

ences who are addressed and invoked.) The blurring of time sequence and phases lead us abruptly from the days of the struggle for independence to the present (94). However, the white minority continues to wield economic power, and Manyepo can boast: "There is nothing the government in the city can do. I rule here" (120). This moving forward into the historical present; the traditional proverbs and sayings; the use of fables and folktales; the frequent references to nature, to insects, birds, and animals suggest a continuity, a permanent "human condition" that is not free from pain and suffering. E.M. Forster in *Aspects of the Novel* wondered whether a good novel could not be likened to a symphony; and here the cadence of a rural Chishona rendered creatively into English; the "music" of suffering and sadness, of endurance and courage; of forgiveness and wisdom persist through--and after--this short, moving novel.

Louise DeSalvo

*VIRGINIA WOOLF: THE IMPACT OF CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE ON HER LIFE AND WORK*

Boston: Beacon Press, 1989. Pp. 372. \$22.95

Reviewed by Annis Pratt

Many of us who read, teach, and write about Virginia Woolf have been dismayed by biographers who discount her as "insane" and undervalue her courageous attempts to tell the truth about her childhood. Informed by "insights from the disciplines of feminist inquiry, the history of the family, Victorian studies, and the changes in psychoanalytic theory that stress personal history rather than internal drives as causative factors in neurosis," Louis DeSalvo's carefully researched study of Woolf's childhood, juvenilia, and portrayals of childhood and adolescence in her mature fiction puts an end once and for all to such dismissals (xvi).

Unimpressed by the Freudian idea that children's memories of incest are invariably imaginary, so convincingly does DeSalvo describe Woolf's sexually abusive family (in which Laura Stephen, Stella Duckworth, and Vanessa Stephen were also victimized) that we cannot help but agree that "Any view which explains Virginia Woolf's behavior as madness is archaic: too much is now known about the behavior of victims of childhood abuse to support such a description" (xvi-xvii). DeSalvo depicts the rebellious young Virginia, growing up with her half-sister Laura drugged and imprisoned in the attic as a punishment for disobedience, compelled to save herself from the same fate by teaching herself the art of writing. In *The Experiences of a Pater-Familias*, written when she was ten years old, she "explores in graphic detail . . . the experience of child abuse and child neglect . . . at a time when biographers of Woolf generally maintain that she was well protected and cared for" (134); while in "Terrible Tragedy in a Duckpond," written at the age of 17, she desperately tries to communicate the Duckworth brothers' longtime sexual abuse of herself and Vanessa. Forced to witness the uncontrollable lusts of her cousin J.K. Stephen, a rapacious, knife-wielding misogynist who was allowed access to Stella (and who some contemporaries thought might have been Jack the Ripper); and of Stella's fiancé Jack Hills, whose sexual demands probably contributed to her death of peritonitis a few months after her wedding, she

invented the character of "Miss Jan" to express feelings which she didn't dare articulate with her own voice.

This is not an account in which men come in for unreflective blame: Leslie Stephen and his sons attended schools where sexual and physical abuse left "English boys [feeling] abandoned at a very young age to a brutality that was aided and abetted by their elders who failed to put a stop to this abuse" which was an acceptable element of contemporary pedagogical standards (31); the children's mother complied because, like them, she was caught in "a complex web of patriarchal complicity" with practices considered normal rather than deviant. By teaching herself to write the truth about her appallingly typical Victorian childhood Woolf apprenticed herself not only as a novelist but also as a social critic who would locate the causes of World War Two in an institutionalized fascism characterized in England as well as in Germany by the domination of women and children in the patriarchal home

Rosemarie Morgan

*WOMAN AND SEXUALITY IN THE NOVELS OF THOMAS HARDY.*

London: Routledge, 1988

Reviewed by P.J. Casagrande

Morgan's study is a distinctive contribution, particularly to the growing cluster of materials deciphering Hardy's fictional women, mainly because Morgan energetically seeks to correct the view that Hardy, as novelist, failed to escape the sexual ideology of an age that too frequently denied, when it did not mutilate, the humanity of women. Distinctive also is Morgan's beginning, in more general terms, where too many studies of Hardy fail to begin, with the assumption that his creative powers are major, powers to be explored and admired rather than patronized. Morgan's genuine, but not uncritical, respect for Hardy's art and vision is one of her several strengths as a critic of Hardy. Morgan views her study as a "revisionary study of Hardy's treatment of female sexuality" (xvi), an account of "his practice of celebrating the life of the senses and, most important, of presenting the voluptuous woman, the sexy woman, as neither dumb nor loose in morals" (xii). Though she suggests more in her title, Morgan discusses in depth the women of only five of the fourteen Wessex Novels. She omits entirely women (to me) so interesting as Fancy Day of *Under the Greenwood Tree*, Ethelberta Petherwin of *The Hand of Ethelberta*, Elizabeth-Jane Farfrae of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Lady Viviette Constantine of *Two on a Tower*, Grace Melbury and Marty South of *The Woodlanders*, to say nothing of the women of the short stories and poems, particularly the "Emma" of *Poems of 1912-13*.

Within this somewhat selective treatment, then, Elfride Swancourt of *A Pair of Blue Eyes* "is no iconic Victorian maiden awaiting self-definition through male endowment" (8); Bathsheba Everdene of *Far from the Madding Crowd* is a "voluptuous woman . . . a fair product of nature, fit and healthy in body and mind, neither degraded by her sexuality nor mentally or morally degenerate" (50); Eustacia Vye of *Return of the Native* a woman of "intelligent mind and energetic body restricted to an unvarying, unchallenging, isolated