

## 2 CHARACTER AND ENVIRONMENT

The previous chapter provided a discussion of the ways in which certain categories of feminine experience can be seen to be articulated in literary and socio-psychological discourse. Despite their supposedly different emphases a striking uniformity is revealed in the way in which femininity is reified in the two fields. Even in supposedly critical literary and socio-psychological analyses we find a shared form of sense-making which takes femininity as an enduring aspect of discrete individuals. We suggested that this implicit notion of sex-role can only be transcended by way of a more rigorous analysis of feminine discourse.

The substantive concern in this chapter is with 'place', with the 'sense of place' which can have us attach such deep and important values to our surroundings and to remembered or imagined locales. The concern is widely shared. Like the question of sex-roles, it has acquired considerable significance in contemporary culture - through the environmental movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Psychology was influenced by this movement, to acquire a sub-discipline of environmental psychology. (1) As it developed, and typically pronounced that the 'place-specificity of behaviour is the fundamental fact of environmental psychology' or that place is a 'psychological unit of the geographical environment', hopes were raised that a new understanding of this fundamental construct might be found.

In what follows we shall show how a coincidentally simultaneous reading of a Thomas Hardy novel and an analysis of psychological studies of environmental crowding revealed similarities in one set of structures or 'code' by which we can make sense of 'place' in the two types of discourse, as well as in an example of everyday talk. After brief suggestions about how the concept could be elaborated in Hardy criticism and in environmental psychology, we point to some difficulties which arise from the use of the code. If a dual reading between literature and psychology produces shared forms of sense-making, they are not mutually legitimising so much as indicative of higher-order problems in the analysis of discourse.

## ENVIRONMENT AND PSYCHOLOGY

To give an instance, how might our understanding be enriched of this woman's sense of place? What follows is a short extract from her much longer description of the estate on which she lives in the New Town of Milton Keynes. (2) She describes the walk from her home to the local shops.

In the square on the right side there is a house which the owner has recently painted in yellow and brown, the colours of a Pullman coach, and I really like it. There have been very few houses on the estate painted by their owners.

The second play area on the right, my daughter is a devil to get past with. There are ramps and steps and also it has some lovely cylinders made out of solid concrete. There is also a little climbing-frame for smaller children. My daughter can just manage it.

Coming farther down the path, there is a Japanese lady in the end house whom I often help with her English. Arriving at Market Hill - to the right there is that wonderful slide, which is the greatest amenity of the estate as far as the children are concerned. Nearby there is a place to sit. Probably this would be the place where I would most likely sit and talk to people, because the shop is nearby. Here I would watch Abby go round and round the slide, and look at people come and go to and from the shop. There would also be people waiting for the telephone sitting on the bench.

Environmental psychology contains studies of colour aesthetics, the connotative meaning of artefacts, personal control, home ownership, play environments and the spatial world of children, neighbourhoods and mixed communities, and the distribution of facilities. All those topics can be disaggregated from the passage above. And yet it is difficult to reassemble them from the psychological literature into a new Gestalt which provides the insight we long for.

If one examines a volume explicitly devoted to the 'psychology of place', (3) its contents again look as though they should increase our understanding of the experience of a place like the estate where the woman lived. They include studies of cognitive mapping, distance estimation, environmental evaluation, behaviour as appropriate or inappropriate to particular places, role differences in environments, and design decision-making. But however valuable these attempts may be at formally recording and measuring environmental behaviour, they disappoint when one looks to capture an experience of place. The disappointment reflects more than the gulf which has separated behavioural from phenomenological approaches to psychology. It has to do with a whole series of puzzles about the space between different areas of discourse.

One of the most frequently referred to topics of environmental psychological research in the textbooks is 'crowding'. And the origin of the present chapter lies in the coincidence of reading The Mayor of Casterbridge (4) while en route to a conference on 'The human

consequences of crowding' in Southern Turkey. In Thomas Hardy's novel there are some striking descriptions of a 'crowded place' - the market-place in Casterbridge. Spatially, and through its association with commerce and work, this place provides a major focus in the novel. Much of my reading of The Mayor on this occasion was done during a protracted stopover in Istanbul. On arrival at the conference in Antalya it was quickly apparent that the academic papers on offer conveyed none of the teeming and uproarious streets of Istanbul. They had little to say about crowding as a personal, social or political phenomenon. Typically the psychological study of crowding has tended to concentrate on its effects on the individual, human organism; and when solutions for its ill-effects have been proposed they have been of a rational, bureaucratic kind.

I had decided beforehand that my contribution at the conference would be to try to uncover something of the unsatisfactory nature of the psychological work on crowding by analysing the assumptions which it made about the nature of Man and his relation to society.

(5) In the event this analysis also seemed applicable in a reading of The Mayor of Casterbridge. The contingency of travelling with Hardy to Antalya gave rise to an impetus to read and make sense of, within a common framework, two quite different types of discourse about crowded places. The experience incidentally brought home a realisation of how much space I had allowed to intrude between two long-standing interests, psychology and the novel, even when their substance coincided with a central concern in my own life.

#### MODELS OF MAN

The common framework which I used for the analysis was provided by the notion of 'models of Man'. Psychologists have a recently renewed realisation that such models incorporate important aspects of the stipulations which lie behind their theories and experiments.

(6) A model is usually implicit only, it has strong normative elements and embodies much of the ideology of psychology. A complex classification of alternative types of model might be possible. But we shall simplify the question here by making a crude distinction between three ways of considering Man and society, which will be referred to as 'organismic', 'role' and 'relational' models. (7)

The 'organismic' model is quite well characterised by behaviourism. Man is seen as a passive object; as determined by his basic biological nature; and as an individual, rather than as an essentially social being. There is a mechanical flavour to the model. It deals with the present and future as essentially a replication of the past. Static conditions or equilibrium are assumed to be the appropriate mode. The environment or a 'place' would be defined as a set of stimuli which moves and contains the individual, without regard for his own powers or his relations with others.

The approach through roles, as in 'role theory', has been described in these terms:

Man has certain positions within the social system and related to these positions are normative expectations concerning the individual's behaviour and concerning relevant attributes. Positions are independent of a specific occupant. The same is true of the expectations directed towards a position; they are defined as the role of the incumbent of a position. (8)

Man's definition is in social terms, without reference to his individuality or to his relations as a person with others. A place would be conceived of in predominantly organisational, institutional or categorical terms.

In a relational model, Man is active and acting. He is both a subject and an object, influencing and being influenced by his social environment. He is not conceived of as a bundle of traits or their properties, but as his social relations. Man is the sum of his social interactions. Throughout his constant interaction with others, his self is continuously changing. Interaction is fully reciprocal. Unlike the assumptions of the other two models, relational assumptions give priority neither to the individual nor to social processes. In this case, a place would be seen as an environment which facilitates Man's own attempts to relate to other individuals and to become integrated in a reciprocal relation with social and political institutions.

For the present argument the fact that these models may be neither mutually exclusive nor exhaustive will be ignored. The crucial point is that they have been detected as unwitting assumptions underlying the greater part of social psychology. They have emerged from the discipline of social psychology; they have not been the formal and explicit basis for its organisation. In the particular case of psychological research into crowding, studies can not only be categorised by the assumptions which they make, but the assumptions can also be seen to contain dubious implications for policy which might follow from the research.

To demonstrate the nature of these models and the effective use to which they can be put in narrative, we need only refer to the opening pages of The Mayor of Casterbridge. Considerable critical attention has been paid to the beginnings of Hardy's novels. The remarks made here could be repeated for other instances.

The novel begins with a passage describing the approach of a couple and child to the village of Weydon Priors. There is a clear transition through the three models. The first paragraph contains very slight organismic, then role references: 'were approaching on foot', 'plainly but not ill clad'. The second paragraph reiterates these models at greater length, and the relational model appears in paragraph three. The male character's physique is first described (organismic), followed by details of his clothes and more particularly of the tools of his trade (role). His way of walking is analysed and read as a further indication of his economic status. Then, in the next paragraph, allusions are made to the couple's relationship, from the way in which they walk side-by-side, silently

and without contact. Immediately afterwards a new cycle of transitions begins: first with a physical description of the young woman's face; then an inference of the role positions of the three characters (husband, wife and daughter); and finally the supposition that the relationship between husband and wife was one of 'stale familiarity'.

The ease and power with which the reader is drawn into Hardy's novels by the use of structures such as this should prepare us for a more thorough search for their presence at other points of the narratives. The search would be far from disappointing. Their effectiveness, the facility with which they can be read, also suggest that they are not a recent invention of psychology, but a well-established and readily available code.

#### CASTERBRIDGE MARKET-PLACE

Let us now turn to the market-place in Casterbridge, as it is described in Chapters 9, 22, 23, and 24 of the novel. Lucetta, with whom Mayor Henchard has some years previously had a love affair, inherits a fortune and travels from Jersey to settle in Casterbridge. She hopes to resume the relationship. In the event she marries Farfrae, the protégé and subsequently the business rival of Henchard. Before that Farfrae had seemed likely to marry Henchard's daughter, Elizabeth-Jane.

On her arrival Lucetta rents a large house in the centre of Casterbridge. High-Place Hall is the scene of some of the most important events in the development of relations between the principal characters. Its position overlooking the market-place is used by Hardy as the *mise-en-scène* for the realisation of Lucetta's attraction to Farfrae. The progressive descriptions in the novel of the market-place illustrate views of people and places which move from the organismic to the role-based to the relational.

It is in Chapter 9 that the market-place is first described.

It was about ten o'clock, and market-day, when Elizabeth paced up the High street.... The old-fashioned fronts of these houses, which had older than old-fashioned backs, rose sheer from the pavement, into which the bow-windows protruded like bastions, necessitating a pleasing *chassez-déchassez* movement to the time-pressed pedestrian at every few yards. He was bound also to evolve other Terpsichorean figures in respect of door-steps, scrapers, cellar-hatches, church buttresses, and the overhanging angles of walls which, originally unobtrusive, had become bow-legged and knock-kneed.

In addition to these fixed obstacles which spoke so cheerfully of individual unrestraint as to boundaries, movables occupied the path and roadway to a perplexing extent. First the vans of the carriers in and out of Casterbridge, who hailed from Mellstock, Weatherbury, The Hintocks, Sherton-Abbas, Kingsbere, Overcombe, and many other towns and villages round. Their owners were nu-

merous enough to be regarded as a tribe.... Their vans had just arrived, and were drawn up on each side of the street in close file, so as to form at places a wall between the pavement and the roadway. Moreover every shop pitched out half its contents upon trestles and boxes on the kerb, extending the display each week a little further and further into the roadway, despite the expostulations of the two feeble old constables, until there remained but a tortuous defile for carriages down the centre of the street, which afforded fine opportunities for skill with the reins. (9)

This description coincides with Elizabeth-Jane's first impression of the market-town as she goes to see Henchard for the first time. It is the scene as it would appear to a stranger. The account is much more of a detached, objective record than later descriptions of the market-place in the novel. People are presented primarily as organisms. There is no particular attention to their roles in society, other than the fact that they are at market. There are no indications of their relations in the sense intended here. In the immediately following paragraph, which could almost be read as an introduction to the present-day study of non-verbal communication, the market men are vividly described as isolated individuals signalling to one another across empty space. The social and relational context is as minimal as in a psychological experiment. (This is not to say that the language used cannot be read as having social and relational content; but the passage is not written in such a way as to draw on that content for the purposes of the story as it is being currently pursued.) The physical setting, or place, has a similar significance. The scene is described, for example, in terms of buildings and other objects as obstacles to free movement. Hardy is giving a highly literary account of circulation problems. But if the market-place is very crowded, the crowding is given no particular social or relational significance as it is in later chapters.

When Lucetta moves into High-Place Hall it is described as being:

empty for a year or two, while before that interval its occupancy had been irregular. The reason for its unpopularity was soon made manifest. Some of its rooms overlooked the market-place; and such a prospect from such a house was not considered desirable or seemly by its would-be occupiers. (10)

And we are led to interpret its undesirable location primarily in terms of the 'organismic' image which we have gained of the market-place - in psychological jargon, as a place carrying 'high sensory overload'.

Shortly after Lucetta has taken up residence in the house, she is found waiting with Elizabeth for a call from Mr Henchard. She watches him move about in the busy market-place below.

They sat in adjoining windows of the same room in Lucetta's great stone mansion, netting, and looking out upon the market, which formed an animated scene.... The farmers as a rule preferred the

open *carrefour* for their transactions, despite its inconvenient jostlings and the danger from crossing vehicles, to the gloomy sheltered market-room provided for them. Here they surged on this one day of the week, forming a little world of leggings, switches, and sample bags....

All over-clothes here were worn as if they were an inconvenience, a hampering necessity. Some men were well-dressed; but the majority were careless in that respect, appearing in suits which were historical records of their wearer's deeds, sun-scorchings, and daily struggles for many years past. Yet many carried ruffled cheque-books in their pockets which regulated at the bank hard by a balance of never less than four figures. In fact, what these gibbous human shapes specially represented was ready money - money insistently ready - not ready next year like a nobleman's - often not merely ready at the bank like a professional man's, but ready in their large plump hands.

It happened that to-day there rose in the midst of them all two or three tall apple-trees standing as if they grew on the spot; till it was perceived that they were held by men from the cider-districts who came here to sell them, bringing the clay of their county on their boots. Elizabeth-Jane, who had often observed them, said, 'I wonder if the same trees come every week?'

'What trees?' said Lucetta, absorbed in watching for Henchard. Elizabeth replied vaguely, for an incident checked her. Behind one of the trees stood Farfrae.... Elizabeth-Jane sighed.

'Are you particularly interested in anybody out there?' said Lucetta.

'O no,' said her companion, a quick red shooting over her face. Luckily Farfrae's figure was immediately covered by the apple-tree.

Lucetta looked hard at her. 'Quite sure?' she said.

'O yes,' said Elizabeth-Jane.

Again Lucetta looked out. 'They are all farmers, I suppose?' she said.

'No. There's Mr Bulge - he's a wine merchant; there's Benjamin Brownlet - a horse dealer; and Kitson, the pig breeder; and Yopper, the auctioneer; besides maltsters, and millers - and so on.' Farfrae stood out quite distinctly now; but she did not mention him. (11)

The first account of the market-place was a relatively objective description, as it might have appeared to Elizabeth-Jane as she moved along the High Street. It was free of any particular significance for the relations of the principal characters in The Mayor of Casterbridge. Now, the view is from above, from a first-floor window, as it appears to the two young women. The significance of the scene for Elizabeth-Jane is in Farfrae's appearance. For Lucetta it is less charged. She is introduced to the roles of people they observe, by way of their occupation, and understands that they are not all farmers, undifferentiated as to role. The greater part of the passage is concerned with observations that bear primarily on the social status of the market-goers.

Place is referred to in social terms: 'mansion', 'open *carrefour*

for their transactions', 'sheltered market-room provided'. Clothes, and even more so money, have always been indicators of social position or role. Expectations about people's behaviour and values follow readily on observing what they wear, how much money they have or how they use it. Fashion has been interpreted by social scientists as primarily a device for communicating aspects of the wearer's position in society. For some, money is the entire key to the analysis of social roles.

The market-place is now a 'world of leggings, switches and sample-bags'. Suits tell a man's story. The social worlds of farmer, nobleman and professional are characterised by their dealings with money. The man who sells cider apple-trees advertises himself and his trade by appearing with his trees. This role-prop is used at the critical moment of the passage as far as the developing relations of the characters are concerned. It saves Lucetta from spotting Farfrae and Elizabeth-Jane's interest in him.

Two chapters further on Lucetta's interest has also turned to Farfrae:

... in addition to Lucetta's house being a home, that raking view of the market-place which it afforded had as much attraction for her as for Lucetta. The *carrefour* was like the regulation Open Place in spectacular dramas, where the incidents that occur always happen to bear on the lives of the adjoining residents. Farmers, merchants, dairymen, quacks, hawkers, appeared there from week to week, and disappeared as the afternoon wasted away. It was the node of all orbits.

From Saturday to Saturday was as from day to day with the two young women now. In an emotional sense they did not live at all during the intervals. Wherever they might go wandering on other days, on market-day they were sure to be at home. Both stole sly glances out of the window at Farfrae's shoulders and poll. His face they seldom saw, for, either through shyness, or not to disturb his mercantile mood, he avoided looking towards their quarters.

Thus things went on, till a certain market-morning brought a new sensation.... (12)

A new-fashioned agricultural implement, a horse-drill, appears in the market-place. It attracts an interested crowd. Among them is Farfrae. The two young women decide to go down to look at the instrument. They meet Henchard, with whom they each have an embarrassed exchange. He ridicules the machine and the man who recommends it, Farfrae. He leaves, and the women speak with Farfrae.

In the silence which followed Farfrae appeared only conscious of her; to have passed from perception of Elizabeth into a brighter sphere of existence than she appertained to. Lucetta, discerning that he was much mixed that day, partly in his mercantile mood and partly in his romantic one, said gaily to him:

'Well, don't forsake the machine for us,' and went indoors with her companion. (13)



The significance of the market-place has moved from being simply a bustling, crowded setting for human figures seen from afar to being a place with deep, emotional resonance for the two women through whose eyes it has been presented. The house is no longer architecturally described. It is a home rather than a mansion. It is the focus of threads of interpersonal relations rather than a sign of affluence and social position. The location of High-Place Hall may have been disagreeable to most prospective tenants. To Lucetta and her companion, Elizabeth, it could not have been better situated. At the beginning of the passage just quoted Hardy is quite explicit about the part being played in his narrative by the house and by the market-place.

A new element appears. Commerce is one of the major components of a market-place, and indeed of The Mayor of Casterbridge. Now it is given its significance as the context for the relationship between Lucetta, Henchard and Farfrae. The rivalry of the two men and Henchard's animosity is clearly stated. Here, Lucetta actually comes down into the world of commerce rather than observing it from above, as she did before. But she leaves when she finds Farfrae unable to disentangle his relation to her from his business concerns.

The world of agricultural commerce also envelops the incident which had catalysed Lucetta and Farfrae's mutual attraction in the previous chapter. It encapsulates in a developing sequence of events a transition from an organismic to a role to a relational view of people and place. The two characters' realisation of their new relationship is seen against a recapitulation of the earlier significances of the market-place. To give the full flavour of this transition the passage is cited at length.

It is the day of the great Candlemas fair. Farfrae visits High-Place Hall to see Elizabeth. He finds only Lucetta.

'The fair to-day seems a large one,' she said when, by a natural deviation, their eyes sought the busy scene without. 'Your numerous fairs and markets keep me interested. How many things I think of while I watch from here!' ... 'Do you look out often?' he asked.

'Yes - very often.'

'Do you look for anyone you know?'

Why should she have answered as she did?

'I look as at a picture merely. But,' she went on, turning pleasantly to him, 'I may do so now - I may look for you. You are always there, are you not? Ah - I don't mean it seriously! But it is amusing to look for somebody one knows in a crowd, even if one does not want him. It takes off the terrible oppressiveness of being surrounded by a throng, and having no point of junction with it through a single individual.' (14)

Lucetta herself is made to comment directly on the transition from the market-place as a setting for undifferentiated human beings to its being a place with particular relational meaning. And in doing

so she admits of her interest in Farfrae, for the first time to his face.

They talk briefly about their previous lives. Then:

The fair without the windows was now raging thick and loud. It was the chief hiring fair of the year.... In substance it was a whitey-brown crowd flecked with white - this being the body of labourers waiting for places. The long bonnets of the women, like waggon-tilts, their cotton gowns and checked shawls, mixed with the carters' smock-frocks; for they, too, entered into the hiring. Among the rest, at the corner of the pavement, stood an old shepherd, who attracted the eyes of Lucetta and Farfrae by his stillness. He was evidently a chastened man.... He had planted the stem of his crook in the gutter and was resting upon the bow, which was polished to silver brightness by the long friction of his hands.... A little way off negotiations were proceeding which had reference to him....

The negotiations were between a farmer from a distant county and the old man's son. In these there was a difficulty. The farmer would not take the crust without the crumb of the bargain, in other words, the old man without the younger; and the son had a sweetheart on his present farm, who stood by, waiting the issue with pale lips.

'I'm sorry to leave ye, Nelly,' said the young man with emotion. 'But, you see, I can't starve father, and he's out o'work at Lady-day. 'Tis only thirty-five mile.'

The girl's lips quivered. 'Thirty-five mile!' she murmured. 'Ah! 'tis enough! I shall never see 'ee again!'.... and she turned her face to Lucetta's wall to hide her weeping....

Lucetta's eyes, full of tears, met Farfrae's. His, too, to her surprise, were moist at the scene. (15)

Farfrae goes down to the group and manages their sorrowful situation by hiring the old man and the son himself. He returns to Lucetta in her house. But the world of work not only brings them together, it intervenes between them.

... Farfrae again looked out of the window into the thick of the fair.

Two farmers met and shook hands, and being quite near the window their remarks could be heard as others' had been.

'Have you seen Mr Farfrae this morning?' asked one. 'He promised to meet me here at the stroke of twelve.... he's mostly a man to his word.'

'I quite forgot the engagement,' murmured Farfrae.

'Now you must go,' said she; 'must you not?'....

He looked anxiously at the farmer who was seeking him, and who just then ominously walked across to where Henchard was standing, and he looked into the room and at her. 'I like staying; but I fear I must go!' he said. 'Business ought not to be neglected, ought it?'....

'What has happened to us to-day is very curious.'

Something to think over when we are alone, it's like to be?'

....

'Well, whatever it has been, it is now over; and the market calls you to be gone.'

'Yes, yes. Market-business! I wish there were no business in the warrld.' (16)

In this incident Lucetta and Farfrae reveal to one another, in their different ways, an interest and concern for the romantic. From it can be seen to follow the development of their relationship and their marriage. It is worked out in relation to events in the market-place which is the 'Open Place' of the story and which is successively seen in the three frameworks we are dealing with.

Against the background of the organismic throng, the old shepherd is introduced. Initially he too is simply a figure, read through his posture, a human organism who supports himself on a stick which has been polished by his hand in use. But the stick is a crook - a sign of his occupation, just as the apple-trees of the cider farmers. And his role in society is at the heart of the negotiations which are going on. Finally, the relational or interpersonal aspect of these negotiations is produced. They mean a break-up for the young man either with his father or his sweetheart. Thus, in no more than a page, people at the hiring fair are successively seen in the guises of all three models of Man.

It is the final, relational guise which appropriately evokes the shared emotion and involvement of Lucetta and Farfrae, and which provokes the 'curious' event which will bind them together in their thoughts when the market is over and they are alone and apart. Throughout the episode and at its end the significance of the market as a place of business is clarified. As we have already seen, the theme of business takes on more and more importance as the novel progresses.

#### A SOCIAL SCIENCE OF 'PLACE'

What might be the significance of such an analysis through models of Man for the relationship which we are discussing in this book between literature and social psychology? From the standpoint of social psychology, or the social sciences generally, it is tempting to see literature as a source of new insights and concepts or as a testing ground for hypotheses. This is the approach which has recently been adopted and developed by a number of geographers for example, specifically in relation to the concept of place which they take as a central, organising concept for making sense of our immersion in or interpenetration with the physical world.

A geographical engagement with literature may be very varied, if we follow one recent commentary. (17) Poets, novelists and their writers can be treated as topographers themselves, exercising a particular skill in word-painting. One might look for the geography or topography which lies behind literature, a landscape which stimulates it or organises it; or trace geographical associations in literature, making an atlas of literary references, or guidebook to

a favourite author. Literature may provide much of our indirect knowledge about the environment, and so be a key to understanding people's environmental perceptions and attitudes. Sometimes its influence may be so potent as to exercise social control:

The consistent negative portrayal, or plain neglect, of the North of England at the expense of the South in novels and poems, has contributed to a Southern-based or -biased perceptual frame of reference among the political, financial and business decision-makers in Britain. (18)

Or more optimistically, imaginative or 'false' geographies, such as occur in the pastoral for example, may give rise to alternative and creative perceptions of familiar surroundings.

Substitute 'social processes' for 'geography' in the last paragraph and we could have a general programme for the social psychological use of literature. Depending on their inductive or deductive bias, social psychologists with an interest in 'place' might use Hardy's portrayal of Casterbridge market-place as a source of different sorts of meaning which 'place' can hold, or as a test of the generality of the models of Man. In the first case, they might arrive at a distinction between 'location' (the where of human behaviour as such), 'setting' (the where of behaviour which is defined exclusively in social terms) and 'place' (the where of human relations). Following our version of the models of Man argument, (19) they might conclude that only 'places' are the proper subject of social psychology: only in 'places' is there an examination of an active and reciprocal relation between people and their environment in a full social context. Social psychology must deal with the social interplay between individuals or individuals and their institutions. Individual behaviour as such is the field of psychology, social behaviour as such of sociology. It is the socio-psychological significance of the market-place which one finds in Chapter 24 of The Mayor of Casterbridge at the crucial meeting of Henchard, Farfrae, Lucetta and Elizabeth-Jane in front of the horse-drill.

#### HARDY'S USE OF PLACE

The interpenetration of relations between people and their environment is an achievement of Hardy's 'novels of character and environment' which has been insufficiently discussed in the critical writing. There has been a great amount of topographical attention, attempting to locate the events of the novels in actual places in Dorset and other parts of Wessex, providing descriptions of those places and relating Hardy's own experience of them. His skill at portraying Wessex, giving one the feel of the landscape, the villages and towns, has been admired. One critic (20) has recently gone further, to argue that a key to understanding the meaning of the novels lies in appreciating how and why Hardy 'changed' the Wessex landscape, that is in mapping the departures from veridicality of his geography. Elsewhere the environment has been analysed as a character in its right, as a series of metaphors for the

states of mind of the actors, or as an 'embodiment' of their experience.

These approaches tend to place the environment in the background of human action. They distance 'character' from 'environment', and deny Hardy's essentially 'ecological' achievement. He deals with character-in-environment, in a way that makes the two inseparable; just as a truly social psychology takes the individual-in-society as its unit of study. Characters, and their relations with one another and with the environment are a 'system'. It is the inevitable 'whereness' of Hardy's narrative events that makes the sense of place which has been so much admired, though in so many different ways. One cannot imagine the events transposed to another location; not because, for example, Egdon Heath 'caused' Eustacia Vye to behave as she did in The Return of the Native; but because an essential part of her behaviour is the fact that it happened on and in relation to Egdon Heath. She is not simply Eustacia; she is Eustacia-in-Egdon-Heath. This systemic whereness makes Hardy particularly attractive for a social psychologist who is interested in persons-in-their-environment.

From this viewpoint it is possible to approach the criticism of Hardy's novels and the concerns of an environmental social psychology as having mutual implications for one another. The social psychologist can find in the novels an outline agenda for the study of 'place'. Hardy deals with 'displacement' as well as place; his places are given a clear social reference, particularly through the roles of working-class characters; places are located in a temporal dimension. These components of place are features which are conspicuously lacking from social psychology generally. It has tended to become fixed at one pole of bipolar concepts: studying leadership independently of follower-ship, conformity but not non-conformity, attraction and not repulsion, attitudes but not the absence of any attitude. Despite its apparent reference, most social psychology to date has proceeded in a social vacuum, giving very little attention indeed to social context. Similarly the historical or temporal element has been neglected, partly because of the convenience of instantaneous experimental studies.

There is a variety of space- and place-themes which recur in Hardy and which would fill out this agenda: for example, the elements, weather, the work-place, inns and churches, the dance. The spatial relations of 'inside' and 'outside', particularly of the home, and of people overhearing one another are again and again used to build the narrative. Although most of these elements have been referred to by critics, they have never been taken together in a concentrated study of the way in which Hardy uses place as a figure through which character and environment essentially interpenetrate one another.

## DECONSTRUCTING ELIZABETH-JANE

Rather than develop this argument further, or more specifically allow, for example, the treatment of Casterbridge market-place to reflect upon the socio-psychological study of crowding, we will finish this chapter on a more thoroughly critical, 'deconstructive' line, by suggesting that a models of Man approach to place in Hardy can be seen to carry with it a fundamental weakness which undermines its objectives. For this purpose we will make some points about the character Elizabeth-Jane in The Mayor of Casterbridge.

On a first reading the various models through which the Casterbridge market-place is presented act as counterpoints to the development of Lucetta and Farfrae's relationship. This is an obvious reading in view of the important part which their relationship plays in promoting Henchard's downfall; and it is his tragedy which is usually taken as the central subject of the novel. His massive temperament tends to obscure alternative readings. But when we pull out the market-place scenes for particular examination, our attention is more easily drawn to Elizabeth-Jane. What is her part in these scenes, and further in the novel as a whole?

The essence of her part, we suggest, is as a contradictory combination of character and authorial device. As a character, she appears most readily as an unsophisticated girl, whose major standard is 'respectability' and who desperately needs to 'become wise'. Her story is one of the gradual acquisition of 'wisdom' or knowledge, along a path of abasement and suffering. The novel ends with her, in a long passage which indicates her developed consciousness: she learns now from teaching others, whereas previously she had tried to learn from silent observation and solitary study.

It is in this earlier state, creeping 'silently about observing the scene', that she fulfils much of her role as authorial device. More than half of the descriptions of Casterbridge are given as through her eyes; and she provides the major viewpoint for about the first one hundred pages of the novel. More than half of the chapters begin with a reference to her, usually in the first paragraph. This is especially the case in the first half of the novel. For readers of the original serial she would initially have provided an instant point of continuity between instalments.

Her position in the market-place passages reveal something of her development as a character and her simultaneous shift from being an authorial device to becoming a person. But it also exemplifies 'contradictions' which persist because of her dual role.

The first, physicalistic description of the market-place is given as though through the 'unpractised eyes' of a girl 'fresh from the seclusion of a seaside cottage' - a patently authorial means of introducing the reader to a new scene. By the next view she has learnt and is able to comment on some of the social structure of the market-town. She has been made aware explicitly of her own role as the Mayor's daughter, in a development which also makes her reject a

predominantly physical identity for herself 'as the town beauty'. Both in her new and convenient role as Lucetta's companion, and in her description of the scene from the upstairs window of High-Place Hall she is again doing the author's work; although some more personal significance for her is briefly introduced in the appearance below of Farfrae's figure.

In the following chapter she is no longer necessary. Some familiarity, on the part of Lucetta and Farfrae, with the physical, organic and social role aspects of the hiring-fair can now be presupposed. Against that background the relational significance of it for them is developed. When Elizabeth-Jane reappears in the episode of the horse-drill, it is as a character in her own right; her part in the episode is of relational significance.

Although her more infrequent appearances in the second half of the novel tend to present her as a person, there are a number of major contradictions between her position as character and as authorial device. We can find them prefigured in the first description of the market-place. Casterbridge is presented as a set of 'metropolitan novelties to the unpractised eyes of Elizabeth-Jane', in spite of Hardy's extended and practised description of them. The reader is uncertain what Elizabeth-Jane is seeing and what is given by the author. And the contradiction also remains ambiguous in the further uncertainty as to whether it is a strictly authorial contradiction, or itself constitutes a representation of Elizabeth-Jane's own unfamiliarity with and distance from the scene.

To illustrate just one more of these contradictions: a particularly striking example occurs in the context of the visit by a Royal Personage to Casterbridge. A drunken Henchard disgraces himself in front of the assembled company. Elizabeth-Jane is there for the ceremony. Her attention is drawn to her father by the gasps of all the ladies. 'Elizabeth-Jane peeped through the shoulders of those in front, saw what it was, and was terrified; and then her interest in the spectacle as a strange phenomenon got the better of her fear.' (22) The curiosity for the reader is that this reaction should occur at a point in the narrative when Elizabeth-Jane's relation to Henchard appears to be particularly close. After a period of painful estrangement, she has become reconciled with him. She is caring for him and, above all, trying to keep him from drink. The semi-colon in the sentence quoted above transforms an intimate interpersonal relation into a mere 'interest' in a 'strange phenomenon'. One senses a callous reduction of Elizabeth-Jane to her earlier position of observer.

With hesitations such as this Elizabeth-Jane progresses from being a mechanical observer of events, and especially of the environments which are characteristic of a Hardy novel, through a number of social roles, albeit for the convenience still of the narrative (to torment Henchard, or to bring Lucetta more easily into the story), until she is a person in her own right. But in the last analysis she is the 'victim' of the developmental structure which we have identified with the 'models of Man' code. She sustains herself as a person with difficulty. Her struggle for 'wisdom' is inauthentic,

because her initial naiveté is contrived. At the end of the story, when she finds rest, she is recognised not to be capable of enjoying the happiness which could be hers. The final chapters read less as a last act of attention to her character, rather as an apology for past authorial abuses, if not a convenient way to round off the tale. The final sentences of the novel again deny her identity by their unacknowledged shift into authorial commentary.

Despite the emphasis which we have been able to put upon her, Elizabeth-Jane is more usually a rather invisible character. She scarcely appears in the critical writing on The Mayor of Casterbridge. The novel is interpreted almost exclusively in terms of the story of Henchard, the man of character. It is as though Hardy's title determines the focus of our attention, in the same way in which a social psychological experiment is always taken to be 'about' whatever topic is specified in the title of its report. Elizabeth-Jane is akin to the experimental subject who does not give positive instances of the behaviour explicitly under examination. When reading a report of an experiment on direction-finding, for example, we are usually not allowed an interest in the processes of those subjects who do not find their way. If a capacity to get lost is the focus, then it is the report of the behaviour of those who do find their way which is inattentive and undifferentiated.

Experimental subjects are also the victims of contradiction. They are essential to the playing out of the experiment; but most of their psychological processes are kept in the background, undeveloped. Because of the conventions of the experimental report, they are not explicitly referred to. The experimenter, as author, needs these characters to allow his story to develop, but he allows them only a marginal identity. Hardy, similarly, is prepared to use a character for authorial purposes and in so doing to deny her her full identity as a person. (23)

We do not need to discuss whether the experimenter or Hardy should be accused of political or moral abuse of the status of personhood. The problem is that both the novel and the experiment appear to rest in important respects on contradicting reasonable expectations of how they will treat persons, expectations which implicitly they establish. Readers appear to be unaware of the contradictions, and so tend to connive with them, in particular if they adopt a realist reading. The antidote is to see both experiment and novel as a construction, and to focus attention on the means by which such constructions are achieved. This we have done for parts of The Mayor of Casterbridge. Whether the means in turn have moral or political correlatives is an important, but here a separate, question.

#### FRAGMENTATION THROUGH MODELS

It is Hardy's use of a 'models of Man' code in particular which sets up expectations for Elizabeth-Jane which are not fulfilled. Contradictions leave her development as a character in a fragmented state.



The code may be as damaging in psychology. In 1972 when Israel discussed the three models used here, it was exciting to have apparently found a basis for clearly differentiating social psychology from sociology and psychology; and a means of criticising much that previously had passed under the label of 'social psychology', but which was almost exclusively individualistic. If Mead and Marx could be considered as parents of the relational model, that only added to the excitement. (24) But the outcome of following this path is to fragment the human subject under study in quite as damaging a way as occurs in the individualistic or collectivistic theories which implicitly are under attack. (25) The analysis of studies of crowding, (26) referred to at the beginning of the chapter concluded that restricted individualistic or collectivist assumptions actually constituted a large measure of so-called 'problems of crowding'. If the psychologist merely assimilates the assumptions rather than transcends them he cannot hope to counter the problem.

We would not argue that an analytic distinction between different models of Man is fundamentally untenable. The intelligibility of the operation refutes that. The readability of, for example, the opening of The Mayor of Casterbridge and the facility with which our attention is progressively drawn into the tale as it expands through the models suggest that they do offer a readily available framework for reading, for making sense of phenomena. But their separation also produces problems, both in literature and psychology. And its allure conceals what can follow any analytic operation, the demanding and creative task of synthesis.

At the risk of appearing to naturalise such a synthesis, we can refer back to the material cited earlier, in which a woman describes her walk through the Eaglestone estate at Milton Keynes. (27) In the two following passages we indicate what may be organismic, role, and relational components in the discourse.

In the square on the right side there is a house which the owner has recently painted in yellow and brown, the colours of a Pullman coach, and I really like it. There have been very few houses on the estate painted by their owners.

The second play area on the right, my daughter is a devil to get past with. There are ramps and steps and also it has some lovely cylinders made out of solid concrete. There is also a little climbing-frame for smaller children. My daughter can just manage it.

Coming farther down the path, there is a Japanese lady in the end house whom I often help with her English. Arriving at Market Hill - to the right there is that wonderful slide, which is the greatest amenity of the estate as far as the children are con-

cerned. Nearby there is a place to sit. Probably this would be the place where I would most likely sit and talk to people, because the shop is nearby. Here I could watch Abby go round and round the slide, and look at people come and go to and from the shop. There would also be people waiting for the telephone sitting on the bench.

I can give you more details about the setting and what happens there if you want. Straightaway, coming out of the house into this little square, I am aware of what a shabby state these so-called 'front gardens', Council-maintained, always are. I usually look at mine and Edna's, the lady from number 15, because they are nice. Here, in this space, I am very likely to stop and talk to neighbours because these are the people I live closest to, and I am on first-name terms with almost everybody in this terrace. To get to the Ferndale playground I usually come on this side of the houses. I could go around this way, but this way takes me close to the garages and I do not want to encourage my daughter to go in that direction. And that is actually not the most direct route to the swings.

This analysis is crude, and very far from definitive. Some words and phrases undoubtedly contain more than one component; and the content of some is very much open to question. But the striking feature of the woman's description is not just that it can be read without difficulty as containing all three types of component. She moves rapidly between them at her ease, and does so throughout a transcript which runs to many pages. An effect of this example of everyday discourse is to blur the distinctions between components which in literary and psychological discourse may become fragmented. Thus, there is no inevitable consequence of fragmentation in the models code.

Of course the risk of naturalising a particular interpretation is very real. We are not suggesting that everyday discourse is superior in any sense. Further analysis might well show that the woman's discourse is problematic in its own particular manner of articulation through models of Man. This problem would then become the focus of interest, as it did in the case of Elizabeth-Jane. Similarly the fragmentation of models in psychology, how it is achieved and some of its consequences, is equally interesting in its own right. Indeed the use of the models code in different forms of discourse is more interesting for us than drawing sharp distinctions between those forms.

#### CONCLUSION

We began this chapter with a hope that literature might yield greater insights into the notion of 'sense of place' than psychology appeared able to do. At first Hardy appeared, in the particular instance of Casterbridge market-place, to be able to present a much more elaborated picture of place than one would find in socio-psychological texts; but one which also was concordant with the relatively advanced meta-analysis of social psychology presented by Israel. At the same time the 'models' code might be taken as a useful socio-psychological resource for clarifying certain narrative devices.

In the latter half of the chapter, however, we detected fundamental 'weaknesses' in Hardy's picture; and weaknesses which are shared by social psychology. These in turn were seen to be a product of reading. The violation of personal identity and the manipulative relation in which the realist reader becomes implicated come from allowing oneself to build up expectations of the novelist and the psychologist which the inherent weaknesses of his practice could never allow him to fulfil.

Our conclusion is that the contiguous study of literature and social psychology may sometimes contribute not so much to substantive insights, as to understanding the ways in which these forms of discourse are constructed, and to defining higher order problems for the analysis of discourse.