

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

existence" (59). Similarly, Tess Durbeyfield, the best known of Hardy's women, is a "combination of sexual vigour and moral rigour" (not one of Morgan's happier phrases) that makes her "not just one of the greatest but also one of the strongest women in the annals of English literature" (85). And in *Jude the Obscure*, Sue Bridehead, and more particularly Arabella Donn, are stunning portraits, respectively, of sexual repression and liberation. Morgan indeed revises the general view, for she shows convincingly that, in those cases she chooses to discuss, Hardy celebrates—in contrast to other novelists of his age—the "humanly imperfect, unconventional, strong, sexually vital, risk-taking" rebelliousness of women (155).

Morgan's view of Hardy's women produces novel views of certain of Hardy's men, e.g., Gabriel Oak, whom she describes as a victim of Hardy's irony. Also, in exhibiting Hardy as an iconoclast in his depiction of women, she uncovers an important aspect of Hardy's, and any writer's, creativity—the shaping of originals through subversive handling of conventions. The originals, as Emerson pointed out, are not original. This confirms, in turn, Hardy's important place among the sexual "progressives" of nineteenth-century English literature, Shelley, Eliot, Swinburne, Mill, and later Woolf and Lawrence. Hardy's appeal to the last two is traceable to the appeal of his

The relatively tight focus of Morgan's thesis has predictable, and excusable, results—a tendency to oversimplify the views of critics with whom she differs, neglect of possible counter-examples from life and work (e.g., Fanny Robin and Emma Hardy), and occasional stylistic excesses, as in the following: "Reaching her plateau of sexual ecstasy Tess soars to such a pitch of intensity that tears spring to her eyes . . . Fully in keeping with the intensity of her female sensation, her alternating 'waves' of orgasmic dilation, so too the lush, vegetative 'weedflowers glowed' . . ." (88). And this is just a beginning, as this description—I provide only half of it—concludes with a "melting ache that lingers on [that] has phased to bitter-sweet, post-orgasmic *triste*." Hardy does this much more nimbly. Why not quote him? But such occasional straining is more than offset by Morgan's easy demonstration of Hardy's surpassing achievement with his fictional women, making her study a very important addition to the writing on Hardy's women, a group whose peer exists, in this reviewer's opinion, only in the plays of Shakespeare.

Ben Stoltzfus

*RED WHITE & BLUE*

Fredericton: York Press, 1989. Pp. 122. \$6.69

Review by Michèle Praeger

Ben Stoltzfus's short novel *Red White & Blue* is, Eco would say, an "open work." It requires a reader who is not a mere consumer, as Sartre would have it, but a collaborator of the artist. The reader is not presented with a completed work she has to decipher, to receive like the Host, the "right way." She is now herself a creator; one among others such as the writer, the characters, and, of course, language itself.

Stoltzfus's book shows that communication and modern art are not in conflict but, on the contrary, that they feed on each other just as writer and reader