SUE BRIDEHEAD

AS A MODEL FOR MODERN FEMINISM

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I. INTRODUCTION

"But I was a coward—as so many women are—and my theoretic unconventionality broke down".
The notion of equality among the sexes is thought to be a relatively new notion, with the memorable markers of its beginnings being equal voting rights, bra-burning, ERA action and the like. Before the actual birth of such organized action toward equality, however, there had to be a pregnancy. A slower, more subtle growth preceded the overt changes, and this slow, subtle growth manifests itself in art, music, and literature. During the industrial revolution, agricultural life was declining and traditions were broken. Basic moral, religious, social, and political codes began to undergo certain changes--changes which were reflected in literature. This time of transition is often noted as the literary beginning of the feminist movement; and while feminist topics seem to swell visibly during this time, the beginning of the movement can be traced back even further. Although the Nineteenth Century treatment of the independent woman may have been considered a new approach, this type of character development is not so new at all. We find the stereotype of a weak, frail, and helpless woman broken in the 1700's by Samuel Richardson, with his strong and virtuous feminine characters, and in the early 1800's by Jane Austen, with her carefully created practical and sensible ladies of society. These are, in fact, only two of many authors who begin, early on, to experiment with the development of feminist role models. The trend, then, for writers even before the Nineteenth Century was a move toward the emancipation of women, by setting the example and making preparations for a social eventuality, which developed into today's equal voting rights and job opportunities.
Even as much as one hundred years before, Samuel Richardson created feminine characters with as much intelligence, dignity, and self-definition as those created by more modern authors. Clarissa and Pamela in Richardson's *Clarissa* and *Pamela*, published in the mid-1700's, are arguably better feminist models than some of those created by Nineteenth Century writers. The novel *Pamela*, written in 1740, was the first popular novel ever to be recognized as a "best seller" (Richardson, p.7). Along with its status as the first best seller, *Pamela* gained status as one of the first novels in which the heroine is a main character "...with masculine characters only figures in her story" (Richardson, p.8). Margaret A. Doody says, "Pamela is, I believe, the first important heroine in English fiction who works for a living, and could earn a living by the work of her hands" (Richardson, 13). Pamela is only fifteen when the lady she serves dies. The lady's son keeps her in the household and eventually begins to make advances toward her. Pamela's greatest interest is in defending her virtue, even if it results in her dismissal. When she is dismissed, however, she decides to remain in the household until she completes the work she has in progress. In one confrontation with the master of the house, she shows her courage and independence:

But, sir, said I, let me ask you but one question and pray don't let me be called names for it; for I don't mean disrespectfully: Why, if I have done amiss, am I not left to be discharged by your housekeeper as the other maids have been? And if Jane, Rachel, or Hannah
were to offend, would your honour stoop to take notice of them? And why should you so demean yourself to take notice of me? Pray, sir, if I have not been worse than others, why should I suffer more than others? and why should I not be turned away, and there's an end of it? For indeed, I am not of consequence enough for my master to concern himself, and be angry about such a creature as me. (91)

While she is afraid of the possibility of being seduced by the master of the house, she consistently stands her ground in confronting him and in resisting his advances. Though she becomes very agitated, weeps and is distraught over the master's behavior, she is also capable of thinking for herself, planning strategies, defending herself, and taking control of her own life. Thus, she rejects all of the young master's overtures, going to great lengths to evade him, and eventually he realizes that the only way he will ever have her is to marry her. Even when he proposes marriage, Pamela is very careful to be sure that she is entering into a real marriage and not a sham that could be her downfall. After the marriage, she says

for this I might say, as they both knew my story, that I had not wanted both for menaces and temptations; and had I complied with the one, or been intimidated by the other, I should not have been what I was (Richardson, p. 459).

Finally, after the marriage and after having been accepted by the master's friends as worthy to be his lady, Pamela refers to her
husband as "my best friend who always takes delight to have me praised" (Richardson, p. 494). Even though some of the role stereotyping of the time does exist in the marriage, Pamela is very much her own person even as a married woman and sees her husband as both husband and friend.

Margaret A. Doody's comment on Pamela's independence being an important "first" in English fiction might lead readers to believe that only fictional women were making important moves toward independence at such an early time. Pamela's friendship with her husband is one that is somewhat similar to the real relationship between Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin in the late Eighteenth Century. Wollstonecraft herself at the age of twenty-one declared, "I will not marry" (Sunstein, p. 12). She makes the unusual choice of spinsterhood—and she proceeded to have an affair with the painter, Henry Fuseli, a married man. She also had a passionate affair with an American businessman and gambler, Gilbert Imlay, who was the father of her illegitimate daughter, Fanny. She finally relinquished her principled opposition to the institution of marriage so that she could give social respectability to her child. Their marriage was called the "most famous radical literary marriage of Eighteenth Century England" (Mellor, p. 1). Mary Wollstonecraft died after giving birth to her daughter Mary, but not before she had written A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, in which she ardently advocated education opportunities for females. Vindication claimed, "State-supported education for females as well as males would render women better fitted to serve
as sensible mothers, more interesting companions to men, and more useful citizens of the nation" (Mellor, p.3). Regardless, of the fact that Wollstonecraft seemed to flounder through a series of passionate, yet disastrous events, she made real contributions to the newly emerging view of women. We can see that she made strides in her relationship with William Godwin (much like those of Pamela with her young master) in a letter from Godwin to Wollstonecraft:

Of their love he says, "It grew with equal advances in the minds of each... One sex did not take the priority which long established custom had awarded it... It was friendship melting into love" (Spark, p. 7).

Richardson also created an independent-minded woman in his novel Clarissa, a novel which is not unlike Pamela in that the heroine commands attention and requires respect. Henry Fielding, nonetheless, endeavors to show the reader a different kind of Pamela in Shamela, which is both a marvelous satire on Pamela and a picture of an independent, self-determined woman. Shamela has only been made more crafty as a result of her affair with the parson and having had his child. She sets out with great deliberation to entrap the master of the house, Mr. Booby, as soon as she realizes that there is a possibility of marrying him. She plans her strategies in her letters to her mother:

for my own part, I am convinced he will marry me.... I shall be Mrs. Booby, and be mistress of a great estate and do what I will.... Well, and can't I see Parson Williams as well after marriage as before... (Fielding, p. 550).
While Pamela is genuinely terrified in her situation, determined to protect her virtue at any cost, and therefore enduring dramatic trials, Shamela is just playing a game to win a predetermined prize: marriage and its privileges, fully intending to appropriate all the assets of her groom for her use and pleasure without either love or regard to him, while she continues her other relationships. Shamela is interested only in the best way to take care of herself in her time and situation, and she is deliberate and ruthless in the execution of her plans. She never feels a qualm of conscience, never looks back, never veers from the path to the goal. Once she has managed to marry Mr. Booby, she is ashamed of her mother and only sees her in private. In short, nothing is to interfere with her needs, desires, and schemes. She rejects her mother, manipulates her husband, and continues her involvement with her lover. Fielding, thus, creates a satirical picture of a woman who is so sure, so steady, and sufficiently sneaky that Pamela, with all of her virtue and protestations, seems comparatively weak. Fielding's Shamela provides an example of frustrated feminism—the kind of feminism that results from a lack of independence, forcing a woman to manipulate in order to gain power.

Richardson and Fielding, however, are not the only authors who move into the female mind, write from her perspective, and find her powers of observation, her struggles, and her ability to withstand the pressures of life equal to that of a man. In 1813 Jane Austen introduced Elizabeth Bennet in Pride and Prejudice. Elizabeth Bennet may be a mere lady in a man's society, but she
carries herself with dignity. She has good sense and a sharp mind. Her relationship with Mr. Darcy is made believable by the fact that she has the sensitivity to fall in love, the sharpness to be cautious, and the powers of reflection needed to understand Mr. Darcy. Her love for him seems to be based on good judgment, not romantic notions.

Even before her creation of Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen wrote *Sense and Sensibility*, a novel about manners and the lives of two sisters, one who carries herself with practical sense and reason and the other who lives by generous quantities of emotion and sensitivity. First, there is Elinor, the eldest daughter who possessed a strength of understanding and coolness of judgment which qualified her, though only nineteen, to be the counsellor of her mother, and enabled her frequently to counteract, to the advantage of them all, that eagerness of mind in Mrs. Dashwood which must generally have led to imprudence

(Austen, p. 8).

This first description of Elinor prepares the reader for later scenes where Elinor overcomes circumstances of potential despair and instead behaves with dignity and good sense. Moreover, Elinor sets up the contrast for her younger sister, Marianne. Marianne is depicted as being clever and eager, but "her sorrows, her joys, could have no moderation" and later "she was everything but prudent" (Austen, p. 8). The title, then, of *Sense and Sensibility*
refers respectively to Elinor and Marianne, and their actions throughout the novel testify to the aptness of these labels. Mrs. Dashwood, their mother, tends to be more similar to Marianne in the way she makes decisions and manages her emotions, so she must rely heavily on Elinor to help make decisions. Even though Elinor is only nineteen, Mrs. Dashwood requires her advice when she gets ready to find a new home. She worries about how to make a choice "suited to the prudence of her eldest daughter, whose steadier judgment rejected several houses as too large for their income" (Austen, p. 14). Later when it comes time to hire servants, Mrs. Dashwood wants to have many servants, but Elinor advises against it. "The discretion of Elinor prevailed. Her wisdom too limited the number of their servants to three". (Austen, p. 24). As they prepare to move, it is Elinor who makes the bulk of the decisions, while Marianne wanders about their beloved old home and weeps her goodbyes to the house, the trees and their branches, saying, "When shall I cease to regret you! When learn to feel a home elsewhere!" (Austen, p.25). Marianne never participates in household decisions; she only revels in the newness of change and laments the loss of that which is familiar.

Throughout the story, Elinor acts as a check to Marianne's excessive displays of emotion. She often reminds Marianne of what is reasonable and realistic, counterbalancing the weight of Marianne's romantic notions. When Marianne starts spending time with Willoughby, her first love, she is swept away by her feelings and begins to behave inappropriately with him in public. She is
so caught up in her own emotions that she ignores the codes of society and the feelings of her relatives. When Elinor points out that Marianne's actions on a particular morning are not acceptable, Marianne insists, "I have never spent a pleasanter morning in my life". To which Elinor replies, "I am afraid that the pleasantness of an employment does not always evince its propriety" (Austen, p.57). Elinor speaks as the voice of reason, hoping to convince Marianne to behave somewhat more modestly in the future. Elinor also tries to direct Marianne in her ideas about Happiness. Marianne naively believes that money has nothing to do with happiness. When she asks, "What have wealth or grandeur to do with happiness?", Elinor answers, "Grandeur has but little, but wealth has much to do with it" (Austen, p. 75). Marianne entertains noble ideas, but her behavior is likely not so noble as that of Elinor.

The more noble side of Elinor's character emerges when she must silently endure the loss of the man she loves. Just as Marianne finds herself betrayed by Willoughby, Elinor learns of her own Edward's engagement to Miss Lucy Steele. While Marianne becomes quite obviously stricken with grief and receives attention and comfort from her friends and family, Elinor bears her own grief silently and with dignity. She thinks to herself, she was stronger alone, and her own good sense so well supported her that her firmness was as unshaken, her appearance of cheerfulness as invariable, as with regrets so poignant and so fresh, it was possible for them to be (Austen, p. 113).
Rather than focusing on herself, she attends to the needs of Marianne, Mrs. Dashwood, and Mrs. Jennings.

Elinor may spend much of her time comforting others, but she will not miss the opportunity to point out examples of arrogance or inconsideration. During one conversation with John, she sits politely, as John explains how he and Mrs. Ferrars are now thinking that Robert should marry Miss Morton, rather than having Edward marry her. Elinor, calmly notes, "The lady, I suppose, has no choice in the affair" (Austen, p. 238). For Jane Austen, in 1811 to have her main character speak about freedom of choice for women is nothing short of extraordinary. However, for Jane Austen to create a female character with such intelligence and self-possession that her revolutionary words are fully in keeping with her character is an even greater achievement.

Because writers like Richardson and Austen make such a strong beginning for the new type of feminine character, it only seems reasonable for readers to expect later writers to continue to create characters who are even stronger and more independent than their forerunners. We expect later writers to look at previous examples of feminine heroism, to improve upon them, and to use these improvements as tools for even greater social changes. Naturally, we expect these improvements to manifest themselves in the writings of Thomas Hardy, whose late Nineteenth Century novels concentrate heavily on female characters. Hardy disappoints those readers who have such expectations, for the shift in Hardy's female characters is only from unrealistic sweetness to realistic role-
confusion. Hardy's women cannot survive their own struggles, and as they become more aware of their capabilities and conflicts, they become only scarcely more able to seek solutions. In one of Hardy's early novels (The Mayor of Casterbridge, 1886) he creates a more traditional female character, Elizabeth-Jane who is kind and feels sincere love, but she seems almost too good. There is something false about her, perhaps because her personality is unbalanced and the tilt is toward sweetness. Hardy's Tess, published in 1891, is a somewhat more successful attempt at creating a modern woman. Writing about her life from sixteen to twenty-one years of age, Hardy focuses on her struggles with the conflict between natural law and social law. Even though Tess encounters a more modern struggle, she does not emerge victorious. In the end, she is hanged, falling short of our expectation of her as a feminine role model. Through Tess, Hardy first attempts to approach the conflict which later becomes the whole of his theme in Jude the Obscure, published in 1894. In Jude the Obscure, Hardy introduces more complex characters. Sue Bridehead, in particular, makes a beginning for the strong, self-defining woman of a later time, but her character remains true to its own time, for she eventually weakens and is unable to sustain independent thought or action. She shows herself to be scarcely more prepared for the consequences of a radical feminist attitude than the average woman of her time and age. What we find here is only the first traces of a longing for independence, the struggle of a young girl who tries and fails. Yet her effort in itself is something, for it was
remarkable at the time to find a female so urgently struggling for freedom and self-sufficiency.
II. THE BACKGROUND OF SUE BRIDGHEAD, HER INADEQUACY, AND HER INCONSISTENCY

"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. I am called Mrs. Richard Phillotson, living a calm wedded life with my counterpart of that name. But I am not really Mrs. Richard Phillotson, but a woman tossed about, all alone, with aberrant passions and unaccountable antipathies" (Hardy, p. 183).
In the postscript to Thomas Hardy's *Jude The Obscure*, Sue Bridehead is recognized as "the first delineation in fiction of the woman who was coming into notice in her thousands every year—the woman of the feminist movement—the slight, pale 'bachelor' girl" (Hardy, ix). While there is great support for Sue and all of her independent efforts as a model for feminism, she is something of a failure. Her efforts, however fierce, prove her, at most, to be only a weak example of what the feminist woman should represent; and while much scholarship concentrates primarily on Sue's pioneering attempts at liberation, most of the criticism on the subject leaves her shortcomings largely unexplored. The study of her unsuitability as a leading feminist character is alarmingly absent in critical literature. Nonetheless, what is obvious about Sue, even on a first reading, is her fundamentally unheroic nature.

Sue is somehow conscious of her inadequacy and seeks to compensate for it with a staunch sort of resistance to conventional society. Rosemarie Morgan applauds her stand, saying:

Sue's campaign against the Institution of Marriage is rigorous, radical and militant. Ideologically ahead of the times as far as the feminist movement of the early 1890's goes, and more in line with 20th Century suffragettism, she argues not only with foresight but also with a hindsight wisdom available to few educated Victorian women: that of a divorced wife

(Morgan, 111).
Morgan, however fails to point out that Sue's radicalism stems mainly from a soul-felt sense of inadequacy, that her militancy is an overcompensation—and a destructive one, at that. Even when we first meet Sue, she shows her weakness. Impulsively, she buys two large figures of Venus and Apollo (Roman goddess of Love and Beauty and Roman god of Sunlight), and then she regrets her purchase. Hardy tells us "she was still in a trembling state, and seemed almost to wish she had not bought the figures"(Hardy, 81). Sue knows that Miss Fontover will disapprove of the pagan statues, so she conceals them. Later, when Miss Fontover notices them, Sue lies, saying that they are of two saints: "St Peter and St.--St. Mary Magdalen"(82). It is not just a lie; it is an inadequate lie. Sue's attempts at unconventional behavior repeatedly fall flat. Unable to follow through on any definitive action, she forms a life out of strong beginnings and weak endings.

We observe how she weakens by degrees when she gives Jude an account of her escape from the school. As we watch, Hardy shows how "she had begun the explanation in her usual slightly independent tones, but before she had finished the thin pink lips trembled, and she could hardly refrain from crying"(Hardy, 127). This woman-child may well be a curious and peculiar character, but her peculiarity in no way sets a standard for a new kind of woman. She makes a strong initial attempt to be the sophisticated, modern woman, but she finishes weakly, for her sophistication is more like a determined bravado. Perhaps Sue has always been somewhat like this, for Aunt Drusilla's neighbor says of Sue, "She was not
exactly a tomboy, you know; but she could do things that only boys
do, as a rule"(97). However, when the boys would cheer her, she
would suddenly run indoors, and "they would try to coax her out
again"(97), but she would not come. She starts out seeming to be
full of spirit and courage, but she becomes shy and frightened,
unsure of herself. Sue finds it hard to admit, even as an adult,
that she has trouble with participating fully as an equal with
other men and women. She herself boasts to Jude, "I have no fear
of men, as such, nor of their books. I have mixed with them--one
or two of them particularly--almost as one of their own sex. I
mean I have not felt about them as most women are taught to
feel"(130). And yet Sue is terrified of being kissed by Jude and
of being replaced by Arabella. Sue is forever advancing as the
brave woman and retreating as the fearful child.

Sue's failures, as infuriating as they are, become almost
comic. We begin to expect her unpredictable shifts so much that
they become predictable. We grow fond of her fidgety little hands
and her uncalculated caprice. Herein lies the reason for our
sympathies toward Sue. Because Sue is painted as such a lovable
little soldier, we make allowances for her.

We must, too, make allowances for the fact that Sue is a
difficult character to study. Part of what makes Sue a difficult
character to study is that she is so unsure of who she is and what
she wants that the reader becomes almost as lost and unsure of who
Sue is and what Sue wants as is Sue herself. We can only come to
know Sue through her relationships with others, particularly
through her relationship with Jude and with Arabella. By knowing what we know about Jude and Arabella, we can see the similarities and the contrasts that serve to provide Sue with something of an identity. A study of Jude is important because Jude is the person Sue loves, yet rejects, and Sue's love-rejection response to Jude provides clues to her true nature. It is valuable, then, to know Jude.
Jude wondered, "Or was Sue simply so perverse that she willfully gave herself and him pain for the odd and mournful luxury of practicing long-suffering in her own person, and of being touched with tender pity for him at having made him practice it?....Possibly she would go on inflicting such pains again and again, and grieving for the sufferer again and again, in all her colossal inconsistency" (Hardy, p. 155).
Jude, the main male character, stands as the flawed tragic figure whose tragedy lies in his intensity, his naivete, and his twice unfortunate choice of mates. His intensity leads him to a dreamy life of books and ideas with nothing of the solidity of life experience to ground him. His naivete allows him to be charmed by the calculating, manipulative young Arabella who traps him into an empty and unsatisfying marriage, which is eventually dissolved and which leaves him with a strong craving for the companionship of someone more like himself. After his first marriage with Arabella, he selects Sue Bridehead—a woman who is not only his cousin, but his neurotic cousin, at that.

Sue Bridehead mirrors some of Jude’s flaws in that her intensity leads her to overdevelop her mind, leaving her physical and emotional life unattended. Like Jude, her naivete gives her a certain youthful arrogance which causes her to overestimate her ability to tolerate marriage. She marries Richard Phillotson and finds the marriage not only unsatisfying, but repugnant, and she is left with the alternative of leaving Richard and moving out on her own—then, an uncommon move for a woman. Feeling lonely and unsure about such a bold action, she relies on the attentions of her devoted cousin Jude to steady her. And here, an interdependence develops between Jude and Sue. They begin to behave as a couple—like married people, with more than their share of the problems faced by married couples—those of finances, jealousy, religion, ex-spouses, and children. They encounter the problems as well as some of the rewards.
Because Jude loves Sue, he struggles to ignore her flaws. The amount of energy he uses simply trying not to notice that which is not very pleasant or very admirable about Sue is enough to indicate to the reader that perhaps Sue possesses more than just a few minor flaws. However, it is in Jude’s nature to remain unaware of the unpleasant portions of that which he loves. For instance, when he strolls in Christminster, he denies the ugliness of his beloved city: "When he passed objects out of harmony with its general expression he allowed his eyes to slip over them as if he did not see them"(Hardy, 67). And he tries to do the same with Sue. A life with Sue is as much of a dream to Jude as is a life of scholarship in Christminster. Ramon Saldivar points out that in Jude’s attachment there is a "transfer from Phillotson, to Christminster, and finally to Sue"(Bloom, 195). Jude never outgrows adolescent attachment; he simply transfers it, and so he cannot see Sue any more realistically than he could see Phillotson or Christminster. In his dreamy adoration of Sue, he ignores her repeated cruelties. In this way, he is able to sustain his love for her. When he does see Sue’s meanness, he allows his eyes to "slip over" it. We know that "he felt that she was treating him cruelly, though he could not quite say in what way"(132). Since he cannot understand her cruelty, he chooses to ignore it. We see how he manages to avoid conflict when he defends himself from one of her attacks: "‘I am awfully ignorant on general matters, although I have worked so hard’ he said, to turn the subject"(132). He would rather not focus on their differences or on her severity,
so he changes the course of the conversation. This is so like Jude. Hardy's Jude serves to make Sue's flaws all the more apparent--because as we watch him desperately working to ignore and cover up her defects, our attention is drawn to the enormity of his task.

Those parts of Sue which he cannot ignore, he forgives. Sue's overdeveloped capacity for regret leads the reader to wonder if ever there has been a more apologetic character than Sue Bridehead. She is forever dashing off quick, urgent letters of apology. Ramon Saldivar notes that "even in their coldest tones, Sue's letters, while banishing Jude, nevertheless constantly summon him to her by the very fact that they establish a link of communication between them"(Bloom, 197). He further notes that "she simultaneously removes and retains her absence and distance"(Bloom, 197) through her letters. Jude himself says to Sue, "You are often not so nice in your real presence as you are in your letters"(Hardy, 146), and we see an example of this in one letter where Sue writes to apologize to Jude. She writes,

You had been so very good and kind to me that when you were out of sight I felt what a cruel and ungrateful woman I was to say it, and it has reproached me ever since (137).

So she is forgiven. Every time Jude finds himself beginning to resent her for her selfish and irresponsible behavior, she sends a hasty request for forgiveness. On one particular morning, Jude starts to see clearly that "she was rather unreasonable"(140),
(which is, indeed, an understatement) and true to form Sue immediately sends him a note: "Forgive me for my petulance yesterday! I was horrid to you" (140). And he does, which is quite characteristic of Jude. One might think that Sue has been sent solely for the purpose of testing Jude's Christian capacity to forgive. And one wonders if Jude ought to be canonized. Not unnoticeable is the fact that Sue never changes her patterns; she only repeats them. She only regrets what she has done, rather than attempting to correct those parts of herself which lead her to be rude or unfair to Jude.

While her apologetic abilities may be memorable, the hardest for the reader to forget is Sue's unwillingness to commit. Sue moves in with Jude, but she maintains distance by refusing to admit how she feels about him and by refusing to sleep with him. Allowing herself to share her life with Jude, for Sue, does not necessarily include sharing her body. She will live with him, but she would rather not sleep with him—or with anyone, for that matter. Her sexual abstinence is one of her most memorable traits, and it is probably her most defining trait. With her nearly debilitating fear of intimacy, her physical denial logically follows her unwillingness to commit herself with words. When Jude asks if she loves Richard, she answers, "I don't mean to say anything definite" (Hardy, 169). We almost hope, here, that Jude will demand an answer, but he merely accepts her avoidance with a shrug. Sue's repeated unwillingness to commit herself by labeling a feeling becomes tedious. As apparent as we might think her love
is for Jude, she will not speak the words. Jude, assuming that she returns his feelings of love, receives from Sue only this: "Guess what you like, but don't press me to answer questions!" (192). In no way does this reply confirm or reveal her emotions, so Jude is left without reassurance. Sue's fondness for forcing others to play guessing games is childish and annoying; and were it not for her startling intelligence and her lovable eccentricities, we might be put off by the cowardice of her inevitably vague replies.

Just as she avoids verbal admissions, she avoids physical expressions of feelings. If she will not admit her love for Jude with words, she finds it even more difficult to show him with her body. Since making love means disclosing the extent of her passion, Sue prefers not to make love. Some critics admire her self-restraint, especially Rosemarie Morgan who says of Sue, "she generates an air of distinct sexual fastidiousness, which for entirely different reasons also ensures her credibility and power" (Morgan, 123). There is something disturbing about the idea that withholding sexual desire can provide credibility and power. Admiration of self-containment of this sort is much like admiration of the man who walks courageously across a hot bed of coals. We watch in wonder, fascinated by his ability to endure pain. But something happens after we marvel over his endurance—something that makes us ask a question: Why would anyone do anything so ridiculous and unnecessary? We might ask the same question of Sue. Why would she deny herself and Jude physical pleasure?

And yet she does just that. If Sue is "as slippery as an
eel" (Hardy, 235) when Jude wants a confession from her, then she is fixed and virtually unshakable when he hopes for wifely affection from her. Even something as harmless as a little kiss causes distress for poor Sue. In a typical scene Jude pursues the remote Sue: "Jude's eyes rested musingly on her face. Then he suddenly kissed her; and was going to kiss her again. 'No--only once now--please, Jude!' "(213). It would be considerably less significant if we could assume that Sue is simply having a bad day and wishes not to be touched, but this type of scene recurs throughout her relationship with Jude. The frequency of her refusals cannot be passed over without notice, and we must wonder why Jude's kisses are not welcome.

Penny Boumelha, however, connects Sue's self-possession with her "sense of selfhood", saying in defense of Sue that "a refusal of the sexual dimension of relationships can seem the only rational response to a dilemma" (Boumelha, 143). For Boumelha, Sue revolts against being reduced to something so base as a sexual being. This interpretation lacks substance. Even when Sue has chosen to marry Richard Phillotson, she still refuses to sleep with him, but she never gives any solid reasons for her refusals. Just the fact that he seems to be a kind old gentleman is not enough to stir even a minimal amount of desire in Sue. She elects to spend the night among the spiders and their spider-webs in order to avoid sleeping with her husband. After Richard sees to what great lengths she will go to avoid his touch, he remarks, "What must a woman's aversion be when it is stronger than her fear of spiders!" (198).
His remark shows his awareness of her aversion, but he cannot help being confused by it. Phillotson simply accepts this as a mysterious part of her personality. He does not consider it as her revolt against wifedom, but more as her personal eccentricity. Because Sue never gives any reasons for action—or her non-action as the case may be—she is not making a "rational response". Instead, she reacts (somewhat violently) against physical closeness without knowing quite why. She continues to have trouble with deliberate action of any kind. Being unable to act deliberately, she emerges as a less than liberated character.

Sue's confusion and frustration call forth sympathy and sadness from the reader—maybe because we hope to see her overcome the disadvantages of her essential nature and because we find that, because of her nature, defeat is inevitable. Henry Nevinson notes that Hardy's novels can be grouped as either "Comparatively Cheerful" or "Profoundly Sad" (Nevinson, 23). His observation stresses the depressing tone of Thomas Hardy's novels; and if Jude the Obscure were to be categorized by Nevinson, it would unquestionably fall into the "Profoundly Sad" category. It would be categorized as such not because of Jude's ultimate death, but because of Sue's personal defeat—a defeat that assists in causing both Jude and Time's deaths. Her individual disintegration joins with her unintentional damage to others, and we watch the deterioration of her integrity. Again serving as a contrast, Jude differs from Sue in this way. He builds as she dissembles. Lacking integrity, Sue succeeds only in bringing danger to the
lives of her friends and family. Her clumsy, wavering attempts at liberating herself testify to her lack of integrity. Jude, on the other hand, never pretends to himself that he is a different kind of a person. Much earlier in the story when he sleeps with Arabella while being in love with Sue, he begins to understand how his own body and soul are divided. He realizes that "he was a man of too many passions to make a good clergyman; 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" (Hardy, 171). Later, after he and Sue engage in a long and passionate kiss, he can no longer reconcile his religious aspirations with his romantic longings. He refuses to live a life of inconsistencies. He cannot tolerate a lack of harmony between his doctrines and his actions, so he makes a decision not to be a hypocrite. His integrity will not allow hypocrisy. He thinks to himself that "he might go on believing as before, but he professed nothing" (194), and he burns all of his theological and ethical works. Jude is not afraid to admit his own position, even though he feels conflicted. After he earns the title "Tutor of the Slums", he makes a speech about what he has learned since he came to Christminster. He says:

I am in a chaos of principles--groping in the dark--acting by instinct and not after example. Eight or nine years ago when I came here first, I had a neat stock of fixed opinions, but they dropped away one by one; and the further I get the less sure I am. I doubt if I have anything more for my present rule of life than following
inclinations which do me and nobody else any harm, and actually give pleasure to those I love best (297).

In order to learn how to live, Jude has had to unlearn much of what he had assumed to be true. He admits that he no longer holds his old views, and he is struggling to form new ones. We again see the striking difference in the way Jude approaches his own mental and spiritual confusion. He is not like Sue, who says one thing, does the opposite, experiences regret, and worries endlessly over her momentary (if not continual) weakness. During Jude’s book-burning, Sue’s double-mindedness shows itself. She does not even attempt to make any sense out of her emotional and mental discord. Hardy says,

Sue’s logic was extraordinarily compounded, and seemed to maintain that before a thing was done it might be right to do, but that being done it became wrong; or, in other words, that things which were right in theory were wrong in practice (195).

The mazes of her pitiful little mind are difficult to follow; and if she has trouble navigating within her own mind, then it is no surprise that the reader finds himself lost among her contradictory beliefs and actions. She sacrifices her integrity at expense to herself and others, while Jude refuses to do so. When Sue decides that she no longer wants to live with Richard, she starts to explain to him what she professes to believe about Convention. She
says, "Domestic laws should be made according to temperaments, which should be classified" (199), and she goes on to tell him what it is that she finds disagreeable about social rules when she says, "If people are at all peculiar in character they have to suffer from the very rules that produce comfort in others!" (199) She completely ignores the alternative that might have produced comfort for her, which would have been to remain unmarried. In fact, for Sue to represent the feminist woman, this might have been the most fitting alternative. She could have marched through life as a single person, untied to any person or social convention, capable of surviving as a single woman in the world, and she would have then salvaged her integrity. She would have become more of a pioneer than a social and private failure. Sue was not coerced into marriage; she married Richard willingly, though recklessly. She suffers for her own mistake, yet she blames her suffering on domestic laws. She argues and explains her beliefs in such a curious way that she leaves Richard feeling confused and exhausted. He thinks to himself, "She was beginning to be so puzzling and unstateable that he was ready to throw in with her other little peculiarities the extremest request which a wife could make" (200). Sue then leaves Richard and goes to Shaston to live with Jude, but at the same time she feels uneasy about the idea of living with Jude. To think that Sue could stand as an example of the New Woman is absurd, considering her lack of integrity, and it is unthinkable since she never overcomes the disadvantages of her essential nature. It is much more likely that Sue, being the weakest of an
entire cast of weak characters, represents the failure of both feminine and masculine efforts toward survival. In fact, her failure is more troubling than it might have been if she had been more distinctly male or more distinctly female. Hardy, it seems, did not create her as an example of what all women should strive to become, but as an example of what all people are in danger of becoming. Sexually shapeless, she stands as a warning to men as well as to women.

Further examples of her double-mindedness include her disastrous conversation with Little Time, her alternate distaste and love for the Church, and her flight from and then retreat back to Phillotson. Because she will not attach herself to any solid position, she causes pain and frustration. With Time, Sue talks, expressing only part of her opinion. Because she holds two different views and only weakly verbalizes one, she gives Time a distorted impression of her beliefs. When Time exclaims, "I wish I hadn't been born!" (Hardy, 303), Sue answers him with a half-hearted, "You couldn't help it, my dear" (303). She does not take the time to explain things gently, and she does not do him the courtesy of telling him the whole truth, good and bad. Instead, she indulges in expressing the darker side of their situation. She involves Time in her fondness for seeing herself as a miserable, pitiable creature. Time, her adopted son, misunderstands Sue and believes that she wishes that he and her children were dead, so he kills the children and then kills himself. After Time murders her children and hangs himself, she sees (too late) that she had made
a mistake. She cries, "It was my want of self-control, so that I could neither conceal things nor reveal them!" (Hardy, 308). If Sue could have assumed an adult role in her relationship to Time and if she could have taken responsibility for expressing herself in a way that the child could understand, then she might have saved several lives. Her mistake in telling Time, essentially, that he might be better off dead leads to Time's suicide and to her eventual deterioration.

Recognizing that her insufficient explanation to Time has caused harm, she makes an extreme doctrinal shift. Her guilt motivates her to change her views on the Church rather drastically. Self-reproach leads her to a life of self-torture, quite out of harmony with her old life. Her newly adopted fear of God and respect for the Church arises not out of a profound conviction, but out of emotional terror and confusion. Thus, the split between her beliefs and her actions remains, and is only reversed. Notice the similarity between the two splits:

Earlier, when Jude asks if she wants to go and sit in the cathedral, Sue answers, "Yes. Though I think I'd rather sit in the railway station. That's the centre of town life now. The cathedral has had its day!" (Hardy, 118). To which, Jude exclaims, "How modern you are!" (118). But a division shows itself between her modern words and her less than modern behavior. Terrified of both solitude and togetherness, she alternates between the two and proves that she is not a modern woman. She may avoid the cathedral and appear to be modern, but her avoidance of the pleasures of a
modern woman prove her to be a follower of traditional values whether or not she actually holds traditional beliefs. While they are together at Shaston Jude says to Sue, "I have sometimes thought...that under the affectation of independent views you are as enslaved to the social code as any woman I know!" (216). Jude's view is borne out when Sue refuses to marry Jude because of the stigma placed upon such a marriage by society and the Church.

Later, she says to Jude, "We must conform!" and "It is no use fighting against God!" But to this Jude remarks, "It [the fight] is only against man and senseless circumstances" (Hardy, 311). This time Sue announces God's power in an orthodox fashion, but the split shows itself in her desperation. Because she is not truly morally reconciled to God's authority, she must force herself to submit by praying and by starving herself. Her already confusing logic becomes all the more twisted when she declares, "Arabella's child killing mine was a judgment—the right slaying the wrong" (318). Remembering that Time is actually Arabella's son, she begins to think that perhaps Arabella's child is "right" because Arabella's marriage to Jude was socially and spiritually sanctioned and that her own children were "wrong" because she and Jude had lived sinfully together. Her understanding of justice is much affected by her guilt, and she begins to believe that her sinful behavior has been judged by God and punished with the deaths of her innocent children. She imagines that God is punishing her for some wrongdoing, rather than simply seeing Time's death as the unfortunate consequence of a horrible miscommunication. She prays
and fasts to break her own spirit. In her unmitigated self-blame, she almost seems to be starving her soul. Jude aptly captures the heart of the situation and says, "I'm glad I had nothing to do with Divinity--damn glad--if it's going to ruin you in this way" (319). When Sue finally miscarries her third child, she sees the miscarriage as part of her punishment and she hopes for death.

So Sue continues her self-torture, completing her own ruin by forcing herself to return to Richard and, finally, by sleeping with him. However, her decision remains half-hearted because she cannot bring a fullness to her choice--she cannot sleep with him and be aroused by him, so she does not generate love or desire, only guilt and obligation. She still is not really his wife, regardless of her efforts. Just before Sue makes her retreat back to Richard, Jude argues with her and tries to show her that she is making a mistake. He says, "I loved you, and you loved me; and we closed with each other; and that made the marriage. We still love--you as well as I know it, Sue! Therefore our marriage is not cancelled" (Hardy, 328). Jude knows what it means to be married to Sue's soul. Mrs. Edlin, as well, urges Sue to rethink her decision to sleep with Richard. She says, "I don't think you ought to force your nature. No woman ought to be expected to" (359). And later she comments, "Ah! Poor Soul! Weddings be funerals 'a b'lieve nowadays" (362). Mrs. Edlin's wisdom does not penetrate Sue's guilt-ridden conscience. Sue now makes a full retreat, being chased by guilt back to a life of misery. Unable to provide care and forgiveness for herself, she continues to punish herself. Her
self-battery is anything but subtle. Ultimately, she becomes her own victim. Jude is amazed by the dramatic change in Sue. He asks her, "Where are dear Apollo and dear Venus now!" (320). He finds it hard to believe that Sue is the same woman who once bought pagan statues as a symbol of her independence and free-thinking, and he is confused by her new rigidity. Irving Howe best describes the self-destructive split within Sue when he says,

She is promethean in mind but masochist in character; and the division destroys her, making a shambles of her mind and a mere sterile discipline of her character. She is all intellectual seriousness, but without that security of will which enables one to live out the consequences of an idea to their limit. She is all feminine charm, but without body, without flesh or smell, without femaleness

(Howe, 142).

Howe focuses on her lack of self-definition—again her uncertainty. Sue does not depend on a patriarchal society to destroy her. She is quite capable of destroying herself. Howe, making an important comment on the formlessness of Sue’s sexuality, seems to believe that Sue’s lack of self-definition has something to do with her inability to enjoy the pleasures of the flesh and that this incapacity is what makes her so destructive to herself and to others.

In order for Sue to make a move either toward her cousin or toward aloneness, she must break societal codes. She must assert
herself, her wants and wishes. However, as Sue strives to assert herself, she simultaneously sabotages her own plans. Loving Jude, she marries Richard. Loving her children, she makes the fatal mistake that results in their deaths. Hoping for admiration, she behaves in ways that make her seem almost contemptible. Striving for independence, she enslaves herself. We find that Sue falls short as the model for modern feminism. She emerges, instead, as a forerunner of the modern woman, not as the embodiment of independent womanhood.
IV. ARABELLA FAWLEY, AS A CONTRAST TO SUE BRIDEHEAD

"If it [Marriage] is only a sordid contract, based on material convenience in household, rating, and taxing, and the inheritance of land and money by children, making it necessary that the male parent should be known—which it seems to be—surely a person may say, even proclaim upon the housetops, that it hurts or grieves him or her?" (Hardy, p. 187).
It might be valuable, then, to investigate further the ways in which Sue fails in her move toward freedom. Once more, in order to know Sue, we must look at those characters who stand in contrast to her, and thereby bring her blurred traits into focus. Because of the contrast she provides, Arabella is just such a character.

To watch Sue, we might think, as does R. E. Zachrisson, that Hardy intends to show how a person can become a "victim of Fate and Circumstance" (Zachrisson, 12). Amidst a series of perplexities, Sue struggles against society and even against herself, and she loses. The odds are not in her favor, and nothing works to her advantage. At a glance, we see that her troubles are great and her resources are few, but on taking a closer look we must notice that Arabella follows a similar path and faces similar struggles. Like Sue, she rejects one husband for another, turns to religion for comfort, loses her child, and goes back to her first spouse. Unlike Sue, Arabella succeeds where Sue fails. Sue buckles under the weight of her troubles, while Arabella seeks creative solutions.

Arabella thinks and acts with purpose, while Sue allows herself to fall victim to the pressures of her position. By opposing marriage and other forms of commitment, Sue finds herself at war with Convention, a force far more formidable than our tremulous little Sue. Rather than opposing Convention, Arabella uses it to benefit herself. Albert Pettigrew Elliot observes, for Arabella "marriage brings her protection and dignity" (Elliot, 93), while for Sue marriage only turns "a passing passion into a
lifelong contract" (Elliot, 101). Marriage provides for Arabella and proves disastrous for Sue. George Wotton pronounces Sue’s problem to be one of a psychological deficiency caused by the confusions of the modern world. He calls her "hysterically neurotic, egotistical, terribly vain, self-regarding and intellectually over-developed" (Wotton, 183). Her intense self-involvement serves to numb her necessary instincts for survival, and Wotton recognizes her self-involvement for what it is—"an unnatural product of modern civilization" (Wotton, 183). To survive, Sue must work within the modern civilization which produced her, but she cannot do so because she has been created without the necessary personal capabilities. Thus, Sue is in a bind.

Sue does not earn our admiration; instead, she earns our pity. We may shake our heads and smile at her funny little ways, but there is an element of parental love in our feeling for Sue. The only reasonable explanation for this emotional response to Sue is that she behaves much like a child. She is indecisive, immature, and bewildered by circumstance—clearly not a grown-up woman, and certainly not a model for the modern feminist.

Unmistakably, Sue’s life is problematic, and her problems arise out of her unfitness for the world. She never develops into a mature, competent woman. Irving Howe calls her "that profoundly affecting and troublesome creature: the modern girl" (Howe, 138). Sue’s nervousness, her inability to live maturely in the world, makes her seem girlish, but Howe mistakes her floundering attempts
at independence and her stubborn refusal of pleasure as being modern. He confuses her muddled and chaotic strivings with modernness when all that really resides within her adult body is a frustrated and immature spirit. She is distraught, and, although uniquely alive, she is rootless, and therefore unable to grow into a woman of any sort, traditional or modern.

Alvarez notes that in creating Sue, Hardy "created one of the few totally narcissistic women in literature; but he did so at the same time as he made her rather wonderful" (Guerard/Alvarez, 198). We know that Hardy is enchanted with Sue by his obvious attempts to overlook her childishness and her narcissism. He does overlook them for at least long enough to give her a balancing sort of appeal. He goes to great lengths to do so—one of the ways he manages this difficult task is by being less merciful in his description of Arabella. When Hardy first introduces us to Arabella, he is not exactly generous in his description of her. He calls her a "substantial female animal—no more, no less" (Hardy, 30), and here he sets up the idea of Arabella as an animal, which is an idea that recurs throughout the story. He later writes that she is "not worth a great deal as a specimen of womankind" (46).

Further along in Jude's marriage to Arabella, Hardy writes about Jude's first encounter with Arabella as she really is, when Jude realizes that her long tail of hair is not really her own. Not long after Jude discovers that her hair is false, he finds that her dimples are not natural. Arabella's dimples are a skill. He sees that she produces her dimples artificially by a sucking
motion, and he is horrified. This action of Arabella’s "brought him to full cognition" (50). When Jude understands that her dimples are not real, he says suddenly "Don’t do that, Arabella!" (50). Hardy emphasizes all about Arabella that is false—her hair, her dimples, and her pregnancy. Some of Hardy’s more subtle attempts to “villainize” Arabella are found in the surroundings he chooses for coupling the two young lovers. For instance, when the two of them have tea together at a lower class inn, they sit near a picture of Samson and Delilah, which suggests a woman stealing a man’s power by tricking him. Later, Hardy refers to Jude as Arabella’s "shorn Samson" (344). Hardy repeats this idea when he has Jude realize that "he had been diverted from his purposes by an unsuitable woman" (62). Sue, however, is never referred to as being coarse or false or animalistic. Because Hardy draws Arabella in an almost grotesque fashion, she serves to exaggerate Sue’s refined allure. She lacks so much of what makes Sue lovable that the reader is in danger of discounting Arabella’s better qualities. Hardy is ungenerous to her, and were it not for her occasional flashes of insight and her capable efficiency, we might have been forced to view her as the villain. Arabella, like Sue, survives Hardy’s tendency to draw caricatures, and she emerges with more fullness than Hardy, perhaps, would have initially allowed for her.

Considering Hardy’s unbalanced emphasis upon Arabella’s repugnant qualities, the reader might want to look more carefully at those qualities that could make Arabella appealing. Because Hardy downplays her pleasantness and twists her hardiness into an
unattractive coarseness, he consequently directs the reader's sentiment away from Arabella and toward Sue. The reader must make a centralized endeavor to discover Arabella's more subtle virtues. For instance, after Sue's continual agonizing, Arabella's good-humored, unflagging energy is almost refreshing. She sets out to get what she wants, and she usually succeeds, and so her attitude and her behavior seem more creative. Arabella is an inventive woman who knows her own limits and works within them, whereas Sue who is always unsure, only ignores her limits and works against them and ultimately against herself.

One of Arabella's most striking achievements is her surprising ability to awaken Jude's sexual yearnings. At the beginning of Jude the Obscure, Jude seems like the sort of young person who might be forever serious and scholarly. He reads with a passion most people reserve for their lovers, and he shows promise of being more loyal to his studies than most people are to their mates. In fact, our first piece of information about Jude is this: Drusilla Fawley, Jude's aunt, tells the local washerwoman, "The boy is crazy for books...His cousin Sue is just the same"(Hardy, 7). At sixteen when he decides that he wants to study Greek and Latin, Jude sets about his studies "with an expenditure of labour that would have made a tender-hearted pedagogue shed tears"(24). At the beginning it seems that Jude will never find time to experience the pleasures of the flesh, for he is so wholly committed to learning languages and reading the classics. Only a sharp and powerful young woman could help him bring to life those desires which had been too long
unattended, and Arabella does just that. She is something of an equalizing influence. She successfully coaxes Jude into exploring his romantic, sexual side by moving slowly, at his pace rather than at her own. She measures out her encouragement in degrees, so that her intention is almost imperceptible—so that Jude believes himself to be the pace-setter. Just as they are walking together outdoors, Jude finds himself walking so near to Arabella that their bodies are touching, and he thinks to himself, "How fast I have become!" (38). At the very same moment Arabella is amazed by his slowness. She finds it necessary to flirt and to invite, without frightening Jude. She wins his affections finally when Jude asks her if they are lovers. She coyly answers only by a movement of her head: "For answer she inclined her head upon his shoulder. Jude took the hint, and en-circling her waist with his arm, pulled her to him and kissed her" (38). Arabella can be viewed not only as an evil temptress, but also as the only person who can fully awaken Jude's sexual desires and therefore, the only woman who can help him to become more complete. Once again, we see that Sue fails even in contrast to Arabella. Sue succeeds only causing Jude pain, whereas even the cold and selfish Arabella succeeds in making him happy.

Sue herself recognizes that Arabella possesses abilities which she does not, and she feels jealous of Arabella for that reason. Only two emotions can drive Sue to do that which she otherwise avoids at all costs. Only two things motivate her to give herself to a man—jealousy and guilt. Heroic characters are usually
inspired by emotions of a nobler kind, but not Sue. There is nothing noble about the way she makes a desperate effort to retain Jude’s attentions when Arabella arrives on the scene. Nothing but a sound rival can spark such a sudden rush of affection from Sue. In all of her selfishness, she cannot bear to imagine that Jude might find himself attracted to Arabella, so she acts out of desperation and jealousy when she gives in to Jude. She reveals her jealousy when Jude prepares to leave to go help Arabella. After he points out to Sue that they have no real commitment, she runs to him and cries, "I am not a cold-natured, sexless creature, am I for keeping you at such a distance? I am sure you don’t think so! Wait and see! I do belong to you, don’t I? I give in!" (Hardy, 240). Expectedly, Sue regrets her admission immediately the next morning and tries to explain to Jude: "Love has its own dark morality when rivalry enters in— at least mine has" (241). Sue herself, then, admits that competition, more than love, motivates her. She calls her morality "dark", yet she excuses herself by asserting that Love is the foundational feeling even though it was temporarily tainted by rivalry.

Boumelha fails to make this motivational distinction. She insists that Sue is asserting her independence through denial of erotic love, and she cheers Sue for her restraint, saying,

There is a very important sense in which Sue is right to equate her refusal of a sexual relationship with her freedom, in that it avoids the surrender to involuntary physiological processes which her pregnancies entail.
Nowhere, however, does Sue indicate that she fears pregnancy. Furthermore, she seems so pleased to adopt Jude’s first son, Little Father Time, that the reader is led to believe that she desires to have children. She even seems delighted and touched when Time asks to call her "Mother". Boumelha’s belief that Sue wishes to "assert her right to a non-sexual love" (Boumelha, 143) rests on the assumption that Sue consciously and purposefully resists erotic commitment. Sue is not a planner, and sometimes it seems that her intentions are mysterious even to herself, so such a premeditated act is less than plausible. Sue never seems threatened by the possibility of children, and she never explains why she avoids contact. We can only surmise that since jealousy and guilt are the only emotions that make Sue initiate any sort of touching, that her resistance is an unconscious reaction.

At least, we might guess (as Sue would probably insist) that her resistance is a reaction against her feeling of inadequacy, which explains why jealousy would be a powerful motivator for her. Feeling inadequate next to the voluptuous Arabella, Sue summons up all of her scarce womanly resources and competes. Otherwise, we can suppose that Sue would have remained celibate to compensate for her lack of feminine strength. Feeling threatened by Arabella, she gives in to Jude. Later, she gives herself to Richard out of guilt when she returns to him. She uses sex as a way to punish herself, rather than as a way to express love or joy, and we can see again how Sue enslaves rather than frees herself.
Ironically, the fact that she must use "surrender" in order to keep Jude at home shows that she is anything but free. Her drastic measures serve mainly to emphasize her entrapment. She does not want to be married, but she does not want to be alone. The reader experiences her confusion, knowing that Sue is anything but the free spirit she claims herself to be. She denies her femininity, yet she does not replace those traits which she denies with any others. In the feminist reappraisal of the female role, we find that women need not become masculine in order to renounce the old and unfulfilling feminine stereotype. However, as Margaret Forster points out, the idea of men and women as opposites is deeply rooted and difficult to fight. She asks, "If she [Woman] no longer claimed to be purer, feeblner, more delicate and modest than her male counterpart where did that leave her?" (Forster, 320). Arabella is a part of the answer to this question and serves as a contrast to Sue, so it makes perfect sense for Sue to feel threatened by Arabella, since Arabella is all woman from her haughty laugh to her large bosom. Arabella seems real and vital next to the tiny, trembling wisp of a woman called Sue. Peter J. Casagrande comments, "Sue was born with the vital female atrophied in her: she was almost male" (Casagrande, 47). Just because she feels uncomfortable with her own femininity does not mean that she possesses masculine traits, and Casagrande, here, makes the mistaken assumption that her lack of feminine vitality results in a kind of maleness. She acquires no balancing male attributes; she is simply deficient when it comes to female ones. Undependable and
incompetent, she generally folds under pressure. As insubstantial as Sue proves herself to be, it is no wonder that Arabella seems contrastingly firm, ample, and robust, yet nowhere near masculine.

If Sue feels intimidated by such a woman, then she probably makes an appropriate assessment of her opponent. Unlike Sue, Arabella is purposeful, competent, and insightful. She makes Sue seem like a light-weight competitor, and we admire her for it. It could be that we admire her precisely because it is not necessary to waste sympathy on her. Arabella knows how to take care of herself, and this becomes evident even as early as the pig-killing scene. In this scene, she proves cold and practical beside the foolish and tender-hearted Jude. As she so matter-of-factly puts it—"Pigs must be killed" and later, "Poor folks must live" (Hardy, 54). She is right, of course, in her plain and simple way, but her lack of feeling is disturbing. She greatly differs from Sue who, Benjamin Sankey observes, is "equipped with acute feelings in a world where dull ones would be an advantage" (Sankey, 46). Her acute feelings make her waver incessantly and hinder her from taking practical action. A new type of woman, the successful feminist, would somehow integrate Arabella's practicality with Sue's keen ability to feel, and the two would combine to produce a mentally and emotionally well-equipped woman. Hardy's Sue, unfortunately, has none of Arabella's good sense. Sue cannot be an example for feminism chiefly because she only perpetuates the idea of women as being irrational and impractical. She makes inconsistency and indecisiveness seem like "womanish" traits,
rather than individual characteristics.

Even her best intentions to be efficient and helpful fail. When she and Jude decide to live together, they must find a way to support themselves financially. Although Jude has the opportunity to take a job that pays fair wages, he takes a lower paying job as a Monumental Mason. He does this, ironically, to keep Sue from feeling herself to be a burden upon him. Since she can help him with the lower paying job, she feels herself to be more helpful: "It was the only arrangement under which Sue, who particularly wished to be no burden on him, could render any assistance" (Hardy, 235). Sue’s help is not really help at all. Their occupational arrangement is only an impractical adjustment for a woman who is unable to be financially helpful even when she wants to do so. Because Sue’s mind is sharp, we know that her skills cannot be so limited, and we therefore wonder why she has such trouble with financial contribution.

Unlike Sue, Arabella knows how to make use of opportunity. When she desires to remarry Jude, she deliberately gets him drunk. Once she gets him to the church, she gives a triumphant laugh and says, "All right. I’ve--married you. She said I ought to marry you again, and I have straight-away. It is true Religion! Ha-ha-ha!" (Hardy, 349). She finds Sue’s rigid, moral, and self-defeating attitude hysterically funny, and Arabella is obviously pleased with her victory.

Arabella seeks only her own good fortune, and she usually finds it. She considers both the present and the future potential
alternatives and sets herself toward achieving her goals. While Jude is on his deathbed she explains,

Weak women must provide for a rainy day. And if my poor fellow upstairs do go off—as I suppose he will soon—it’s well to keep chances open. And I can’t pick and choose now as I could when I was younger. And one must take the old if one can’t get the young

(Hardy, 365).

Knowing that Jude will soon be dead, Arabella plans to pursue the old town physician. Perhaps this seems unfeeling and selfish, but there is no doubt that it is realistic.

Her realism spills over into a surprising ability to perceive the emotions and attitude of others. If she herself possesses blunted emotions, this does not hinder her from being able to read the emotions of others. Her insight into Sue is staggering. Arabella says,

She may swear that on her knees to the holy cross upon her necklace till she’s hoarse, but it won’t be true! She’s never found peace since she left his arms, and never will again till she’s as he is now

(Hardy, 372).

Even if Sue herself does not know, Arabella knows where Sue’s heart is. To Arabella, this fact is plain, and she knows it because she is as sensitive to fact as Sue is to feeling. Had Sue been able to acquire a balance of both sensitivities, she might have had a better chance at representing the Modern Woman.
Jude says, "She, so sensitive, so shrinking, that the very wind seemed to blow on her with a touch of deference....As for Sue and me when we were at our own best, long ago--when our minds were clear, and our love of truth fearless--the time was not ripe for us! Our ideas were fifty years too soon to be any good to us. And so the resistance they met with brought reaction in her, and recklessness and ruin on me!" (Hardy, p. 364).
Because Sue is such a wavering, uncertain figure, we can easily lose sight of her among her contradictory opinions and actions. She almost cancels out her own existence precisely because of the way in which she lives. Her thoughts serve to confuse, rather than to clarify. Her actions serve to remind her of her inadequacy, rather than to solidify her self-confidence. Her emotions result in suffering, rather than in celebration. Her own identity is almost obscured by the clutter of her heart and mind, and we can only begin to find Sue by looking at the contrasts between her and her lover, and between her and her rival.

Upon looking, we do not find an even stronger feminist role model who will continue the trend of newer, better feminine heroines, like those in the novels of Richardson and Austen. Instead, we find a woman whose integrity pales in comparison to that of the man she loves and whose practicality is non-existent in comparison to that of her rival. She proves herself unworthy of being a feminist role model in that she lacks the qualities necessary for independence. Sue, herself being unsure and unsteady, represents the unsure and unsteady pace of the women's movement. She reminds us of its slow and stumbling progress, and she provides an example of failed feminism, which is in itself a powerful tool of instruction.

Her words, however, are memorable ones:

"I am certain one ought to be allowed to undo what one had done so ignorantly! I daresay it happens to lots of women, only they submit, and I kick....When people of a
later age look back upon the barbarous customs and superstitions of the times that we have the unhappiness to live in, what will they say!" (Hardy, p. 192).
VI. WORKS CITED