides an adequate witness and so absorbed is she in her reflection that she remains oblivious of the fact that her performance is made before 'the sight of sparrows, blackbirds, and unperceived farmer who were alone its spectators' (*ibid*).

Another crucial difference between the two episodes, despite superficial similarities, is the identification of the artist responsible for the manufacture of each portrait. Hetty consciously undertakes the reproduction of 'the picture' herself and, through Eliot's exposition, is held fully accountable for what she does. But Bathsheba is denied this control as a definition is imposed upon her by the combined and ambiguous thought-processes supplied by Hardy and Oak, neither of whom can penetrate her fundamental inscrutability. Recognition of this ineffable quality may in part account for the ungenial assessment provided by the baffled farmer:

The picture was a delicate one. Woman's prescriptive infirmity had stalked into the sunlight.... A cynical inference was irresistible by Gabriel Oak as he regarded the scene, generous though he fain would have been. There was no necessity whatever for her looking in the glass. (*ibid*)

What, one wonders, would have made him 'generous'? It is a typical bit of masculine cynicism: this woman is pleasing to herself; she is not looking at her reflection to ensure any man's

acknowledgement, or relying on any man's reassurance. Bathsheba has appropriated what is in Hardy's novels a male prerogative: definition of the feminine through a penetrating masculine gaze. She has plundered this male preserve and has the audacity to recognize and determine herself. Oak is unable to accept this (along with Hardy whose own view becomes almost inseparable from his protagonist's) and, in an attempt to wrestle back at least a degree of control, states that *he* can see nothing wrong with her appearance: only that would account for the 'necessity' of a mirror. To reinforce these ideas he speculates on the presence of a masculine impetus for her actions – those 'likely dramas in which men would play a part'.

Nevertheless, the 'conjecture' forwarded by Oak is so ambivalent that Bathsheba is left for the time being, as an equivocal 'picture', unreadable to all of her observers. Only to herself, it seems, is there significance in her movements, and the final summation from the men is that 'she simply observed herself as a fair product of Nature in the feminine kind'. This is where the scene differs most from Hetty's with regard to the position adopted by the omniscient narrator. The sheer indeterminacy of the Hardy vision, in diametric opposition to that of Eliot, contributes to the fundamental complexity and final inscrutability of the perspective; one cannot decide at this juncture whether the primary point of view is critical, admiring, or neutral. But neither the mirror nor Hardy lie, and artifice seems to have the final place here as it does with Hetty. And for Bathsheba, the artifice is suggested into existence by Oak's conventional, 'cynical' evaluation which colours things in an entirely different way. What is more, it is left to the 'piqued' and rebuffed 'spectator' to name these feminine antics by expounding on womankind's innate, moral 'faults': 'The greatest of them is – well, what it is always ... Vanity'.

Though Hardy is more doubtful than Eliot as to whether someone inherently infirm can ever develop perceptually and grow morally, he does at least show that Bathsheba attains a modicum of true insight as a result of her observational experiences. She matures out of that perceptually debilitating 'false taste' and aspires to the mastery of 'true taste' which 'is forever growing, learning... and testing itself by the way that it fits things' (*Works*, IV, 60). She comes to recognize the moral responsibilities incumbent on one upon whom 'many eyes were turned' (*FMC*, Ch. L); she is able to see that she is a 'watched woman' (*FMC*, Ch. LI) and act accordingly. Aware now that she is an objective as well as a subjective entity, she painfully works her way out of that introspective and self-absorbed 'moral stupidity' which belongs to Dorothea. Hetty, on the other hand is morally and perceptually irredeemable and spirals further inward until she is finally lost to all objective scrutiny, literally and figuratively, as she is transported out of the novel. Once she leaves the narrative, she exists only where she always wished: in her own mind.

This moral theory of perception has a profound effect on the physical and mental eyes themselves. As both authors demonstrate, the latter are extremely sensitive and impressionable to information brought in by the former, especially when a moral dilemma is involved. Depending on the intensity of the situation, the retina is irreversibly engraved. Once this scorching had taken place, the impression becomes the experience and the associative process gains in potency with the passage of time. Perhaps the most startling 'moment of vision' in *Far from the Madding Crowd* is that exploring Boldwood's response to the massive suggestiveness

of this retinal branding. His reaction is of an intensity so appalling that the incident degenerates into an obsessive perceptual fixation, literally and figuratively. Bathsheba irrevocably stamps his inner eye; she controls and occupies its functions; she forces herself into his mind so thoroughly and monopolizes the attention and focus of his physical eye so absolutely that there is little room left for anything else. Clear sight is impossible. For her, this monopolization of Boldwood's visual faculties is a just reparation for the perplexity caused by his refusal to 'afford her the official look of admiration' by 'withhold[ing] his eyes' (*FMC*, Ch. XIII). This riveting, optical dichotomy of possessing and being possessed is a consequence of her retaliation, and she decides to fight sight with sight. Her impulsive gesture allows her to materialize and concentrate those numerous living signifiers of moral discomfort and unease to which she is prone: blushes. The telling 'enlarging spot' (*FMC*, Ch. IV) frequently suffuses her face and is called forth at her first sight of herself in the looking-glass: 'She blushed at herself, and seeing her reflection blush, blushed the more' (*FMC*, Ch. I). These bloody circles are transformed into the branding iron, the famous wax circle on the card: 'Here the bachelor's gaze was continually fastening itself till the large red seal became as a blot of blood on the retina of his eye' (*FMC*, Ch. XIV).<sup>10</sup>

Sasaki<sup>11</sup> suggests that one of Eliot's own moments of vision, that pertaining to Dorothea's dissatisfaction with her honey-moon, ingrained itself into Hardy's own inner eye: 'In certain states of dull forlornness Dorothea all her life continued to see the red drapery ... spreading itself everywhere like a disease of the retina' (*M*, Ch. 20). For all of the victims of this indelible marking the episodes reveal their ultimate significance in retrospect; it takes time for the associative process – in which objects are assigned an emotional equivalent through habit or familiarity – to gather in force and meaning:

Forms both pale and glowing took possession of her young sense, and fixed themselves in her memory even when she was not thinking of them, preparing strange associations which remained through her after years. (*M*, Ch. 20)

Though there are undeniable similarities, the differences are substantial. From a contextual point of view, Dorothea's isolation from known and customary phenomena is physical as well as mental, whereas Boldwood experiences only subjective displacement. Dorothea is surrounded by impressive but distanced images which, from an objective standpoint, possess no personal significance until she projects her emotions outward and the Self of the imaginative realm begins to distort the Other world of fact. The formal 'stupendous fragmentariness' concomitant with such a process, a condition which permeates the whole experience, is only just held back from total disintegration by the masterly skills of the omniscient narrator. Hardy is neither as controlled nor as successful in preventing such formal incongruities

One of Eliot's characteristics is to accommodate extreme objective and subjective perspectives within a single vision. This passage traces the progressive shift from the abstract to its external correlative in the concrete, and its final return to the inner mood and vision. Yet despite this perceptual oscillation and the narrator's intense sympathy, there is no relinquishing of calm objectivity. Hardy's movements between internal and external views are similarly flexi-



ble, as is his assimilation of exhibition and exposition, and it is also through the intercession of an overly-stimulated imagination that the material object is transformed into a symbolic subjective presence. But whereas Eliot's combination of the showing and the telling amounts to almost perfect formal coherence, Hardy's technique balances precariously on the edge of dissonance, and he offsets the poetical translation by explaining it through an incongruous and incompatible scientific analogy. The cold precision which seeks to equate impressionable 'crystal substances' with the enormous emotional energy contained in the 'blot of blood' is an awkward intrusion which threatens to undermine the autonomy of the experience. The incongruity is only partially mitigated by its existence as an attempt to justify, with only marginal success, the correspondence of the general and the particular. Eliot is more likely to interpolate than Hardy and is certainly less disruptive when she does so; Hardy is more persuasive when he chooses to show and permits the episode to express itself. The repetition of red on white is more psychologically convincing when conceived as a subjective projection emanating directly from behind Boldwood's affected eyes: 'the only half of the sun yet visible burnt rayless, like a red flameless fire showing over a white hearthstone' (*FMC*, Ch. XIV).<sup>12</sup>

Dorothea, like Boldwood, has 'no ... defence against deep impressions' (*M*, Ch. 20), but the principal distinguishing feature resides in the authors' attitudes to the function of the 'moral retina'. Dorothea is watched in the process of battling to extricate herself from the 'moral stupidity' (*M*, Ch. 21) which encourages her to project her egocentric desires onto the outer world, and she is thoroughly crushed when the 'incongruities' become all too clear. For Eliot, the role of the 'moral retina' is to teach the absolute and independent value of the objective Other while also guiding the perceiver into acknowledging the difference as well as the equivalence of those 'centres of self' within other consciousnesses. Dorothea receives due punishment for her wilful and selfish perversion of 'fact', for her inclination disturbs the integrity of the real world until it approximates an 'illusion of exaggerated sensitiveness' (*M*, Ch. 20). Given the prescriptions operating within Eliot's aesthetic, Dorothea's 'mental life' demands immediate 'readjustment' (*ibid*). Hardy's doctrine, on the other hand, advocates the opposite. His creed, depending for its significance on the visually-orientated process of subjective/affective association, is not concerned with eradicating this idiosyncratic mode of regard so much as simultaneously encouraging and tempering its development, thereby bringing it into accord with the moral parameters established by that particular narrative.

And to infer a connection between the mirror and the retina is neither arbitrary nor tenuous. In each case the looking-glass is shaped like an eye, and matches its perceiver's intensity of gaze. Moreover, the colour red is conspicuous in all instances. Hetty's small mirror itself is red-framed; Bathsheba's red jacket is matched by the blush which incarnadines her reflected face as she surveys herself; Boldwood's 'blot of blood' and Dorothea's blood-red retina are additional scarlet circles inextricably linked with looking. In addition, each character is irresistibly attracted by this colour whether it be on cheeks, mirrors, cards or curtains; the eye of the egocentric seems to exhibit a pronounced susceptibility for this hue. Indeed, all of the characters are self-absorbed, observing the people and the world around them (when they surface from their own minds, that is) with their inner rather than their physical eyes. Each narrative shows these egos attempting to come to terms with the Not-I. Only Dorothea can claim any real suc-

cess and manages to liberate herself from herself. 'Full souls are double mirrors' (*M*, Ch. 72), an observation which crystallises the moral and perceptual position which Dorothea, having experienced the single-mirror of Casaubon, finally attains. Hetty and Bathsheba bring an eye moulded from and surfeited with 'I' and that is all they see, and Bathsheba is left only slightly better off than her Eliotean partner, dependent in the end on Oak's visually-charged prophecy: 'Whenever you look up, there I shall be – and whenever I look up, there will be you' (*FMC*, Ch. 4). He, and only he, will be her mirror from now on. Hetty breaks free of such a masculine-dominated visual prison but the alternative is just as annihilative of the Self: she is lost to everyone's sight and is reduced to a subjective impression stored in the memory of all who knew her. For men, it seems, madness is the only possible result and Boldwood's optical obsession destroys his sanity. Perhaps, therefore, one can look not only to Ruskin for a common source of inspiration but to Carlyle, who was esteemed by both Hardy and Eliot. In the final analysis, then, 'the eye sees that which it brings with it the means of seeing'.<sup>13</sup> And that 'means' is I.

#### Notes

1. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. Mary Innes (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1955), Bk III, p. 85.
2. H. James, 'Far from the Madding Crowd', *Nation*, 24 (Dec, 1874); rpt. *Thomas Hardy: Critical Assessments*, ed. Graham Clarke, 4 vols (Sussex: Helm Information, 1993), pp. 183-7 (I, 187).
3. J. Ruskin, *The Works of John Ruskin*, ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 39 vols (London: George Allen, 1903-12), IV, 36. Hereafter cited as *Works*.
4. G. Eliot, 'Art and Belles Lettres', *Westminster Review*, 65 (April 1856), 626-7.
5. *The Essays of George Eliot*, ed. Thomas Pinney (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 429. Hereafter cited as *E*.
6. *Adam Bede*, ed. Stephen Gill (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), Ch. 17. Hereafter shortened to *AB*.
7. See Richard Freadman, *Eliot, James and the Fictional Self: A Study in Character and Narration* (London: MacMillan, 1986) esp. pp. 10-16.
8. *Middlemarch*, ed. W. J. Harvey (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), Ch. 21. Hereafter cited as *M*.
9. *Far from the Madding Crowd*, Ch. I, ed. Ronald Blythe (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975). Hereafter shortened to *FMC*.

10. For further analysis of the passage see Ian Gregor, *The Great Web: The Form of Hardy's Major Fiction* (London: Faber & Faber, 1974), p. 54; Jean Brooks, *Thomas Hardy: The Poetic Structure* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1971), p. 71.
11. Toru Sasaki, 'On Boldwood's Retina: A "Moment of Vision" in *Far from the Madding Crowd* and its Possible Relation to *Middlemarch*', *Thomas Hardy Journal*, VIII:3 (Oct 1992), 57-60.
12. Cp. 'A letter lies on the red velvet cover of the table; staring up by reason of the contrast. I cover it over, that it may not hit my eyes so hard'. F. E. Hardy, *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy, 1840-1891* (London: MacMillan, 1928), p. 276.
13. Last line of 'The Profitable Reading of Fiction' (1888), in *Hardy's Personal Writings*, ed. Harold Orel (London: MacMillan, 1967; rpt. 1990), pp. 110-125 (p. 125). Quotation from Thomas Carlyle, *The French Revolution*, Part One, Bk I, Ch II, 'Realised Ideals'; also in *Past and Present*, Book IV, Ch I, 'Aristocracies': "in every object there is inexhaustible meaning; the eye sees in it what the eye brings means of seeing".