Social Vision And Individual Learning In Arnold Bennett's Five Towns Fiction

Douglas William Malcolm

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LA THÈSE A ÉTÉ MICROFILMÉE TELLE QUE NOUS L’AVONS REÇUE
SOCIAL VISION AND INDIVIDUAL LEARNING IN ARNOLD BENNETT'S FIVE TOWNS FICTION

by

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ABSTRACT

Arnold Bennett's present reputation has been hampered by the disfavour that he incurred among the leading modernists and the critical tendency to treat realism as simply an attempt to achieve social mimesis. If realism is regarded as a mode of fiction that is present in varying degrees in the literature of all ages, Bennett's Five Towns books can be seen as an endeavour to formulate a coherent social vision rather than as a reproduction of the Staffordshire Potteries at a particular point in time. In Anna of the Five Towns, The Old Wives' Tale and Clayhanger, the best of the Five Towns works, the characters' environment displays an increasing propensity to divide into personal and social worlds, both of which are animated by a force that is peculiar to each work. The society described in Anna of the Five Towns is impelled by the ethos of Social Darwinism, whereas a principle of cyclical change governs the diffuse universe portrayed in The Old Wives' Tale. Although the social milieu of Clayhanger is quite distinct from Edwin Clayhanger's personal sphere, both aspects of the novel's universe are ruled by human suffering and misery.

The characters in these novels strive with an increasing degree of success to attain an understanding
of the powers that control their worlds. Anna Tellwright learns to detect the impact of Social Darwinism on her personal realm, but since the scope of her development is delineated from the novel's outset, she is unable to apply this insight on a social scale. The education of the Baines sisters is determined largely by their individual temperaments rather than their environment. Constance learns to view the influence of the cycle of change on her personal world as evidence of continuity—a realization that is free from the irony that tinged Anna's discovery—but she has no understanding of the same force when it is manifested on a social scale. Sophia perceives the cyclical process as a force that intensifies her extreme sense of alienation, and she learns to deal with her angst only by concentrating upon the practical considerations of her life. Edwin Clayhanger, unlike his predecessors, ultimately attains full comprehension of the suffering that prevails both in his personal world and in society as a whole.

Bennett manipulates a number of stylistic devices such as narrative point of view, imagery and symbolism, in order to enhance the fictional exploration of the relationship between man and society. In Anna of the Five Towns, for example, Bennett's style creates an ironic undertone that suggests Anna's development is
restricted from the opening pages of the novel. The narrative voice in *The Old Wives' Tale* is utilized with particular effectiveness as a way of directing the reader's perception of the book, while the symbols of the public square and the window are used as paradigms of society and the characters' perception of it. In *Clayhanger*, imagery, in particular animal imagery, as well as narration are employed to substantiate the relationship between the novel's personal and social spheres.
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CHAPTER ONE

Edwardian Society

and

Bennett's Five Towns Fiction

The years in which the majority of Arnold Bennett's Five Towns books were published, 1898 to 1916, were the culmination of nearly a century of unprecedented change.\(^1\) C. F. G. Masterman, writing in 1909, observes: "No one, today, looking out upon a disturbed and sullen Europe, a disturbed and confident America, but is conscious of a world in motion; whither, no man knows."\(^2\) At a level of simple technology, the fruits of the Industrial Revolution were finally beginning to affect the private life of the average citizen: airplanes, electric lights, telephones, if not commonplace, were fast on their way towards becoming so. Another, far more sinister, manifestation of the changing technology was the military escalation between the imperialistic powers of Britain and Germany. Politically, the English electorate crushed the patrician-dominated Conservatives in 1906, and a few years later the egalitarian process, for men at any rate, since only they were enfranchised, was all but completed when a permanent curb was placed upon the power of the House of Lords.
The decline of aristocratic political authority is just one sign of the social upheaval which was then disturbing the western world. The impact of the great nineteenth-century iconoclasts, especially Marx and Darwin, was disturbing the fundamental concepts upon which society was based. Church attendance began to decline as increasing numbers found it difficult to believe in a universe organized by a divine power. Labour unrest grew as workers demanded better working conditions and a more equitable share of the profits. Women, for the first time, shrugged off the domestic roles imposed upon them by centuries of servitude to their menfolk and sought political recognition. The question of Home Rule for Ireland, which was debated with increasing urgency in the decade preceding the Easter uprising of 1916, contributed to the instability of the social environment. Finally, the dawn of the twentieth-century, the end of the second millennium since Christ's birth, produced, especially in the young, a heady, apocalyptic sensation.

These changes accelerated the deterioration of the contract between man and society that began with the breakdown of the Great Chain of Being in the early eighteenth-century. Nevertheless, it was not until World War I that the more or less contiguous relationship between the individual and his social order was finally severed. The First World War, as Paul Fussell points out
in *The Great War and Modern Memory*, had a profound influence upon the modern consciousness, and perhaps the most significant indication of this impact is that it caused individuals to view with suspicion the forces that animate society as a whole and to seek meaning primarily in their personal lives. This post-war estrangement is evident even in the title of Robert Graves' autobiography, *Goodbye to All That*, and in E. M. Forster's declaration that "if I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friend, I hope I should have the guts to betray my country." Bennett's Five Towns books thus were written at a point in time immediately before notions of social cohesion gave way to modern alienation of the individual from society.

Realism, which as a literary movement emerged during the middle of the nineteenth-century concurrent with the accelerating change, offered its practitioners a detached perspective from which to record their observations on the social upheaval. The Realists were so successful in achieving their goal of social mimesis that even today realism is often associated exclusively with works composed during a particular period of literary history. Though realism may have been popular during the nineteenth-century because it best met the demands of a time in which the relationship between man and society was in a state of constant turmoil, we would be wrong to confine it to that
historical period. In *On Realism*, for example, J. P. Stern defines realism as a certain perspective that can be found in the littérature of any era:

>'the proper point of perspective' that determines the middle distance of realism, is the most familiar thing in all literature: it is the fictional creation of people, of individual characters and lives informed by what in any one age is agreed to constitute a certain integrity and coherence. 7

Ian Watt notes in *The Rise of the Novel* that the realistic mode has been an integral aspect of the English novel since it first flourished in the eighteenth-century, 8 which perhaps explains why the Realistic movement did not succeed in England as it did on the Continent.

Arnold Bennett, much more than any of his English contemporaries, consciously patterned his fiction on that of the great European realists of the nineteenth-century. 9 In the preface to *The Old Wives' Tale*, for instance, he openly acknowledges de Maupassant's *Une Vie* as a model for his book. It is hardly surprising that Bennett's critics have often approached his work with an historical notion of realism. This preoccupation is in turn responsible for such appraisals as Walter Allen's: who observes that the Five Towns books portray life "in any provincial industrial community of England and America during the last three decades of the nineteenth-century; but we can-
not say more than this." Another commentator regards Bennett as the only "English novelist to have made a determined effort to cultivate in English soil the Continental, and primarily French, realistic novel." This critical perspective has tended to restrict the range of interpretation with which to approach his work.

Bennett's present reputation has been further hampered by the disfavour that he incurred among a number of the leading modernists. In Henry James' celebrated essay "The New Novel" he accuses Bennett of supplying the reader with too much undifferentiated data—what he refers to as "the exhibition of innumerable small facts and aspects"—and of not shaping his material sufficiently. Bennett is caricatured by Ezra Pound in Hugh Selwyn Mauberly as Mr. Nixon, an opportunistic author who sacrifices all for financial success, and Virginia Woolf in "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" argues that Bennett, although an excellent craftsman, is content with the surface of things. These attacks, along with the label of Realist, have resulted in a critical view of Bennett that has not kept pace with critical theory. James Hepburn has recently observed in this regard that

The characteristic issues of modern criticism—of form, symbol, myth, imagery, irony, and the like—have rarely been turned upon him. It has seemed to be too obviously the case that he could not bear the sort of
scrutiny that Joyce withstands everyday. Even now, when modern criticism itself is in some disarray, there has emerged no suggestion that Bennett has been seen unjustly. 13

If Bennett is treated as writing in a realistic mode, one, it must be stressed, that is very much within the tradition of the English novel, his Five Towns fiction can be seen as an effort to explore the relationship between man and society and not as an attempt to create a mirror image of the Staffordshire Potteries during the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries. The Five Towns books, which include most of his serious fiction written before World War I, constitute a landscape within which Bennett examines various concepts of society and man’s role in it. Since this approach does not rely on a mimetic association between the Five Towns and the actual Potteries, it permits the artistry of his work, the stylistic means by which Bennett conveys his major concerns, to emerge quite clearly.

In a letter to H. G. Wells, penned in 1897 before most of the Five Towns books were written, Bennett notes that “there is an aspect of these industrial districts which is really grandiose, full of dark splendours, and which has been absolutely missed by all novelists up to date.” 14 Even a cursory reading of the Five Towns books reveals that, while the setting remains constant, the
ways in which Bennett realized the literary potential that he discerned in the region vary considerably. Novels like *The Card* and *Helen With the High Hand*, for instance, are ruled by a benign comic spirit that allows the central protagonist to achieve his goals with relative ease. *Anna of the Five Towns*, *The Old Wives' Tale* and *Clayhanger*, on the other hand, comprise Bennett's most serious attempts in the Five Towns fiction to formulate a social vision and as a consequence they will constitute the main substance of this study.

The societies depicted in these three novels are governed by forces that are distinct from one another but which collectively demonstrate the progression in Bennett's conception of society that took place between the composition of *Anna of the Five Towns* and *Clayhanger*. The growing polarization between man and society that was endemic to the period in which they were written is reflected in the increasing tendency for the societies portrayed in these books to split into personal and social spheres. *Anna of the Five Towns*, for example, is dominated by an ethos of exploitation that derives from Social Darwinism and that controls the novel's business, religious and domestic realms. The characters who make up Anna's personal sphere of family and friends possess a dual significance since they are also leaders of their community and as such are responsible for the pernicious
spirit that prevails in the region.

The universe of The Old Wives' Tale, unlike the society of Anna which seems to be entirely within man's grasp, is governed by a principle of cyclical change that controls the lives of the individual characters as well as the societies they inhabit. In this instance, the personal realm of the Baines sisters at the outset of the book, St. Luke's Square, is clearly distinguished from the outer world, especially France, which is the setting of Sophia's later adventures. The world of Clayhanger is animated by human suffering which originates in conditions that are imposed on humanity by other men and by nature. It thus combines aspects of the forces that govern the other two novels, and this combination creates an environment that allows the individual greater freedom. The novel focuses on Edwin Clayhanger's personal life, but this central concern is balanced by a description of the social issues that were current in late nineteenth-century England.

Bennett's primary interest in the relationship between man and society lies in the human struggle to learn and to come to an understanding of the forces that control his universe. The protagonists of these novels are continually engaged in a process of development, regardless of whether the time scheme covers less than a year,
as in Anna Tellwright's case, or a lifetime, as in the
case of the Baines sisters. Bennett's deep-seated
concern for education can be detected in other areas of
his life and work. The Journal reveals a consistent
dedication to self-improvement, while much of his non-
fiction relies on his stance as educator of the masses.
A similar strain of didacticism can be discovered in a
great deal of Bennett's fiction, including that which is
set in the Five Towns.

Interest in the individual life and its evolution,
as John Lester points out in Journey Through Despair,
1890-1914, was one response to a world in which con-
tentional models of behaviour could no longer be taken
for granted:

the notion that each man, endowed as
he unalterably is with his own pecu-
liar character and characteristics,
must take it as his obligation in
life and in art to explore and obey
and assert that character to the
fullest. 18

In fiction this concern is manifest in the Bildungsroman,
a genre that includes such works as Great Expectations,
The Mill on the Floss, The Way of All Flesh and Sons and
Lovers. It follows an individual's development through
a series of distinct stages: "childhood, the conflict of
generations, provinciality, the larger society, self-
education, alienation, ordeal by love, the search for a
vocation and a working philosophy." This progression towards the achievement of a harmonious personality stems from a conflict within the individual.

The Old Wives' Tale and Clayhanger are specifically excluded from Jerome Buckley's *Season of Youth*, an exhaustive study of the Bildungsroman in English, because, while he acknowledges that they chart individual development, they omit the childhood and early adolescence, a period that is crucial to the Bildungsroman. Bennett's principal interest begins where the Bildungsroman leaves off, in the protagonist's early maturity. He follows to its resolution the development that results from a conflict between such an individual and the world at large. Although certain elements of the Bildungsroman, such as conflict between generations, appear in Bennett's fiction, they do not carry the same meaning. In the Bildungsroman the antagonism between parent and child is simply one stage that is eventually transcended in the maturation process. Ernest Pontifex, for instance, is ultimately indifferent to his father's fate. But in *Clayhanger* the torment that Darius inflicts upon his son is just one indication that human suffering pervades the novel's world, a condition that, of course, persists after the father's death.

Bennett's fiction is similar to the Bildungsroman, however, in that one of its main concerns is with develop-
ment of the self, albeit of a different sort. The protagonists of the three novels under discussion are all poised on the brink of adulthood which is the point in their lives where Bennett's interest begins. Anna of the Five Towns, for example, commences on the eve of Anna's twenty-first birthday, the age when one traditionally assumes the responsibilities of the adult. The characters in the other two novels are also at critical junctures in their lives. At the end of the first day recorded in The Old Wives' Tale Constance informs her sister that they will soon be leaving school, which prompts Sophia to initiate her campaign to become a teacher. In Edwin's case, the novel opens on the day that he completes his formal education, and, as though to underscore his passage into adult society, one of the early chapters is entitled "Entry into the World."

The characters' common age at the outset of these novels suggests that they are equipped with already established personalities. Anna Tellwright's initial outlook of parental dutifulness, religiosity and compassion has been formulated in response to the exploitative society in which she lives. Constance and Sophia, on the other hand, are endowed with distinct personalities that are formed for undetermined reasons and that are separate from the process of cyclical change that governs their universe. Edwin's temperament, like the world he occupies,
has been formed in a manner that unites the forces at work in the other two novels. His character has been partially shaped by his environment—his instinctive submission to Darius—and yet he is sufficiently independent of his father that he wants to learn and to improve himself.

Bennett conceives a conflict between man and the universe to be a permanent condition of these characters' lives. The fundamental nature of this conflict and of man's consequent need to achieve psychological stability by making his environment meaningful is illustrated by the behaviour of the infant Cyril in *The Old Wives' Tale*. He organizes his world by attaching significance to the dimensions of time and space. He exists on a shawl spread before the fire: "For ten months he had never spent a day without making experiments on the shifting universe in which he alone remained firm and stationary." Activities occur on the periphery of his world, "but he remained oblivious" (*CWT*, p. 88). The baby does not regard his occupation of the shawl as being merely a matter of months: to him it is measured in years at the very least. Although his universe bears no resemblance to what we recognize as the world of actuality, presumably it will remain intact until Cyril's experience of a particular incident obliges him to seek a new form of psychological
equilibrium that is in greater harmony with the outside world.

Cyril's awareness of an event, in this case his own hunger, actualizes the latent conflict between himself and his universe. The baby is in the process of being weaned, and so when he is not fed on demand his world becomes meaningless. Bennett implies as much in his observation that "the baby was crying to himself, There is no God" (OWT, p. 189). In order to learn from his sensation of hunger, however, Cyril must place meaning on the incident; presumably in this instance he eventually learns that he will not be fed whenever he wants. Learning, therefore, is the process of making one's experience of an event meaningful in such a manner that it either consciously or unconsciously alters the learner's original conception of the world.

This episode offers a paradigm of Bennett's conception of the learning process, although it is a somewhat more complex procedure in the case of his adult characters. The protagonists of Anna, The Old Wives' Tale and Clayhanger set out with the assumptions of the world detailed above, and these initial outlooks are assailed during the course of each novel by certain incidents that occur in the various social worlds they inhabit. It is possible, of course, for the learning
process to be stimulated from within the psyche of the individual, as it is in the Bildungsroman, but since Bennett's principal interest is in the relationship between his characters and their worlds, the events that provoke learning originate in the outside world.

Such events, for the most part, gain their significance through a character's experience of them rather than from their intrinsic value. It is difficult, therefore, to draw a correlation between the nature of an event and the meaning a character attaches to it. Matthew Peel-Swynnerton's casual inquiry after Cyril Povey is in itself insignificant, but because of the context in which it occurs it is a catastrophe for Sophia. There are a few incidents, aside from those endowed with symbolic qualities, that have a self-evident value which should be taken into consideration by the characters. If they fail to register such an event, like the death of a friend or family member, the reader is allowed a clear insight into the limitations of their personalities.

Such an incident in the outer world provokes in the protagonist an awareness that it is in conflict with his established view of the universe. It is primarily through such awareness that the characters learn, for their conscious realization that they have been affected in some way by an event is the main nexus between themselves and
their worlds. This recognition, of course, does not necessarily imply that meaningful learning will take place or that it will be a conscious activity if it does. The conflict between the characters and their worlds that is initiated in this manner engages the reader's attention until the conflict is resolved in the conclusion of each book.

Learning occurs when a character attaches a meaning that is distinct from his previous world view to a particular event by which he has been consciously affected. Traditional bodies of knowledge—political, religious, or otherwise—do not appear to be of much value to the characters in seeking a resolution to the conflicts that certain incidents place upon their conception of the world. Constance, for example, does not draw upon such knowledge in order to explicate her husband's death. Learning, moreover, may produce additional insights into a character's environment, and it may lead to further conflicts between the individual and his or her world, as it does for Anna Tellwright.

An event, the awareness that it has caused a conflict with one's view of the world and the meaning that is produced to resolve that conflict constitute the primary elements in the learning process described in these books. These elements unite in two different ways that in turn
comprise two distinct kinds of learning. The first type occurs when the incident and one's awareness of it are fused together in one galvanic moment. The meaning that is attributed to this occasion, whether or not it is immediately apparent, is the direct consequence of the intensely experienced incident. Joyce's epiphany and Kerouac's satori are terms that have been employed in literature to portray similar moments.

In the other main type of learning the relationship between the various components is much more diffuse than it is in the galvanic moment. Bennett, for example, often lumps together a number of incidents, such as the changes that occur in Number Four, St. Luke's Square after Constance's marriage, that have a cumulative effect upon the protagonist. The learning that is achieved in this fashion is often modest, and it is not necessarily expressed consciously, as it often is in the epiphany, but it can also be detected in altered thoughts or actions. These two kinds of learning, it is worth noting, are central to the Bildungsroman, a genre that is directly concerned with the protagonist's development. "In book after book ever since Wilhelm Meister some such vision, a sharp epiphany or a more gradual imaginative enlightenment, have been essential to the hero's initiation and continuance."24
While most characters learn in both ways, personality seems to be the factor that determines which type predominates. Sophia and Anna, for instance, are both quite sensitive to their surroundings, and hence tend to respond with intensity to certain events that occur in their worlds. Constance, on the other hand, is a phlegmatic individual and for the most part she learns in the gradual manner described above. In Clayhanger, however, Bennett contrasts the two primary sorts of learning in order to emphasize the reparative qualities of compassion, which Edwin experiences on only a few occasions in the novel, with the self-perpetuating tendencies of misery, which he must deal with continually.

The characters, therefore, embark upon an empirical process of discovery in which they construct a vision of the world from their learning. The process may be a gradual one involving a series of barely perceptible changes in outlook, or it may propel the characters forward in an abrupt and startling manner. The ultimate goal of the learning process in these novels—regardless of the way that it is achieved—is to attain a full understanding of the forces that govern the characters' various worlds. Since the process is an empirical one, the potential for development persists for as long as the characters are conscious of a conflict between themselves and their world. Their awareness of the conflict, however, is often
diminished before they can achieve total insight into the powers that dominate their world. Nevertheless, the characters, from Anna Tellwright to Edwin Clayhanger, exhibit a progressive ability to attain an understanding of the universe.

Anna undergoes three galvanic moments through which she learns to see her father and Henry Mynors as corrupt and hypocritical, but in spite of this marries Mynors, thus putting an end to her development. She never learns that the exploitative forces that dominate her personal life are also characteristic of the Five Towns as a whole. Constance in The Old Wives' Tale gradually achieves an understanding of the cycle of change as it governs her personal world, but she is unable to comprehend the workings of this process in the social sphere. Sophia, on the other hand, learns to survive her almost universal sense of alienation which is triggered through change by developing the practical aspects of her personality, but she has no comprehension of the continuity that is an implicit component of cyclical alteration. Edwin gradually learns to accept pain as a condition of his personal realm, and as a result of one moment, Hilda's gesture to Mr. Shushions, he learns to see individuals in both his personal and social worlds as victims who are worthy of comfort. Although at the end of Clayhanger Edwin attains an understanding of both aspects of his universe, he
realizes at the same time that his knowledge will not exempt him from further suffering.

In The Author's Craft Bennett remarks that "all physical phenomena are inter-related, that there is nothing which does not bear on everything else." Bennett's preoccupation with textual unity is consistent with this view of the external world. He skilfully modulates style in order to enhance his concept of society and of man's role in it. He makes frequent use of imagery and symbolism, for example, and he often exercises subtle control over narrative point of view, a feature of his style that is often overlooked. The narrators of these novels are all ostensibly third-person figures who provide straightforward pictures of the protagonists and the social environments they occupy. But in order for the characters to appear to learn as autonomous beings rather than as creatures of an omniscient narrator, the narrative figures do not, in the main, judge the characters' responses to events nor do they directly articulate the principles which animate the worlds that they describe.

In Anna of the Five Towns a number of images—elevation, clothing, eyes—and forecasts into the future by the narrator combine to create an ironic undertone to the book that, while it does not necessarily detract from Anna's development, suggests that its limits are imposed
on her from the outset. The symbol of the public square in *The Old Wives' Tale* is employed as a means of associating the forces that govern St. Luke's Square with those that are at work in France. Bennett utilizes narrative point of view to control the reader's perception of the novel, and he also occasionally abrogates the customary dualistic stance of the narrative figure in order to accentuate the various changes that the characters experience. In *Clayhanger*, imagery, in particular animal imagery, and narration are used to establish a connection between Edwin's personal sphere and the social world of which he is also a part. In the chapter that follows I shall discuss Bennett's conception of man's role in society in *Anna of the Five Towns* and examine how he uses style to support this vision.
Notes


6. In the introduction to *Documents of Modern Literary Realism* (1963; rpt. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1967), pp. 23-35, George Becker outlines the three, principal tenents of Realism that allowed its advocates a degree of detachment from their milieux. They are a belief that no subject is beyond the range of literary treatment, that the author must remain as objective as possible and that the universe operates according to scientific laws.


9. Bennett's praise of such writers as Flaubert, Tolstoy and Turgenev figures in much of his literary criticism, and it also can be found throughout his letters and in the *Journal*. Indeed, he began keeping a daily record of his observations, as he notes in a letter to George Sturt—"To George Sturt," 23 June 1896, Letter 29, *Letters of Arnold Bennett*, ed. James Hepburn (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968), II, 56—in imitation of the de Goncourt brothers.


15 It documents his efforts to control his stuttering with mental discipline, his self-recriminations after excesses of the flesh and his commitment to a strict daily regimen. At one point, Bennett upbraids himself--The Journals of Arnold Bennett, ed. Newman Flower (London: Cassell, 1932), I, 253 (Sept. 13, 1907)--for not devoting "even an hour a day to scientific reading, to genuine systematic education."

16 Volumes like The Savour of Life, The Human Machine and How to Live on Twenty-Four Hours a Day are early examples of the self-help book. His popular writing on literature betrays a similar pedagogic bent. The Author's Craft, for instance, sets out to divulge the hidden mechanics of novel writing; and during his years as a journalist, first on The New Age and later on the Evening Standard, Bennett compiled lists of the world's greatest novels for the benefit of his audience and instructed his readers on how to start a library.

17 Lord Raingo can be read as a behind-the-scenes expose of political machinations, while The Imperial Palace reveals the inner workings of a large luxury hotel. The short-stories set in the Five Towns are perhaps too often designed to show off the idiosyncrasies of the area's inhabitants to a more worldly audience. Stories like "Tight Hand," for instance, expose the miserliness of the Potteries' citizens.


Jefferson Hunter--Edwardian Fiction (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1982), pp. 26-27--finds the concern for education reflected in the narrative strategies of Edwardian writers who sought "not how to act but how to understand, how to know, and how to communicate." The preoccupation with individual development is also evident in the series of education bills that were legislated in Great Britain during the last three decades of the nineteenth-century.

20 Ibid., p. 22.

21 Critics of English literature have not been as concerned with classification as their German counterparts, and hence terms like Bildungsroman must be imported for critical usage. Although it is not often used in English criticism, another German term, Entwicklungsroman, might be applied to Bennett's fiction and other similar works. In "The Bildungsroman in Nineteenth-Century English Literature," in Medieval Epic to the Epic Theatre of Brecht, 1, eds. Rosario Armato and John Spalek (Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1968), p. 138, G. B. Tennyson describes the Entwicklungsroman as a narrative work that is concerned with the development that results from a conflict between a character and the world. Thus it is fitting that such works should begin with a formalized entrance into the world. Other novels, besides those of Bennett, that might be placed in this category include Pamela, Vanity Fair, Nicholas Nickleby and Bleak House.

22 Arnold Bennett, The Old Wives' Tale (1908; rpt. London: Pan, 1964), p. 188. Hereafter cited in the text with the acronym OWT. Since there is no critical edition of any of Bennett's work, it was felt that availability of the texts in question was of greater importance than employing first editions. As a result, I have used the paperback editions of each of the novels discussed extensively in the thesis.

23 This definition of learning emerges from Bennett's fiction and not from outside models, although there are similarities between it and other literary representations of development, like the Bildungsroman. I have deliberately avoided psychological conceptions of learning since there appears to be little consensus within the discipline itself concerning their relative merits. In Concepts and Theories of Human Development (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1976), p. 255, Richard Lerner notes that while learning has attracted more attention from psychologists than "any other psychological process, different workers in this area maintain markedly different conceptualizations about what variables are actually involved in learning and what, in fact, constitutes learning."

24 Buckley, p. 281.

25 In The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 146, Wayne Booth describes the
narrator of *The Old Wives' Tale* as "intrusive" and terms him "the all-wise author." It is a mistake to identify the narrators of Bennet's fiction too closely with Bennett himself. Although the author's judgment ultimately lies behind all fiction, it is important that in order to gain a proper assessment of his work we distinguish between Bennett, the author, and the narrator.
CHAPTER TWO

Anna of the Five Towns

The Staffordshire Potteries in Anna of the Five Towns are dominated by a principle of exploitation of the weak and defenceless by the strong and powerful, a policy that pervades most aspects of life in the region. This ethos is evident, on a social scale, in business enterprises that are motivated entirely by a need to increase profits regardless of the human costs that are incurred, in the activities of the Methodists, who, with the exception of Mrs. Sutton, are hypocrites who never allow their religious convictions to interfere with their business dealings and in the suppression to which most women in the Five Towns are subjected. In the novel's personal sphere, Anna is consistently exploited by both her father and Henry Mynors. The Five Towns in this book are a fairly cohesive social entity, since the financial and religious leaders of the community are also the principal figures in Anna's personal life.

Anna's conception of the universe at the novel's outset, as illustrated by her dutifulness to her father, her strict spiritual code and her compassion for the weak, has been shaped largely by the exploitative forces that govern the Potteries. Three crucial incidents--
Mynors' silent communication of his love for her, her religious agony during the Revival and her unalloyed pleasure on the Isle of Man—conflict with her initial view of the Five Towns and challenge her to learn and to come to an understanding of the powers that rule her universe. Anna gains considerable insight into the operations of her personal sphere: she learns to regard her father as an oppressor of the poor, to perceive Mynors as a hypocrite and to recognize that she loves Willie Price. Yet her marriage to Mynors indicates that she does not achieve an understanding of the social ethos that dominates the Five Towns. The duty she exhibits towards Mynors at the novel's end demonstrates her unquestioned acceptance of a feminine role in which women are inherently subservient to men.

Bennett suggests, moreover, that Anna's development is limited from the outset by her conception of herself as a woman. He conveys this impression through an undertone to the book that is ironic in nature because it asserts that her learning will be exclusively confined to her personal world. One of the chief components of this undertone is the similarity between Ephraim Tellwright and Mynors in the demands that they impose on Anna. This likeness, which is supported by a variety of images, indicates that Anna, through her marriage, simply exchanges one form of bondage for another. A further aspect of the
ironic undertone is nature imagery which reveals the
destruction that the prevailing ethos has inflicted upon
the Potteries' environment. Yet Anna, although her
learning experiences are each associated with a view of
nature, never understands that the despoliation has been
caused by the forces that rule her society. Irony is also
evident in prognostications made by the narrator and in
Anna's relationship with Willie in the book's conclusion.

The portrayal of industrial activity as almost
inherently corrupt makes its appearance in English litera-
ture by the middle of the nineteenth-century, when the
malignant effects of the Industrial Revolution first
became apparent. This attitude towards industry links
such disparate works as *Mary Barton*, *Hard Times*, *Sons and
Lovers* and more recently David Storey's *Saville*. In
these books, as well as a host of others, manufacture is
presented as dehumanizing to man and harmful to the
natural environment.\(^1\) In order to counteract this view
and to justify their exploitation, the owners, or
"'Conquerors'" as Masterman refers to them in *The
Condition of England*,\(^2\) appropriated the feature of
Darwin's theory of evolution that is summarized in Herbert
Spencer's catch-phrase "survival of the fittest." This
philosophy, known as Social Darwinism, thus explained
their pre-eminence as simply the illustration of a law of
nature.
The staple manufacture of the Five Towns is more fully described and more central to Anna than it is to any of the other fiction set in the region. The atmosphere of the Potteries in other early Five Towns books, however, is so barren that it forces characters such as Richard Larch in *A Man from the North* and the heroine of *Leonora* to seek fulfilment in the metropolis of London. Although Ephraim Tellwright is not directly involved in the day to day manufacture of pottery, he is the wealthiest man in the region and his various investments in the industry allow him to exert his pernicious influence when and where he chooses. He has amassed his fortune by nurturing with miserly care monies that were left to him by his father and his first wife. Perhaps the best indication of his Midas touch is that he has all but trebled Anna's inheritance from eighteen thousand to nearly fifty thousand pounds.

Tellwright is a successful businessman because he does not allow human considerations of any sort to interfere with his business ventures, although unlike, say, Thomas Gradgrind he has not developed a theoretical position to justify his financial pragmatism. The full extent of his pitiless attitude in business matters is demonstrated by his treatment of Titus Price. He decides, for example, deliberately to force Titus into bankruptcy so that as first creditors he and Anna will receive enough
money to repair the building for new and more profitable tenants. In order to achieve this end, he insists that the Prices immediately pay the arrears that have accumulated in their rent. Although Ephraim's interest in this scheme is fuelled subsequently by Titus' generous contribution to the church's building fund, it is undertaken in the first place out of pure expediency with no concern whatsoever for the effect it will have on Titus and his son.

Ephraim remains indifferent throughout the book to the torment that his plan inflicts upon the Prices. In order to meet his creditor's inexorable claims, Titus forges Mr. Sutton's note which he gives to Tellwright as collateral, and he embezzles funds from the church. Finally, following the collapse of a firm that owed him money and which makes the exposure of his crimes seem inevitable, Titus kills himself. Ephraim, however, feels no remorse or reponsibility for the suicide. When Anna brings him news of Titus' death he remarks: "'Suicide's i' that blood. ... Us'n have to do summat wi' Edward Street at last.'" Similarly, when he learns of the forgery he feels no sympathy for "'that blasted scoundrel'" (Anna, p. 203), Willie Price.

As a businessman Titus Price is likewise an active participant in the struggle for dominance that at bottom
dictates life in the Five Towns. But he cannot compete with such manufacturers as Henry Mynors because of the impractical nature of the site of his pottery and the decrepitude of the building itself: "The place was badly located, badly planned, and badly constructed. Its faults defied improvements" (Anna, p. 48). He cannot move to a better and more profitable location, because he is tied by the arrears in rent to his present site. Even his Christian name, alluding as it does to the strength and power of the Titans, is a sadly inappropriate appellation for a man who holds such little sway in the world. In Greek myth, moreover, the Titans were overthrown by the Olympians, whose equivalents in the Five Towns are men like Ephraim Tellwright. Titus' surname, on the other hand, suggests that in the prevailing atmosphere of the Potteries his life is measured and finally paid for in terms of its monetary value.

Henry Mynors is directly implicated in the exploitation and dehumanization of the workers, unlike the Prices whose very ineptitude in business puts them on a par with their employees. The reader comes to this realization during the tour of his pottery that he conducts for Anna. His attitude towards the factory is one which places the quantity of goods produced far beyond their qualitative value:
He had no sympathy with specialities, artistic or otherwise. He found his satisfaction in honestly meeting the public taste. He was born to be a manufacturer of cheap goods on a colossal scale. He could dream of fifty ovens, and his ambition blinded him to the present absurdity of talking about a three-oven bank spreading its productions all over the country and the colonies; it did not occur to him that there were yet scarcely enough plates to go round. (Anna, p. 117)

The process of transforming clay into pottery demands uniformity, and Mynors, just as he is oblivious to the fact that the poor have little crockery, is unaware of the reductive effect that his factory has upon his workers. A paintress they come upon has

a calm, vacuously contemplative face; but God alone knew whether she thought. Her work represented the summit of monotony. . . . Mynors himself was impressed by this stupendous phenomenon of absolute sameness, involuntarily assuming towards it the attitude of a showman. (Anna, p. 121)

Not only does industrial activity degrade the labourer, but in this instance it has also corrupted the creative impulse of the paintress.

The religious life of the Potteries is more fully described in Anna than it is in any of Bennett's other fiction. One commentator observes that, with the exception of Mrs. Sutton, "The Five Towns' Methodists
portrayed by Bennett are a money-grabbing, honourless clique, unconcerned with the welfare of others, and creating a world where good people, such as the Willie Prices, could not live. Their hypocrisy emerges mainly through the behaviour of certain individuals like Titus Price and Henry Mynors, but it is also implicit when during the Revival the Methodists are depicted as a group. The revivalist, for instance, is caricatured as "a little restless, nervous, alert man" (Anna, pp. 63-64), who must play the cornet in order to stir the congregation and whose photograph can be purchased for a fee of one shilling. During the revivalist's peroration "Everyone except the organist, who was searching his tune-book for the next tune, seemed to feel humbled, bitterly ashamed." (Anna, p. 67). The organist's indifference to the proceedings as well as the ambiguity of the verb "seemed" suggest that the crowd's remorse is not as sincere as it might appear to be.

Bennett's sceptical view of the Revival can be more clearly discerned when it is compared with Ralph Connor's description of a similar event in The Man from Glengarry, published in 1901 only a year before Anna of the Five Towns. Connor treats the collective resurgence of religious faith as a miraculous occurrence that deeply impresses his characters:
Mr. Murray and the ministers assisting him became aware that they were in the presence of some remarkable and mysterious phenomenon. The people listened to the Word with an intensity, response, and eagerness that gave token of a state of mind and heart wholly unusual.

The spirit of this revival, which arises directly from the minister and his congregation without the services of a professional revivalist, is a further indication of the seminal differences that distinguish Connor and Bennett's attitudes towards revivals.

Titus Price, as superintendent of the morning Sunday school, is above even Henry Mynors in the Methodist hierarchy, yet he is such a flagrant hypocrite that he is openly recognized as such by the townspeople: "Here was a man whom no one respected, but everyone pretended to respect—who knew that he was respected by none, but pretended that he was respected by all; whose whole career was made up of dissimulations . . ." (Anna, p. 188). Although Titus enjoys his religious position, he is quite unable to exercise properly the authority that accompanies it. The novel opens, for example, with Anna's complaint to Mynors that Titus has punished one of her pupils too severely for stealing a Bible: he cannot appreciate that the theft may have been prompted by an overactive interest in Christianity. As his business troubles become more acute, he is increasingly neglectful of his
responsibilities at the Special Teachers' meeting and later at the Sunday school treat.

As Ephraim Tellwright relentlessly pursues his plan of driving Titus into bankruptcy, it becomes apparent to Anna and, after his suicide to the town as a whole, that Titus is more of a victim than a hypocrite. His death shocks the town because it represents his ultimate refusal to carry on the pretensions that were such a major part of his life. By killing himself, Titus seems to be telling his fellows that this is real human nature. This is the truth; the rest was lies. . . . I confess it, and you shall confess it!'" (Anna, p. 188). He thus rends for a moment the cloak of hypocrisy that enwraps all activities in the Five Towns. His public admission of weakness forces the townsmen to recognize that they were his accomplices in perpetuating the fraud that was Titus Price's existence.

Yet there is no evidence that the suicide causes any prolonged self-appraisal. The young people, like Mynors, are primarily concerned with the Sunday school's reputation. To the older generation his suicide affirms "their most secret and honest estimate of humanity, that estimate which they never confided to a soul" (Anna, p. 188). This secret evaluation, although it is not articulated, seems to be that most men are hypocrites.
who, like Titus, are at bottom weak and helpless. But the older folks also realize that the sense of cataclysm will pass and the veil of deceit will be resumed. John Stanway in Leonora, who also kills himself as a result of business difficulties, is privately emboldened by those of his contemporaries, "Titus Price, for instance," who take their own lives.  

Henry Mynors is second only to Titus Price in the Sunday school, and he is as much of a hypocrite as his superior. Indeed, his influence is far more insidious than Titus' since he is not at all troubled by the fundamental contradiction between his behaviour in business and his supposed religious beliefs. He applies, for example, the same concern for quantity to his ecclesiastical work that he exhibits in the operation of his pottery. In the opening scene of Anna of the Five Towns Mynors remarks to Mrs. Sutton that he has just led a very enthusiastic class, and he adds, as though to prove what an excellent session it was, that over seventy students were in attendance. The good Mrs. Sutton reproves him for his preoccupation with quantity: "'I make nothing of numbers, Henry. I meant a good class. Doesn't it say--Where two or three are gathered together . . . ?'" (Anna, p. 17). The sincerity of Mynors' faith is again called into question by his insensitive response to Titus Price's suicide. He is not bothered by the exigencies that forced
the former Sunday school superintendent to commit such an act, but instead he is chiefly "dominated by the idea of the blow thus dealt to the Methodist connexion by the man now dead" (Anna, p. 184).

Mynors' religious hypocrisy is also reflected in his actions during the Revival. He admits to Anna that he has never undergone a soul-stirring conversion such as she expects (Anna, p. 85), yet he unquestioningly assumes the right to counsel those in the midst of such an experience: "A man opened the pew-door, and sitting down by the youth's side began to talk with him. It was Henry Mynors. . . . Presently the youth got up with a frenzied gesture and walked out of the gallery, followed by Mynors" (Anna, p. 70). Earlier Mynors is depicted "In the orchestra . . . whispering to the organist" (Anna, p. 69). Like the organist, Mynors is fundamentally indifferent to the influences of the revivalist and to the soul-searching that is going on around him.

Although Mynors is in no way responsible for Titus Price's business failure, he does profit from the other's misfortune. He is twice depicted replacing his superior in the functions of the church. At the Special Teachers' meeting, for example, Mynors tells the assembled group that "in the absence of Mr. Titus Price it fell to him to take the chair . . . " (Anna, p. 56). Mynors later assumes
Price's position at the Sunday school treat: "The excursion was theoretically in charge of Titus Price, the Senior Superintendent, but this dignitary had failed to arrive on Duck Bank, and Mynors had taken his place" (Anna, p. 138). Although the elder Price eventually appears at the treat, he is forced to depart before the others, and Mynors, "the general of a routed army" (Anna, p. 143), conducts his charges home. And, of course, when Titus dies one assumes that Mynors takes over his position. Thus the successful businessman, Mynors, supplants the unsuccessful one, Titus Price, in the affairs of the church.

Ephraim Tellwright's work in the religious world, as in the other areas of his life, is motivated solely by his preoccupation with financial gain. He had been a mainstay of the Hanbridge Methodists before he and his daughters moved to Bursley, but his primary interest in the church was not in spiritual matters but rather "in those fiscal schemes of organization without whose aid no religious propaganda could possibly succeed" (Anna, p. 32). As the treasurer of the circuit he was able to free it from debt within ten years, but then for no apparent reason he gave up all religious participation except for his attendance: "It was an inexplicable fall from grace. Yet the solution of the problem was quite simple. Ephraim had lost interest in his religious
avocations; they had ceased to amuse him, the old ardour had cooled" (Anna, p. 34). Upon his move to Bursley he does little except to attend chapel regularly, and even this habit is gradually being eroded: his "attendance at chapel was losing the strictness of its old regularity" (Anna, p. 183).

The almost uniform pharisaical behaviour of the Methodists in Anna seems to be relieved by the figure of Mrs. Sutton, who is depicted as being a genuine Christian: "Mrs. Sutton's bodily frame had long ago proved inadequate to the ceaseless demands of a spirit indefatigably altruistic, and her continuance in activity was notable illustration of the dominion of mind over matter" (Anna, p. 18). Throughout the novel she is depicted dispensing charity and good-will. Moreover, she appears to hold some sway over the town's hypocrites, as her reproof of Mynors for his preoccupation with numbers demonstrates. She twice persuades Ephraim Tellwright against his inclinations: she convinces him to donate to the building fund and to allow Anna to accompany the Suttons on their vacation to the Isle of Man. Anna appears to have chosen wisely when, during the spiritual crisis that she undergoes at the Revival, she establishes Mrs. Sutton as a model for her own development.
Women in the Five Towns are particularly vulnerable to the ethos of exploitation. They hold little sway in the industrial arena, the key to the Five Towns' power structure, and the responsibility they are given in religious circles is nugatory. The women at the sewing meeting, for example, are allowed to make their spiritual contribution only by making clothing, a menial task that implies their inferior standing in the religious community and that at the same time perpetuates sewing for others as a conventional female task. This gathering also offers a glimpse of the empty rituals of social interaction that the women unthinkingly accept. Beatrice Sutton epitomizes the superficiality of the lives that many of these women lead. She is portrayed as a vain dilettante who spends her indulgent father's money on frivolous luxuries. It is noteworthy in this regard that Beatrice has decorated their drawing-room in such an opulent fashion that Mrs. Sutton, the genuine Christian, "seemed scarcely of a piece with it" (Anna, p. 96).

Those women without beauty, money or a generous father end up like Miss Dickinson and Sarah Vodrey. Miss Dickinson, for instance, "supported her mother, and was a pattern to her sex. She was lovable, but had never been loved. She would have made an admirable wife and mother, but fate had decided that this material was to be wasted . . . ." (Anna, pp. 96-97). Instead, she derives her
sole pleasure in life from spreading gossip and as a consequence inflicting hurt on others. Sarah Vodrey, the Prices' housekeeper, dies at the end of the novel after a lifetime spent in "the fetters of slavery and fanaticism" (Anna, p. 223). These women, and others like them, are the counterparts of the industrial victims of the Potteries.

The plight of these and countless other women in late Victorian England helped to engender the suffragette movement which by the end of the first decade in the twentieth-century had become a formidable social and political power. Bennett presents the central character of Hilda Lessways, published in 1911, as a woman who has been strongly influenced by the spirit of female emancipation. It would be an error, however, to regard Anna of the Five Towns solely as a tract that demonstrates the need for change in society's treatment of women. The victimization of these women is a condition that is shared by the Prices and the labourers, and their common lot is an indictment of the entire social order and not only its attitude towards women. The society considered in Clayhanger is also arranged hierarchically, but in that novel the principle of suffering is expanded to the extent that all men are regarded as victims.
The principle of exploitation that dominates the Iyere Towns society depicted in Anna is also the chief force in Anna's personal world, a realm that is at least initially governed by her father. Ephraim Tellwright is a particularly severe oppressor of his womenfolk, whom he treats almost as though they were servants. Indeed, he considers the harsh usage of his daughters to be completely normal:

The women of a household were the natural victims of their master: in his experience it had always been so. In his experience the master had always, by universal consent, possessed certain rights over the self-respect, the happiness, and the peace of the defenceless souls set under him—rights as unquestioned as those exercised by Ivan the Terrible. Such rights were rooted in the secret nature of things. (Anna, p. 127)

Hence he is like a blight on the women who are close to him causing them to wither and in some cases die. His first wife, "a rosy-cheeked, very unassuming, and simple woman" (Anna, p. 31), perishes after being married to him a scant ten years: "The widower engaged a housekeeper: otherwise his existence proceeded without change" (Anna, p. 31). He subsequently exhausts another wife, Agnes' mother, and the housekeeper, who dies "a gaunt grey ruin" (Anna, p. 33). Anna Tellwright is the rightful heir of these drudges.
There is a graphic illustration of the totality of the control that Ephraim exercises over his daughter at the conclusion of the novel's first chapter. Anna, in a group with Mynors, Agnes, and Beatrice, sees her father in the new park, "a short, stout, ruddy, middle-aged man. . . . He recognized her, stared fixedly, and nodded with his grotesque and ambiguous grin. Then he sidled off towards the entrance of the Park. None of the others had seen him" (Anna, p. 28). Anna immediately informs her sister that they must leave in order to make tea. As John Lucas points out the scene "neatly demonstrates how Tellwright unquestioningly tyrannizes over her. Without hesitation Anna cuts short her own pleasure in order to hurry home and prepare her father's meal." Throughout the opening section of the book Anna is depicted performing a host of domestic tasks: she peels potatoes (Anna, p. 44), serves breakfast (Anna, p. 38) and washes dishes (Anna, p. 62).

Ephraim's strict regulation of Anna's inheritance, which remains unimpaired by Anna's legal entitlement to it, is another indication of her "life-long submission" (Anna, p. 197) to her father. When Anna learns of her fortune she experiences no sense of liberation but rather mechanically checks over a list of her holdings as her father instructs her to do: "She felt no elation or ferment of any kind; she had not begun to realize the
significance of what had occurred" (Anna, pp. 43-44). It is not just the shock which accounts for Anna's phlegmatic reaction to the news of her fortune. The money is meaningless to her because it is still under Ephraim's control: indeed, her lack of response is illustrative of the extent of his power over her. After her father has imparted his news Anna returns to her chore of peeling potatoes.

Anna, it must be noted, is occasionally troubled by the severity of the existence that Ephraim has imposed upon Agnes and herself, but at the novel's beginning she is able to quell such rebelliousness before it creates a rift between her and her father. She realizes, for example, that her father is a miser, whose tight-fistedness obliges his daughters to live in unnecessarily harsh conditions, yet she remains silent. After she receives her inheritance, Anna, like a dutiful daughter, visits the bank at her father's behest, and although she would like to withdraw a small amount for her personal use, she refrains from doing so because she knows her father would object. Nevertheless, the feeling that she would like to spend a little of her fortune persists, and Anna is somewhat relieved when she returns the books of her account to Ephraim:
She did this while ardently desiring
to refrain from doing it, as it were
under the compulsion of an invincible
instinct. Afterwards she felt more at
ease, as though some disturbing question
had been settled once and for all.
(Anna, p. 55)

Although Henry Mynors is not an outright fortune-
hunter, it would be naive to think, as Anna does, that
her fortune did not play some part in his business over-
tures to Ephraim, who has a reputation as an exceedingly
reluctant investor: "perhaps even he himself could not
have cataloged all the obscure motives that had guided
him to the shrewd miser of Manor Terrace" (Anna, p. 66).
The narrator implies that Mynors' regard for Anna is
inseparable from her inheritance in his description of
their encounter at the sewing meeting. His greeting is
filled with such "sincerity of regard for herself and
everything that was hers that she could not fail to be
impressed" (Anna, p. 103). Presumably "and everything
that was hers" includes her fortune. And certainly Mynors'
reaction to the size of Anna's inheritance confirms the
suspicions that he has been interested in her money from
the outset: "He had not expected more than fifteen or
twenty thousand pounds; and even this sum had dazzled his
imagination.... He now saw himself the dominant figure
in all the Five Towns" (Anna, p. 227).
The underlying selfishness of Mynors' interest in Anna is further illustrated by their business partnership. This arrangement can be likened to a parody of the marital union which they will later enter into. It is a testament to the primacy of business in the Five Towns that they are tied together by this sort of contract long before they become husband and wife. Mynors proposes, "'Are you willing to be my partner?'" (Anna, p. 82), and Anna unwittingly accepts. On the deed of partnership, the parodic marriage contract, Anna discovers "her own name coupled with that of Henry Mynors in large letters" (Anna, p. 111). The verb "coupled," suggesting as it does the carnal aspect of marriage, serves to imply the corrupt nature of the partnership, especially in a society which felt that the purpose of sex was solely procreative. Afterwards, Anna realizes that "the names of herself and Mynors were everywhere coupled . . ." (Anna, p. 112).

At the beginning of the novel Anna is on the verge of turning twenty-one and assuming at least nominal responsibility for her inheritance. Her birthday thus underlines her passage into a fully adult world. Anna, at the book's outset, is completely unaware of the exploitative forces that govern business, religion and relations between the sexes in the Five Towns. Yet her perception of the world has already been shaped by these forces, for, like the other females in the book, she is
the victim of a society in which women consider themselves subservient to men. This attitude is so instilled in Anna that, despite the learning that she achieves in her personal environment, she never questions it. Her acceptance of this social role is apparent in her personal world in her dutifulness to Ephraim, even though she realizes that he treats her with unnecessary harshness. Anna's servitude causes her to channel her feelings into those areas of her life—her spiritual commitment and her compassion—over which Ephraim does not bother to exercise his control.

Religion appears to offer Anna a release from the oppressive spirit that rules her personal world. She has not been converted, however, and her sense of herself as an outsider in Methodist circles serves to increase the spiritual demands that she makes of herself. Although shy by nature, she nevertheless disciplines herself to visit the homes of her Sunday school pupils and discovers "joy in the uncongenial and ill-performed task" (Anna, p. 63). The contrast between her almost impossible expectations of conversion during the Revival and the hyperbole and superficiality of the festival itself leaves her deeply confused:

Of course she believed. She had never doubted, nor dreamed of doubting, that Jesus died on the Cross to save her soul—her soul—from eternal damnation.
She was probably unaware that any person in Christendom had doubted that fact so fundamental to her. What, then, was lacking? What was belief? What was faith? (Anna, p. 70)

The fact that the Revival causes a true believer--Anna's unconverted condition stresses the integrity of her belief--to question her faith is yet another sign of the corruption that permeates the Methodist sect described in the novel.

Anna not only obeys a rigorous spiritual code herself in the opening chapters of the book, but she also expects others to live up to her standards of behaviour. She imposes these standards on Titus Price, for instance, and at least initially she condemns him as a hypocrite. When Anna first learns of Titus' difficulties she is prepared to accept a measure of responsibility for them because she is aware of the defects of her property. But when she recalls that Titus is a debtor, her pity dissolves as her strict code of conduct comes into play: "The idea of being in debt was abhorrent to her. She could not conceive how a man who was in debt could sleep at nights" (Anna, p. 45). She brands him as a hypocrite when she recollects that, despite his own sins, he has recently castigated a mere child for petty theft. Anna is thus convinced, at this point in the novel, that she is morally superior to Titus, and as a result she deals
with him in a stern manner that Ephraim, had he overheard her, would have applauded: "There was a flinty hardness in her tone which astonished herself perhaps more than Titus Price" (Anna, p. 51).

The severity of her life with Ephraim makes Anna compassionate towards those, like her sister and Willie Price, who are obviously more defenceless than herself. She exhibits a maternal concern for Agnes throughout the novel, and as a consequence she is determined that she will protect her sister, if at all possible, from a lifetime of dedication to their father: "She felt passionately sorry for Agnes, too young to feel the shadow which overhung her future. Anna would marry into freedom, but Agnes would remain the serf" (Anna, p. 179). Anna's original view of Willie almost passes unnoticed, in the light of their later relationship. He salutes her in passing and the narrator remarks that "She thought of him exactly as Agnes had done" (Anna, p. 20). Agnes, it turns out, feels sorry for him as she does "towards her doll when she happened to find it lying neglected on the floor" (Anna, p. 17). Even though Anna is depressed by her visit to the Edward Street works, her compassionate view of Willie remains untarnished by his involvement in his father's sordid business: "it seemed to her that some one ought to shield that transparent and confiding soul from its father and the intriguing world" (Anna, p. 50).
It is only a matter of time and of development before she assumes responsibility for him herself.

Anna experiences three events in the novel so intensely that they conflict with her initial conception of the world, and as a consequence of her efforts to resolve them she achieves an understanding of the exploitative forces that govern her personal sphere. Bennett describes these incidents as "the three great tumultuous moments of her life" (Anna, p. 19). Mynors' unspoken declaration of his love for her, the first of these moments, conflicts with Anna's dutifulness to her father and teaches her that Mynors offers a means of liberation from parental servitude. As a result of her spiritual turmoil during the Revival, which causes her to question the sincerity of her faith, Anna learns to regard Titus Price not as a hypocrite but as a victim and to condemn her father's treatment of the Prices. During her vacation on the Isle of Man, the third incident, Anna experiences a sense of self-fulfilment that is implicitly at odds with her life in the Potteries. This latent conflict becomes manifest upon her return home, and through her attempts to resolve it she learns to act against her father, to regard Mynors as a hypocrite and to realize that she loves Willie Price.
Anna's learning is a cumulative process which means, for example, that her defiance of her father in the latter stages of the novel is founded upon previous insights into his character. Her development proceeds in a linear fashion until it culminates in her realization that she loves Willie Price, who is the antithesis of the dominating males who rule the book's universe. Her marriage to Henry Mynors, despite her love for another man, makes it clear to the reader that Anna has never examined the sense of duty and submission to men that she shares with the other women in the novel. Hence Anna's development in the world of family and friends continues until it is brought to a halt by her social identity, her conception of womanhood as a state of servitude to men.

When Anna first meets Henry Mynors in the novel she receives a pleasant shock: "she realized for the first time that she was loved" (Anna, p. 19). Yet it is not immediately apparent why this moment should have such a significant influence upon her life. Certainly, Anna does not appear to be overwhelmed in the least by Mynors' attention; indeed, she had been expecting it for some time. She also remains sufficiently self-possessed to recognize that her father's money and miserliness has marked her as someone special in the town, and that Mynors' interest in her will be construed by some as fortune-hunting. But she is convinced that although "Mynors might
have no incurable aversion to a fortune, she herself, the spirit and body of her, had been the sole awakener of his desire" (Anna, p. 23). She is flattered that she has attracted perhaps the most eligible bachelor in the Five Towns, but there is no indication that she reciprocates his affection.

In Anna's eyes the actual significance of Mynors' affection lies not in the love itself but in what will occur should it be allowed to reach fruition: her emancipation from her father's clutches. Mynors represents a potential new life for Anna which of necessity is in conflict with her deep-seated commitment to her father:

Far more impressively than in the afternoon she realized that this was the end of one epoch in her career and the beginning of another. Enthralled by austere traditions and that stern conscience of hers, she had never permitted herself to dream of the possibility of an escape from the parental servitude. ... The worst tyrannies of her father never dulled the sense of her duty to him; and, without perhaps being aware of it, she had rather despised loye and the dalliance of the sexes. ... Now she saw, in a quick revelation, that it was the lovers, and not she, who had the right to scorn. She saw how miserably narrow, tepid, and trickling the stream of her life had been, and had threatened to be. Now it gushed forth warm, impetuous, and full. ... She lived; and she was finding the sight to see, the courage to enjoy. (Anna, p. 36)
The possibility of freedom releases feelings in Anna that have long been held in check by her dutifulness to her father. These feelings promise to transform her vision of the world, and although she recognizes that they originate in her hope of liberation and not love for Mynors, the new-found respect that she has for lovers suggests that she looks forward to falling in love herself as a means of enhancing her novel sensations. These feelings, however, are soon dampened, for once Tellwright returns home his domination of her is immediately re-established: "'At last,' said her father grimly, when she opened the door. In two words he had resumed his terrible sway over her" (Anna, p. 37).

It takes Anna some time to learn to regard Mynors as a viable alternative to her father, in spite of the intense sensations that his silent avowal of love excite in her. She needs to be reassured, especially in those moments when Ephraim exercises his control over her, that she did not mistake the significance of his glance. After she is informed of her inheritance, and it is patently obvious that her father intends to continue to manipulate her fortune as he did before her birthday, Anna is unable to decide upon a proper course of action until she has seen Mynors:
It seemed to her that she could not arrange or examine her emotions until after she had met Henry Mynors again. . . . As if when her eyes had rested on him, and not before, she might perceive some simple solution of the problems which she had obscurely discerned ahead of her. (Anna, p. 44)

Later, when Ephraim is in a rage over a meal that is not served on time, Anna longs to see Mynors as though his mere presence might supply an answer to her difficulties: "once again she had the idea that something definite and satisfactory might result if she could only see him . . ."
(Anna, p. 81).

Anna is hesitant, it would seem, because she fears committing herself to a man who is less than her father's equal. But Mynors' behaviour at the Special Teachers' meeting, which Anna attends specifically in order to gain reassurance, more than justifies the hopes that she has invested in him. While Anna endows him with a host of virtues, she is perhaps most impressed by his ability to dominate his fellows: "Incomparable to the rest, he was clearly born to lead" (Anna, p. 56). This aspect of his character, which implies that at the very least he will be able to hold his own against her father, leads her to believe that "Mynors was perfect that night; the reality of him exceeded her dreamy meditations" (Anna, p. 57). His masterfulness is magnified by Anna during
her religious dilemma into a superhuman faculty. Not only is he a leader among men, but he also holds dominion over his spiritual existence: "a man would either wring salvation from the heavenly powers or race gloriously to Hell. Mynors—Mynors was a god!" (Anna, p. 75).

Once Anna has learned to trust in Mynors' ability to effect her liberation from Ephraim, she turns to him increasingly for advice when she is confronted with difficulties of a religious, business or social nature. After her painful encounter with the converted at the early morning prayer meeting following the Revival, Anna observes to herself that it would have been different "If Mynors had but been present!" (Anna, p. 78). He furnishes further religious assistance by sending Mrs. Sutton to her side in the midst of the Revival—Anna later joins her class at Mynors' suggestion (Anna, p. 144)—and his advice on conversion helps to solve the problem of her spiritual agony.

Anna also thinks of Mynors when she is troubled by her obligations as the owner of Titus Price's pottery. Price's woeful appearance at the Sunday school treat makes her instinctively seek out Mynors, who, unfortunately for her, is occupied with organizing the party's return: "A word from Mynors would have been balm to her . . ." (Anna, p. 143). Anna is brought closer to him by their
business partnership, and, during their tour of Mynors' works, the obvious control that he exerts over the factory's operation impresses upon her the range of his abilities: "Anna pondered over the organizing power, the forethought, the wide vision, and the sheer ingenuity and cleverness which were implied by the contents of this warehouse" (Anna, p. 124).

Mynors' attractiveness to Anna as a religious worker and a man of business is augmented by his social prowess and willingness to please her. One of Anna's chief worries as she contemplates her prospects is her sister's future, but Mynors solves this problem with his open affection for the little girl and his readiness to take in Agnes once they are married. He also relieves Anna of her deep-seated sense of social unease which is most in evidence during the sewing meeting. She is acutely aware that she is being minutely inspected as she enters the drawing-room, and then she has the misfortune to be placed beside Miss Dickinson, whose allusions to Mynors make Anna even more uncomfortable. Finally, when Anna notices how suited to each other Mynors and Beatrice are, she feels utterly wretched. But Mynors, by greeting her with "deference" (Anna, p. 103) and effusion, instantly relieves her apprehension: "Her sense of humiliation and of uncertainty was effaced by a single word, a single glance" (Anna, p. 103). Mynors not only reassures her but later, when
he offers to escort her home, he also makes his interest
in her public: "For declaration it was, and a formal
declaration" (Anna, p. 105). Anna's confidence in Mynors
gradually increases until her holiday on the Isle of Man
diminishes his allure.

The Revival initiates the second major incident that
conflicts with Anna's preconceived vision of the sur-
rounding world. She is especially susceptible to its
influences because her formal position as one of the
ungodly places pressure on her to join her fellows.
Anna's ingenuous regard for Mynors also intensifies her
response to his message at the Special Teachers' meeting:
"Caught up by the soaring of his spirit, her spirit lifted,
and she was conscious of vague but intense longing sky-
ward. . . . She made resolutions which had no verbal form,
yielding eagerly to his influence and his appeal" (Anna,
p. 59). And she conducts her pastoral visits under "the
still active influence of Mynors and the teachers' meeting"
(Anna, p. 63).

These influences, as well as the revivalist's exhori-
tations and the visible and audible evidence of those
undergoing conversion, combine to make the Revival service
an ordeal for Anna. Although she believes in Christ
unquestioningly, her high spiritual standards lead her to
expect that conversion will galvanize her entire existence,
and until this occurs she is unable to declare her faith publicly. Anna finds it impossible to sleep in her conscience-stricken state, and instead dreams "impossibly of a high spirituality which should metamorphose all, change her life, lend glamour to the most pitiful surroundings, ennoble the most ignominious burden . . ."

(Anna, pp. 74-75). She resolves to confess her largely imaginary sins to her father and sister, but before they waken she leaves to seek relief at the prayer meeting. But this gathering only adds to her pain, so that when she emerges "It was like coming out of prison" (Anna, p. 78). Hence Anna must learn to resolve the conflict between the high spiritual expectations that she places upon herself and the actual conditions of her existence.

Mynors and Mrs. Sutton offer Anna two different solutions to the conflict between her spiritual goals and her religious practice that originates out of the Revival. Mynors, for example, cautions her not to expect too much from conversion, and he instructs her to follow Christ's teachings on a diurnal basis: "she concentrated the activities of her brain on that idea of Christ-like living, day by day, hour by hour, of a gradual aspiration towards Christ and thereby an ultimate arrival at the state of being saved" (Anna, p. 86). But while Anna initially puts this advice into practice, she finds it difficult to maintain such a regimen once the Revival's influences have
faded: "She was obliged to acknowledge that the fervour of her aspirations had been steadily cooling for weeks" (Anna, p. 198).

Mrs. Sutton, on the other hand, does not instruct Anna but rather sets an example through her behaviour for Anna to follow. In the midst of her torture during the Revival Anna is visited in her pew by an "angel of consolation" (Anna, p. 71), Mrs. Sutton: "The ageing woman's thin distinguished face... glistened with love and compassion, and as Anna's eyes rested upon it Anna felt that here was something tangible, something to lay hold on" (Anna, p. 71). It is significant that Anna, who is unable to profess her faith publicly, sets as a model a woman whose chief trait is the practical application of her Christianity. This example is consistent with Anna's innate compassion and thus its effect upon her is far more profound than Mynors' advice. She continues to pattern her actions on those of Mrs. Sutton long after she has forgotten her resolutions to seek salvation through daily observance of Christ's teachings. But in any case, the immediate impact upon Anna of both these solutions to her spiritual crisis is to put her beliefs into action.

Anna's commitment to practical Christianity is almost immediately tested by her father's scheme to bankrupt Titus Price, and as a consequence of this conflict Anna
learns to view Titus as a victim. Inspired by her recent resolutions, Anna tries to place the Prices in a framework of Christian ethics, and she is reminded at once of the Third Beatitude: "She thought of the text: 'Blessed are the meek,' and saw in flash the deep truth of it" (Anna, p. 88). Although Anna, in theory, regards Titus in this charitable fashion, it is only through Willie Price, the very embodiment of meekness, that Anna learns to alter her opinions of the elder Price. Willie's obvious concern and affection for his father reveals "Titus Price in a new light to Anna, as a human creature loved, not as a mere gross physical organism: the effect was quite surprising" (Anna, p. 87).

Ephraim's renewed policy of "'squeezing the last penny' out of Titus Price" (Anna, p. 111) serves to increase Anna's concern for the Prices. This interest is quickened initially by the explicitly Christian resolves she makes following the Revival, but these intentions are eroded with the passage of time. Mrs. Sutton's example, however, engages Anna's inherent compassion for the weak and causes her concern for Willie and his father to deepen into a genuine interest in their welfare. Her pity for Willie is increased on each occasion he calls in reply to her father's demands, and when he finally responds to Ephraim's ultimatum with the forgery his "craven and fawning humility was inexpressibly touching
and shameful to Anna" (Anna, p. 128). Similarly, when Anna sees Titus Price at the treat she is shocked by his ravaged appearance: "Anna realized the intensity of the crisis through which Mr. Price was passing" (Anna, p. 138). Although she feels partially responsible for their plight, her guilt by this point in the novel derives from her inability to express her compassion rather than from her neglect of religious principle.

The spiritual conflict that teaches Anna to view Titus with sympathy also instructs her, perhaps for the first time, to condemn her father. Ephraim's hold has been vitiated somewhat by Mynors' influence, and his behaviour toward the Prices perpetuates the erosion of his power over her. Immediately following the Revival, however, Anna is still very much within her father's grasp: she "obediently" (Anna, p. 87) meets Willie at his command; she "coldly" (Anna, p. 89) inquires as to the extent of their resources; and when Ephraim enters the room "Anna caught a glance from him dismissing her. She went out in silence" (Anna, p. 89). Yet as her care for the Prices increases, itself an implicit condemnation of her father's actions, she is able to communicate her disapproval to Ephraim. When the miser demands that she write the Prices the ultimatum, for instance, Anna omits the threat of immediate eviction from the letter. Although Ephraim soon detects this ruse, the tears that she sheds as she signs
the letter are another indication of her discontent. By the time of the Sunday school treat, Anna has learned to regard his bankruptcy plan as a "deliberate persecution" (Anna, p. 139) of Titus Price.

The third and final incident that provokes Anna's development is her vacation on the Isle of Man. This episode reveals to her a potential for human happiness and allows her to experience personal fulfilment, accomplishments that are implicitly at odds with her life in the Five Towns. Before the holiday, Anna dreams of "an enchanted isle and hours of unimaginable rapture" (Anna, p. 145), and these hopes are satisfied at each step of their journey and on the Isle itself. Anna is transported with joy from the moment of setting out on their holiday. Liverpool, for example, is "too much, too astonishing, too lovely. She had not guessed at this" (Anna, p. 150). Her first sight of the ocean and the voyage itself produce "a feeling of intense, inexplicable joy, a profound satisfaction with the present, and a negligence of past and future. To exist was enough, then" (Anna, p. 151).

On the Isle, Anna, who is accustomed to her father's moroseness, is amazed at the amiability of her companions; she goes boating for the first time, and she even catches more fish than anyone else: "Anna was profoundly happy each moment had its pleasure, and this pleasure was quite independent of the thing done; it sprang from
all activities and idlenesses" (Anna, p. 167).

Anna's unalloyed happiness allows her for the first time to practice freely the compassion that is stimulated by Mrs. Sutton's example, and in this manner she experiences a sense of self-fulfilment that, given the restrictions of her life in the Potteries, she could not achieve at home. When Beatrice Sutton falls ill, Anna shows her concern by nursing the invalid through two successive nights until she is on the road to recovery. Although Anna tries to pray for an improvement in her patient's condition, like Mrs. Sutton, she discovers "much more satisfaction in the activity of nursing" (Anna, p. 171). Perhaps the most significant aspect of Anna's performance is that she will not allow Mrs. Sutton to execute the most rigorous part of the nursing, the administration of medicine at regular intervals during the night. Her substitution for Mrs. Sutton, who after all is Beatrice's mother as well as an exemplar of Christian compassion, suggests that Anna has achieved the same stature as her model. She has given a suffering individual practical assistance and thus established a precedent for herself that will help determine her actions when she next encounters someone in distress, such as Willie Price.

Anna is quite conscious that these events have helped to bring about a fundamental change in herself, a trans-
formation that is evident in the way that she is treated by her companions and in her conception of herself:

Their gratitude, unexpressed, but patent on each face, gave her infinite pleasure. She had won their respect by the manner in which she had risen to the height of an emergency that demanded more than devotion. She had proved, not merely to them but to herself, that she could be calm under stress, and could exert moral force when occasion needed. (Anna, p. 173)

Anna has established herself as an independent person who is no longer afraid to put her compassion into practice when the occasion demands. Furthermore, she has fulfilled her personality in a manner that she could not have accomplished in the Five Towns. Thus when she returns home she is conscious that "Nothing had changed, except herself."

(Anna, p. 177).

Upon her return to the Potteries, Titus Price's suicide makes Anna painfully aware of the conflict with the exploitative forces of the Five Towns that is implicit throughout the Isle of Man episode. This conflict is exacerbated further by Willie's revelation of the forgery and Mynors' news that Titus Price embezzled monies from the church. Anna attempts to resolve this conflict through a complete acceptance of her responsibility for these events; an increased sense of compassion for the Prices and, after her success with Beatrice, a need to alleviate their suffering through action. These developments in
Anna produce further insight on her part into the characters of her father and Henry Mynors and into the actual nature of her relationship with Willie Price.

When Anna hears of the elder Price's death, she shows the independence that she experienced on the Isle of Man through her instant acceptance of culpability for the suicide. Although her sense of wrong-doing abates somewhat during the inquest when Willie discloses that his father's chief worry lay with the bankruptcy of a firm in London, it is intensified when she discovers that the note was forged: "Her one feeling was the sense of being herself a culprit. After all, it was her father's action, more than anything else, that had led to the suicide, and he was her agent" (Anna, p. 195). Anna's guilt is augmented by an enormous sense of compassion for Titus Price, whom she regarded as the worst kind of hypocrite at the book's outset. Indeed, she absolves him of all his crimes: "Old Price had atoned for all in one sublime sin, the sole deed that could lend dignity and repose to such a figure as his" (Anna, p. 185).

Although the nature of her regard for Willie remains consistent with her previous view of him, and continues to remain so until the final scene in the novel, its intensity is increased greatly. This attitude is evident when he confesses to her that he forged Mr. Sutton's
signature: "She wished passionately to shield, shelter, and comfort him, to do something, however small, to diminish his sorrow and humiliation . . ." (Anna, p. 194).

The sensation of fulfilment that Anna undergoes on the Isle also instructs her to put such feelings as these into action. As a result, Anna acts on behalf of the Prices throughout the remainder of the book. She burns the forged note, recompenses the church in order that Titus' crime will not be detected and gives Willie one hundred pounds as a means of establishing his new life in Australia.

Anna's perception of her father after learning that Titus Price has taken his own life reflects her experience on the Isle of Man. After her latent dissatisfaction with his miserliness and her criticism of his treatment of the Prices, she now condemns him outright: "By the act of death, Titus Price had put her father for ever in the wrong. His corpse accused the miser . . ." (Anna, pp. 196-97). Moreover, this condemnation of Ephraim, almost as much as her compassion for Willie, emboldens her to burn the counterfeit note: "She had saved Willie Price, but she had ruined herself with her father. She knew well that he would never forgive her" (Anna, p. 200). And indeed he does not, for when Ephraim discovers what his daughter has accomplished he is deeply shocked and, typical of his base view of human behaviour, he attributes
her actions to sexual impropriety.

Anna's destruction of the forgery signifies her rejection of her father's belief in the supremacy of money, and as a consequence his dominion over her is almost immediately reduced: "the unappeasable ire of the old man tended to weaken his power over her. . . . Now that she had seen and felt the limit of his anger, she became aware that she could endure it . . ." (Anna, p. 205). Since Ephraim can no longer control her completely he makes it clear that he wants her to leave, but, true to form, it is only grudgingly that he relinquishes his hold over her bank books. Anna thus learns to condemn her father's preoccupation with financial gain and to put her opposition into action. As a result, she finally frees herself from his grasp.

By burning the forged note, Anna aligns herself with Willie Price and rejects the values of her father's world. At the same time, she consigns Henry Mynors, whom she had once conceived as a refuge from Ephraim, to the world of duty. This realization, however, is preceded by a period of latent dissatisfaction with Mynors that is born out of the implicit conflict between Anna's happiness on the Isle of Man and the prevailing ethos of the Five Towns, as it is embodied in Mynors. Their relationship is summarized prior to the holiday, and it would appear from
this account that both parties are satisfied with the present nature of their association. Mynors' love for Anna is a "temperate affection" (Anna, p. 144), and while Anna does not return this sentiment, at least "She was sure of him. She waited calmly for events, existing, as her habit was, in the future" (Anna, p. 145). When Anna discovers that Mynors will likely join their trip, she "retired to her bedroom to savour an astounding happiness in quietude" (Anna, p. 137). Yet on the Isle of Man Anna's expectation that she will fall in love with Mynors does not materialize; she is reserved rather than blissfully happy with her suitor. The genuine pleasure and self-fulfilment that she experiences on the vacation teaches her to view Mynors with suspicion.

Anna immediately resents the propinquity that is forced upon Mynors and herself by the Suttons. "Throughout the day Anna had been conscious of the fact that all the Suttons showed a tendency, slight but perceptible, to treat Henry and herself as a pair desirous of opportunities for being alone together. She did not like it" (Anna, p. 155). Later in their stay she again has "the uncomfortable suspicion that Mynors and herself were being manoeuvred" (Anna, p. 164). When they are alone together Anna is glad that Mynors' attentions are not in the least amorous: "'Is this love-making?' It could not be, she decided; but she infinitely preferred it so..."
She wished for nothing better than this apparently frivolous and irresponsible dalliance" (Anna, p. 165). She concludes that his attitude towards her is that of a brother rather than a lover: "his attitude was such as Anna, ignorant of the ways of brothers, deemed a brother might adopt" (Anna, p. 167).

When Mynors resumes his attentions after Anna has achieved a sense of fulfilment by nursing Beatrice, she is annoyed because she feels that "events had lifted her to a higher plane than that of love-making" (Anna, p. 173). In spite of her discontent Anna, after some hesitation, agrees to marry Mynors. Although she anticipates "the prospect of happiness" (Anna, p. 175) and she looks forward to freeing Agnes from their father's grasp, she derives no immediate joy herself from the engagement: "she experienced no new sensation. She felt as she had felt on the way down, except that she was sorely perturbed. There was no ineffable rapture, no ecstatic bliss" (Anna, p. 175). And even though she is transported with joy on the journey home, "The duties, rather than the joys, of her condition, had lain nearest her heart until that moment of setting out ... " (Anna, p. 176).

Anna's latent dissatisfaction with Mynors is aggravated upon their return to the Five Towns by his superficial response to the Price's suffering and by his
condescension towards herself. On the evening she learns of the suicide, Anna confesses her sense of responsibility for what has occurred to Mynors, who attempts to comfort her: "But, beneath the feeling of reassurance, which by superior force he had imposed on her, there lay a feeling that she was treated like a frightened child who must be tranquillized in the night" (Anna, p. 187). Yet she appreciates his concern, and that evening, when her sense of guilt prevents her from sleeping, she is solaced "by making anew her vows to him" (Anna, p. 188). It is noteworthy that when it becomes apparent that she must act alone to save Willie, she goes to bed absorbed by her commitment to him rather than her duty to Mynors: "It was on the firm, almost rapturous resolve to succour Willie Price, if need be, that she fell asleep" (Anna, p. 212).

Anna's buried resentment of Mynors surfaces when she sees that some form of action must be taken if she is to save Willie from prosecution for forgery:

It is significant that the idea of confiding in Henry Mynors did not present itself for a single moment as practical. Mynors had been kind to Willie in his trouble, but Anna almost resented this kindness on account of the condescending superiority with which she had overheard Mynors saying to himself: 'Here is this poor, crushed worm. It is my duty as a Christian to pity and
succour him, will do so. I am a righteous man. She could never reveal Willie's sin, if it was a sin, to Henry Mynors— that symbol of correctness and of success. She had fraternized with sinners, like Christ; and, with amazing injustice, she was capable of deeming Mynors a Pharisee because she could not find fault with him, because he lived and loved so impeccably and so triumphantly. (Anna, pp. 198-99)

Mynors' attitude towards the Prices is thus at odds with the sense of responsibility and compassion that Anna feels for them, and as a result of this conflict she perceives Mynors' insensitivity and hypocrisy. After Anna acts on Willie's behalf, she is fully cognizant at last of her animus toward Mynors. She sees him on three occasions after setting fire to the forgery, and "each time the secret bitterness of her soul, despite conscientious effort to suppress it, had marred the meeting ..." (Anna, p. 206).

Mynors' indifference to Willie's plight actually intensifies Anna's feelings for the unfortunate young man. She is astounded, for example, at the callousness with which Mynors and Mr. Sutton discuss Willie's situation: "She perceived that they could see in him only a defaulting debtor, that his misfortune made no appeal to their charity" (Anna, p. 209). Later, when Anna inquires as to what will become of Willie, Mynors replies in a
voice, "callous and perfunctory" (Anna, p. 211), that reinforces her compassion for Willie. She even interprets Mynors' interest in the Prices' home as a further addition to Willie's suffering: "she could not entirely banish a misgiving that Willie Price was again to be victimized" (Anna, p. 215). Hence Mynors, the successful businessman and inheritor of Titus Price's religious duties, completes his conquest by possessing the Prices' home.

Anna's dissatisfaction with Mynors increases when he refuses to conceal Titus' embezzlement from the church fund. He informs her that he cannot falsify the accounts, because the auditor would discover the alteration: "'Besides, I should not be doing my duty if I kept a thing like this from the Superintendent-minister. He, at any rate, must know, and perhaps the stewards.'" (Anna, p. 228). Mynors presumably relates to these worthies what has occurred, and with so many people in the know the story soon becomes common knowledge. Although it is not directly acknowledged, it is implied that Mynors is responsible. After all, Anna had managed the affair of the forgery herself, and "she had not only accomplished the deliverance of Willie Price, but had secured absolute secrecy concerning the episode" (Anna, p. 205).
Mynors is last seen at the bazaar as the substitute for an auctioneer who has failed to capture the crowd's imagination. His remarks are deliberately juxtaposed with Anna's discovery that the tale of the embezzlement has been divulged. Beatrice Sutton tells her that "It's all over the place. Miss Dickinson told me" (Anna, p. 233). And then we hear Mynors speaking: "You will be glad to know, ladies, Mynors' voice sang out from the platform, 'that the total proceeds, so far as we can calculate them now, exceed five hundred and twenty-five pounds'" (Anna, p. 233). The implication is that Mynors is responsible, and that he is indifferent to the pain that he has caused. His primary interest is in making money, not unlike Ephraim Tellwright whose religious zeal was generated by the same concern. The montage effect that Bennett achieves in this scene, which shows his indebtedness to Flaubert, reveals his ability to put his point across in a laconic manner that is free from the proximity of which he is often accused.

Anna's development after her vacation on the Isle is also apparent in her ultimate realization that she loves Willie Price. Until the last scene in the novel, Anna characterizes her concern for the Prices, both father and son, as that of a mother caring for children who are too weak to defend themselves. This attitude is first
in evidence during the Sunday school treat when Anna finds that Titus Price is "acutely wistful in her eyes, as a child might have been" (Anna, p. 139). After the Isle of Man episode, however, Anna increasingly pictures her relationship with Willie as a maternal one. Prior to burning the forgery, for instance, she envisages him as her offspring: "She felt equal with him; as a mother feels equal with her child when it cries and she soothes it" (Anna, p. 199). After Willie discloses his gratitude for her assistance, she regards him as "her great child" (Anna, p. 202), and she views him in the same fashion during the night that she nurses Sarah Vodrey. She forces him to eat, thinking "Child of a hundred sorrows, he must be treated as a child" (Anna, p. 221). Even on the morning of his departure, by which time he has heard the gossip about his father's crime, Anna still feels that "Now was the moment when, if ever, the mother's influence should be exerted" (Anna, p. 235).

Anna's conception of herself as a mother is consistent with the maternal care that she has exhibited towards her sister from the novel's beginning. This trait is strengthened by her establishment during the Revival of Mrs. Sutton, the Christian mother, as a role model. She nurses Sarah Vodrey in Mrs. Sutton's stead, just as she cared for Beatrice on the Isle of Man. The maternal role, which in Anna's eyes is quite distinct
from her sexual identity, is also an impediment to her
development since it retards her recognition of the
actual nature of her regard for Willie Price. Anna's
picture of herself as a mother in her relations with
Willie predominates after her vacation, the occasion
when she becomes engaged to Henry Mynors. The duty that
she feels towards Mynors prevents her from admitting to
herself that she loves another man. The asexual portrait
of herself as a mother is thus a convenient means of
protecting herself from a painful admission.

Nevertheless, the conflict between her maternal self-
image and her experience of personal fulfillment is placed
under increasingly greater strain in the last section of
Anna. Indeed, the frequency with which she conjures up
the picture of herself as a mother, as though to reinforce
her commitment to Mynors, is evidence of this strain.
A number of factors—her realization that "he worshipped
her" (Anna, p. 202), Mynors indifference to his lot—
contribute to the pressure that is focused on Anna, but
perhaps the greatest tension is provided by the actions
that she performs on Willie's behalf.

It is primarily through acting out her compassion,
the means by which she originally discovered fulfillment,
that Anna comes to recognize her love for Willie. At
Titus' inquest the "rapid mouthing exasperated her beyond sufferance" (Anna, p. 193), and her sense of urgency and impatience with the inadequacy of the concern shown towards the Prices is redoubled by Willie's information about the forgery: "But at any cost she meant to comfort him..." (Anna, p. 196). When she does burn the note, the depth of her feeling is reflected in the conflagration itself which destroys the token of her father's cold, logical world:

She did not reason—she felt; reason was shrivelled up in the fire of emotion. She almost trembled with the urgency of her desire to protect from further shame the figure of Willie Price... and to protect also the lifeless and dishonoured body of his parent. (Anna, p. 197)

The feelings that are aroused in Anna after she acts on Willie's part are also stimulated by her restitution of the funds that Titus pilfered from the church: "She prayed wildly that he might never learn the full depth of his father's fall" (Anna, p. 228).

Anna administers further assistance to Willie when she is called upon to nurse Sarah Vodrey, and this instance provokes an even greater demonstration of her stifled affection for Willie. When she discovers that he will soon be leaving the Five Towns she desperately wants to confess to him her guilt and her love, yet she
is still unable to articulate her feelings:

She longed to kneel at his feet, and comfort him, and to cry: 'It is I who have ruined you—driven your father to cheating his servant, to crime, to suicide; driven you to forgery and turned you out of your house which your old servant killed herself in making clean for me. I have wronged you, and I love you like a mother because I have wronged you, and because I saved you from prison.' (Anna, p. 223).

This example, which occurs during their penultimate meeting alone in the novel, is a silent confession on Anna's part that allows her to examine her sentiments for Willie. Although she still characterizes herself as a mother in this passage, its almost hysterical tenor suggests otherwise. The conflict in Anna is further illustrated by her confused desire to kneel at Willie's feet, an expression of her fervour, and to comfort him, which is a sign of the maternal role that she had adopted.

On the morning of Willie's leave-taking, Anna's final act—the gift of one hundred pounds—the imminence of her departure, the fresh pain elicited by the news of his father's crime and their touch conspire to force Anna to recognize, at last, the actual nature of her feelings for Willie: "As their eyes met in an intense and painful gaze, to her, as least, it was revealed that they were lovers". (Anna, p. 235). This insight marks the culmination of Anna's development in the novel, for it completes
the self-fulfilment that she experiences on the Isle. She transcends the asexual maternal role that she unconsciously imposes upon herself as a result of her engagement and admits that she loves a man other than her fiancé. Willie, moreover, is the embodiment of meekness and goodness, traits that are antithetical to those of the other men in Anna's life. Her love for him indicates that at least in her affections she endorses these principles and rejects the self-serving behaviour of her father and Mynors.

In spite of the learning that Anna achieves in her personal world, she never questions that as a woman she is inherently subservient to men, especially those who actively seek to dominate her. The deep-seated nature of Anna's unexamined conception of herself in the social sphere is evident in her marriage to Henry Mynors, to whom she is committed long before she realizes that she loves Willie:

Some may argue that Anna, knowing she loved another man, ought not to have married Mynors. But she did not reason thus; such a notion never even occurred to her. She had promised to marry Mynors, and she married him. Nothing else was possible. She who had never failed in duty did not fail then. She who had always submitted and bowed the head, submitted and bowed the head then. . . . Facing the future calmly and genially, she took oath with herself to be a good wife to the man.
whom, with all his excellences, she had never loved. (Anna, p. 235)

D. H. Lawrence presumably had Anna's dutifulness in mind when he remarked upon the novel's "hopelessness" and the "resignation" that Bennett exhibits in it. Indeed, his reading of Anna of the Five Towns inspired him to write The Lost Girl in order to demonstrate that poverty and industrialization do not necessarily confine the human spirit. The degree of Anna's restriction can be gauged if one compares her to such contemporary heroines as Ann Veronica, the Schlegel sisters in Howards End and Ursula and Gudrun Brangwen in Women in Love. Although these characters have limitations of their own, they all are much more conscious of the social bonds that determine their interactions with men than is Anna.

Anna's development in the novel appears to be a linear progression towards enlightenment that is suddenly curtailed by her marriage to Mynors. Although their nuptials are the first concrete evidence of the extent of her subservience, it is suggested from the novel's outset that Anna's education ultimately will be limited by her social identity. The underlying similarity of the demands that Mynors and Tellwright make of Anna, for example, is reinforced by images of clothing, religion, looks and elevation. The novel's nature imagery also
reveals the Five Towns as a ravaged landscape, but Anna remains oblivious to the societal implications of her blighted environment. The narrator makes forecasts into the future that inform the reader that the conditions of Anna's life will never alter, and that her educational limitations are also implicit in the book's conclusion. These elements coalesce to form an undertone to Anna that is ironic in nature because it asserts that the scope of Anna's learning is determined, even before it is initiated, by the exploitative forces that govern the Five Towns portrayed in the novel.

Although the personalities of Tellwright and Mynors are quite distinct, they both operate according to the ethos of exploitation that rules the novel's social-and personal worlds. As a result, the demands that they make of Anna, which in turn elicit her unquestioning sense of duty, are similar. Willie Price, it should be noted, expects nothing from Anna and thus he gains her love. Ephraim, who treats his daughter like a chattel, approves of Mynors' interest in her from the outset. He sees Anna and Mynors together in the park at the novel's beginning, and upon his return from chapel that evening, instead of being irate because Anna does not open the door promptly enough, calls her by a nickname and asks if she has been day-dreaming: "She was staggered at this change
After the episode of her life, the preyed acts of her life. It was one of deceptions to accompany myriads to church. "It was one of noon of the forgotten bacon incident, for example, Anna difficulties to be greater than they are. On the after-two men, a commonly practiced, although Anna expects the her attachment to myros, the association between the there is little discord with myros as a consequence of relationship with her father, delicious from the fact that her strain that her subsequent development places upon her her father, further irony, especially in the light of myros by its masterfulness, a trait that he shares with p. 176. It is ironic, however, that Anna is attracted to her forthcoming marriage as representing "freedom" (Anna, with him sets in on the issue of what she continues to view emancipation, and even after her dissatisfaction Anna, of course, learns to regard myros as the means of course, learns to regard myros as the means money actually negotiates his respect for her chance.

Thus his configuration that myros is marrying Anna for her financial standing through marriage as he did himself resourceful businessman who is seeking to improve his business partners. In his eyes, myros simply is a promote their alliance by bringing them together as in his daughter and he condones it; indeed, he goes on to seen."

(Anna, p. 37) He has discerned myros' interest what did he know? What had those old eyes of front...
breakfast, to suggest a procedure which might entail any risk upon another meal was absolutely heroic" (Anna, p. 84). Yet there is no indication that this incident exacerbates Ephraim's relatively benign attitude towards the young couple. Perhaps the sole occasion when Ephraim shows any resentment towards his daughter's suitor occurs characteristically just before he relinquishes control of her inheritance: "'I wish to God thou'dst never seen Henry Mynors. It's given thee pride and made thee undutiful'" (Anna, p. 226).

In spite of Anna's hopes, there are a number of indications in the novel that her marriage to Mynors will lead, not to liberation, but to further bondage. The expectations Mynors has of her are similar to those of her father, and they provoke in Anna the same sense of blind duty which she exhibited towards Ephraim. Mynors' appreciation of Anna's organized and efficient kitchen suggests that, like Ephraim, he values her for her domestic competence. He informs Anna that her kitchen is "'the nicest room, I know'" (Anna, p. 107), because it clearly indicates her ability as a housewife. Mynors is so impressed by the kitchen that he mentions it to the Suttons, and Mrs. Sutton remarks to Anna that "'Henry was very enthusiastic about this kitchen the other night, at our house'" (Anna, p. 132). Even while proposing marriage
Mynors treats Anna in a forceful manner that is reminiscent of Ephraim. She is stunned by his proposal and does not know how to react:

She drew her hand timidly away, but he took it again. She felt that he dominated her and would decide for her. 'Say yes.'

'Yes,' she said. (Anna, p. 175)

In financial matters, Ephraim assumes the same peremptory right towards her fortune that Ephraim exhibits. While her partnership with Mynors is discussed, for instance, Anna is ignored by both her father and her future husband. "Anna stood silent, like a child who is being talked about" (Anna, p. 83). Anna, moreover, accepts without question that after their marriage he will govern her money: "'Henry, after we're married, I shall want you to take charge of all this'" (Anna, p. 227). Anna's willing renunciation of her inheritance is particularly ironic, since her wealth offers a potential means of establishing her independence. Instead, her fortune simply emphasizes the degree to which she is bound by her sense of duty.

Anna's dislike of Mynors surfaces after her vacation, but she never examines the commitment to him that their engagement has cemented. When he suggests that they take a walk together, "She agreed dutifully" (Anna, p. 210);
when he asks her to call him Harry she repeats his name over and over, reminding herself that "She must please him . . ." (Anna, p. 212). She is even able to accept with equanimity that she does not love him: "She knew that she could face any fact—even the fact of her dispassionate frigidity under Mynors' caresses" (Anna, p. 212). And so she marries him without ever understanding that her sense of duty has been inculcated into her by the exploitative forces that govern her society. Ideally, the concept of duty implies a reciprocal relationship in which the dutifulness of the inferior partner is rewarded by his superior's care and protection. In Anna, however, duty is used only as a device with which to quell the dissatisfactions of the lowly and to serve the interests of the powerful.

Bennett uses the novel's imagery to stress the underlying similarity that exists between Ephraim Tellwright and Henry Mynors. These images, moreover, often emphasize the insuperable nature of the barrier that separates the masters from the victims, in particular Titus and Willie Price, in the Five Towns. The likeness of Anna's father and her suitor is suggested by their carapace-like exteriors which seem to conceal their predatory motives. Tellwright can be seen in the town, his face "offering everywhere the conundrum of its vague smile . . ." He
existed within himself, unrevealed" (Anna, p. 34). Similarly, Mynors, in spite of his apparent openness, is "quite inscrutable" (Anna, p. 22) to Anna.

Mynors' inscrutability is represented throughout Anna of the Five Towns by his clothing. At the Special Teachers' meeting, during the course of which Anna is struck by his seeming perfection, Mynors "wore a brilliant new red necktie and a gardenia in his buttonhole" (Anna, p. 56). He appears at the sewing meeting "joyous and self-possessed, a white rose in his coat" (Anna, p. 101). At the treat we discover that in Anna's eyes "he was once more the exemplar of style: His suit of grey flannel, his white straw hat, became him to admiration" (Anna, p. 140). Mynors also dresses to suit the occasion. On the way to the Isle of Man he meets his companions at the station "admirably attired as a tourist" (Anna, p. 149). Ephraim, it might be added, approves of Mynors' sartorial care: "Henry's smartness of appearance—the smartness of an unrivalled commercial traveller—pleased him" (Anna, pp. 181-82).

It is significant that Anna's dawning awareness of Mynors' actual nature is represented by a peccadillo in his clothing. After their ascent of Bradda on the Isle of Man, Mynors lends Anna his muffler. At the time, she
apparently accepts the offer with some appreciation: "That feeling of the untidiness of the muffler, of its being something strange to her skin, something with the rough virtue of masculinity, which no one could detect in the gloom, was in itself pleasant" (Anna, p. 158). But later we discover that Anna regards "the offer of the muffler as an indiscretion—his sole indiscretion during their acquaintance" (Anna, p. 173). The most apparent reason for her reaction is that by offering the muffler Mynors is somehow being too forward, too intimate. But the clothing imagery also suggests that Mynors has revealed the actual nature of his interest in Anna which she unconsciously recognizes: he is symbolically exposed without the full panoply of his attire. The offer of the muffler and the manner in which it is worn around the neck are indicative of the shape that their relationship will assume: Anna, as the garment's name suggests, will be muffled and perhaps strangled by the demands Mynors makes of her. This pattern of symbolism, because it is so subtly enmeshed within the ordinary events of the characters' lives, is a particularly effective means of eliciting the nature of their alliance.

The defencelessness of Titus and Willie Price is conveyed through their attire. Titus' public face is represented by the "rich, almost voluptuous, broadcloth"
(Anna, p. 45) he wore as Sunday school superintendent. Anna views him in his actual condition, although she does not yet realize it, when she comes upon him at his factory:

He was wearing an apron, but no cap; the sleeves of his shirt were rolled up, exposing forearms covered with auburn hair. His puffed, heavy face, and general bigness and untidiness, gave the idea of a vast and torpid male, slattern. Anna was astounded by the contrast between the Titus of Sunday and the Titus of Monday: a single glance compelled her to readjust all her notions of the man. (Anna, pp. 48-49)

At the treat Titus' desperate struggle to maintain his religious position as well as to make ends meet is represented by the incongruity of his attire: "except the new brilliant hat, all his summer clothes were soiled and shabby" (Anna, p. 138). Willie, when his clothing is described at all, is either dishevelled (Anna, p. 49) or "coatless" (Anna, p. 201).

The clothing image is also employed to illustrate the extent of Ephraim's dominion over his daughter. On a number of occasions, he refuses to allow Anna to spend any of her fortune on clothing, and he expects, as always, that she will obey him without question. As a result, Anna finds it very difficult to approach her father on the matter: "she lacked the courage, since by whatever avenue
she approached it circumstances would add an illogical and adventitious force to the brutal snubs which he invariably dealt out when petitioned for money" (Anna, p. 110). She is finally forced to cash surreptitiously a money-order in her name and make the clothes she needs for her holiday in secret. When she does reveal what she has done, her father is outraged: "but since his anger was too illogical to be rendered effectively coherent in words, he had the wit to keep silence" (Anna, p. 148). A similar situation which occurs in Helen with the High Hand demonstrates the difference between Bennett's light and serious Five Towns work. James Ollerenshaw, a miser second only to Ephraim Tellwright in the region, refuses to give money to his grand-niece, Helen, but she nonchalantly takes it from his money-box without asking and without serious repercussions.

The clothes quarrel, however, is something of a smoke-screen, for it also parallels Anna's passage from one form of bondage to another. Her first denied request for "a new dress" (Anna, p. 91), for instance, occurs prior to the sewing meeting where she feels inferior to Mynors, who as usual is impeccably dressed, and Beatrice, a "gay and flitting butterfly in a pale green teagown" (Anna, p. 92). Anna does not yet recognize that Mynors' clothes conceal his actual nature and that Beatrice's dress
reflects her superficiality. Hence her relationship with Mynors makes her increasingly conscious of the failings of her wardrobe, and Beatrice's observation, made prior to their holiday, that "You can't have too many blouses" (Anna, p. 147), encourages Anna to defy her father's prohibition against new clothes. Ephraim's outrage following this episode anticipates his final break with Anna, just as her new clothes herald the commitment she makes to Mynors on the Isle of Man. Although while on vacation Anna is disturbed by the muffler incident, it is only after she is engaged, and thus enslaved to Mynors, that she penetrates his disguise.

Religious imagery is used to associate the dutifulness that Anna shows towards Ephraim at the novel's outset with that which she exhibits towards Mynors at its end. Anna accepts the harsh lifestyle imposed upon her by her father as though she were a member of a religious order. In her role as her father's housekeeper, for example, she is the latest in "a dynasty of priestesses of cleanliness" (Anna, p. 106). Ephraim's habitual taciturnity "imposed silence on the girls, who felt as nuns feel when assisting at some grave but monotonous and perfunctory rite" (Anna, p. 39). She exhibits the same kind of devotion in her religious duties, which she conducts with "the cold fierce joy of a nun in her penance" (Anna, p. 63). Her
extreme sense of duty seems to have even imprinted itself upon her physiognomy, which is portrayed, as she comes through the doorway of the chapel in the book's opening scene, as "a face for the cloister, austere in contour, fervent in expression, the severity of it mollified by that resigned and spiritual melancholy peculiar to women who through the error of destiny have been born into a wrong environment" (Anna, p. 19).

The frigidity that Anna shows towards Mynors on the Isle and afterwards indicates that she unconsciously recognizes that the demands he makes of her are similar to those of her father. His likeness to Ephraim is confirmed when he names their future home after a religious house which reputedly once stood on the site: "From that time he invariably referred to the place as the Priory" (Anna, p. 219). Anna, who is compared to a nun in the execution of her duties on her father's behalf, will perform the same function, as the name of their house implies, for Henry Mynors. It is noteworthy that another feminine role, that of the mother, is used to describe Anna's acceptance of Mynors: "She had sucked in with her mother's milk the profound truth that a woman's life is always a renunciation, greater or less. Hers by chance was greater" (Anna, p. 235). This identification of motherhood as the means by which Anna's dutifulness is
transmitted lends further irony to her adoption of a maternal role in her dealings with Willie Price. Not only does the maternal identity prevent her from admitting the actual nature of her feelings for Willie, but it also is a role, like that of the nun, that is based on feminine subservience to men.

Mynors' ability to dominate Anna without a word, just as her father does at the end of the first chapter, is demonstrated by their initial meeting in the book: "As if charmed forward by Mynors' compelling eyes, Anna stepped into the sunlight..." (Anna, p. 19). When Anna accompanies Mynors on the tour of his factory, "she could not ignore the look of passionate admiration on his face. It was a look disconcerting by its mere intensity. The man could control his tongue, but not his eyes" (Anna, p. 114). After the tour Anna is conscious of his "incendiary eyes" (Anna, p. 125) focused on herself. Willie Price's eyes, on the other hand, continually reflect his good nature: "For her there was nothing in his blue eyes but simplicity and good intentions" (Anna, p. 50). After Titus' death Anna is unable to verbalize her sympathy for Willie, but nevertheless she does manage to communicate with him: "her feelings could only find outlet in her eyes. Happily young Price was of those meek ones who know by instinct the language of the eyes" (Anna, p. 194).
Willie is able to understand Anna's looks, whereas Ephraim and Mynors use their eyes simply as a means of extending their control over her.

The mutually comprehensible exchange of looks between Anna and Willie suggests that speech, like Mynors' clothing, is another mode of concealment and hypocrisy in the Five Towns. Anna and Willie are unable to express themselves properly—even in mundane social situations:

She would have liked to be kind to him, to reassure him, to make him happy and comfortable, so ludicrous and touching were his efforts after a social urbanity which should appease; but, just as much as he, she was unskilled in the subtle arts of converse. (Anna, p. 87)

Anna comforts Willie with her eyes after Titus' death, for "She had no phrases to soften the frightful blow which Providence had dealt him" (Anna, p. 194). On the one occasion when Willie discloses his feelings for Anna, the narrator takes great pains to emphasize that this is a special kind of speech: "Only the meek, the timid, the silent, can, in moments of deep feeling, use this language of hyperbole without seeming ridiculous" (Anna, p. 202).

Elevation, which Bennett also makes significant use of in The Old Wives' Tale and Clayhanger, is employed in Anna
to represent pre-eminence in the region. Tellwright and his family, along with the Suttons, live on Bleakridge: "First came a succession of manufactories and small shops; then, at the beginning of the rise, a quarter of a mile of superior cottages; and lastly, on the brow, occurred the houses of the comfortable . . ." (Anna, p. 29).

Ephraim's business holdings are likewise associated with height. At the end of Chapter i Beatrice observes that the new park will increase the value of the neighbouring land, and she adds, "pointing . . . to some building plots which lay to the north, high up the hill. 'Mr. Tellwright owns most of that, doesn't he?'" (Anna, p. 28).

While Ephraim's dominance is signified by elevation, Titus Price, who only aspires to the heights, is forced to suffer more because the entrance to his pottery is located "at the top of the steepest rise of the street, when it might as well have been at the bottom . . ." (Anna, p. 48). A similar pretension is that his home is situated "on the highest hill in the district" (Anna, p. 47), and appropriately his son is evicted from it by Mynors at the end of the novel. Mynors is intent upon establishing himself upon his own promontory, and at his first meeting with Anna he instinctively leads her to "the highest terrace" (Anna, p. 24) in the new park as though to demonstrate with the association between height and
pre-eminence in the Five Towns the power that will accrue from their alliance. After he discovers the size of Anna's fortune, which confirms his hopes, he is "glad that he had taken over the house at Toft End on a yearly tenancy" (Anna, p. 227). The house standing on the highest hill in the area symbolizes his successful ascension to a position of potentially enormous power.

Further evidence of the novel's ironic undertone can be found in the description of the Potteries' physical environment which has been ravaged by the dominant ethos of exploitation. Anna, however, shows only a limited awareness of the despoliation that has been wreaked upon the natural world of the Five Towns. Images that are customarily associated with pastoral scenes, for instance, are corrupted by industrial activity. A harvest that is collected on a farm that is situated among the potteries suggests a natural cycle that has been perverted: "The grass grows; though it is not green, it grows. In the very heart of the valley, hedged about with furnaces, a farm still stands, and at harvest-time the sooty sheaves are gathered in" (Anna, p. 25). The same can be said of the other pastoral images within the Five Towns' purview—its parks and gardens. The new park is chiefly red rather than green: "The keeper's house, the bandstand, the kiosks, the balustrades, the shelters—all these assailed
the eye with a uniform redness of brick and tile which nullified the pallid greens of the turf and the frail trees" (Anna, p. 24).

The Tellwright's garden is a sterile "grass-plot sown with clothes-props and a narrow bordering of flower beds without flowers" (Anna, p. 105). Agnes links its infertility to the surrounding industry when she complains to Mynors that "'it's the smoke that stops my gillyflowers from growing!'" (Anna, p. 26). The garden is barren because Ephraim's horticultural instincts are diverted elsewhere. In his financial transactions he is likened to a parodic gardener: "he planted capital as a gardener plants rhubarb, tolerably certain of a particular result, but not dwelling even in thought on that which is hidden" (Anna, p. 109). The Prices' home also has a garden and "a small orchard of sterile and withered fruit trees" (Anna, p. 215). Even Sneyd, the site of the Sunday school treat and a place of bucolic splendour, appears to be contaminated by its proximity to the Potteries: "on the northern horizon a low range of smoke marked the sinister region of the Five Towns" (Anna, p. 140). D. H. Lawrence, who like Bennett was raised in the industrial Midlands, uses the garden image in a similar fashion in Women in Love. Ursula and Gudrun, while out on a walk, pass "a black patch of common-garden, where sooty cabbage stumps stood shame-
The victimization of the Prices is emphasized by means of their identification with the ravaged environment. Their pottery is located in what must surely be the most desolate and barren area of the region. Edward Street is "a short steep thoroughfare at the eastern extremity of town, leading into a rough road across unoccupied land dotted with the mouths of abandoned pits . . ." (Anna, p. 47). These pits are linked with the industrial mutilation of the natural environment as well as with the suffering of human beings that is inflicted by business interests:

These shafts, imperfectly protected by ruinous masonry, presented an appearance strangely sinister and forlorn, raising visions in the mind of dark and mysterious depths peopled with miserable ghosts of those who had toiled there in the days when to be a miner was to be a slave. (Anna, p. 215)

Titus and Willie Price are the spiritual descendents of these wretches from the past. Willie is later associated with the pitshafts when Mynors and Anna recognize him as a figure in the distance who "slouched along, past the abandoned pitshafts" (Anna, p. 218). The manner of his death is itself a powerful assertion of the link between the ruined landscape and his suffering.
Since the main argument for the kind of persecution that the Prices are subjected to is the Darwinian notion of the survival of the fittest, it is appropriate that the image of a predatory animal should be used to depict the relationship between the powerful and the weak. Ephraim's enactment of his so-called rights over his daughters is portrayed in this manner: "This surly and terrorizing ferocity of Tellwright's was as instinctive as the growl and spring of a beast of prey" (Anna, p. 127). Anna illustrates her insight into the Prices' condition of victimization with an example taken from the natural world:

Here were she and her father, rich, powerful, autocratic; and there were Willie Price and his father, commercial hares hunted by hounds of creditors, hares that turned in plaintive appeal to those greedy jaws for mercy. And yet, she, a hound, envied at that moment the hares. (Anna, p. 88)

Anna returns to the image of the hunt when she learns of Titus' death: "Surely some instinct should have warned her that the hare which she had helped to hunt was at its last gasp!" (Anna, p. 185).

The corrupt nature of the Five Towns' landscape becomes even more evident when it is contrasted with the Isle of Man, the only other setting of consequence in the book. The primary characteristic of the Isle, as embodied
in the mountain, Brdda, is that it has successfully resisted industrial disfigurement: "the immense contours rose in melancholy and defiant majesty against the sky; the hand of man could coax no harvest from these smooth but obdurate slopes; they had never relented, and they would never relent" (Anna, p. 155). This place, moreover, is a haven for men seeking respite and simplicity: "The spirit was braced by the thought that here, to the furthest eternity of civilization more and more intricate, simple, and strong souls would always find solace and repose" (Anna, p. 155). It is interesting to note that grass in the Potteries is "grey-green" (Anna, p. 215) or "pallid" (Anna, p. 24), but on the Isle of Man it is a superlative "most vivid green" (Anna, p. 155).

Anna's three seminal learning experiences are enhanced by a description of the heroine surveying the natural environment from an elevated position. While height conveys an impression of the impact on Anna of the three incidents, the primary significance of these moments lies in her perception of the landscape. These three episodes help to chart Anna's development, yet at the same time they demonstrate its limitations. Mynors' silent avowal of his love for her metaphorically exposes Anna to "new and delicious vistas" (Anna, p. 36), and these are realized in a view of the town from the vantage
point of her home on Bleakridge: "To the right ... lay the central masses of the town, tier on tier of richly-coloured ovens and chimneys. ... All was quiescent, languorous, beautiful in the glow of the sun's stately declension" (Anna, p. 36). The pastoral scene reflects Anna's burgeoning sense of emancipation which she projects onto the landscape, but it also illustrates her ignorance of the ruin that industrialization has wreaked upon the Five Towns' environment. Since this sensation is engendered by Mynors, who proves to embody the virulence that has destroyed nature, the view also demonstrates Anna's lack of insight into his actual self.

Anna's soul-searching after the Revival is reflected in a nocturnal impression of almost the same view:

In front, several miles away, the blast-furnaces of Cauldon Bar Ironworks shot up vast wreaths of yellow flame with canopies of tinted smoke. Still more distant were a thousand other lights crowning chimney and kiln, and nearer, on the waste lands west of Bleakridge, long fields of burning ironstone glowed with all the strange colours of decadence. The entire landscape was illuminated and transformed by these unique pyrotechnics of labour atoning for its grime, and dull, weird sounds, as of the breathings and sighings of gigantic nocturnal creatures, filled the enchanted air. (Anna, p. 73)

It is difficult to imagine a more explicit vision of an earthly hell than the one cited above. The fiery land-
scape mirrors Anna's fears of eternal damnation if she is not converted. There is a correspondence between this vision and her actual situation that implies a certain understanding of the forces at work in her personal life, especially when it is compared to her perception of the same vista during the day as a pastoral setting. She does not, however, understand the relationship between this personal vision of hell and the forces that govern her society. For Anna, the fires of industry only constitute a distasteful backdrop to her individual situation: "But Anna saw nothing there save the repulsive evidences of manufacture, had never seen anything else" (Anna, p. 73). The nocturnal operation of the region's industry is a common but usually incidental sight in the Five Towns books. Such descriptions as "the yellow reflections of distant furnaces" and "the splendid watch-fires of labour" are scattered throughout the Potteries fiction.

Anna's ascent of Bradda epitomizes the contentment and self-fulfilment that she experiences during her vacation on the Isle of Man. At its peak, Anna undergoes a near apotheosis:

It was the loveliest sight her eyes had ever beheld, a panorama of pure beauty transcending all imagined visions. It overwhelmed her, thrilled her to the heart, this revelation of the loveliness of the world. Her thoughts went back to Hanbridge and
Bursley and her life there; and all the remembered scenes, bathed in the glow of a new ideal, seemed to lose their pain. It was as if she had never been really unhappy, as if there was no real unhappiness on the whole earth. She perceived that the monotony, the austerity, the melancholy of her existence had been sweet and beautiful of its kind, and she recalled, with a sort of rapture, hours of companionship with the beloved Agnes, when her father was equable and pacific. Nothing was ugly nor mean. Beauty was everywhere, in everything. (Anna, p. 157).

This vision is inspired by the spectacle of man and nature living in harmony with each other. During her climb up the mountain, for example, Anna is moved to tears by the vista of man—the town of Port Erin—existing in an harmonious manner with the surrounding world: "The sight of this haven at rest, shut in by the restful sea and by great moveless hills, a calm within a calm, aroused profound emotion" (Anna, p. 156). In comparison with the vista that opens up after her first-learning experience, this pastoral vision must be judged authentic, but the concord between man and nature she perceives on the Isle does not cause her to reflect upon their opposition in the Five Towns. This vision transfigures Anna's conception of her home life, but without a corresponding social awareness such insight is ironically incomplete.

The vista image is used after Anna's engagement to Mynors as a final illustration of her situation at the
book's end. On a walk taken at Mynors' insistence, they survey a scene that is similar to the earthly hell viewed by Anna after the Revival:

Immediately in front of them stretched acres of burning ironstone—a vast tremulous carpet of flame woven in red, purple, and strange greens. Beyond were the skeleton-like silhouettes of pit-heads, and the solid forms of furnace and chimney-shaft. (Anna, p. 210)

Mynors, in effect, is revealing to Anna the role he plays, as a participant in the scene that they inspect, in the ruination of the natural world. This revelation, however, does not inspire fresh development in Anna. She remains, ironically, unaware that the scene she witnesses is representative of the principle of exploitation that governs her society and that Mynors, like her father, embodies that force. Instead, the fiery landscape reflects in Anna a personal disquietude that presumably will become a permanent condition of her existence: "Anna felt cold, melancholy, and apprehensive of vague sorrow" (Anna, p. 210).

Although the Five Towns are depicted as a thoroughly despoiled landscape throughout most of Anna, they are described in a somewhat different manner in their initial portrait in the book. The reason for this inconsistency is that Bennett, who intrudes in this passage as author,
can be clearly distinguished from the narrative voice that relates the rest of the novel. It is necessary to quote at some length in order to elicit the full extent of his involvement:

Bursley, the ancient home of the potter, has an antiquity of a thousand years. It lies towards the north end of an extensive valley, which must have been one of the fairest spots in Alfred's England, but which is now defaced by the activities of a quarter of a million people. . . . They [the Five Towns] are mean and forbidding of aspect—sombre, hard-featured, uncouth; and the vaporous poison of their ovens and chimneys has soiled and shrivelled the surrounding country. . . . Yet be it said that romance is even here—the romance which, for those who have an eye to perceive it, ever dwells amid the seats of industrial manufacture, softening the coarseness, transfiguring the squalor. . . . Look down into the valley . . . and it may be that you will suddenly comprehend the secret and superb significance of the vast Doing which goes forward below. Because they seldom think, the townsmen take shame when indicted for having disfigured half a county in order to live. They have not understood that this disfigurement is merely an episode in the unending warfare of man and nature, and calls for no contrition. Here, indeed, is nature repaid for some of her notorious cruelties. She imperiously bids man sustain and reproduce himself, and this is one of the places where in the very act of obedience he wounds and maltreats her. . . . On the one side is a wresting from nature's own bowels of the means to waste her; on the other, an undismayed, enduring fortitude. (Anna, pp. 24-25)
Bennett readily admits that the environment has been ravaged by man's activities in the area, and he goes on to justify the despoliation by using the term romance, a tack which is at odds with the overall tenor of the novel.  

During a visit to the Potteries in September of 1897 Bennett records a picture of the area in his Journal that he specifically relates to that used in Anna:

"During this week . . . when I have been traversing the district after dark, the grim and original beauty of certain aspects of the Potteries, to which I have referred in the introduction to 'Anna Tellwright' [his working title for Anna of the Five Towns], has revealed itself for the first time. . . . Though a very old town, it bears no sign of great age--the eye is never reminded of its romance and history--but instead it thrills and reverberates with the romance of machinery and manufacture, the romance of our fight against nature, of the gradual taming of the earth's secret forces. And surrounding the town on every side are the long straight smoke and steam wreaths, the dull red flames, and all the visible evidence of the immense secular struggle for existence. . . ."  

In a letter to H. G. Wells, dated 10 October 1897, Bennett writes of the "immense possibilities in the very romance of manufacture . . . in the tremendous alteration with nature that is continually going on. . . ." These passages suggest that Bennett has inserted but not
necessarily integrated his personal philosophical observations into the text.

Bennett's extended description of the Potteries is conspicuous because it represents a radical departure in perspective: he takes an overview of the environment whereas the rest of the novel is narrated from a standpoint that is more faithful to the individual characters than to the history of ideas. The attitude towards nature expressed in the above passage is one that was popular during the latter half of the nineteenth-century. Its source is the liberal belief in progress which was buttressed during this period by such expansionist philosophies as Darwin's theory of evolution, and which is reflected in the "romance of progress" that pervades the popular fiction of the time. The success of H. G. Wells' scientific romances is one sign of this interest in progress. Bennett's argument, in any case, is similar to that employed by the Social Darwinists who attributed social inequality to the evolutionary law of survival of the fittest. Bennett is saying, in effect, that the mutilation of the landscape is justifiable because man is impelled to do it by a natural law.

The notion that man is driven to revenge himself on the environment for cruelties inflicted on him by nature
relies on a sense of global limitlessness; man's activities may thwart nature but they cannot seriously harm the natural world. There is no sign of today's environmental eschatology that is the eventual product of this line of reasoning. A contemporary expression of the same kind of logic can be found in Shaw's *Major Barbara*. One of its main characters, Undershaft, is a millionaire who has made a fortune out of munitions manufacture and hence warfare, yet because he puts his means to the end of building a Robert Owen-like Utopia for his workers, Shaw presents him as an entirely laudable individual. The benign view of man's struggle with nature can be assigned to Bennett, as distinct from the narrator, whose attitude towards the natural environment is evident, for example, in the stark contrast between the ravaged landscape of the Five Towns and the pastoral setting of the Isle of Man.

The narrator does contribute to *Anna of the Five Towns*' ironic undertone through his omniscient awareness of what will happen to certain of his characters in the future. He makes ominous forecasts which lend an air of inevitability to events and create the impression that the protagonists, however much they may seem to change, are simply playing out foreordained roles. These portentous statements of the narrator's only concern Anna and the Prices. The deaths of both Willie and Titus are fore-
shadowed by the narrative figure long before they actually occur. Ephraim's policy of draining Titus of all his funds, for instance, is responsible for "causing the catastrophe which soon afterwards befell" (Anna, p. 111), which we later realize is Titus' suicide. At the Sunday school treat Titus appears to enjoy himself, "But this was his last hour of joy" (Anna, p. 142). Willie's death is indirectly predicted when on the night that Anna nurses Sarah Vodrey the narrator observes that "the approaching tragedy came one step nearer" (Anna, p. 219).

While the narrator is somewhat oblique in regard to the fates of Willie and his father, he is quite direct in his comments on Anna's future. He remarks that although Anna aspires to a religious existence that will transform her every act, it is "a spirituality never to be hers" (Anna, p. 75). She is ignorant, "and would always be completely ignorant" (Anna, p. 109), of the financial operations which provide the substance of her inheritance. Women, according to the narrator, are interesting to one another only before they are engaged and before their first child is born: "Anna was in the first period; her life did not comprise the second" (Anna, p. 113). The Isle of Man holiday is described as "the brief and unique joy of Anna's life" (Anna, p. 150), and her journey back to the Potteries is called the "apogee of her existence"
(Anna, p. 176). If one puts all these prognostications together Anna's future appears very gloomy indeed. We discover that she will not achieve her spiritual goals; that she will not learn how to deal with a potential source of freedom, her fortune; that she will be sterile; and that the rest of her life will be unhappy. The narrator could hardly make it clearer that Anna's learning will be curtailed.

The novel's undertone of deep-seated irony is perhaps most in evidence in its conclusion, especially in regard to the relationship between Anna and Willie. It takes Anna, for example, such a long time to advance from feeling pity for Willie and viewing him as a child in desperate need of comfort to recognizing that she is in love with him. The pairing of Mynors and Willie in the novel's opening scene stresses her slowness, for in it she is presented with two men who love her and the two possibilities for development inherent in their affection. Ironically, Anna learns from Mynors' love that emancipation from her father is possible, but as a consequence of her other learning experiences her regard for him turns to dutifulness. On the other hand, she all but ignores Willie at the beginning of the book, yet by its end she discovers that she is in love with him. Thus she sets out seeking liberation through another's affection and
she concludes having found love herself but little freedom. This symmetrical arrangement, of course, serves to underline Anna's entrapment by the repressive forces that rule the Five Towns.

It is also deeply ironic that Anna's sudden recognition of love, which presumably is comprehended by Willie, is directly responsible for his death: "What he had learnt in that instant can only be guessed from his next action . . ." (Anna, p. 235). His next act after he realizes that Anna loves him is to kill himself. For him it is the final blow: the woman he loves and who loves him in return will never be his. This realization, coming as it does so soon after he hears of his father's crime, causes him to take his own life. Anna's awareness that she loves Willie is an experience which represents the climax of her development; in order to learn from it, however, she would have to turn her back on Mynors and her social responsibility as a woman, a thought which never seems to cross her mind. In Cupid and Commonsense, a 1908 play that is based loosely on the story line of Anna of the Five Towns, Bennett does alter the plot to make the ending a happy one.

Anna also tries to assist Willie with her fortune, the hundred pounds' gift, when only her affection and
commitment to him would effect any change of circumstances. In a sense this futile attempt to appease her personal obligations with money confirms the banker's glance earlier in the novel which seems to say: "You are naive and unspoiled now, but these eyes will see yours harden like the rest. Wretched victim of gold, you are only one in a procession, after all" (Anna, p. 47). The narrator concludes the book with an ironic equation between money and human value as a result of Willie's death: "the Bank of England is the richer by a hundred pounds unclaimed, and the world the poorer by a simple and meek soul stung to revolt only in its last hour" (Anna, p. 236).

Willie's suicide by throwing himself down one of the derelict pitshafts mocks Anna's sustaining dream of his success: "Her thoughts often dwelt lovingly on Willie Price, whom she deemed to be pursuing in Australia an honourable and successful career, quickened at the outset by her hundred pounds" (Anna, p. 235). Yet his body lies at the bottom of the shaft within yards of her home. The pitshafts, of course, are linked with the oppression of the workers and the despoliation of the natural environment by the ethos of ruthlessness that seems to dominate the Potteries. The shafts also contrast with the eminences, Bleakridge, for example, that are associated with the characters who govern the region. The manner of
Willie's death thus confirms his position as a victim of the forces that rule his world.

The ironic undertone that is present throughout *Anna of the Five Towns* asserts that the limits of Anna's learning are imposed from the outset by her conception of herself as a woman. But these limits should not be considered as an indictment of Anna herself. She is never allowed to recognize the extent of her commitment to the world of her father and Henry Mynors, just as she has no way of knowing of Willie's death. The nature of her world, however, is such that it occasionally even distorts the development that she does achieve. The self-fulfillment that she gains through nursing Beatrice, for example, actually accelerates Mynors' affection for her: "the very event which had separated them for three days had also impelled the lover forward in his course. It was the thought of her vigils, her fortitude, her compassion, that had fanned the flame" (*Anna*, p. 174). Similarly, the genuine Christian, Mrs. Sutton, arranges Anna's vacation during which her commitment to Mynors is sealed, and at the end of the novel, when Anna is most in need of her assistance, Mrs. Sutton is not at home: "There was only one person from whom she could have asked advice and help, and that wise and consoling heart was far away in the Isle of Man" (*Anna*, p. 199). The intention is not to
condemn either Anna's learning or Mrs. Sutton's goodness, but through their impotency to demonstrate just how pervasive the ethos of suppression is in the Five Towns.

John Lucas observes that Bennett "at his worst . . . uses up page after page in order to tell us about his characters without once giving them a chance to speak or act for themselves." Yet in *Anna of the Five Towns* Bennett, for the most part, refrains from this sort of expository presentation. Instead, he employs a laconic style that matches the quietly implacable force that rules the novel's universe and that makes Anna's escape impossible. Perhaps the best example of his circumspection is the understated manner in which he suggests the fundamental likeness of Mynors and Ephraim Tellwright, who superficially appear to be quite different. The similarity of the demands that they make of Anna, which is reinforced through the novel's various images, subtly demonstrates that Anna's marriage is simply another form of enslavement.

In the preface to the *Book of Carlotta*, the American title for *Sacred and Profane Love*, Bennett remarks that this novel was conceived as the third part of a trilogy, the first two sections of which were *Anna of the Five Towns* and *Leonora*. His intention was to describe the
lives of Five Towns' women from each of the lower, middle and upper classes—Anna Tellwright, Leonora Stanway and Carlotta Peel respectively. Although the two later volumes do not measure up to the standards of Anna, both Leonora and Carlotta, like Anna, are concerned with their development, as is demonstrated by Leonora's explicit statement of her objectives at the beginning of the book. She aspires to "an existence more distinguished than her own; an existence brilliant and tender, where dalliance and high endeavour, virtue and the flavour of sin, eternal appetite and eternal satisfaction, were incredibly united" (Leonora, pp. 6-7). These novels, however, lack the social balance that provides a depth to Anna's learning as it does to that of Constance and Sophia Baines in The Old Wives' Tale.
Notes

1 These effects caused certain Victorian social reformers, like William Morris, to seek to counter the harmful influences of industrialization through a return to the working operations of the Middle Ages, a tradition that was later revived by Roger Fry in the Omega Workshops.


4 This tour is by far the most extensive portrait of the region's staple industry in the Five Towns fiction, and Peter Copek ("The Five Towns Novels of Arnold Bennett: A Response to Industrial Society," Diss. Northwestern 1973, pp. 42-50) discusses it at length as a reflection of industrialization. Bennett was fascinated by large scale operations of any sort—in The Author's Craft, ed. Samuel Hynes (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1968), p. 14, he writes that he is excited by "the phenomena of organization"—and he often describes them in his books. The short story, "The Matador of the Five Towns," contains a behind-the-scenes picture of the local newspaper, but the main testament to his interest is The Imperial Palace which depicts the operations of a luxury hotel in London.


In Sacred and Profane Love Bennett also employs the heroine's twenty-first birthday to stress a new step in her life. Carlotta Peel is initiated into the mysteries of sex in the first section of the book which is set on the eve of her birthday.

Anna Tellwright's compassion for the weak and defenceless is a trait that is shared by certain female characters in other Bennett novels. In Sacred and Profane Love (1905; rpt. London: Chatto and Windus, 1922), p. 232, Bennett's heroine, Carlotta Peel, discovers that Diaz, her former lover and the world's greatest pianist, is a hopeless drunk and feels that "My longing to assuage the lot of Diaz became almost an anguish." In Clayhanger the tenderness that Hilda Lessways shows towards the senile Mr. Shushions is perhaps the most significant event in Edwin Clayhanger's life.

It should be noted that while Bennett applies this description to the first of these moments--Mynors' silent avowal of his affection--he never divulges what the other two moments are. The identification of the other two moments is thus based upon the assumption that they will have a similar affect on Anna, as indeed they do. Moreover, the vista--image, which figures in each of these incidents and which is discussed later in the chapter (see pp. 97-101 of dissertation), seems to corroborate this identification.


Bennett's use of elevation to stress Anna's three moments of galvanic insight is a method that is utilized by certain of his contemporaries. At the end of Wells' Ann Veronica, for example, the heroine and her biology professor and lover, Capes, flee from the constraints of English society to the freedom of the Swiss Alps. The mountains signify Ann Veronica's liberation, and they help to emphasize the revolutionary nature of her liaison with Capes. The Alps also figure in the conclusion to Women in Love as part of a motif that is used throughout the novel.

Anna inspects the view both from the end of the garden and from her window. The window image is also used to convey the hopelessness of the Prices' situation.
As Anna looks over her building before calling on Titus, "her first feeling was one of depression at the broken and dirty panes of the windows" (Anna, p. 48). And later we are told that "A greyish light came through one small window" (Anna, p. 49); inside the pottery.


18 Bennett does not use the term romance to describe man's struggle with nature in a precise fashion but rather as a word that through everyday usage has lost much of its original vigour. In the Journal entry cited below in the text Bennett employs the word romance equally to depict aspects of history and industry. He employs the term to suggest in the main that which excites the imagination of the viewer. In Romanticism (London: Methuen, 1969), p. 14, Lilian Furst observes that the term denoted "a turn of mind that looked favourably on things of an imaginative and emotional kind." The vista of the Five Towns, the embodiment of man's fight with nature, is redolent of romance in that it requires a special imagination, one that is not possessed by the locals, to perceive it. Bennett utilizes the word in The Old Wives' Tale and Clayhanger in a similar manner to portray Sophia and Edwin's respective wishes to lead more stimulating lives. Walter Wright in Arnold Bennett: Romantic Realist (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1971) and James Hepburn in Chapter viii of The Art of Arnold Bennett (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1963), pp. 175-81, both discuss the influence of the romantic tradition on Bennett's writing.


22 Lucas, p. 12.

CHAPTER THREE

The Old Wives' Tale

In early 1907, several months before he began work on The Old Wives' Tale, Bennett finished reading Herbert Spencer's First Principles, a work originally written in 1862 that applies a theory of evolution, not just to biological phenomena as Darwin did in The Origin of Species, but to all orders of phenomena. Bennett's initial response to the book was extremely enthusiastic, and indeed, he later remarked that "First Principles, by filling me up with the sense of causation everywhere, has altered my whole view of life. . . . You can see First Principles in nearly every line I write." While this observation may be overstating the case, there is no doubt that the universe portrayed in The Old Wives' Tale operates in a manner that resembles the theory of change proposed in Spencer's work.

Spencer in First Principles advances the notion that the universe is animated by a persistent force that derives from an unknowable source. This force acts upon the building blocks of the universe, matter and motion, in a uniform manner, thus enabling Spencer to propose a theory of change that is cyclical in nature.
During the earlier part of the cycle of changes, the integration predominates—there goes on what we call growth. The middle part of the cycle is usually characterized, not by equilibrium between the integrating and disintegrating processes, but by alternate excesses of them. And the cycle closes with a period in which the disintegration, beginning to predominate, eventually puts a stop to integration, and undoes what integration had originally done. 2

Spencer terms the process of integration that marks the first part of the cycle evolution, and the process of disintegration that characterizes the second half he refers to as dissolution. Although all orders of phenomena—inorganic, organic and super-organic—are subject on a lesser scale to the same sort of cyclical change, they are ultimately bound by the current state of the universal cycle. Spencer avers that at the time of writing the universe is at an evolutionary stage, but at the end of the volume he speculates on a past that is composed of "alternate eras of Evolution and Dissolution" and on a future that will conform to a similar pattern. 3

Spencer's theory of cyclical change provides an interesting analogy to the world view presented in The Old Wives' Tale, for Bennett conceives the novel's universe to be governed by a recurrent cycle of death and life, a model, incidentally, that is also employed by Spencer, who in writing of the end of the world, "Universal Death," opines that it will be succeeded by "a subsequent
Universal Life. Bennett demonstrates the historical change that occurs as a result of the cyclical action by showing its effect on the personal lives of Constance and Sophia Baines and the societies that they inhabit. The individual lives of the various characters in the novel follow the general pattern of cyclical change, while France and St. Luke's Square are depicted at different stages in the cycle, death and life respectively, in order to illustrate on a social scale the cycle's full scope. Finally, Bennett stresses the eternal qualities of the principle of cyclical change by indicating that, beneath the changes that occur in time, the cycle of death and life rules both societies and the lives of the protagonists. This rather bleak view of the human condition is more customarily associated with European Realism than it is with English fiction of the same period, although there are elements of an external principle that controls mankind with indifference in most of Hardy's fiction and in such works as The Rainbow and New Grub Street.

At the outset of The Old Wives' Tale Bennett endows Constance and Sophia with temperaments that, much more than their environments, determine how they view the world and how they learn about its operations. Indeed, they are not allowed access to philosophical or religious models that might provide an explanation for the activities of their
universe. Constance, who is by nature a conformist, learns in a gradual fashion to view her family as embodying human continuity, and this insight enables her to accept the impact of cyclical change on her personal world. Yet she is unable to make any sense of her sister's view of the world or to comprehend the effect that change has on the social world of St. Luke's Square.

Sophia, unlike her sister, finds it impossible to establish relationships that are meaningful in her personal life, and she seeks relief from her picture of herself as an outsider in an idealized conception of the social world beyond the Square. A series of incidents conflict violently with Sophia's illusory view of the world and intensify her feeling of alienation, a state that she associates with death and meaninglessness. During the upheaval of her disillusionment, Sophia learns to survive her desolate view of existence by adopting the practical values of her upbringing which eliminate the influence of change on her life as much as possible. Gerald's death at the end of the novel reawakens her sense of angst and precipitates her own demise.

Bennett supports the educative process that Constance and Sophia undergo with a comparison of their lives that ranges from particular incidents to their overall impres-
sions of existence. Unlike Anna of the Five Towns in which the imagery runs counter to the heroine's apparent learning, the symbolism and imagery of The Old Wives' Tale are used to buttress the picture of the world that dominates the book. The universality of the cycle of change is symbolized by the public square that figures in both France and the Five Towns, while the characters' individual views of the world are represented by a window that often overlooks the symbolic square. Images of animals and travel are also employed to enhance the prevailing picture of the world. Finally, Bennett occasionally abrogates his narrator's customary stance in order to stress the changes experienced by the Baines sisters.

Narrative point of view plays a major role in determining the reader's understanding of The Old Wives' Tale, for, aside from their obviously different settings, perhaps the greatest difference between the French and English sections of the novel is that they are narrated from separate vantage points. The customary stance of the narrative figure, at least in the Five Towns portions of The Old Wives' Tale, is his dual perspective which offers the reader views of the Potteries as a personal world and as a social one. This position is initiated in the book's first line which immediately establishes a relationship between the narrator and the principal characters: "Those
two girls, Constance and Sophia Baines, paid no heed to the manifold interest of their situation. "^5

By starting the novel with a demonstrative adjective, the narrator instantly aligns the reader with himself. "Those two girls" assumes that the reader, like the narrator, is already familiar with the sisters and that he and the narrator stand in the same relation to them. In the remainder of the opening section, the narrator, having linked the reader's point of view with his own, withdraws from this position of familiarity and proceeds to establish a distance between himself and the Baines girls based upon his knowledge and their ignorance of the world outside St. Luke's Square. This perspective, which is maintained throughout the Potteries sections of the novel, allows the reader a view of the characters that is at once intimate and detached.

The narrator's dual perspective has long been recognized as perhaps the most salient feature of The Old Wives' Tale's narration. John Wain remarks that it accounts for "the slight but all-pervading irony which we find in his descriptions of Five Towns scenes and people,"^6 and Walter Allen also takes note of the dualism which, he observes, results in "facetious irony somewhat akin to the mock heroic."^7 But Allen finds fault with the novel because
the ironic perspective is missing in Book Three which is set in France. His allusion to the mock heroic, however, suggests a means by which its absence can be made comprehensible. Martin Price in *To the Palace of Wisdom* observes that the "mock form plays off a 'pure' view--heroic, tragic, pastoral--against the befuddling reality from which it makes a sharp selection." In St. Luke's Square the cyclical process is observed in its life or evolutionary phase; the resultant change occurs gradually over nearly half a century and for a specific reason, namely the improvements in transportation that took place during the latter portion of the nineteenth-century. France, however, is depicted during the cycle's stage of dissolution, and the changes that it undergoes are sudden, violent and apparently without historical cause. Since social change in the latter case can be readily identified with definite incidents, like a war and revolution, the narrator uses it as a pure view against which he plays off the more gradual alterations that take place in the Square, and it is for this reason that the mock form is not used in Book Three.

In *First Principles*, Spencer notes that "social dissolution . . . as history shows us, is apt to occur when social evolution has ended and decay has begun. . . ." France in *The Old Wives' Tale* is portrayed during a period
when the Napoleonic Empire starts to disintegrate as a result of the French defeat in the Franco-Prussian War. The impression of social dissolution is augmented by the Paris Commune, a radical socialist government that was erected for a brief time after the war, for, as one critic remarks, "In a revolution those things which hold a society together are destroyed; revolutions, therefore, occur when a society is disintegrating." Yet there is scant evidence in Book Three of an historical context which would explain these events for the reader. This limited view is produced by dropping the outer perspective that characterizes the narrative position in the Five Towns. Book Three is thus related from a perspective that is closely associated with Sophia's point of view.

Sophia's lack of understanding of the political and military forces at work in France enhances the reader's perception of it as a society that is disintegrating. The picture of French society that emerges through her eyes is of a wild, almost primitive people, who allow their brute feelings to dominate their actions. To her, France seems "a strange civilization perfectly frank in its sensuality and sensuousness" (OWT, p. 305). Sophia appears to have almost no notion that she is caught in the midst of armed hostilities, and hence events that take place during the war, like the siege of Paris, are presented at face value
with little or no explanation for their occurrence. On one occasion, she is moved to tears by the spontaneous celebration of a French victory that erupts in the streets. Her tears, however, are caused by the wild emotion generated by the crowd and not because she understands the significance of the victory, which, in any case, turns out to have been false. To Sophia, the war, as signified by the sound of cannon firing, simply reflects the turbulent nature of her milieu: "She accepted the booming as another expression of the high spirits that had to find vent somehow in this feverish empire" (OWT, p. 338). France, therefore, appears in The Old Wives' Tale as a society that is in the process of disintegration.

The condition of social dissolution that prevails in Book Three of The Old Wives' Tale is manifest in an actual death, the execution of the murderer, Rivain, and Bennett makes it clear that the significance of this episode is greater than that customarily associated with the death of one individual. An execution, for example, is a judicial death that is administered for a severe contravention of the standards of behaviour that govern a particular society, and thus it reflects the social order in which it is carried out. The approaching demise, moreover, creates an interest in the population as a whole that is both widespread and intense. At Sophia and Gerald's hotel
in Auxerre, "the talk was exclusively about assassinations, executions, criminals, and executioners" (OWT, p. 321). Rivain's death, therefore, represents France's historical place in the cycle of change, a position that according to the law of cyclical alteration will be followed presumably by a period of evolution at some indefinite point in the future.

The execution can also be considered emblematic of a state of social death that transcends a particular time and place, and in illustration of the principle that governs the novel's universe, it is immediately succeeded by a sign of renewed life. As the climactic moment approaches, the crowd assembled to view the execution is transformed by the prospect of imminent death into a bloodthirsty mob that embodies a primitive spirit of vitality. Sophia, whose innocence contributes to the scene's intensity, falls asleep and is suddenly "awakened by a tremendous shrieking, growling, and yelling: a phenomenon of human bestiality that far surpassed Sophia's narrow experiences" (OWT, p. 325). The mob is almost indistinguishable from the "line of maddened horses" (OWT, p. 326) that it tries to smash in order to obtain a closer view of the guillotine. Finally, the execution unleashes a primordial energy from the onlookers: "Shriek after shriek, from various windows, rang on her ears in a fusil-
lade; and then the mad yell of the penned crowd, which, like herself, had not seen but had heard, extinguished all other noise" (OWT, p. 327). This incident thus suggests that the eternal cycle of death and life underlies France's historical state of social dissolution.

The greater part of The Old Wives' Tale is given over to a study of a society that is in the evolutionary stage of the cyclical process. In contrast to France, change in St. Luke's Square is regarded by the narrator from an historical point of view that examines in detail alterations that occurred in the Square during the late nineteenth-century. The mock view of change that prevails in the Five Towns sections of the novel is best exemplified in events that are common to both France and St. Luke's Square. An actual war provokes much of the action in Book Three, whereas in the Square quarrels between individuals are elevated to the stature of armed conflict. Mrs. Baines' decision to have both her daughters leave school at the same time, for example, catches Sophia unawares: "She had been caught unready, and the opposing forces had obtained the advantage of her" (OWT, p. 71). Sam and Constance's disagreement during Daniel Povey's defence is called a "battle" (OWT, p. 234), and Constance the narrator informs us, "had no notion of honourable warfare. She was always beginning again, always firing under a flag

Sophia's quarrel with Constance's long-time servant, Amy, makes the atmosphere in the kitchen feel "as though the kitchen was sanded with gunpowder and there were lighted matches about" (OWT, p. 482). The two women, moreover, "surveyed each other like opposing armies" (OWT, p. 482). Even the chapter titles of the St. Luke's Square sections of the novel, such as "A Battle," "A Defeat," "Revolution," often reflect the mock form. Individuals, as well as events, are aggrandized in a similar manner in the Potteries. Mr. Critchlow's calls upon the bed-ridden John Baines are deemed "ambassadorial" (OWT, p. 47), for instance. Mrs. Baines' initial visit to the Square after Sam and Constance's marriage is described as the "first visit of state" (OWT, p. 165), and, of course, she sleeps in "the state bedroom" (OWT, p. 171) during her stay.

The evolutionary process in St. Luke's Square is illustrated by the changes undergone by a particular generation of Potteries' inhabitants, who succeed their forebears at the novel's outset and who in its conclusion are replaced by a future generation. The Old Wives' Tale opens at the conclusion of one historical period, mid-Victorian England, and the inception of another, late
Victorian England. The typical mid-Victorian society is characterized as a small, isolated social unit, like St. Luke's Square, that is directly controlled by its leaders, men of resolute independence, like John Baines. Late Victorian society, the book's main focus, is depicted as an age during which man gradually congregates in increasingly larger communities and the individual man becomes less and less significant in his social milieu. Spencer, it might be noted, regards integration of this sort as a key aspect of evolution. The process culminates at the end of the novel in the emergence of the modern era, as illustrated by the Federation of the Five Towns and the extinction of the Baines family in the district. The events that occur in the Square are typical of the general movement towards centralization that took place in England during the late nineteenth-century.

The autonomy of the St. Luke's Square society is manifested in the most fundamental perceptions of its inhabitants. Sophia's involvement with Gerald Scales, for example, highlights the distinctive way that time is perceived in the Square:

In St. Luke's Square there was always, in every head, a sort of timetable of existence prepared at least one week in advance. But in Gerald's world nothing
was pre-arranged. Elaborate affairs were decided in a moment and undertaken with extraordinary lightness. (OWT, pp. 316-17)

Many of the characters even find it difficult to conceive of the world beyond the boundaries of St. Luke's Square. Mrs. Baines is shocked to learn that Sophia has plans to teach eventually in London: "Mrs. Baines had half a mind to add that Sophia had mentioned London... There are some things which one cannot bring one's self to say" (OWT, p. 66).

Paris, of course, is to their minds completely alien territory: "To Bursley, Paris was nothing but the site of a great exhibition which had recently closed" (OWT, p. 173). Constance does not think of her sister as living in Paris, because the mere concept of France itself is beyond her experience. Instead, she resorts to metaphorical language, which typifies her suspicion of the world beyond the Square, to express her hope that after Sam's death, "Sophia might return out of the darkness" (OWT, p. 252). And upon her return to the Five Towns Sophia is astonished by its natives' ignorance of the outer world: "These people in Bursley did not suspect what Paris was" (OWT, p. 478).
The gradual transition from autonomy to integration with the rest of the nation that occurs in the Square during late Victorian England is registered through various references to clothing fashions and social customs: Sophia's "Amazonian hat... the final word of fashion that spring in the Five Towns" (OWT, p. 128) and Constance's "cult for photographs" (OWT, p. 549). But for the most part such details are employed largely to establish an impression of historical authenticity. Perhaps the primary cause of the Square's loss of isolation is the increase in the speed and availability of transportation that took place during the late nineteenth-century and which promoted interaction between the Square and the outside world. In Book One of the novel the only means of transport between Aunt Harriet's home in Axe and St. Luke's Square is by horse and cart. As The Old Wives' Tale progresses travel becomes an increasingly complex activity. The Loop railway, which figures in much Five Towns fiction, is completed, thus uniting the Potteries. Eventually, the "old horse-cars" (OWT, p. 211) are replaced by steam-cars and still later by electric trams, while both a balloon and automobile appear in the last book of the novel.

These advancements in the technology of travel have a profound influence upon the Square's economy which at
the start of The Old Wives' Tale is entirely self-sufficient. In Book Two, after Sam's death, it is noted that "The Square was no longer what it had been. . . . The tradesmen had naturally searched for a cause in every direction save the right one, the obvious one . . ." (OWT, p. 263). By the time of Book Four, however, the impact that improvements in transportation have had upon the Square's economy is inescapable: "These electric trams had simply carried to Hanbridge the cream, and much of the milk, of Bursley's retail trade. . . . Hanbridge was the geographical centre of the Five Towns, and it was alive to its situation" (OWT, p. 556). The movement towards Federation of the Five Towns is thus a political recognition of the economic situation that exists in the district. Federation, which is accomplished by the novel's end, marks the beginning of a new social order that is founded upon the assimilation of several, individual communities, like St. Luke's Square, into one homogeneous mass that is of national import.

The centrepiece of each of the three books set in the Five Towns is a public death, corresponding to the execution in France, that represents a stage in the process of change that St. Luke's Square undergoes during the course of The Old Wives' Tale. Although the concept of death is contrary to the developmental process that the Square
experiences, the death of those elements of society that are rendered obsolete by evolution is an apposite means of registering its influence. Aside from their function as historical signposts, these deaths are also reminders of the eternal condition of social dissolution, and, like Rivain's death in Book Three, they are each succeeded by a collective assertion of primitive human energy that is a sign of renewed life. This repeated pattern of death and life suggests that a principle of cyclical change ultimately governs St. Luke's Square, just as it does all other orders of existence in the novel.13

The execution of the elephant in Book One initiates the pattern that is continued throughout the novel. The elephant, part of a professional menagerie in Bursley for the Wakes, gets loose, gores a man, is captured and is summarily shot in front of the Baines' shop: "Sűch was the greatest sensation that has ever occurred, or perhaps will ever occur, in Bursley" (OWT, p. 88). The execution reflects the self-containment and innocence of the Square's population at this point in the novel. They are capable of intense excitement over an incident that is of no interest whatsoever to the outside world. The narrator's interpolation, "or perhaps will ever occur," supports this view of St. Luke's Square in Book One. The enormous significance attached to the elephant's death derives
largely from the community's isolation, which is gradually eroded through the process of assimilation. The community's capacity to respond with the vigour it does to the crazed beast's execution diminishes as it becomes part of a larger and more sophisticated social entity. Future occurrences in the Square do not generate the same excitement because their impact is absorbed by a broader and more knowledgeable society. Hence the elephant's death is, indeed, "the greatest sensation" that ever occurs in Bursley.

In Book Four of The Old Wives' Tale an elephant is used to demonstrate the change in attitude that has occurred in the Square as a consequence of assimilation. Sophia, on her return to the Square after an absence of many years, describes from the train's window "two camels and an elephant in a field close to the line . . ." (OWT, p. 465). Once an exotic beast that stirred the imagination of the whole community, the elephant has devolved into an accepted part of the landscape. These animals are in the Five Towns because, as Constance informs her sister, the district is situated in "the middle of England" (OWT, p. 465), a further sign of the process of centralization that has taken place during the novel.
Daniel Povey's execution for his wife's murder represents an intermediate stage in the Square's historical passage from isolation to assimilation. It is also specifically associated with the elephant's death: "Since the execution of the elephant, nothing had so profoundly agitated Bursley" (OWT, p. 247). Samuel Povey leads an impassioned defence of his cousin that is inspired by his deep-felt conviction that Mrs. Povey's utter degeneracy somehow justified Daniel, who is a respected member of the community: "Daniel was not a murderer; his wife's death was due to accident, was simply a mishap" (OWT, p. 230). Sam's view, moreover, is taken up by his *Five Towns* compatriots; when, after the trial and sentencing,

The district woke up to the fact that a Town Councillor, a figure in the world, an honest tradesman... was cooped solitary in a little cell at Stafford, waiting to be hanged by the neck till he was dead. The district determined that this must not and should not be. (OWT, p. 241)

This attitude apparently emanates from the sense of isolation from the rest of England that is integral to St. Luke's Square's separate identity. The citizens feel that theirs is an autonomous society which is quite capable of policing itself, especially when the putative malcontent is a respectable individual. The interference from external powers is not only a slight to their community, but it also seems to jeopardize the very integrity of their
separate world. Sam soon recognizes that Daniel's actions will be judged by the impartial laws of the nation as a whole rather than by the complacent standards of the Square. At the initial hearing into the case it becomes evident that to the presiding magistrate and even to Daniel's own barrister the accused, in spite of his high standing in the town, was nothing but a "petty tradesman accused of simple murder" (OWT, p. 230). Afterwards, Sam feels that "His eyes were opened; he saw things as they were" (OWT, p. 232).

Daniel's trial and execution forces upon Sam and his fellows the startling revelation that the Five Towns and the Square belong to a much broader and largely indifferent society, and while still defending Daniel, they tacitly acknowledge their subjugation to the laws of this world. After Daniel's sentence is passed even those who had been his most stalwart defenders suddenly admit that "a verdict of guilty had been inevitable. Everybody recognized that now. Even Samuel and all the hottest partisans of Daniel Povey recognized it" (OWT, p. 242). It is then decided that a petition must be gathered in order to pressure the government into granting a reprieve, but in order to present it they must travel to London, the centre of English power and authority, which again demonstrates their subservience to the outer world. Daniel
Povey's execution is concrete and absolute proof that the Five Towns and St. Luke's Square are bound by the laws of a much larger social entity and that their state of isolation is largely an illusion. The demonstration held to protest the injustice of Daniel's execution reflects the fundamental alteration in perspective that has taken place in the Square since the death of the elephant, for the citizens' anger is an implicit acknowledgement that they now define themselves within the context of the outer world:

That execution was not only an injustice; it was an insult, a humiliating snub. And the worst was that the rest of the country had really discovered no sympathetic interest in the affair. Certain London papers . . . had slurred the morals and manners of the Five Towns. . . . This had helped to render furious the townspeople. This, as much as anything, had encouraged the spontaneous outburst of feeling which had culminated in a St. Luke's Square full of people with memorial cards in their hats. (OWT, p. 246)

In Book Four the public death that attracts the attention of the townsfolk is the demise of St. Luke's Square as a separate social institution. The economic independence that it displayed at the beginning of The Old Wives' Tale has been largely eroded by the emergence of Hanbridge as the commercial heart of the Five Towns: "As a centre of commerce it had assuredly approached very
near to death" (OWT, p. 475). Federation signals a new social order founded upon the amalgamation of the Five Towns into one enormous municipality. The rest of the nation, for the first time, actually shows some interest in the affairs of the Potteries: "The United Kingdom itself was languidly interested in the possibility of suddenly being endowed with a new town of a quarter of a million inhabitants. The Five Towns were frequently mentioned in the London dailies . . ." (OWT, p. 560).

These three deaths, like that of Rivain, are also emblematic of a condition of social demise that is divorced from a particular historical context, and, as a demonstration of the eternal principle of cyclical change that rules the novel's universe, they are each followed by a burst of primal human energy. The elephant's death, it should be mentioned, occurs during the Wakes, a festival that is derived from early Celtic fertility rites. It is an occasion for much high-spirited celebration, especially on the part of the lower classes, and is described as "an orgiastic carnival, gross in all its manifestations of joy. The whole centre of the town was given over to the furious pleasures of the people" (OWT, p. 87). The elephant's execution, proof that "the shocking always happened" (OWT, p. 30) during the Wakes, elicits an even greater show of vitality from the celebrants: "The crowd
cheered, and, intoxicated by their importance, the Volunteers fired three more volleys into the carcass, and were borne off as heroes to different inns" (OWT, p. 88). The Wakes is referred to in a number of other Five Towns works, including *Whom God Hath Joined* and "The Death of Simon Fuge," and most of these also make note of the "frenzies of licence" that arise during the carnival.15

The crowd assembled ostensibly to protest Daniel Povey's demise and the large, exuberant gathering that takes place in St. Luke's Square during the plebiscite on Federation both embody an elemental energy that is a sign of regeneration. In the former instance, the Square is filled with a crowd of seven or eight thousand by a collective, seemingly involuntary impulse. The law of cyclical change influences mankind at quite a primitive level, and, as if to substantiate this point, the demonstration disintegrates into a drunken carousel, that, like the Wakes, is described as "orgiastic" (OWT, p. 249). In the latter case, St. Luke's Square is "transformed by this clamour in favour of Federation; people cheered and sang also . . . " (OWT, p. 564). The occasion is "a heroic day" (OWT, p. 561) during which "excited wayfarers" (OWT, p. 564) gather in various groups and transmit the spirit of "contagious vivacity" (OWT, p. 564) to those who somehow have managed to avoid it. Although St. Luke's Square
and France are portrayed at different stages in the cycle of change, the pattern of death and life that is common to both societies suggests that the universe of The Old Wives' Tale is, at bottom, governed by a principle of cyclical alteration.

The narrator's inner view offers the reader a detailed portrait of the effect that the cyclical process of change has upon the Baines family as a whole and Constance and Sophia in particular. At the novel's outset St. Luke's Square and the Baines' household are almost indistinguishable from each other, and, like the Square, the family is made redundant by the historical process of evolution that takes place in the Five Towns during the course of The Old Wives' Tale. St. Luke's Square's initial autonomy, for instance, is embodied in the figure of John Baines. In the retail hierarchy of the Square the drapers are considered the elite, and among them "the shop of Baines stood supreme" (OWT, p. 30). Before he was invalidated John Baines was a public speaker of note, an alderman and a diligent supporter of religious causes: indeed, "the very life of the town's life" (OWT, p. 68).

John's stature is such that his death, like that of the elephant, reflects the passing of an entire age: "Mid-Victorian England lay on that mahogany bed" (OWT,
p. 97). His demise is also closely linked to the elephant's execution, since the beast's carcass attracts the remainder of the family, except for Sophia, who accidently causes her father's death when she leaves him unattended while she meets Gerald Scales.\textsuperscript{16} It is noteworthy that the Baines select the week during which the Wakes is held to display funeral goods in their window. There is a certain irony in the timing of this display, beyond its obvious prefiguring of John Baines' death. The mercantile class that the family represents is eventually eliminated through evolution, as is the concept of the Square as an independent economic unit. The display of mourning goods, in contrast to the spirit of vitality that dominates the Wakes, is a portent not just of John's demise but also of the eventual passing of the Baines family and the Square itself.

The decline in the Square's prosperity after the associated deaths in Book One is evident in the deterioration of the economic fortunes of the Baines family and the ever-widening gap that opens up between the family and their social milieu.\textsuperscript{17} The pre-eminence of the shop established by John is maintained for a time by Samuel Povey, partially because he recognizes the burgeoning significance of mass marketing which becomes more important as social organizations grow larger. As he and
Constance construct their revolutionary advertising tickets, Bennett remarks that they "were making history—the history of commerce. They had no suspicion that they were the forces of the future insidiously at work to destroy what the forces of the past had created..." (OWT, p. 103). Sam's death, like his employer's, occurs in tandem with a death in the Square, that of his cousin, Daniel Povey.

After Sam's demise, the deterioration of the Square is reflected in the sale of the property to Mr. Critchlow, the installation of Mrs. Critchlow as proprietoress and the physical separation of the shop from Constance's home. In Book Four, the impoverishment of the Square causes Mrs. Critchlow's suicide attempt and the closing of the shop: "That was the end of Baines's" (OWT, p. 557). The final ignominy is that Mr. Critchlow lets the shop and evicts Constance from the house that she has lived her entire life in. The new tenant, Midland Clothiers Company, is representative of the new social order in that it appeals to the mass of consumers with cheap goods and a sign, "compared to which the spacious old 'Baines' sign was a postcard" (OWT, p. 559). The firm's name, which defines it as a regional rather than local enterprise, is a further indication of the process of evolution that has taken place.
Constance, it should be noted, is disgusted with the "modern world" (OWT, p. 558), which she sees reflected in the Square's decline, and, despite the inclement weather and her poor health, she goes out to vote against Federation, its political embodiment. As a consequence of this journey, she perishes, "a martyr to the cause of Bursley's municipal independence" (OWT, p. 558). Thus her demise, like the deaths of her father and husband, is associated with a public death, but in contrast to the grandeur and ceremony attached to John Baines' passing, her death is not of sufficient moment to draw even Cyril, who arrives three days after the funeral.

The deterioration of the Baines family can also be traced through the gradually diminishing significance that its male members have in the community. In spite of John's illness; for example, "he still lived on the lips of admiring, ceremonious burgesses as 'our honoured fellow-townsman.' He deserved his reputation" (OWT, p. 30). Yet for all his merits, John Baines produces no male offspring who might have taken over the shop, and his "surrogate" (OWT, p. 39) and heir in business is Samuel Povey. But despite his efforts, Sam never attains the stature of his employer, since he "never could impose himself on the burgesses. He lacked individuality. He was little" (OWT, p. 250). John's grandson, Cyril, is even less remarkable.
The narrator ironically dismisses him by observing that Cyril's behaviour is faultless: "He was unexceptionable." (OWT, p. 546).

Although the Baines family as a whole declines as a consequence of the evolutionary change that goes on in the Five Towns during the course of the novel, the full cycle of change can be detected in the lives of the individual family members. Since the alterations imposed on each man by the cyclical process occur much more rapidly than those that transform one's social environment, it is possible for Bennett to show the cycle of change as a continual operation through the successive generations of the Baines family. The Old Wives' Tale opens with the passing of one generation, as signified by John Baines' death, and the emergence of a new one. Indeed, the development of the younger generation is apparently accelerated by the associated deaths of John and the elephant. Sophia, for instance, is smitten by Gerald Scales on this occasion, an attachment that leads to her elopement and subsequent career in France. Constance and Sam also appear to formalize their mutual attraction during their inspection of the elephant's corpse, since they are unusually self-conscious upon their return home.
The time scheme of The Old Wives' Tale is determined by the influence that the cyclical process of change has upon the lives of Constance and Sophia. The evolutionary phase that they both undergo is eventually succeeded by a period of corporeal dissolution that concludes in their deaths and the end of the novel. E. M. Forster, it would appear, has the inevitability of their deaths in mind when he observes in Aspects of the Novel that "Sophia and Constance are the children of Time from the instant we see them romping with their mother's dresses; they are doomed to decay with a completeness that is very rare in literature." Yet Forster fails to notice the renewal of life that the principle of cyclical change makes equally as inevitable. At the novel's conclusion, Constance, the last of the family, forges a spiritual link with Dick Povey and Lily Holl, who represent the future. Lily is regarded by Constance as the embodiment of "ingenuous girlishness" (OWT, p. 543) that will flourish in time, while Dick is a staunch supporter of Federation, the new social order.

Although the cycle of change governs the sisters' social and personal worlds, it is perceived in a different fashion by each protagonist. Indeed, the chief purpose of the narrator's inner view is to present detailed portraits of Constance and Sophia's lives through which they emerge
as individualities possessed of distinct personalities that liberate them from the determinism implicit in Forster’s observation and in the cyclical process. Certainly, they are drawn inexorably towards their deaths by an indifferent force, but their tempers, much more than their environments, determine the way that they view the universe and the way that they learn about it. The cosmopolitan world of Paris and the provincial backwater of St. Luke’s Square can even be considered as reflections of the protagonists’ separate personalities. Their independence of character represents a considerable departure from Anna of the Five Towns in which the heroine’s view of the world is shaped by the exploitative force that rules her society.

The opening section of The Old Wives’ Tale provides an excellent example of the complexity of Bennett’s style, for, aside from initiating the narrator’s dominant stance, it is used to introduce Constance and Sophia to the reader. It is noteworthy, especially in the light of the above remarks, that this introduction emphasizes their initial likeness. The book’s first line, cited previously in connection with the narrator, reads “Those two girls, Constance and Sophia Baines, paid no heed to the manifold interest of their situation, of which, indeed, they had never been conscious” (OWT, p. 27). Bennett catalogues
the beauty of Staffordshire, the county in which they live, but the two sisters, "busy with the intense preoccupations of youth, recked not of such matters" (OWT, p. 27). They are equally oblivious to the manufacture of pottery, the primary industry of the Five Towns itself. The autonomous society of St. Luke's Square, which is closely linked to their family—the title of Book One is "Mrs. Baines"—comprises the scope of the girls' universe at this point in the novel. Mrs. Baines is the active power who supports the figurehead, John Baines, and perhaps the most striking evidence of her puissance is that she manages to create and maintain "a gigantic fiction that the organism [her husband] remained ever the supreme consultative head of the family . . . " (OWT, p. 69). Her physique is depicted as a "majestic form" (OWT, p. 141), and she regards her family and presumably the Square itself as her "realm" (OWT, p. 85).

Not only are the Baines sisters alike in their ignorance of the world, but there is also a marked physical resemblance between "these two big girls, with their short-sleeved black frocks and black aprons, and their smooth hair, and their composed serious faces . . . " (OWT, p. 42). Their similarity in knowledge and appearance suggests that they begin their separate journeys through life on roughly the same footing. Nevertheless, they are immediately
differentiated from each other by their behaviour in the novel's opening scene. Their respective ages—Constance is sixteen and Sophia fifteen—suggest that the reader is presented with a fait accompli, two completely different personalities that for whatever undetermined reasons have already been formed by the time the novel opens. Their initial likeness concentrates attention on their separate characters and suggests that they will be of seminal importance in their later development.

In *Anna of the Five Towns*, Anna Teilwright undergoes three intense experiences that conflict with her commitment to her father's world, and she learns by applying meaning to these incidents in a fairly direct manner so that a tension is established between her original conception of the universe and her development. The initial views of the world of the protagonists in *The Old Wives' Tale* reveal their separate temperaments, which are the primary determinants of the way that they learn about the world. Constance's mild and conservative nature leads her to accept unquestioningly life in St. Luke's Square and to learn in a gradual manner. Sophia, on the other hand, possesses a proud and sensitive personality, and her education is largely inspired by a succession of profound reactions to change.
Constance's cautious and phlegmatic personality is reflected in her initial identification with her family, and, as a result of this attachment, she experiences the cyclical process almost exclusively as a series of alterations that occur within the Baines family. The emergence of the new generation, which is heralded by her marriage to Sam, imposes on Constance a host of changes that range from assuming new responsibilities in the house and shop to forging new relationships with her mother and her husband. Constance detects the eternal cycle of change that underlies these alterations, and she learns to accept them by picturing herself as part of a continual process that is embodied in her family. This philosophy is gradually strengthened by her further encounters with change, especially as it is manifest in the deaths of those near to her and in her own demise. Constance, of course, is exposed to the evolutionary change that occurs in the social world of St. Luke's Square, but she is unable to comprehend that the principle of cyclical change also governs these alterations. Similarly, she cannot understand Sophia's view of the world, and as a result she is critical of her sister throughout the novel.

Constance, at the outset of The Old Wives' Tale, identifies completely with her family and St. Luke's Square. On her first appearance in the novel, she demon-
strates her commitment to the family by employing her leisure time to embroider a canvas for her mother's birthday. She also obeys Mrs. Baines' dictums without question: she willingly leaves school to work in the shop, for example. As a consequence, her mother treats her as an adult—she openly mentions Mrs. Daniel Povey's pregnancy (OWT, p. 65) to her daughter—and she even entrusts Constance with her keys, the symbols of her omnipotence, during her absence. Since Constance is an integral component of the Square's life, she receives less attention in Book One than her obstreperous sibling.

Indeed, Constance's altered relationship with Samuel Povey, the only major change that she is confronted with in Book One, does not conflict with her allegiance to the family but rather serves to reinforce it. Constance's attraction to Mr. Povey, which hitherto has remained nascent, surfaces as a result of Sophia's capricious extraction of his tooth: "'What!' Constance's face showed the final contortions of that horrified incredulity that is forced to believe" (OWT, p. 46). She clearly allies herself with Sam when she fractures the "code of honour" (OWT, p. 55) that had governed the bedroom she shares with Sophia by opening her sister's work-box and throwing the tooth that is secreted there out of the window. This act, which for Constance as well as Sophia
is a "revealing experience" (OWT, p. 55), is a declaration of her acceptance of adulthood and her identification with the world of St. Luke's Square. It takes the remainder of Book One, of course, before her relationship with Sam is formalized, over the mildly hypergamous objections of her mother.

Book Two opens with Constance being faced by the welter of change that has arisen from her marriage and that conflicts with her vision of life in the Square. The first chapter is appropriately entitled "Revolution," and it chronicles the changes that Samuel Povey introduces to Number Four, St. Luke's Square. These include his habit of smoking, his purchase of a dog, his new sign for the store front and his announcement of an annual sale, "the final defeat of the old order" (OWT, p. 174). Constance also dreads her mother's initial visit to the household that she once ruled so capably. But she eventually learns to adjust to her new relationship with Mrs. Baines and to accept her husband's innovations: "Gradually she had obtained a sure ascendency over her mother. . . . Gradually she had gained skill and use in the management of her household . . ." (OWT, pp. 175-76).

Constance also discovers that her new husband does not conform to her expectations that are based upon his
amenable behaviour as her suitor. His furious retort to
her voiced disdain for paper collars makes them both
suddenly aware "that they were standing on the edge of
a chasm. . . . They had imagined themselves to be wan-
dering safely in a flowered meadow, and here was this
bottomless chasm!" (OWT, p. 160). In Leonora Bennett uses
the term "deeps," which implies a similar marital abyss,
to portray the irreconcilable differences between John
Stanway and his wife. But Constance, unlike Leonora
Stanway, learns to adjust to her husband's personality:
"Gradually she had constructed a chart of Sam's individu-
ality, with the submerged rocks and perilous currents all
carefully marked, so that she could now voyage unalarmed
in those seas" (OWT, p. 176).

Constance's acceptance of the substantial changes
that have occurred within the family is not simply the
practical adaptation to altered circumstances that her
earlier conformity might suggest it to be. Although she
does not comprehend the social ramifications of the prin-
ciple of cyclical change, she does learn to understand its
effect on her family. She reflects on the vicissitudes of
existence that she has experienced—her father's death,
Sophia's elopement, her mother's widowhood—and opines
that "she knew what life was, and that it was grim" (OWT,
p. 158). These changes seem to have stimulated in her
the realization that she is part of a continuous flow of existence that surpasses such mutability. Constance recognizes that her parents' bedroom, which she now shares with Sam, symbolizes a cycle of death and life that is in continual operation: "The course of nature, with its succession of deaths, conceptions, and births, slowly makes such a room august with a mysterious quality which interprets the grandeur of mere existence and imposes itself on all" (OWT, p. 158).

Bennett, however, cautions the reader not to take her evaluation of life too seriously at this juncture in the book for "this melancholy was factitious, was less than transient foam on the deep sea of her joy. Death and sorrow and sin were dim shapes to her..." (OWT, p. 159). Nevertheless, the principle of continuity which Constance perceives in her family's perpetuation remains the cornerstone of her vision of existence. Her development is not studded with brilliant insights, but instead is a gradual deepening of this philosophy as she undergoes a host of other alterations.

Constance accommodates herself to familial change because she conceives that it is her role to maintain the family's unity and hence preserve the continuity that it embodies. The conflict between Sam and Cyril that arises
over the latter's disgraceful behaviour at his birthday party elicits this realization. Sam's obduracy in the question of Cyril's punishment suddenly transforms him in Constance's eyes into a stranger: "For a brief instant Cyril did not exist for Constance. Samuel alone obsessed her, and yet Samuel seemed a strange, unknown man" (OWT, p. 202). Constance recognizes that she cannot alter her husband, and although Cyril is still a child she feels that he, too, is immutable: "He was just as unchangeable as a growing plant" (OWT, p. 202). The tension between father and son is perceived by Constance solely in terms of the individuals involved and not as a natural conflict between different generations that will likely ease with the passage of time. She realizes, however, that in order to keep peace in the family she must act as an arbiter between the two intractable forces of father and son: "Always she would be between them, to reconcile them, and to be crushed by their impact. Always she would have to bear the burden of both of them. There could be no ease for her" (OWT, p. 202).

Constance, however, is quite capable of resisting changes in her husband's behaviour when she feels that they place the family in peril. Probably the greatest alteration in Sam occurs when, as a result of his single-minded defence of Daniel Povey, he is fully involved in
the evolutionary changes that are taking place in their society. Constance views her husband's struggle for the self-governing concept of the Square exclusively as a danger to the family. Thus she combats Sam's continuing battle because his ill health endangers the familial unit:

It was a battle between her will and his. . . . In the fight Constance was scarcely recognizable. She deliberately gave way to hysteria; she was no longer soft and gentle; she flung bitterness at him like vitriol; she shrieked like a common shrew. . . . She might just as well have talked to a post. . . . He told her that it was useless for her to put herself about, as he should act as he thought fit. . . . Constance was beaten. She accepted the defeat. . . . (OWT, p. 234)

Constance, therefore, applies what she has previously learned about Sam's intransigence and accepts his decision to continue on. Henceforth, she acts as though "she had a madman in the house, who could not be treated according to ordinary principles" (OWT, p. 235).

Although the gradual changes that occur in Constance's family are ultimately attributable to the cyclical process, the most direct impact that it has on her life is in the form of death—metaphorical and actual, others' and her own. In one instance, Cyril's birth, Constance, undergoes a kind of death that is directly associated with the renewal of human life:
She was dying. Her soul was leaving her. And she was alone, panic-stricken, in the midst of a cataclysm a thousand times surpassing all that she had imagined of sickening horror. ... And then she wept; beaten, terrorized, smashed and riven. No common sense now! No wise calmness now! No self-respect now! ... Nothing but a kind of animalized victim! And then the supreme endless spasm, during which she gave up the ghost and bade good-bye to her very self. ... (OWT, p. 190)

Constance's perception of the cycle of change as a continuous process that transcends even the apparent finality of death is strengthened as a consequence of Cyril's birth. His appearance in the world, which succeeds his mother's metaphorical demise, also allows Constance to accept Mrs. Baines' death which occurs shortly after Cyril is born: "In Constance grief and joy were mystically united" (OWT, p. 193). The same pattern of death and life, of course, is representative on a social scale of the principle of cyclical change. It is noteworthy that like the mass events that comprise the focal point of each book in The Old Wives' Tale the process of individual change is one that can also be violent and primitive.

The other deaths that Constance experiences during the course of the novel are not directly linked with regeneration, yet they further her growing awareness that she is part of a continuum of existence. One of the ways
that she learns to cope with death is to find support in the lives of those around her. After Sam's death, for example, Constance fills the void in her life with Cyril, who as her only child represents an unbroken continuum in the family's life. He does not realize that "in that stout familiar body before him was a sensitive, trembling soul that clutched at him estatically as the one reality in the universe" (OWT, p. 253). Indeed, she adjusts to his behaviour just as she did to her husband's. Constance, for a short time after Sam's demise, upholds his refusal to allow Cyril to take evening classes at the local art school. But she soon relents, for to continue to resist her son, who is as uncompromising as her father, would do irrevocable harm to the relationship that is so meaningful to her: "He was charming again. When she was alone she could cling to him again. And she said to herself: 'If we can be happy together only when I give way to him, I must give way to him'" (OWT, p. 261).

It is hardly surprising that Constance experiences Cyril's departure for London at the end of Book Two as a kind of death. At the station Constance kisses her son so forcefully that she "kissed her life out" (OWT, p. 282) and after his train departs she is left standing by herself on "the dead platform" (OWT, p. 282). And when she returns home she indulges her grief to the fullest:
"'I'm a lonely old woman now. I've nothing to live for any more, and I'm no use to anybody. Once I was young and proud. And this is what my life has come to!'" (OWT, pp. 282-83). But in spite of her lamentations the reader has every confidence that she will survive as she has done before. In Book Four she unhesitatingly turns to Sophia when she learns of her whereabouts, and while their relationship is not an easy one, her sister's presence is emblematic of familial continuity. Although Sophia's death is in some ways a "relief" (OWT, p. 549) to Constance, she discovers the spirit of regeneration in Dick and Lily, who can be regarded as members of her extended family and who embody the future.

The death that has the greatest impact on Constance is her husband's, and as a consequence it stimulates her most profound insights into the process of cyclical change. Constance appears to foresee Sam's death on the day of Daniel Povey's trial: "Constance was in the blackest despair. She saw nothing but death around her. She thought: 'misfortunes never come singly. Why did not Samuel come?'" (OWT, p. 240). Even after he returns Constance still "was profoundly troubled; great disasters seemed to be slowly approaching her from all quarters" (OWT, p. 240). Yet in spite of her apprehension Constance is able to transcend the apparent finality of death by
applying her learning to the situation:

His death was an amputation for her. But she faced it with calmness. She did not nurse the idea that her life was at an end; on the contrary, she obstinately put it away from her, dwelling on Cyril. She had lost her father and her mother, and now her husband. Her career seemed to be punctuated by interments. But after a while her gentle commonsense came to insist that most human beings lose their parents, and that every marriage must end in either a widower or a widow, and that all careers are punctuated by interments. (OWT, p. 252)

As the reference to Cyril suggests, Constance instinctively turns to those near her as an antidote to death, but this action should not be taken as a sign that she attempts to avoid the concept of death. The assumption which underlies the above passage is that Constance regards herself as part of a human continuum in which the deaths of those closest to her are accepted as a logical consequence of the cycle of change. She discovers comfort and meaning in the commonality of death—the fact that it is shared by all men, regardless of the era in which they live. It is significant that Constance regards this insight as a considerable advance in her education from her understanding of the world at the outset of Book Two: "The sudden thought of their naive ignorance of life, hers and his, when they were first married, brought tears into her eyes. How wise and experienced she was.
Constance's philosophy is elaborated upon at the end of The Old Wives' Tale when she recognizes the imminence of her own demise. It is necessary, once again, to quote at length in order to present the full scope of her vision of existence:

Constance never pitied herself. She did not consider that Fate had treated her very badly. She was not very discontented with herself. The invincible commonsense of a sound nature prevented her, in her best moments, from feebly dissolving in self-pity. She lived in honesty, and kindness for a fair number of years, and she had tasted triumphant hours. She was justly respected, she had a position, she had dignity, she was well-off. . . . True, she was old! So were thousands of other people in Bursley. She was in pain. So were thousands of other people. With whom would she be willing to exchange lots? She had many dissatisfactions. But she rose superior to them. When she surveyed her life, and life in general, she would think, with a sort of tart but not sour cheerfulness: "Well, that is what life is!" . . . Thus she did not unduly bewail her excursion to the Town Hall to vote, which the sequel had proved to be ludicrously supererogatory. "How was I to know?" (OWT, p. 569)

As she did after Sam's death, Constance comforts herself by comparing her lot in life to that of her contemporaries. She feels that in many ways—the fullness of the life she
has led, the respect she receives from others, her financial independence—she has been favoured in comparison with others for much of her life. In that same fashion, she is able to accept the drawbacks of her present situation—her age, her discomfort—as conditions that she shares with countless others. The italicized statement, delivered on her deathbed, stresses her acceptance of death as an experience that she shares with all mankind. Hence Constance learns to view the principle of cyclical change, as it is manifested in her personal world, as an ongoing process that transcends her own demise.

There are limitations to Constance's view of the world, however, and they are perhaps most apparent in her attitude towards her sister. From her first appearance in the novel Sophia flaunts the narrow conventions of her family and St. Luke's Square and so makes it clear that she has little use for them. In Constance's eyes, it is almost inconceivable that her sister should view the Square as anything less than the centre of the universe. Thus when Sophia shows her disrespect by playing with Mrs. Baines' new skirt Constance is dumbfounded: "It was sacrilege that she was witnessing, a prodigious irreverence. She was conscious of an expectation that punishment would instantly fall on this daring, impious child" (OWT, p. 37). Sophia's elopement, of course, is an indisputable
declaration of her scorn for the Square and its parochial way of life, and it seems to confirm in Constance's mind the notion that her sister deserves to be punished. When Sophia dies Constance cannot help thinking that justice has in some way been accomplished: "Sophia had sinned. It was therefore inevitable that she should suffer" (OWT, p. 544). Sophia's crime, it would appear, is that she "deceived her mother, and for the deception had paid with thirty years of melancholy and the entire frustration of her proper destiny" (OWT, p. 547). Constance never gains any insight into her sister's vision of the world, and as a result she can only make sense of Sophia's actions by placing them in a moral context. Thus as she lies near death Constance is more convinced than ever of the rectitude of the life she has led: "This idea of Sophia's wasted and sterile life, and of the far-reaching importance of adhering to principles, recurred to her again and again" (OWT, p. 569).

Constance is not able to comprehend the social consequences of the law of cyclical change, just as she fails to appreciate the validity of her sister's point of view. St. Luke's Square, from Constance's perspective, remains eternally the isolated community that it is at the novel's outset. She fails to understand, for example, the import of Daviel Povey's execution and the consequent demonstra-
tion in St. Luke's Square. The first intimation of change that conflicts with Constance's vision of the Square occurs when Number Four is sold to Mr. Critchlow. The sale of the Mericap property, of which the Baines' home and shop is a part, is considered by the narrator to be reflective of the state of the Square's decline. Although Constance experiences the physical separation of her home from the shop as a "havoc of change" (OWT, p. 272) and a "devastating revolution" (OWT, p. 272), she has no comprehension of the social implications of the incident. Sophia's return to the Square in Book Four emphasizes the extent of Constance's commitment to an atavistic conception of her social environment. Sophia categorizes the Square as a "'poor, poor little thing!'" (OWT, p. 476), and she thinks of Constance's home as a "dark inconvenient house ... blackened by smoke, surrounded by mud" (OWT, p. 496). But even though she convinces Constance to move to the Rutland Hotel, in the end Constance's attachment to the Square necessitates their return: "She had carelessly left her heart behind in St. Luke's Square" (OWT, p. 511).

Constance is, of course, a bitter opponent of the movement towards Federation of the Five Towns, and her inability to comprehend the reasons for the Square's downfall illustrates the limitations of her view of the world:
she had no general ideas; she did not see the cosmic movement in large curves. She was incapable of perceiving the absurdity involved in perpetuating municipal divisions which the growth of the district had rendered artificial, vexatious, and harmful. She saw nothing but Bursley, and in Bursley nothing but the Square. (OWT, pp. 564-65)

Since she contracts her fatal illness while voting against the Federation motion, she does, in effect, give her life for her outdated vision of St. Luke's Square. It is worthy of note that as she nears the moment of death Constance associates the approaching oblivion with a vision of being lost in the cellars of the house she knew as a child: "And she was afraid of the vast-obscure of those regions, as she had been in her infancy" (OWT, p. 570). Hence in death, as in life, Constance remains committed to a concept of society that never changes.

Sophia regards the process of change from a perspective that is quite distinct from her sister's. This attitude originates in her conception of herself at the novel's outset as an outsider within the personal sphere of her family. In order to compensate for her innate sense of alienation, she tends to idealize the world that exists beyond the border of St. Luke's Square. Sophia associates even the slightest modulation in her idealized picture of the world with death, a state that reawakens her original sense of meaninglessness. Thus Sophia's
temperament makes her extraordinarily sensitive to the principle of cyclical alteration that governs the novel's universe. She learns to survive this sense of *angst* by developing the practical side of her personality, but change ultimately penetrates her defences and precipitates her demise.

Sophia, unlike her sister, is discontent with her family and the Square at the beginning of the novel. Her dissatisfaction is partially explained by her jealousy of the privileges that her parents bestow on Constance, their eldest and more responsible daughter:

> the door was shut with a gentle, decisive bang that to the silent watcher on the floor above seemed to create a special excluding intimacy round the figures of Constance and her father and mother. The watcher wondered, with a little prick of jealousy, what they would be discussing in the large bedroom. Certainly, in some subtle way, Constance had a standing with her parents which was more confidential than Sophia's. (OWT, p. 52)

Yet the sense of detachment implicit in the narrator's repeated description of her as the "watcher" and the urgency of her desire to escape the Square suggest that this attitude on Sophia's part stems from a deep-seated feeling of alienation that transcends mere jealousy. It is quite possible, although it is never made clear in the
text, that Sophia's view of the world originates in a childhood experience of parental rejection, either actual or imagined, and that her jealousy of Constance is simply the least painful way of acknowledging her buried hurt. In any event, Sophia perceives herself, for whatever reason, as an outcast within the world of her family and St. Luke's Square.

Sophia is strongly attracted to the outside world out of an urgent need to belong, and this impulse determines even her choice of profession. Certainly, teaching offers her "the one possibility" (OWT, p. 71) of avoiding the otherwise inevitable fate of becoming a shop clerk, but it also presents a route, however indirect, to a world that is broader than St. Luke's Square. She mentions teaching in Miss Chetwynd's sister's school in London to her mother, who, as noted, is suitably upset. Miss Chetwynd, who becomes her "sole friend" (OWT, p. 86), exemplifies even in her speech another more exotic universe: "Miss Chetwynd had no trace of the local accent; she spoke with a southern refinement which the Five Towns, while making fun of it, envied" (OWT, p. 81). Sophia's vision of the outside world, however, is somewhat fanciful. Her interest in the fifteen models displaying the latest Parisian fashions foreshadows her own journey to Paris, and at the same time it suggests that, like the model's
universe, her view of the world is superficial and without substance: "Why was one sister going to the theatre, another to tea, another to the stable, and another to bed?" (OWT, p. 35).

Sophia's resolve to quit St. Luke's Square brings her, of course, directly into conflict with Mrs. Baines, who regards the family and the Square as her own domain. It is appropriate that Sophia's self-assertion is most often exhibited during her mother's absence. Mrs. Baines is out when Sophia tries on her skirt and extracts Mr. Povey's tooth in the novel's opening scene. When Mrs. Baines joins Constance and Sam on their excursion to view the dead elephant, Sophia leaves her father unattended—with disastrous consequences—in order to wait on Gerald Scales in the shop. It is also significant that Sophia's rebelliousness manifests itself in brief journeys outside the Square that are not sanctioned by her mother: "She had been beyond the Square and was returning... Mrs. Baines' heart jumped. For let it be said that the girls never under any circumstances went forth without permission, and scarcely ever alone" (OWT, p. 75). Sophia twice meets Gerald Scales beyond the Square, and their elopement is a fulfilment of the outward movement.
Sophia's desire to escape from the Square is her primary motive in Book One, but it is some time before she finds the opportunity that will allow her to leave. As soon as Scales appears on the scene, however, Sophia concentrates her outward energies on to him. He is portrayed as "neither an ordinary commercial traveller nor the kind of man to which the Square was accustomed. He came from a different world" (OWT, p. 115). Sophia perceives Scales as the very embodiment of her dream-like conception of the outer world, which as a portent of the future is again associated with Paris:

Paris meant absolutely nothing to her but pure, impossible, unattainable romance. And he had been there! The clouds of glory were around him. He was a hero, dazzling. He had come to her out of another world. He was her miracle. He was almost too miraculous to be true. (OWT, p. 130)

Scales represents to Sophia a brilliant world that is incomparably superior to St. Luke's Square. When she arrives in London to meet Gerald, she finds the other-worldly qualities that she attributes to Gerald mirrored in the city itself: "And at last London . . . all dream-surpassing, intensifying to an extraordinary degree the obsession of unreality . . . " (OWT, p. 288). Her vision of Gerald is not easily shaken, for even after the disappointment that she suffers over the elopement Sophia still persists in idealizing her husband: "She relished
instruction from his lips. It was a pleasure for her to learn from that exhaustless store of wordly knowledge" (OWT, p. 301).

Sophia's determination to pursue her idea of Gerald and the outside world prevents her from discovering his true nature until it is too late. He is described, for instance, as the "real murderer" (OWT, p. 97) in reference to John Baines' death. His stature is further diminished by the emblematic "yellow marl round the edges of his boots" (OWT, p. 129) at his clandestine meeting with Sophia near the construction of the new railway, a site that is "as far away from Sophia's ideal conception as Manchester from Venice" (OWT, p. 129). And finally there is the veiled hint, reminiscent of the disclaimer attached to Anna Tellwright's initial infatuation with Henry Mynors, that his New Year's Eve appearance on their door-step is not quite as fortuitous as it appears to Sophia: "Real miracles never seem to be miracles, and that which at first blush resembles one usually proves to be an instance of the extremely prosaic" (OWT, p. 111).

Sophia's obsession with the outside world and with Scales completely overrides her response to the cycle of change as it is manifested in the first book of The Old Wives' Tale. She would rather daydream than inspect the
dead elephant, and she is thoroughly captivated by Scales when they meet. Immediately following their first brief encounter, Sophia thinks "'Only in these moments have I begun to live!'" (OWT, p. 93). Even the shock of her father's death is not sufficient to shake her out of the reverie. She asks Mr. Critchlow if her father is dead, and at the same time "Somewhere within a voice was whispering, 'So his names is Scales!'" (OWT, p. 95). Sophia, moreover, does not leave her position at Miss Chetwynd's out of contrition for her neglect of her father; her main incentive is that Gerald will sooner or later return to the shop. She realizes that her "motive in leaving Miss Chetwynd's and joining the shop had been, at the best, very mixed, very impure" (OWT, p. 109). She is still pursuing her dream even while appearing to be a dutiful and repentant daughter to her mother.

Sophia undergoes a series of traumatic experiences that conflict with her idealized picture of Gerald and her fanciful notion of the world outside St. Luke's Square. Although these changes are not all directly related to the cyclical process, Sophia perceives them as intimations of individual and social death; death to her is not an element in the continual cycle of change but rather a brutal reminder of her state of alienation. These episodes are associated with a physical breakdown on Sophia's part that
conveys the intensity with which she experiences them and prefigures her eventual demise.

Sophia's first clue that change will inevitably alter her relationship with Gerald occurs even before she escapes from the Square. She envisions his death as he frolics dangerously around the lip of the abandoned mine shaft: "She saw him at the distant bottom of the shaft, mangled, drowning" (OWT, p. 131). The possibility of Gerald's death clashes, of course, with Sophia's illusory view of the universe, and she experiences the conflict as a physical shock: "A horrible sickness seized her. And she shrieked again. Never had she guessed that existence could be such pain" (OWT, p. 131). Sophia's "dark vision of the mine" (OWT, p. 132) is excruciating because it emphasizes her inherent isolation and makes the world appear to be incomprehensible. The episode, incidentally, anticipates Gerald's return at the end of the novel and its effect upon Sophia.23

The mine shaft incident illustrates that Sophia's innate personality rather than environment is largely responsible for her extreme reaction to change, but environment, albeit one that she has sought out, does tend to exacerbate that reaction. Gerald Scales, the ambassador from a better world, operates according to a value system
that is completely alien to Sophia, and as a result he inflicts a series of devastating changes upon her. In London he has to be coerced into marriage, and his thoughtless and erratic behaviour in France soon succeeds in undermining her remaining illusions about his character. He takes her to an expensive restaurant, which turns out to be a gathering place for courtesans, and then he leaves her alone when he becomes embroiled in a petty squabble. At Rivain's execution, he abandons her once again, and, as if to stress the degradation that he inflicts on her, he propositions a prostitute before her still innocent eyes. And, finally, after four years of disastrous marriage, he deserts her.

Sophia experiences these incidents, which conflict with her wishful view of Gerald and the world, as a physical assault that is often associated with death. After her disappointment over the elopement she undergoes a kind of physical collapse:

She glanced about for support, as a woman in the open street who feels she is going to faint, and went blindly to the bed, falling on it, with the upper part of her body, in an attitude of abandonment. She wept, but without sobbing. (OWT, p. 295)

This episode also causes Sophia to contemplate suicide, albeit as a means of revenging herself on her suitor.
"I could slip out at night and drown myself... A nice thing that would be for Gerald." (OWT, p. 295).

Gerald's desertion triggers a reaction in Sophia that actually endangers her existence. Her physical response to change has by this time become a chronic condition: "the gastric dizziness from which she had been suffering for two years" (OWT, p. 334). When it becomes evident that Gerald's leave-taking is final, Sophia's vertigo flares up into a near fatal fever: "She felt that she was dying... She was perfectly aware that she was going to die" (OWT, p. 350). Sophia's previous sensation of fainting in public is realized when she faints in the street, an incident which places her isolation and vulnerability in a social context. Indeed, the prospect of dying in a foreign place, which occurs to Sophia as her fever mounts, intensifies her experience of alienation: "She saw herself dying in Paris, and heard the expressions of facile sympathy and idle curiosity drawn forth by the sight of the dead body..." (OWT, p. 343). In London, Gerald's marital reluctance elicits a similar sense of social isolation: "She could do nothing for herself. She was as helpless as a rabbit in London" (OWT, p. 295).

The sense of meaninglessness that Gerald's behaviour provokes in Sophia is intensified considerably when she...
witnesses Rivain's execution. This episode shatters, once and for all, the vision of French society that she nurtured in St. Luke's Square, and it marks the first time that her death-like response to change is elicited by an actual death in the outer world. From her vantage point overlooking the execution, Sophia sees the once alluring French social world transformed into a mob that is obsessed with death, and this vision produces in her a sense of alienation and incomprehension that is universal in its scope:

She felt like a lost soul, torn too soon from shelter, and exposed for ever to the worst hazards of destiny. Why was she in this strange, incomprehensible town, foreign and inimical to her, watching with agonized glance this cruel, obscene spectacle? Only yesterday, and she had been an innocent, timid creature in Bursley. Either that day or this day was not real. (OWT, p. 327)

As in previous instances, Sophia's alienation is reflected in a physical breakdown that is akin to death: "She shrank down to the floor in terror and loathing, and hid her face, and shuddered" (OWT, p. 327).

In this incident Sophia does not perceive the regenerative spirit that is an implicit aspect of the crowd's frenetic behaviour, and that Constance in her personal sphere construes as an indication of continuity. At the
same time, however, Constance simply ignores the impact that the cycle of change has on the social world of St. Luke's Square, and she has no concept of the universe that exists beyond the borders of her circumscribed society. Sophia's revulsion from the principle of cyclical change as it is manifested in the execution scene bears a certain similarity to Conrad's vision of the world in *Heart of Darkness*. Conrad fears that the forces of darkness endanger the very survival of human civilization, and Kurtz, like Sophia, expresses that despair in his famous comment: "The horror! The horror!".24

These episodes make it clear that subsequent to Gerald's desertion Sophia must either learn to survive her utter isolation in alien territory or else succumb to its terror. She does learn, of course, and indeed the first signs of her development can be discerned once she leaves the Square and suffers her initial disappointment. Although her learning, for the sake of credible characterization, occurs in tandem with her experience of change, it is acquired fairly rapidly and thus her development can be separated from the events that stimulate it. As she recovers from her illness, Sophia feels that she has undergone a sudden transformation: "It was a rebirth" (OWT, p. 351). She does not, however, see any significance in the fact of her renewal, as her sister does in
similar circumstances.

The first glimmerings that Sophia is not entirely helpless on her own are seen in London, when, after her disappointment with Gerald, she decides that she will not return to the Five Towns: "She faced the fact. But she would not repent.... She would not exchange the remains of her pride for the means of escape from the worst misery that life could offer" (OWT, p. 294). The proud obstinacy that underlies this stance is soon transformed into practical self-reliance once she and Gerald have established themselves in Paris.

Gerald said that she was not to think about prices. She was, however, forced by some instinct to think about prices—she who at home had scorned the narrowness of life in the Square. In the Square she was understood to be quite without commonsense, hopelessly imprudent; yet here, a spring of sagacity seemed to be welling up in her all the time, a continual antidote against the general madness in which she found herself. (OWT, p. 299)

This passage contains a detailed account of the mechanism by which Sophia learns to deal with her acute sense of alienation. She cannot, of course, eradicate the inherent way that she perceives the universe, but she can diminish its terrifying implications by concentrating upon the practical considerations of her existence. After the execution Sophia sees her husband for the first time with-
out a mask of illusion: "The deep conviction henceforth formed a permanent part of her general consciousness that he was simply an irresponsible and thoughtless fool. . . . Such was her brilliant and godlike husband" (OWT, p. 329). Immediately following this realization Sophia demonstrates her newly acquired pragmatism by stealing the two hundred pounds that later gives her a start in business. By the time of Gerald's departure Sophia pictures herself as a woman who has undergone a fundamental alteration: "It did really seem to her, indeed, that the Sophia whom Gerald had espoused was dead and gone, and that another Sophia had come into her body. . . . Her eyes were the eyes of one who has lost her illusions too violently and too completely" (OWT, p. 333). The feeling of rebirth that she experiences during her recovery helps to substantiate the impression that she has been transformed.

The practical manner in which Sophia has learned to view the world is derived largely from the principles of her upbringing, but with the emphasis on their pragmatism rather than on their moral propriety. Sophia, for example, condemns Madame Foucalt not on the grounds of her profession, but because she has not taken full advantage of her situation: "'Goodness! If I had been in her place I shouldn't have been like that. I should have been rich!"
(OWT, p. 363). Her background also asserts itself as she examines Madame Foucault's apartment for the first time: "Nothing in it, she found, was 'good.' And in St. Luke's Square 'goodness' meant honest workmanship, permanence, the absence of pretence" (OWT, p. 356). During the siege she falls back on her mother's idea of what constitutes a basic diet: "the chief of her purchases was cheese, of which her mother used to say that bread and cheese and water made a complete diet" (OWT, p. 388). It is Sophia's single-minded attention to such practical necessities that makes her pension such a success: "She thought of nothing but her enterprise, which absorbed all her powers" (OWT, p. 389). And, of course, this obsession blocks out most intimations of change that might reawaken her sense of isolation.

Sophia also utilizes the values of her background to survive the shock of being discovered in Paris after so many years of exile. When she receives Constance's letter she is immediately struck by her sister's naive generosity: "At that moment there was assuredly for Sophia no creature in the world like Constance. Constance personified for her the qualities of the Baines family" (OWT, p. 452). When she returns to St. Luke's Square and actually meets Constance, Sophia, with her usual detachment, categorizes her sister as a provincial, yet at the
same time she sees in Constance a "quality of an honest and naive goodwill, of powerful simplicity. That quality presented itself to her as the greatest in the world. ...(OWT, p. 477). This quality, which Constance represents to such a degree, typifies to Sophia the difference between England and France. Hence, despite her permanent feeling of isolation, Sophia attaches herself to her sister: "She was alone—but Constance was there" (OWT, p. 479).

Sophia's attraction to Constance and the values she rejected as a young woman illustrates the extent of Sophia's development. At the outset of The Old Wives' Tale Sophia places a high value on her relationship with Constance, as symbolized by their shared bedroom: "It had been the girls' retreat and fortress since their earliest years" (OWT, p. 52). Sophia, as a result of her innate alienation, seems to place much greater faith in the integrity of their childish haven than does her sister: "if Constance had one night laid down on the half [of their bed] near the window instead of the half near the door, the secret nature of the universe would have seemed to be altered" (OWT, p. 52). She demonstrates her confidence in her sister's adherence to the rituals of the bedroom when she places Mr. Povey's tooth in her "absolutely sacred" (OWT, p. 53) work-box. The harmony
of their friendship is threatened by Constance's bur-
geoning relationship with Sam, for it contributes to
Sophia's sense of exclusion: "It was now in the highest
degree odd, this seclusion of Mr. Povey and Constance;
unlike anything in Sophia's experience!" (OWT, pp. 50-51).

Sophia's extraction of Mr. Povey's tooth, regardless
of its playful overtones, at bottom represents a need to
protect her association with Constance by making Samuel
an object of derision. But she miscalculates, for instead
of driving them apart her act brings them closer together.
When Constance clearly aligns herself with Sam by stealing
the molar and thus breaking the bedroom's code of behav-
iour, Sophia is profoundly shocked: "In a single moment
one of Sophia's chief ideals had been smashed utterly,
and that by the sweetest, gentlest creature she had ever
known" (OWT, p. 55). Hence a change that is fundamentally
related to the cyclical process—Sam and Constance stand
for the new generation—redoubles Sophia's innate sense
of alienation and leaves her bewildered. Years later
Sophia is faced with another "inexplicable development"
(OWT, p. 55) in her sister's behaviour: Constance's
indelible attachment to an outmoded concept of St. Luke's
Square. In this instance, however, Sophia shows that
she has learned by accepting her sister's unwillingness
to move: "They had had a lesson. And particularly Sophia
had a lesson. Having learnt, they left the Rutland and returned to St. Luke's Square" (OWT, p. 517).

Towards the end of her convalescence following Gerald's desertion, Sophia feels that she "knew all that was to be known about human nature. She had not merely youth, beauty, and virtue, but knowledge—knowledge enough to reconcile her to her own misery" (OWT, p. 362). Even so, Sophia's knowledge demands constant vigilance on her part to forestall any breach of her defences by the mutable world. In certain instances she is entirely successful in blotting out the influence of the cycle of change on her existence. She remains largely oblivious, for example, to the process of social disintegration that is going on around her. During the siege, her vision of the world is dictated solely by practical necessities: "Her ignorance of the military and political situation was complete; the situation did not interest her. What interested her was that she had three men to feed and that the price of eatables was rising" (OWT, p. 388). When she eventually returns to the Square, Sophia cannot understand Dr. Stirling's interest in these events. This attitude also helps to protect her to a certain extent from death itself, a marked change from her earlier vulnerability: "The death of the faithful charwoman, when she heard of it, produced but little effect on Sophia.
The charwoman . . . vanished out of Sophia's memory.

(OWT, p. 393).

There are, however, other cases in which Sophia must recognize the threat to her survival and exercise her knowledge in order to repulse it. Chirac, Gerald's friend and Sophia's mainstay during her illness, seems to represent such a danger. In spite of her obvious affection for him, Sophia immediately draws back when Chirac confesses his love for her: "She scowled . . . Yet she did not want to repulse him. The instinct which repulsed him was not within her control" (OWT, p. 404). Sophia, of course, has just been deeply hurt by Gerald, and she instinctively realizes that Chirac, who seems to her to be governed by his emotions, would expose her to further pain. She finds his passion to be a sign of weakness, because she, too, is passionate, and it is this trait, given its tendency to idealize experience, that has been responsible for most of the disappointment that she has suffered. Her scorn for him increases proportionately when he flaunts his weakness by undertaking a dangerous spying mission: "She could not admire weakness. She could but pity it with a pity in which scorn was mingled. . . . She saw the wounds of a soul that could not hide its wounds, and she resented the sight. She was hard." (OWT, p. 411).
Sophia's inherent alienation, however, makes it inevitable that change will ultimately surmount her defences. In Book Four Peel-Swynnerton's stay at Frensham's and Gerald Scales' return trigger reactions in Sophia that are identical to her experience of the cycle of change as a young woman. Peel-Swynnerton's reference to Cyril Povey forces upon her the process of evolution that has altered St. Luke's Square in her absence: "Supposing something utterly unanticipated and revolutionary had happened in the Five Towns!" (OWT, p. 448). When she does return to the Square she sees evidence of the economic decline that has occurred: "the alteration was not wholly in herself. The Square really had changed for the worse; it might not be smaller, but it had deteriorated" (OWT, p. 475). Gerald's return, on the other hand, obliges Sophia to confront, for perhaps the first time, the full implications of death: "What affected her was that he had once been young, and that he had grown old, and was now dead. That was all. Youth and vigour had come to that. Youth and vigour always came to that. Everything came to that" (OWT, p. 536). Sophia thus regards change not as a cyclical process but as one that ultimately results in social disintegration and personal death.

Both of these incidents intensify Sophia's inherent sense of isolation. After Peel-Swynnerton's inquiry Sophia...
is conscious that "She was ageing, and she was alone in the world. . . . She was alone in the world. . . . She was the most solitary person on earth." (OWT, p. 447). Gerald's corpse provokes an even greater sense of alienation and meaninglessness:

"Yet a little while," she thought, "and I shall be lying on a bed like that! And what shall I have lived for? What is the meaning of it? The riddle of life itself was killing her, and she seemed to drown in a sea of inexpressible sorrow." (OWT, p. 537)

As before, Sophia's angst is reflected in a bodily collapse. After her night of torment in her pension she discovers that "the lower part of her face was twisted out of shape" (OWT, p. 450). Gerald's return, of course, is the direct cause of Sophia's death.

In The Old Wives' Tale Bennett employs a variety of techniques that are designed to enhance the novel's vision of the world and the educational progress of the protagonists. He calls attention to the profound effect of character on development, for example, by comparing Constance and Sophia through the novel. The book's primary symbol, the public square, reflects human society in the midst of change, while a window overlooking the symbolic square stresses the sisters' various insights into their universe. Images that are used in the novel include animals, which
represent human vitality, and travel, which suggests the condition of permanent instability that the cyclical process creates. Bennett also modulates the dominant narrative stance in order to convey an impression of a universe in change.

The arrangement of the novel into four individual books helps to structure the comparison between Constance and Sophia. Both the sisters' lives can be divided into three general categories: adolescence, adulthood, and old age. Book One records the development of the girls from their middle teens to their marriages. Books Two and Three, "Constance" and "Sophia" respectively, obviously balance each other. Book Four, "What Life Is," a quote taken from Constance's death-bed ruminations, places a focus on what each sister has learned during the course of her existence. The final two chapters of Book Four, "End of Sophia" and "End of Constance," as well as the pointed comments on life in general delivered by each sister, invite comparison.

The time schemes of Books Two and Three of the novel reflect the opposing ways that the sisters learn. Book Two begins in 1867 and concludes in 1893, when Cyril departs for London to take up his scholarship. With the exception of the four years separating Cyril's leave-
taking from Sophia's return, Constance's life is more or less portrayed as a continuum. Book Three, on the other hand, describes in great detail five years of Sophia's existence, 1866 to 1871, and in its final pages tells of her eventual success as a landlady. This difference suggests that Constance responds to the mutability of the world in a conservative manner, while her sister's experience is much more intense and her learning, of necessity, more rapid. Indeed, their opposition in character is also apparent in their names. Constance, of course, refers to the protagonist's steady and phlegmatic nature. Sophia means wisdom which, should be taken as a reflection of her broad view of existence, rather than as an endorsement of her vision at Constance's expense. 25

The comparison of the two sisters emphasizes the extent to which their inherent characters must be taken into account in a consideration of their development. Constance and Sophia begin The Old Wives' Tale alike physically and intellectually, yet, within two years of their introduction, the narrator comments that they are now "sharply differentiated" (OWT, p. 86). By stressing the difference between the sisters' basic assumptions about the world through the comparison, Bennett invites the reader to regard their distinct attitudes as representative of the seminal ways in which man perceives his
existence. Moreover, if they are placed in the context of the time of the novel's composition, Constance's perspective becomes retrograde in its assumption of a meaningful universe while Sophia's view anticipates the spiritual angst of the twentieth-century.

The major symbol in The Old Wives' Tale is the public square which Bennett uses to represent human society.²⁶ St. Luke's Square, for instance, is introduced in the novel, in a chapter appropriately entitled "The Square," as the last in a series of autonomous social units that lie one within the other. The narrator begins this procedure by outlining the various physical features of Staffordshire and by describing its relation to the rest of England: "England can show nothing more beautiful and nothing uglier than the works of nature and the works of man to be seen within the limits of the county. It is England in little, lost in the midst of England . . ." (OWT, p. 27). He goes on to observe that the Potteries district, the area that Bennett named the Five Towns, stands in the same relation to the county as the county does to England: "its self-sufficiency and the true salt savour of its life can only be appreciated by picturing it hemmed in by county" (OWT, p. 28). St. Luke's Square, the final element in the series, is situated in Bursley, the oldest of the Five Towns, and as a consequence of its
antiquity and its special status as the retail centre of Bursley, it "ignored the staple manufacture as perfectly as the district ignored the county" (OWT, p. 29). The sequence thus focuses the reader's attention on the Square as an isolated world that functions according to its own unique set of principles.

The process of stripping away outer social layers, as though they are utterly superfluous to the Square's operation, allows it to emerge as an elemental social unit. Its universality is implicit in the narrator's summation to the sequence in which he enjoins the reader to "comprehend the importance and self-isolation of the Square in the scheme of the created universe. There you have it, embedded in the district, and the district embedded in the county, and the county lost and dreaming the heart of England!" (OWT, p. 30). There is, of course, a strain of irony implicit in these remarks that instructs the reader not to take too seriously the Square's pretensions to universality, and yet it is not so caustic as to cause them to be entirely dismissed. Joyce in Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man employs a similar list of names, beginning with the hero's name and concluding with the universe, that are inscribed on the fly-leaf of Stephen Daedalus' geography text. The purpose of this list is to convey the hero's sense of alienation from his
surroundings and to place it in a universal context. Bennett's series aggrandizes the Square by directing attention inwards rather than outwards as in Joyce's novel.

The social organization of St. Luke's Square is not different in kind from any other social entity, even if it is one that, like France, is a great deal larger. As the reductive sequence implies, all societies gain their cohesion through assumptions about the world, such as the Square's solipsistic notions of time and space, that are shared by their citizenry. In this universal sense all societies, whether large or small, are alike in that they rely for their coherence on the shared views of their citizens. Bennett makes use of the public square in the French section of the novel in order to suggest the fundamental similarity of all human societies. The execution of Rivain takes place in a "little square" (OWT, p. 320) in Auxerre, the premature celebration of the French victory over the Germans occurs in an "immense square" (OWT, p. 376), the Place de la Concorde, and squares and courtyards also figure in Sophia's experience in France. These squares imply that beneath the differences of nationality, all social entities have basic elements in common.
The conventional function of the public square is to enhance the significance of events that occur within its perimeters. The initial democratic procedure of the Greek city states, for example, consisted of the citizens gathering in a public square and voting on proposals as a group. Hence the square and the crowd in it were not an incidental unit but were representative of the entire polity. In a similar manner, the public square in both the French and English portions of The Old Wives' Tale is used to symbolize the wishes of a larger component of the total populace than is actually in the square itself. Rivain's execution is held in a square in order to serve notice to the community as a whole, as signified by the onlookers, that justice is being carried out. Mass rallies and demonstrations are held in St. Luke's Square in order to indicate to those in power that the causes which the participants espouse are supported by a substantial portion of the population. It is therefore significant that the principle of cyclical change in the novel is enacted in a public square in both England and France. Thus a public square that is galvanized by a public death and an assertion of human renewal becomes a symbol of human society caught in the midst of the cycle of change.
A window overlooking a symbolic square or courtyard is used to establish an antithesis between the Baines sisters, as individuals fated to a temporal existence, and the universal qualities embodied in the square itself. Elevation, incidentally, is used in a significant fashion in both *Anna of the Five Towns* and *Clayhanger*. In the opening scene of *The Old Wives' Tale*, Constance and Sophia spy on Maggie from an upper story window as she makes her way across St. Luke's Square. Maggie contains the fertility and energy of man as a bodily creature, the source of his ability to overcome death. Maggie leaves the Baines' employ, and although her first child dies, she eventually produces a large family. Constance, after Sam's death, is deeply puzzled by Maggie's contentment and continual vitality which persist in spite of her proletarian lifestyle:

She, to whom Maggie had always seemed an old woman, was a widow, but Maggie's husband survived as a lusty invalid. And she guessed that Maggie, vilely struggling in squalor and poverty, was somehow happy in her frowsy, careless way. *(OWT, p. 255)*

Maggie's lower class background and her procreative ability suggest that she is in some way closer to the origins of life than the middle-class Baines sisters. Indeed, the physical vitality of animals is occasionally utilized in *The Old Wives' Tale* to celebrate life. The
elephant that runs amok in St. Luke's Square, for instance, represents a vigorous age—mid-Victorian England—that has spent itself and must be replaced by a new force. On a considerably lesser scale, Spot would sooner gambol about the Square than pay heed to Constance's plans for Sophia's momentous arrival from Paris. The image of the aging dog, Fossette, teetering towards her food bowl at the end of the novel is one, as Hepburn suggests, that is redolent of vitality and renewal. The new born baby, Cyril, is described as "brutish" (OWT, p. 191), and Constance feeds her child with "the unconscious primitive savagery of a young mother" (OWT, p. 189). The sisters, however, are for the most part detached from the elemental process that dominates their social worlds, as the initial opposition between Maggie and themselves suggests. This detachment is implicit on the occasions in the novel when either sister is portrayed looking down on the world beneath them.

The window, besides establishing the sisters' detachment from the events in the square, also symbolizes their perception of the universe. In the initial instance Sophia and Constance are differentiated on the basis of their reactions to Maggie: Sophia is condemning while her sister is sympathetic. Constance is depicted in this position far less often than Sophia, for she lacks her
sister's wider view of existence. One of the ways that Constance learns to face death is by turning to the continuity of life that she finds in her family. On the day of her mother's demise Constance, who is pregnant with Cyril, stands "at the large, many-paned window in the parlour" (OWT, p. 184) and waits for Sam, who has been with Mrs. Baines in Axe. Through the window, which places symbolic emphasis on what she perceives, Constance sees an omen of the approaching death, "A great dark cloud" (OWT, p. 185) which seems to envelop the entire sky. Yet she is able to accept the death, because if is balanced by the child she is carrying.

The window, however, later illustrates Constance's incomprehension of the forces that govern St. Luke's Square. While Sam lies on his death-bed, Constance and Cyril watch the great demonstration against Daniel Povey's execution from "the window of the large bedroom" (OWT, p.244). Later, as she sits by her husband's side, she "could not but witness the orgy" (OWT, p. 247) that follows the protest. There is no indication that Constance has understood the significance of what is going on before her. Some years afterwards, Constance witnesses the celebration in the Square in favour of Federation: "Constance remained at the window till dinner, and after dinner she went to it again" (OWT, p. 564). Constance's lack of
understanding of the scene beneath her is expressed in her vote against Federation and the effort required to cast it.

The window symbol in Sophia's case is indicative of the various stages in her development. Her initial dissatisfaction with the world of St. Luke's Square is revealed as she gazes out of a "window at the Square. . . . To Sophia, though she was in a mood which usually stimulates the sense of the romantic, there was nothing of romance in this picturesque tents field. It was just the market" (OWT, p. 73). Sophia first sees Gerald Scales as she stands at "the bedroom window" (OWT, p. 89). When she returns to the Square at the end of The Old Wives' Tale the window stresses her alienation from her childhood home. Upon her return nearly the first act that Sophia performs is to go to the window: "She hurried to the window and looked out into the Square" (OWT, p. 467). The next morning she repeats this action: "Sophia arose and . . . went to the window" (OWT, p. 474). What she perceives, with the clinical eyes of a stranger, is a place, "scarcely bigger than a courtyard" (OWT, p. 474), that has been ravaged beyond recognition by a decline in trade and a shift in population.
The symbol of the window is employed frequently to underscore the various incidents that stimulate Sophia's sense of alienation. After her disappointed elopement, for example, Sophia draws the window-curtain and had a glimpse of the river. It was inevitable that she should think of suicide . . ." (OWT, p. 295). The profound shock that arises from her observation of Rivain's execution is also associated with a window: "she had the sensation of having been at the window only a few minutes" (OWT, p. 325). Death is an expression of Sophia's alienation, and since in these examples it is associated with the scene outside the window she learns to insulate herself against its meaninglessness. When Scales returns in Book Four, however, Sophia finds herself in a strange room with the body of her husband. As if to seek a solution to the "riddle of life" (OWT, p. 537), she glances out the window: "She turned to the veiled window and idly pulled the blind and looked out. . . . The people of Manchester hurried along the pavements, apparently unconscious that all their doings were vain" (OWT, p. 537). This evidence of human energy accentuates Sophia's sense of angst, for its inevitable consequence is death. This situation parallels Constance's vigil with Sam, and the window symbol is, in fact, an additional element in the comparison of the two sisters.
Since the evolution of St. Luke's Square is brought about by advancements in the technology of transportation, it is appropriate that travel should be employed metaphorically to symbolize the state of impermanence that the cycle of death and life creates. Gerald Scales, for instance, is associated with instability throughout the novel, a feature of his character that is reflected in his profession. He is an "ambassador" (OWT, p. 91) for Birkenshaws, and the chapter in which he makes his re-appearance in St. Luke's Square is entitled "The Traveller." Dick Povey is also noteworthy because he operates the more or less modern vehicles in the book. Indeed, he is associated with travel from his first dramatic appearance in the novel on the boneshaker. Like Straker, the chauffeur in Shaw's Man and Superman, Dick Povey is emblematic of the modern common man, but he is noticeably lacking in his counterpart's navigational skill.

Although the mechanical improvements in transportation that Dick is associated with are responsible for the decline of St. Luke's Square, they do not reflect a progression in man's ability to understand the cycle of change that governs his world. This point is conveyed through Dick's imperfect mastery of all his conveyances: the bone-shaker topples over, the car gets a flat tire, the balloon crashes. Developments in technology are
manifestations of the historical change that takes place in the Square, but they are not accompanied by a gradual perfecting of the human species. All the characters in The Old Wives' Tale, regardless of the age in which they live, must learn to deal with the eternal process that rules their world.

As if to underscore the notion that change, as symbolized by a journey of some sort, is all-pervasive in the novel, travel is used to frame each of its four books. Book One opens with the two sisters watching Maggie leave the Square for the "land of romance" (OWT, p. 51). It concludes with the double departure of Sophia and Mrs. Baines, while Book Two begins with Maggie's permanent leave-taking. Cyril's trip to London at the end of Book Two provides a significant link with Book Three, for he is following the route taken by Sophia years earlier. Book Three starts with Sophia's elopement and ends with Chirac's doomed ascent in the observation balloon. Matthew Peel-Swynnerton's visit to Paris occurs at the outset of Book Four, which closes with Constance's fateful journey to cast her ballot. Travel thus not only serves a thematic purpose, but it also provides the novel with structural unity.
Another example of the special significance attached to travel in *The Old Wives' Tale* is that even brief journeys are often linked with the ultimate form of change experienced by man—death. This relationship has an extensive background in literature; Shakespeare's depiction of death in *Hamlet* as "the undiscovered country, from whose bourn/ No traveller returns" (III, i, ll. 79-80) is just one example among many. In *The Old Wives' Tale*, John Baines dies as a direct result of being deserted by Sophia; at the same time Mrs. Baines, Constance and Sam have left the house to inspect the dead elephant. Mrs. Baines' death later necessitates a special trip to Axe by Sam. Sam himself dies because he does not wear enough clothing and so catches pneumonia: "a journey of five hundred yards to the Rectory had been one journey too many" (*OWT*, p. 250). Constance perishes in remarkably similar circumstances: her journey to the Town Hall aggravates her already acute rheumatism. And Sophia, of course, is overcome in Dick Povey's automobile after her fateful trip to Manchester.

Travel and death are also joined in the metaphorical language of the characters. Mrs. Baines, at the end of Book One, after Sophia's elopement and immediately prior to her own journey to Axe, thinks: "'My life is over'" (*OWT*, p. 149). On hearing the news that Maggie will be
leaving, Constance seeks out her husband to tell him "all about the end of the world" (OWT, p. 157). And at the conclusion of Book Two, Constance returns home after having seen Cyril depart for London and says to herself: "This is the end!" (OWT, p. 283). Although there is an obvious element of irony in these expressions of eschatology, it does not damage the relationship between death and travel. Constance reveals a similar attitude when she must face a considerable alteration in the circumstances of her existence: the enforced renovation of her home: "And a builder and a mason came and inspected doorways, and Constance felt that the end was upon her" (OWT, p. 271).

Bennett occasionally splits the dominant narrative position, which is characterized by inner and outer views of the protagonists, so that at one point the narrator is quite intimate with the characters and at another utterly detached from them. This practice enhances the novel's world view in which all things are subjected to mutability by the cycle of change, and at the same time it broadens the reader's understanding of the characters. The absence of the mock form in Book Three stresses the physical and psychological distance between Sophia and St. Luke's Square, but it is also a sign of a narrator who has altered his previous stance in order to conform to the
demands of a new world. He identifies closely with Sophia throughout Book Three: events are described from a point of view that is very near to Sophia's consciousness. This practice stresses the alien nature of the environment that Sophia finds herself in.

A striking example of the proximity between the narrator and Sophia occurs during the description of Rivain's execution. As the time appointed for the execution draws nearer, Sophia peers out the window and observes "Gerald coming out of a house opposite, followed after a few seconds by the girl with whom he had previously been talking" (OWT, p. 326). The obvious assumption to be drawn from the passage is that Gerald has just had intercourse with a prostitute, but there is absolutely no indication that either the narrator, who in the Five Towns does not hesitate to exercise his omniscience, and Sophia, who is still ignorant of her husband's ways, have drawn the proper conclusion from the unmistakable evidence. Later on, after four years of living with Gerald, Sophia instantly assumes his infidelity when she sees him with a woman "who was evidently of the discreet class that frequented the big shops of an afternoon with something of their own to sell" (OWT, p. 340). The narrator's identification with Sophia thus assists, the discreet presentation of her development.
The narrator's intimacy with his characters, untempered by irony, twice causes him to emerge into the first person. The first time occurs in an aside he makes about Aunt Harriet (OWT, p. 137), but the second occasion is more sustained and of greater import. It takes place when the narrator offers what is virtually a homily for Samuel Povey:

I have often laughed at Samuel Povey. But I liked and respected him. He was a very honest man. I have always been glad to think that, at the end of his life, destiny took hold of him and displayed, to the observant, the vein of greatness which runs through every soul without exception. (OWT, p. 250)

In this example the narrator offers his opinion of Sam, not as the judgment of an omniscient narrator, but almost as someone who has known him for a long period of time. The obvious affection for Sam that emerges in this portrait enlarges the reader's understanding of his character in a manner that would not be possible if it were tinged with irony. This passage is also consistent with the intimate tone adopted during Book Three. 29

There are certain occasions when the narrator refuses altogether to recognize previously established characters. This technique is first employed in Book Two to depict Cyril: "In the year 1893 there was a new and strange man
living at No. 4, St. Luke's Square. Many people remarked on the phenomenon. Very few of his like had ever been seen in Bursley before" (OWT, p. 273). This passage continues on at length, but with the exception of his address there is no clue to his identity until the following line: "He had come into the house with startling abruptness soon after Cyril left school and was indentured to the head designer at 'Peel's' . . . " (OWT, p. 274). A further element of disjunction is supplied by the narrator's description of the stranger's avant-garde clothing which is chiefly distinguished by "the complex way in which he secured himself by means of glittering chains" (OWT, p. 273). This device captures the suddenness of Cyril's transformation from boy to adult, and his sartorial preoccupation offers additional insight into his character.

Sophia is also introduced to the reader in Book Four as though she were a new character. When Peel-Swynnerton is staying at Frensham's he observes "a tall straight woman of uncertain age" (OWT, p. 431) enter the dining room, and he notes that "she was handsome and pale, and that her hair was black" (OWT, p. 431). In a similar manner, he encounters "a short, fat, middle-aged lady dressed in black" (OWT, 440) in Bursley just after he has returned from France. The narrator relates how the unnamed woman is impressed by Matthew's family, whom she
considers her social superiors. It is not until Cyril is mentioned at the end of a lengthy paragraph that the reader is certain that this woman is indeed Constance. One critic remarks that this unexpected perspective of Constance "disturbs us by unsettling our fixed view of her..." [30] These generic descriptions of the two sisters also stress the changes that they have undergone since they were first introduced. The same technique is used later to portray Constance and Sophia's brief stay at the Rutland Hotel.

A dichotomy between the narrator's ironic detachment and a somewhat less removed view can be detected in his treatment of time in the St. Luke's Square sections of The Old Wives' Tale. In Book One part of the narrator's ironic attitude is based upon the fact that he is writing about a period of nearly fifty years in the past. There are a variety of remarks, such as "they never even suspected that they were not quite modern and quite awake" ([OWT, p. 36]), "In those barbaric days" ([OWT, p. 73] and "mediaeval mothers" ([OWT, p. 74]), that imply a certain distance between the narrator and the past. His distance from the characters is partially founded on his greater knowledge of the world, and his place in history is just one more advantage that he has over them. When John Baines expires, for example, the characters are not fully
cognizant of the implications of his death: "They knew not that they were gazing at a vanished era. John Baines had belonged to the past . . ." (OWT, p. 97).

As fictional time approaches the juncture in history from which the novel is related, roughly the first decade of the twentieth-century, such references to the past disappear altogether. Time is mentioned once in Book Four, but the tone of the reference is more of amazement than of mockery: "The effect of time was such that even Mr. Critchlow appeared to have forgotten even that she had been indirectly responsible for her father's death. She had nearly forgotten it herself . . ." (OWT, p. 490). The changes that occur in time are enormous, and since the narrator used it as part of his arsenal of irony in the first book of the novel, the lack of ironic reference to time in the latter portions of the work is conspicuous. Its absence forces the reader to experience Constance and Sophia's deaths as the loss of two well-defined personalities rather than as a historical footnote.

The Old Wives' Tale represents a considerable departure, both in its portrait of the universe and its characterization, from Anna of the Five Towns. In the earlier novel, the world of the Five Towns is one that is ruled entirely by man, whereas in the later book the universe is
governed by a force that is beyond human control. Anna Tellwright is shaped by the exploitative forces that dominate her world, and she undergoes three dramatic incidents that teach her to question her father's values. Her marriage to Henry Mynors, however, indicates that she fails to achieve an understanding of her social order, and the novel's ironic undertone suggests that the scope of her development is established from the outset. In *The Old Wives’ Tale* Constance and Sophia possess characters that are distinct from the novel's universe, and although both sisters learn to survive within the context of their separate personalities, neither sister attains both a personal and social understanding of her universe; indeed, such comprehension appears to be unlikely in *The Old Wives’ Tale*. Clayhanger combines features from both of the earlier works, and it might be termed the most complete expression of Bennett's conception of the world as it is manifested in the Five Towns.
Notes


3 Ibid., p. 452.

4 Ibid., p. 446.


9 Spencer, p. 438.


11 Spencer, p. 267.

12 The building of the Loop railway is portrayed as destructive of the physical environment in a manner that is briefly reminiscent of the ironic world of Anna of the Five Towns. Sophia and Gerald's surreptitious meeting takes place within sight of its construction, and "From the bridge they had a sudden view of a raw gash in the earth; and hundreds of men were crawling about it like flies in a great wound" (OWL, p. 129).
13 The analysis of the manner in which the novel's universe operates is based in part on the exegesis offered in James Hepburn's *The Art of Arnold Bennett* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1963). Hepburn regards the public deaths that occur in each book of *The Old Wives' Tale* as evidence of the breakdown in Victorian society and the crisis in French society. The position taken in the present study is that these deaths, together with the outbursts of vitality that succeed them, represent historical stages in both societies as well as the eternal cycle of death and life. In order to clarify my indebtedness to Hepburn, I shall cite his book as specific points arise in the text.


16 This association can also be found in the French section of the novel, although it is not as thoroughgoing a relationship as it is in St. Luke's Square. In *The Art of Arnold Bennett*, pp. 60-61, James Hepburn observes that Rivain's execution is accompanied by Gerald's sexual death: "Before the execution 'he had been proudly conversing with impudent women. Now, in swift collapse, he was as flaccid as a sick hound' [OWT, p. 328]. His metaphorical death points to the death of his relationship with Sophia." This metaphorical death supports the view that the lives of individuals are bound by the same process that governs their social environments.

17 It will be recalled that in *Anna of the Five Towns* the personal and social sphere are synonymous throughout the entire book. The growing separation between the Baines family and the social world of the Square reflects the social fragmentation that was endemic to the period before World War One in which the novel was written. The use of France, a society that is far beyond the ken of the Square's inhabitants, as a setting is a further indication of this process.

18 Hepburn, p. 59.


20 Perhaps the character who might be considered most representative of the universe's indifference to man is Mr. Critchlow. Like the cyclical process, he appears to
be completely lacking in normal human sentiment, as his eviction of Constance indicates. His longevity, furthermore, illustrates the neutrality of the cycle of change to man's moral worth, for if any character in the novel deserves an untimely end it is he.


23 The image of the mine shaft is also connected with death and suffering in Anna and a short story, "Phantom," in Tales of the Five Towns. In the latter case, the shaft is the site of a suicide attempt, and in the former it constitutes an important part of the novel's imagery.


26 In "Spatial Metaphors in Arnold Bennett," Diss. University of Illinois 1974, p. 39, Richard Handelsman notes the focus Bennett places on St. Luke's Square as an isolated community. He also provides an interesting discussion of Bennett's use of other spatial metaphors, such as bedrooms and basements.

27 Hepburn, p. 62.

28 Ibid., p. 64.

29 This passage has excited much comment from Bennett's critics. In Arnold Bennett, p. 68, Walter Allen regards it as further evidence of "facetious irony," while John Lucas--Arnold-Bennett (London: Methuen, 1974), p. 107--sees it as a sign that "Bennett, as commentator, interferes with his own creation...." For the reasons cited in the text, I disagree with these remarks.

30 Lucas, p. 113.
CHAPTER FOUR

Clayhanger

The world described in Clayhanger consists of the Five Towns, which though provincial nevertheless embodies the social principles that were current in Great Britain during the late nineteenth-century, and Edwin Clayhanger's personal circle of family and friends. The British society described by Bennett is organized in a hierarchical fashion and although the influence of those in power is not put to malevolent purposes, it is rarely used to relieve the obvious misery of those at the lower end of the social scale. Edwin and his circle are all members of the privileged sector of their society, but their social position does not exempt them from suffering. Although they do not experience economic deprivation like the poor, they do suffer from a host of ills that are almost as onerous. Misery, therefore, is a condition that is common to mankind, yet for the most part little is done to alleviate it, since suffering, as the case of Darius Clayhanger illustrates, often makes one indifferent to others' pain. The torment he endured as a child is shown to be directly responsible for the domineering manner in which he rules his family and for his reactionary social views. Darius, however, also experiences kindness at the hands of Mr. Shushions which allows
his amelioration from pauper to social stalwart to occur. The extent of his social ascension demonstrates the potential power of compassion to create change and to relieve human misery, but, except for the gratitude that he feels towards his benefactor, he does not learn to treat his fellows in a charitable manner. This single instance of compassion is not enough to counteract the callousness that is a legacy of his suffering.

At the novel's outset, Edwin Clayhanger is at once submissive to his father's tyranny and determined to establish his independence through a powerful desire to learn and to improve himself. He is quite unaware of the forces that dominate his personal and social milieu at this time. Like Darius, Edwin experiences both misery and compassion during the course of the book, but unlike his father he is able to achieve an understanding of his universe. It is compassion, not misery, that teaches Edwin most. He suffers throughout the novel as a consequence of his relationships with his father and Hilda Lessways, and while these incidents stimulate his sympathy for the victims and outcasts of society, they produce limited personal development: he learns to accept pain as an inherent part of his existence, but he is unable to discern a similar condition in the lives of those about him. Edwin experiences relatively few acts of kindness in the
book, but they play a much greater role in his education than his suffering does. The most important of these occurs when he witnesses Hilda's gesture of compassion to the decrepit Mr. Shushions, and for the first time he recognizes that another's suffering exceeds his own and that he should act to relieve that person's pain. This realization is manifest in his personal circle in his care for his father after he becomes ill and in his forgiveness of Hilda for deserting him. On a social scale, Edwin rejects the values of the Felons and votes for the Labour candidate, whose party represents the downtrodden. His final reconciliation with Hilda is couched in apocalyptic language, as though to indicate that such a relationship, founded as it is on compassion and an understanding of human misery, augurs a new social order.

Since Edwin's learning takes place over a period of almost twenty years, Bennett employs a number of devices that are intended to stress his protagonist's development and to consolidate the relationship between the novel's personal and social worlds. Edwin's educative process is supported by certain parallel incidents that recur throughout the novel and so lend continuity to his development. These episodes include the renewal of his declaration to learn at the beginning of each book of the novel, the similarities in Edwin and his father's development and
the gesture of compassion that is repeated on three occasions in the novel. There are also a variety of images--animals, police, criminals, elevation--that are employed in reference to both the social and personal spheres and thus bind them more closely together. Bennett, moreover, uses several narrative techniques that draw attention to Edwin's development and make the book's inner and outer communities appear to be contiguous.

The universe portrayed in Clayhanger contains elements of the world views that are found in the novels dealt with previously. The misery that is an inherent condition of human life in Clayhanger, for instance, is similar in its universality to the cycle of change that animates the world of The Old Wives' Tale. The suffering that is embedded in the lives of all the novel's characters, middle-class and proletariat alike, seems to anticipate a view of man that is central to the modern novel. Clayhanger's world, on the other hand, is at least partially in man's grasp, as the universe of Anna is to characters like Ephraim Tellwright and Henry Mynors, and hence it can be modified to a certain extent by mankind. In Clayhanger human control is exercised through compassion which seems to diminish the self-perpetuating tendencies of suffering. This attitude is characteristic of an age in which organizations as disparate as the
Salvation Army and the Fabian Society sought, in their separate ways, to alleviate human pain.

The Five Towns in Clayhanger, though somewhat removed from the mainstream, appear to be an integral part of British society of the late nineteenth-century. A number of contemporary events of national import, such as the Sunday school Centenary; the potters' strike, Queen Victoria's Silver Jubilee and the by-election, are indispensable episodes in the novel's plot. Bennett, furthermore, creates a vivid impression of the Great Britain of the time through a multitude of allusions to contemporary customs, books, journals and people. Popular games such as marbles and croquet, which was then "in its first avatar" (C, p. 168), as well as clothing fashions (C, p. 180) are noted throughout the novel. Books, like Victor Hugo's Notre Dame de Paris (C, p. 195), and publications, like Cassell's National Library reprint series (C, p. 302), are also mentioned. Darius Clayhanger takes The Christian News (C, p. 293), while his son reads Harper's (C, p. 334) and the Manchester Guardian (C, p. 418). Luminaries like Prime Minister Gladstone (C, p. 199), Charles Parnell (C, p. 418) and Cardinal Manning (C, p. 497) are referred to alongside the not so illustrious, like Sir Henry Thompson and his prayer machine (C, p. 35). This presentation of the Potteries as a part of
a broader world suggests that the principles upon which it is founded are applicable to the nation as a whole.

The Five Towns society portrayed in *Clayhanger* is oligarchical, and although the power of those at the top is not used for purposes of outright exploitation, as Ephraim Tellwright uses it, for the most part it is not employed to relieve the suffering of the masses. While the poor are in great evidence throughout the book, they seem to possess little ability, either as individuals or as groups, to alter the dreary circumstances of their lives. Certainly, they do not embody the enormous vitality of the lower classes described in *The Old Wives' Tale*. The upper classes, who do hold sufficient power to create at least economic change, appear to be self-satisfied and indifferent to the lot of their inferiors. The dynamics of this world are such that the hierarchical arrangement is continually reinforced; there is little apparent movement towards an egalitarian society. The static nature of the society is conveyed on a number of occasions in the novel that encompass a wide range of matters through the juxtaposition of the poor's misery with the indifference of their superior's.

Perhaps the most extended presentation of the polarity that exists between the poor and the rich in the
book occurs during the celebration of the Sunday school Centenary. The Sunday school celebrants are among the most impoverished members of their community, and the massive gathering of Sunday school pupils in St. Luke’s Square is composed of "indigence bedecked. . . . Nearly all had the air of poverty decently putting the best face on itself." (C, p. 224). Many of the rosette-wearing officials who are supervising the crowd have "a poor, driven look" (C, p. 225), and even the spectators who watch the event from ground level are "in the main a shabby lot; persons without any social standing" (C, p. 224). The town’s élite, however, inspects the celebration in a manner that metaphorically expresses their relative detachment from the poor: "Nearly the whole respectability of the town was either fussily marshalling processions or gazing down at them in comfort from the multitudinous open windows of the Square" (C, p. 224).

The elevated position of the upper class, as in The Old Wives’ Tale, dramatizes the rigid and hierarchical class structure of the Five Towns.

A similar distance between those in power and the masses is apparent in the by-election that is held in the district near the conclusion of Book Three. The episode begins with Edwin’s inaugural visit to a meeting of the Férons, who represent "the authority and wealth of the
... Here was the oligarchy which, behind the appearances of democratic government, effectively managed, directed, and controlled the town" (C, p. 395). Their attitude towards the population as a whole is thoroughly paternalistic; indeed, they treat it as "a restless child, to be humoured and to be flattered, but also to be ruled firmly, to be kept in its place, to be ignored when advisable, and to be made to pay" (C, p. 395). These values are also held by the Conservative candidate who appears at the Felons' gathering fresh from an evening rally. The point of view common to both the politician and the Felons is that a victory for Labour would be a social disaster of enormous magnitude, not just for themselves but also for the "unscrupulous rabble" (C, p. 399). However, their fears prove to be unfounded, for with the aid of not a little alcohol the Conservatives win the election by convincing "the governed proletariat" (C, p. 398) to vote in their favour. The masses are described as canaille, who willingly exchange their franchise for "an evening's orgy of oratory and horseplay and beer" (C, p. 394).

The striking potters, as representatives of the working class, are depicted in a cold mist as "a stragglng band of men who also, to compensate for the absence of overcoats, stuck hands deep into pockets,
and strode quickly" (C, p. 257). Edwin later thinks of them as "starving artisans on strike and stricken" (C, p. 282). Like the Sunday school celebrants, they sing "Rock of Ages," as if to console themselves with the promise of a better life to come after death (C, p. 299, p. 284). Their natural adversaries are the pottery owners, but in Clayhanger there is no confrontation between the two sides of the strike. Instead, the union leaders take advantage of their own men, which suggests that even a modicum of power tempts one to consolidate one's own position rather than to assist those less fortunate. At the strike meeting, the union officials sit "on Windsor chairs" (C, p. 282), while the workers are crammed together on bare, uncomfortable benches. The strikers, moreover, are without adequate protection against the cold, but the "officials had overcoats" (C, p. 283).

The seemingly unbridgeable gulf between the poor and those with power over their fellows exists not only in the Five Towns but also throughout the nation as a whole. The same antithesis between the upper classes, the "triumphant" (C, p. 438), and the oppressed is perhaps even more evident in Brighton than it is in the Potteries. The opulence that is so conspicuous on Brighton's avenues can only be sustained through a large measure of human
suffering: "All was not triumph! Where triumph was, there also must be the conquered" (C, p. 439). This vision of the seaside resort impresses itself upon Edwin so deeply that "Brighton became for him the most sorrowful city on earth" (C, p. 440). It should be noted that Bennett wrote much of Clayhanger during a stay in Brighton, and his opinion of the place concurs with that of his protagonist. In his Journal, he remarks that the city is a "symbol of a system that is built on the grinding of the faces of the poor." But although Bennett does not hesitate to point out examples of social injustice in this novel and others, he cannot be considered a committed socialist.

Finally, Darius Clayhanger's history makes it clear that, while the conditions in which he lived and worked as a child were even more scandalous than those of the late nineteenth-century, the lot of the poor has not greatly improved in the intervening years. On his way to work for the first time, Darius passes "a crowd of shivering, moaning, and weeping wretches, men, women, and children—the basis of the population of Turnhill. Although they were all endeavouring to make a noise, they made scarcely any noise, from mere lack of strength" (C, p. 38). The poverty of this group has reduced them to such a primitive level of existence that food and
shelter are their sole concerns. Bread and coal are distributed among them by administrators, who are quite indifferent to their suffering: "This coal and these loaves were being served out by meticulous and haughty officials, all invisibly braided with red-tape . . ." (C, p. 38). Later in the Bastille episode, those in control are similarly oblivious to the misery of their charges. After the young escapee is beaten into unconsciousness, a clergyman, while blessing the inmates' supper, sanctimoniously exhorts them "to be thankful" (C, p. 45) for their meal.

The variety of these examples of social injustice illustrates the extent to which the unfair hierarchical system has pervaded the novel's universe. Perhaps the only occasion in Clayhanger when power on a social scale is employed in an effort to alleviate suffering is the news that Gladstone has introduced in the British Parliament legislation which is designed to free the Irish from centuries of English exploitation: "A Parliament in Dublin! The Irish taxing themselves according to their own caprices! . . . A separate nation!" (C, p. 308). It is noteworthy that when he receives word of Gladstone's Home Rule bill, Edwin is reading Swift's Tale of a Tub. Since Swift is well-known as a champion of Irish rights, the mention of his name in this episode, even if it is
only a tangential reference, lends greater weight to the reparative intentions of Gladstone's legislation. Home Rule, of course, was not accomplished for many years to come, but its inclusion in Clayhanger indicates that those in authority are not uniformly indifferent to the suffering of their inferiors. In a similar manner, Mrs. Sutton's genuine Christianity in Anna of the Five Towns appears to temper the ethos of exploitation that dominates the Five Towns.

The principal focus of Clayhanger is on Edwin and his intimate circle—his family, the Orgreaves, Hilda Lessways—all of whom are members of the social elite. Yet it is soon evident that while they do not experience the economic want of the lower classes, their lives are also filled with misery. The torment that Edwin endures at the hands of his father and Hilda is one of the primary motifs in the novel, but he is by no means alone in this experience. The Orgreaves appear to be immune to such misery, even though Edwin is somewhat startled by the degree of their consumption: "the idea of the price of living as the Orgreaves lived seriously startled the prudence in him" (C, p. 198). Nevertheless, there is an underlying sense that their over-indulgence is a flaw for which they must eventually suffer. This impression is borne out by events in These Twain: both parents
die leaving their dependent daughter, Janet, penniless; Tom becomes increasingly miserly; Jimmie makes a bad marriage; only Alicia seems to have fulfilled her earlier promise by marrying a man wealthy enough to maintain her lifestyle.

Women in the novel, like their counterparts in Anna and The Old Wives' Tale, suffer as a consequence of their relations with men. Hilda innocently marries a bigamist, and as she bitterly observes at the end of Hilda Lessways, she is left to face "Grief! Shame! Disillusion! Hardship! Peril! Catastrophe! Exile!" Edwin's sister, Clara, becomes a shrew after her marriage, whereas the only man that the spinster, Maggie, is attracted to dies before their relationship can even be acknowledged. The Vicar's death in Book Four illuminates for Edwin "the profound sacrificial tragedy of her entire existence" (C, p. 499). Maggie, of course, more or less raises her younger siblings and is first Darius' and then Edwin's housekeeper. Janet Orgreave, as Auntie Hamps points out, pines for Edwin throughout the book, and by the end her unrequited love seems to have had a harmful affect upon her demeanour: "of late years, though her deep universal kindness had not changed, she seemed to have hardened somewhat on the surface" (C, p. 431).
Certain characters in *Clayhanger*, however, also suffer from forces that are completely outside the scope of human authority. Both Mr. Shushions and Darius, Clayhanger are made to experience the full effects of human mortality. Mr. Shushions, for example, is rendered "a horrible and offensive old man. He was Time's obscene victim" (C. p. 235). Darius, on the other hand, is stricken by an unnamed malady at the height of his powers. Dr. Heve, at the onset of the illness in April 1886, gives Darius two more years of life (C. p. 324), and he dies almost exactly two years later, in April 1888 (C. p. 381, p. 392). The implacable nature of his disease adds a further dimension to the ills suffered by man during the course of the novel. It suggests that while the main concern of the book is with wrongs that lie within the human sphere, misery is a fundamental and unavoidable condition of human existence.

Human suffering, therefore, is the common state that links the novel's personal and social worlds, and it is shown to be responsible for the society's resistance to change. The history of Darius Clayhanger is important in this regard, for the misery that he undergoes as a child is directly related to his personal behaviour and his social attitudes as an adult, and although he is dealt with kindly on one occasion, this isolated experience
is not sufficient to diminish effectively the insensitiveness that is instilled into him by his suffering. It is because of the significant role that he plays in Clayhanger that Bennett devotes so much attention to him in the first three books of the novel. Other than Edwin, he is the only character whose view of the world is described in any detail. Furthermore, Darius' introduction to the working world at the age of seven is described at some length.

The pottery industry of Darius' childhood is an environment of almost absolute human degradation: he is subject to brutal work, long hours, terrible conditions, as well as much arbitrary physical abuse. The harshness of his world does not strike Darius until, along with the rest of his family, he is forced into a workhouse, the Bastille: "He now understood the reason for shame; it was because he could have no distinctive clothes of his own, because he had somehow lost his identity" (C, p. 44). The legal eradication of selfhood, however, seems merely the final stage in the process of degradation to which he has been subjected by his environment. Darius' experience of humiliation intensifies when he and the other inmates are obliged to witness the punishment of the captured escapee. The "ritualistic and cold-blooded torture" (C, p. 45) of the boy burns forever the sense
of his own unworthiness into Darius' mind:

Darius knew that he was ruined; he knew that he was a workhouse boy for evermore, and that the bright freedom of sixteen hours a day in a cellar was lost to him for evermore. He was now a prisoner, branded, hopeless. He would never be able to withstand the influences that had closed around him and upon him. He supposed that he should become desperate, become a tiger, and then... (C, p. 45)

Although Darius is soon rescued from this predicament, the incident has a profound influence upon his later life. It should be noted that his belief that he was free before his imprisonment is spurious; his incarceration simply makes him conscious of his abject condition.

Darius' actions and the views that he expresses during the course of Clayhanger can all be interpreted in the light of his early history. Darius is constantly aware of his past. In his mind he repeatedly invokes his childhood as a means of measuring his accomplishments: "The little boy from the Bastille was achieving the supreme peak of greatness—he was about to live away from business" (C, p. 163). The phrase, "the little boy from the Bastille," is used as a kind of refrain that continually reminds the reader of Darius' origins. To Darius, his career has been blessed with an almost mystical quality: "Darius saw him always, the infant who
had begun life at a rope's-end. Every hour of Darius's present existence was really an astounding marvel to Darius" (C, p. 140-41). In the passage that follows this observation, Darius reflects upon how remarkable even the minutiae of his life are: it is amazing that he can read, that he has decent clothing; and that his family is also decently attired. As if to underscore the awe with which he beholds his accomplishments, the phrase "It was wonderful" (C, p. 141) is repeated seven times in this section in an almost incantatory fashion.

His printing business is to Darius a visible sign of the miracle that has taken place in his life: "He admitted that there were businesses much bigger, but they lacked the miraculous quality that his own had. They were not Sacred. His was, genuinely" (C, p. 142). His family runs a decidedly poor second to the printing shop, and thus it is fitting that at the first family gathering in Clayhanger Darius is initially absent because he has been called away on business. His obsession with the business is most evident when it is endangered in any way. He immediately foresees "the end of everything" (C, p. 111) when the new printing press threatens to break the floor of his shop. The tears that Darius sheds on this occasion are the only outward sign of his vulnerability in the first two books of Clayhanger.
The business is at the forefront of his mind when he discovers that his son wants to become an architect. Darius construes Edwin's lack of enthusiasm for printing as an implicit rejection of everything he has achieved in his life. Thus he reacts to Edwin's letter with great hostility:

He meant to save his business, to put his business before anything. And he would have his own way. He would impose his will. . . . All the heavy, obstinate, relentless force of his individuality was now channelled in one tremendous instinct. (C, p. 143)

Edwin's proposal that his father grant him a partnership in the firm in order to give him the means to support Hilda meets with a similarly negative response. Darius interprets this plan as a threat to "his intense and egotistic sense of possessing in absolute ownership the business which the little boy out of the Bastille had practically created" (C, p. 297). Darius tries to protect his business by forcing Edwin to become a printer, and yet for the same reason he refuses to allow his son to participate equally in his enterprise.

Darius' conception of his son is likewise dictated by his early experiences in the Potteries and the Bastille. Edwin, like the printing operation, is for Darius a symbol of his success. It pleases him to have left his
son in school until he is sixteen, because it shows the extent of his own achievement: "He had had the sort of pride in his son that a man may have in an idle, elegant, and absurdly expensive woman" (C, p. 141). Darius takes pleasure in Edwin's appearance of "original grace" (C, p. 94), because it is an indirect reflection on himself: "how he, so common, had begotten a creature so subtly aristocratic" (C, p. 94). He feels, perhaps with some justification, that in comparison with himself Edwin has been raised in an atmosphere of luxury and benevolence: "Edwin had never had a care, never suffered a privation, never been forced to think for himself. . . . Edwin had lived in cotton-wool, and knew less of the world than his father had known at half his years . . ." (C, p. 94). Darius alters this impression of his son only when Edwin's quick thinking in the matter of the new press saves the business and he unknowingly perpetuates his father's miraculous career. It is only afterwards that he sees "the lad had grit; there was material in the lad of which much could be made" (C, p. 111).

Darius' victimization as a child is also manifested in his temper and in his physical appearance. At the conclusion of Book Two, for instance, Darius is unmoved by Edwin's affection for Hilda, although he, too, has been in love, because "He was a man whom life had bru-
talized about half a century earlier" (C, p. 295). This vestigial brutality is perhaps most evident in his violent temper. Indeed, Darius takes considerable pleasure in giving vent to his wrath: "it was his one outlet; he gave himself up almost luxuriously to a passion . . ." (C, p. 160). His temper, moreover, is judged to be "savage" (C, p. 106, p. 297) on at least two other occasions in Clayhanger. Darius' coarseness is also apparent in his physical being, descriptions of which border on the repulsive. His clothing is usually disreputable, his hair unkempt and his moustache seems especially ferocious because of a nervous habit of biting down on his lower lip (C, p. 32). His peculiar method of walking, with "his arms motionless by his sides and sticking slightly out" (C, p. 67), is a further sign of his physical awkwardness. The impression of slovenliness that emanates from Darius only becomes more pronounced as he gets older: "White hair sprouted about his ears. . . . He had an air of somewhat gross and prosperous untidiness. . . Except for the teeth, the bodily frame appeared to have fallen into disrepair . . ." (C, p. 156).

Darius' illness in Book Three is depicted as a continuation of this decline into brutishness. In the end he becomes a kind of quintessential victim, who is reduced to a purely corporeal existence. This process,
if not inspired by his earlier suffering, certainly allows its malignant influence upon his character to emerge. Darius harangues Maggie for preventing him from growing mushrooms in language "to which he was hourly accustomed when he began life as a man of seven. For more than fifty years he had carried within himself these vestiges of a barbarism which his children had never even conceived . . ." (C, p. 378). Darius finds it increasingly difficult to control his emotions—he begins to cry while listening to Maggie and Clara sing a duet (C, p. 381)—or to perform simple tasks, like using his dining utensils properly (C, p. 361). As the process of deterioration advances further, Darius is gradually stripped of his humanity. He is variously described as "a loathsome object" (C, p. 379), a "ponderous, irrational body" (C, p. 384), the "cumbersome body" (C, p. 385) and "the object" (C, 387). And in the final stages of his malady he is characterized primarily as a sufferer: he accepts the blandishments of the family "like a victim" (C, p. 389); "The victim" (C, p. 407) finds a moment of ease during his battle; and Edwin regards the process of death as "the martyrdom of the victim" (C, p. 409).

Darius' background, aside from the enormous influence it has on his personal life, also appears to shape
his opinions of society. Although as an adult he avoids the Sunday school and its teachings, he agrees nevertheless to send Edwin to a Saturday afternoon Bible class. Edwin bears such a grudge over this incident, for it takes over his only free afternoon, that when the young minister who proposed the scheme, a Mr. Peartree, appears some twenty-five years later in *These Twain*, he greets him with barely concealed hostility. Edwin is so conscious of the importance his father attaches to the Sunday school that on the day of the Centenary he realizes without being told that "his excited father would expect him to witness the celebrations and to wear his best clothes..." *(C, p. 213).* Darius' esteem for the Sunday school, of course, can be traced back to his childhood when Sunday was a special day, because it offered relief from the rest of the week: "Sunday morning was the morning which he lived for during six days. . . . At Sunday school he was petted and caressed" *(C, p. 37).* His respect for the Sunday school is further enhanced by Mr. Shushions, who as Sunday school superintendent effects the release of Darius and his family from the Bastille.

Darius' views of labour and politics are directly related to his early history. He is very much against the potters' strike, and Edwin, who has listened to "his father's invective" *(C, p. 264)* against the strikers,
attributes his antagonism to the fact that the union broke the last arbitration award. It must be kept in mind, however, that an earlier strike was responsible for the imprisonment of the young Darius in the Bastille: "His father, having been too prominent and too independent in a strike, had been black-listed by every manufacturer in the district..." (C, p. 43). Since the experience in the Bastille has had such a momentous impact upon Darius, it must be assumed that he bears some animus towards the labour movement for having put him there. Darius, having achieved success himself, is politically opposed to changes in the social structure that might threaten his position. He is worried by the present "tendencies of England" (C, p. 159), and indeed he has had misgivings since the repeal of the Corn Laws in the 1840's: "From that moment he had finished with progress" (C, p. 159). Edwin remarks to the Orgreaves that although his father calls himself a Liberal, he is actually "'a regular old Tory'" (C, p. 199).

Darius' experiences as a child, however, are not universally painful. Mr. Shushions' compassion acts as a powerful antidote to the misery that the young boy undergoes in the Bastille. After having the family released from the workhouse, he restores their home to them and he finds Darius and his father employment. Thus,
he is ultimately responsible for Darius' amelioration and for the advantages that Edwin has over his father. Small wonder, then, that when Mr. Shushions sees Edwin he sheds "the tear of the creator looking upon his creation and marvelling at it" (C, p. 46). Yet while Darius sends his son to the Sunday school and is grateful to Mr. Shushions, he has not learned to treat others with compassion himself: this one act of kindness is not sufficient to surmount the influence of the suffering that he has endured. The degree of his success, however, does imply the potential remedial power of compassion.

The significance of Mr. Shushions in Darius' life can be measured by the impact that the old man's death has upon the printer. Unbeknownst to Darius, Mr. Shushions is taken to the Bastille, where a short time later he dies. Darius arranges his funeral, and afterwards he returns home in a state of great confusion. The only reason given for Darius' condition is that it is the first evidence of his fatal illness. This disease, however, is never named, except for Big James' confident allegation that it is softening of the brain, a somewhat flimsy explanation, especially for an author who is usually precise about the causes of death. The malady, furthermore, is reputed to be of a degenerative nature, yet it begins quite abruptly. The greater purpose of
Darius' illness is that it emphasizes the inextricable association between Mr. Shushions and Darius. The old man's death in the Bastille brings Darius full circle, back to the origins that he thought he had escaped forever. Mr. Shushions is his redeemer, the man who made the miraculous conversion from the brutal past to the astounding present possible, and so after Mr. Shushions' death Darius reverts to the brutishness of his past.

Darius Clayhanger is of crucial significance in Clayhanger, for the presentation of his character elucidates the dynamics of the novel's universe. As a member of the social elite, his indifference to the suffering of the masses is comprehensible. The ruling class functions as it does presumably because to a lesser or greater extent each member of it has undergone some form of misery, and this experience is reflected in a collective desire to preserve the status quo and thus protect its social position. Similarly, Darius' background explicates the torment that he inflicts upon Edwin and the rest of the Clayhangers. Yet at the same time there is evidence in both the novel's social and personal worlds that suggests human suffering can be alleviated to a certain extent through compassion and understanding. Edwin Clayhanger, therefore, is confronted with a universe in which he can either perpetuate misery or learn to remedy it.
Edwin's character at the outset of *Clayhanger* combines aspects of the personalities of Anna Tellwright and the Baines sisters. The outline of his temperament can be discerned in his initial meeting with his father in the novel: "He hesitated with a diffident, charming smile, feeling as he often did in front of his father, that he ought to apologize for his existence, and yet fiercely calling himself an ass for such a sentiment" (C, p. 33). Edwin's extreme diffidence before Darius indicates that, like the heroine of *Anna of the Five Towns*, he has already been shaped by the dominant force in his environment--his father. Indeed, he has been conditioned to perceive Darius as being as omnipotent as the world of nature: "It might be said that he regarded his father as he regarded the weather, fatalistically. No more than against the weather would he have dreamed of bearing malice against his father..." (C, p. 93). When Darius treats his son with kindness after the machine accident, Edwin feels that "it was against nature, as Edwin had conceived nature" (C, p. 110). And later, during their altercation over Edwin's career, he observes that "He could no more change his father than the course of a river" (C, p. 144).

Yet Edwin's personality, like those of Constance and Sophia Baines, is to a certain extent distinct from
the forces that animate his world. His independence of character is expressed as a fierce, all-encompassing need to learn:

By a single urgent act of thought he would have made himself a man, and changed imperfection into perfection. He desired . . . to do his best, to exhaust himself in doing his best, in living according to his conscience. . . . Achievement was not the matter of his desire; but endeavour, honest and terrific endeavour. (C, pp. 26-27)

At the start of the novel, however, this aspect of his personality is still nascent, for others have no notion of "the mysterious and holy flame of the desire for self-perfection blazing within that tousled head." This need, it should be noted, does not differentiate between personal, and social spheres, and presumably it embraces both. Edwin's desire to learn is a fundamental quality of his character that soon turns to architecture as a means of achieving fulfilment. Thus when Darius dashes his son's hopes of becoming an architect he does not coincidentally destroy Edwin's desire to learn; he simply diverts it.

At the outset of Clayhanger Bennett, as he does in Anna and The Old Wives' Tale, underscores the protagonist's emergence into a fully adult world: the book opens when Edwin completes his schooling and begins to
work for his father. And like his fictional counterparts, Edwin is quite oblivious at this point in the novel to the powers that govern his universe. His knowledge of the social world as he leaves school is woeful: he knows nothing of physiology, psychology, philosophy, natural science, geography, history, art, astronomy and language. The purpose of this catalogue of Edwin's educational inadequacies—in the text it occupies some four pages (C, pp. 22-25)—is to establish his complete ignorance of the world he is about to enter. Indeed, "his unfitness to commence the business of being a citizen almost reached perfection" (C, p. 24).

Edwin is equally unaware of the forces that animate his personal milieu. Darius has never revealed to anyone the horrific circumstances of his childhood, an omission which effectively prevents his son from fully understanding his present behaviour. Edwin's ignorance of his father's past is emphasized by his implicit exclusion from the secret shared by Darius and Mr. Shushions in their meeting at the novel's opening. He cannot understand, for example, why Mr. Shushions should be moved to tears at the mere sight of himself: "He was astounded; mystified; but he was also humbled. He himself was never told, and he never learnt, the explanation of that epic tear" (C, p. 36). The two chapters of Clayhanger that
follow this scene reiterate Edwin's ignorance by describing in detail Darius' early history.

Edwin's lack of knowledge concerning his father's early life is repeatedly noted in the book, especially in regard to those characteristics of Darius' behaviour that are attributable to his past. Edwin, of course, has no conception of how meaningful the printing business is to his father: "Edwin's grand misfortune was that he was blind to the miracle. Edwin had never seen the little boy in the Bastille" (C, p. 140). Similarly, he has no notion that his father's irritability (C, p. 159) and his political (C, p. 159) and religious (C, p. 125) views are the consequences of past experience. On the night of Mr. Shushions' funeral, Edwin is unaware that "the being in front of him was not a successful steam-printer and tyrannical father, but a tiny ragged boy who could still see his mother weeping round the knees of a powerful god named Shushions" (C, p. 311). When Darius dies himself, his son is unconscious of the full implications of his demise: "Edwin did not know that the little boy from the Bastille was dead. He only knew that his father was dead" (C, p. 416).

The repeated allusion to Edwin's ignorance of his father's background serves a variety of purposes in
Clayhanger. Edwin's initial scorn for his father, for instance, shows him to be a callow youth, who has little interest in his fellows. The key to understanding the novel's universe, in both its social and personal aspects, furthermore, lies in the recognition of the universality of human suffering. Darius thus poses a challenge to his son's educative impulse, for he must learn to perceive his despotic father as a victim without any knowledge of his history. When Edwin does achieve this goal in Book Three, his complete ignorance of Darius' childhood heightens the impact of his accomplishment.

Bennett in the Five Towns books describes two main sorts of learning: gradual adaptation over a period of time to the circumstances of one's universe and sudden insight into the forces that animate the world as a result of a particular incident. The purpose of both these methods of learning is to achieve an understanding of one's environment, and on the basis of the works dealt with thus far neither method can be judged the more effective means of attaining this goal. These types of learning are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and the way that they are used depends on such variables as character, time scheme and the nature of the novel's universe. In Anna of the Five Towns, for example, three moments of sudden and intense perception are employed to shake the
heroine's deep-seated commitment to her father's world. Constance Baines, who spends most of her life in a provincial backwater, tends to learn through gradual adaptation to change, while Sophia's education is largely inspired by a series of profound reactions to her milieu.

In Clayhanger Bennett juxtaposes the two primary types of learning as a means of demonstrating the self-perpetuating tendencies of misery and the remedial qualities of compassion. The suffering that Edwin undergoes at the hands of his father and Hilda Lessways occurs with such frequency in the novel that it can be regarded as a condition of his existence. As a consequence of these incidents, Edwin becomes sympathetic towards the victims and outcasts of society, but apart from his acceptance of misery as an inherent part of his life, he does not learn to recognize the torment in the lives of those in his immediate circle. Edwin, on the other hand, experiences compassion on only a few occasions in the book, yet these episodes have a profound influence upon him. As a result, he learns to extend kindness to both Darius and Hilda and to act upon his social views. Although Edwin's experiences of misery and compassion overlap each other, the distinct signification that he applies to these incidents allows them to be treated separately.
Darius Clayhanger appears to his son to be a domestic tyrant who treats his offspring severely and arbitrarily. He instructs Clara and Edwin to obey Maggie, for instance, yet "he would now and then impair that authority by roughly 'dressing her down' at the meal-table" (C, p. 51). His domination of the family is represented in concrete terms by the awkward position of his easy-chair in the sitting-room. His chair backs upon a window which, although it admits little light, is the sole aperture in the room. When Darius reads in the chair it is impossible for anyone to play the piano or even to tend the fire, without disturbing him: "The position of Mr. Clayhanger's easy-chair ... was in reality a strongly influencing factor in the family life, for it meant that the father's presence obsessed the room" (C, p. 51). Darius is thus ensconced when Edwin approaches him at the end of Book Three in his futile bid for a partnership in the firm.

Darius' authority, especially that which he exercises over Edwin, is characteristic of late nineteenth-century British society. Indeed, one commentator refers to it as "an age of tension between father and son."12 V. S. Pritchett in his autobiography, A Cab at the Door, offers a possible explanation for such familial discord:
In the Victorian age, with the great increase in wealth, the war between fathers and sons, between older brothers and younger, became violent, though rather fiercer in the middle-class than among manual workers where the mother held the wage packet. 13

This theme is reflected in literature of the period in such works as Butler's *The Way of All Flesh* and Gosse's *Father and Son*. It should be noted, however, that these books are related almost exclusively from the son's point of view, whereas in *Clayhanger* Darius' tyranny is mitigated by the influence of his harsh upbringing. 14

Darius dominates Edwin's life in much the same way that he prevails over the sitting-room. The history of their relationship is a classic case of parental despotism that lasts from 1872, when the novel opens, until 1886, when Darius suffers his breakdown. Even though seven years elapse between Books One and Two, for example, their relationship has remained static: "To Edwin, Darius was exactly the same father, and for Darius, Edwin was still aged sixteen. They both of them went on living on the assumption that the world had stood still in those seven years between 1873 and 1880" (C, p. 156). Even after the onset of Darius' Illness, Edwin finds it difficult to adjust to the new situation. In the fifth chapter of Book Three, suitably entitled "The Slave's Fear," Edwin feels that "All the slave in him protested against the
knocking off of irons, and the imperative kick into the open air" (C, p. 338).

The greatest hurt that Darius inflicts upon his son is the seemingly arbitrary manner in which he manipulates Edwin's life. This pattern is initiated when he puts Edwin to work in the shop, telling him in an absent-minded fashion that before he can become an architect what he needs is "a bit o' business training" (C, p. 96). When Edwin later broaches his career plans with his father, via the letter, Darius quashes his hopes once and for all. Similarly, he refuses to assist Edwin's marital plans by not granting his son a partnership and offering only to increase his wages by a pound a week. Not only does Darius control his son's existence as much as possible, but he also takes advantage of his position of superiority. He frequently abuses Edwin verbally, and he even goes so far as to accuse him of theft in the matter of the new books. Given this sequence of events, it is little wonder that Edwin is submissive towards his father at the beginning of the novel. It is noteworthy that Edwin, unlike Sophia Baines, never seriously considers escape as an alternative to life with Darius. Suffering, it would appear, is a condition of his life that cannot be avoided, only endured.
Edwin also suffers, although in a less tangible manner, as a consequence of his relationship with Hilda Lessways. Hilda is representative of the so-called modern woman, a type that at the time of the novel's publication was still uncommon, especially in the Five Towns. Although she is not a suffragette, like Wells' heroine, Ann Veronica, Hilda is nevertheless determined to assert herself despite restrictive social codes of behaviour. Bennett evokes her unconventional nature by contrasting her with Janet Orgreave, whom Edwin initially regards as a paragon of femininity. As Edwin reflects upon his tête-à-tête with Hilda in the new house, he instinctively compares her with Janet: "he made a catalogue of her defects of person and of character. She was severe, satiric, merciless... 'Janet Orgreave, now--!' Janet had every quality that he could desire, that he could even think of. Janet was balm" (C, p. 211). When the two girls visit the printing shop prior to the Centenary, Edwin cannot help thinking "If only she resembled Janet...!" (C, p. 221). Yet in spite of her difficult temperament, it is evident that Hilda possesses meritorious qualities that Janet does not. After the incident at the Centenary involving Mr. Shushions, Hilda for the first time benefits from the comparison with Janet: "to Edwin, with the vision of Hilda's mercifulness in his mind, even the sympathy of Janet for Mr.
Shushions had a quality of uncomprehending, facile condescension which slightly jarred on him" (C, p. 239).

Since Edwin starts out with an image of Janet as the ideal woman, it is not surprising that he finds Hilda intimidating. Her spirited defence of Victor Hugo's *Notre Dame de Paris* reveals, to Edwin at any rate, a personality that is unusually intense: "To Edwin it was dramatic; it was even dangerous and threatening. He had never heard a quiet voice so charged with intense emotion" (C, p. 196). It soon becomes apparent to Edwin that this singular individual is interested in himself. After his observation on religious belief, for instance, he catches "the eyes of Hilda blazing on him fixedly" (C, p. 201). Afterwards, in confirmation of his suspicion, she pursues him into the new house, and she attaches herself to him during the Centenary festivities. Hilda seems to overpower Edwin at this point in the novel with the intensity of her feelings, and her rather overbearing demeanour towards him resembles, to a certain extent, Darius' treatment of his son. In both cases, Edwin submits to their forceful personalities rather than articulate his animus. When Hilda informs him that he need not be afraid of her, Edwin "grinned awkwardly, but said nothing, for he could not express his secret resentment" (C, pp. 208-09).
The nature of the misery that Edwin experiences because of Hilda undergoes a fundamental alteration as a result of the episode at the Centenary involving Mr. Shushions. In *Clayhanger* Hilda is seen only through Edwin's eyes, and as a consequence she is something of an enigma both to Edwin and the reader. Her enigmatic quality is greatly enhanced by her act of kindness towards the feeble old man, an act which has a profound influence on Edwin because it contradicts his established view of her. He now thinks of her in paradoxical terms: "He did not like her. She was too changeable, too dark, and too light" (C, p. 256). Yet some fifteen months later, the conundrum that her behaviour poses comprises the substance of Edwin's love for her: "she was invested, for him, with mysteriousness. His interest in her was renewed in a moment, and in a form much more acute than its first form" (C, p. 261). But while Hilda's aura of mystery fascinates Edwin, it also causes him pain.

Hilda's mysteriousness is a lure that attracts Edwin throughout the remainder of Book Two: "she certainly did seem to Edwin to be an organism exceedingly mysterious" (C, p. 262); "Her finest quality was her mystery... She baffled him" (C, p. 272); "Seeing her apparently did naught to assuage the pain of his curiosity about her" (C, p. 276); "It [Brighton] was mysterious, like her."
It was part of her mystery" (C, p. 282); "It was her mysteriousness that agitated him" (C, p. 283). The only occasion when he feels that he has penetrated her cloak of mystery is when they kiss, but the moment of revelation is transitory: "To him it seemed that she had resumed her mystery, that he had really only known her for one instant, that he was bound to a woman entrancing, noble, but impenetrable" (C, p. 287). The terms used in the above quotations to depict Edwin's love, such as "pain," "agitated," "bound," convey the impression that, at least on Edwin's part, the relationship is not an easy one.

Hilda's seemingly erratic behaviour deepens her mysteriousness and excites Edwin's misery. When she sends him a terse note explaining only that she cannot visit the shop, Edwin "suffered then as he had never suffered. . . . He was innocent; he was blameless; and she tortured him thus! . . . He pitied himself for a victim" (C, p. 278). Her supreme act of cruelty, from Edwin's point of view, is to marry George Cannon without, at the very least, informing him: "It could be said of Edwin that he fully lived that night. Fate had at any rate roused him from the coma which most men called existence" (C, p. 301). Yet when Hilda reappears in Book Four of Clayhanger it is evident that for Edwin her mystery and the pain it causes him has not been diminished.
by her behaviour or by the passage of time. The disclosure that Hilda has given birth to a child is to Edwin "a mysterious, a mystic perfecting" (C, p. 448), and her son, George, is "an enigma surpassing in solemnity that of death" (C, p. 434). When she reveals that her husband is not dead, as he thought, but in prison, Edwin's view of her is confirmed: "Hilda was too mysterious... More deeply than ever was that woman embedded in enigmas" (C, pp. 467-68).

These experiences of suffering teach Edwin to alter his social views, but they do little to change his vision of Darius or Hilda. His unhappiness, for example, causes him to identify with social outcasts, like Bishop Colenso and Arthur Bradlaugh. Edwin's admiration for the Bishop originates in his solitary stand against ecclesiastical authority rather than in respect for his theories. In his talk to the debating society, Edwin stresses Bishop Colenso's bitter struggle against all adversity and only in his conclusion notes that "any commentator who was both learned and sincere must be a force for good..." (C, p. 127). His support of Bradlaugh's atheism demonstrates a similar willingness to identify with an unpopular position. It is noteworthy that Edwin's defence of the Bishop places himself in roughly the same position: his motion is soundly defeated and he is publicly castigated
by the society's chairman. Yet the unilateral disapproval of the group does not discourage Edwin in the least: "he knew that the chasm between himself and the others was a real chasm, and not a figment of his childish diffe-
dence . . ." (C, p. 129). The confidence that accrues from this knowledge emboldens him to write his fateful letter to his father.

The personal torment that Edwin experiences in Clayhanger is also manifest in his increasing ability to recognize the suffering of man as a whole. At the start of the novel, he appears to have no social aware-
ness; as his night-time excursion with Big James indicates. Edwin is very much a neophyte in the ways of the adult world; and as though to underscore his naivete at this time, he sees the town in which he has passed his entire life from a novel perspective: "this-evening the town did not seem like the same town; it had become a new and mysterious town of adventure" (C, p. 74). The climax to his evening, amid all the other novelties, is the clog dance of Florence Simcox. The clog, which on Florence's nimble feet is transformed into a "magic instrument of pleasure" (C, p. 88), is "the very emblem of the servitude and the squalor of brutalized populations" (C, p. 88). The narrator goes on to describe how the clog is the ordinary footwear of the common people, and he concludes
by reiterating its symbolic properties: "The clog meant everything that was harsh, foul, and desolating; it summoned images of misery and disgust" (C, p. 88). Edwin, of course, is smitten by Florence, but he has no comprehension of the greater significance of her artfulness.

At the Sunday school Centenary, however, Edwin demonstrates an ability to recognize that all men, and not just the impoverished, are at bottom victims of forces beyond their power to control. He is initially disturbed by the Centenary events in some way that he cannot define: "He thought it was a disconcerting sight, a sight vexatious and troublesome. And he was in no way tranquilized by the reflection that every town in England had the same sight to show at that hour" (C, p. 226). During the course of the proceedings, Edwin's misgivings are transformed into a realization that organized religion appeals to the most primitive instincts of mankind. It is an appeal, moreover, that cuts through all class barriers. Auntie Hamps, who as one of the elite is seated on the Baines' balcony (C, p. 225), becomes part of Edwin's almost surrealistic vision that is inspired by the lyrics of "Rock of Ages." The hymn is replete with rather lurid imagery which Edwin takes literally. As a consequence, he pictures an actual fountain of blood spouting from Christ's side, "and people like his Auntie Clara and
brother-in-law Albert plunging ecstatically into the liquid in order to be white" (C, p. 229). He is reminded of another hymnal phrase, "India's coral strand," which enlarges and clarifies his vision of the inherent barbarism of the spectacle:

he saw the meek, stupid, and superstitious faces, all turned one way, all for the moment under the empire of one horrible idea, all convinced that the consequences of sins could be prevented by an act of belief. . . . And it seemed to him that he was not in England any longer. It seemed to him that in the dim cellars under the shambles behind the Town Hall . . . there dwelt, squatting, a strange and savage god who would blast all those who did not enter his presence dripping with gore. . . . It seemed to him that the drums were tom-toms, and Baines's a bazaar. He could fit every detail of the scene to harmonize with a vision of India's coral strand." (C, p. 230-31)

The believers are thus characterized as victims of a religion that reduces them to insensate, blood-thirsty, violent creatures. Although they do not realize it, their unquestioning devotion to a savage god diminishes their stature as civilized human beings. Yet Edwin, notwithstanding the participation of Auntie Hamps and Albert in his vision, does not consciously relate this insight to the dynamics of his personal life. His detachment from the spectacle is emphasized by the repetition of such phrases as "He saw" (C, p. 230) and "it seemed to him"
(C, p. 231). Nevertheless, there is a relationship that Edwin does not yet recognize between the suffering that he experiences as a victim of his father and Hilda and the dehumanization that he perceives in the subjugation of the votaries by their conception of God.

Edwin's victimization produces only a modicum of development in his personal life. He does learn, however, to accept suffering as a condition of his existence and not to blame others for particular acts of cruelty towards him. He accepts his father's curtailment of his career plans with a kind of fatalism: "He demolished, with a violent and resentful impulse, the structure of his hopes; stamped on it angrily. He was beaten" (C, p. 144). Years later, we discover that "He had forgiven his father for having thwarted his supreme ambition... He had frankly accepted the fate of a printer" (C, p. 175). Similarly, he bears no malice towards Hilda for her inexplicable rejection of him in favour of George Cannon: "He had no rancor against Hilda... Her act had been above rancor; like an act of Heaven" (C, p. 434).

Although Edwin learns not to bear animosity for specific acts of torment, the harsh treatment that he receives from Darius and Hilda does little to advance his understanding of their behaviour or to alter his
relations with them. At the beginning of _Clayhanger_, Edwin is torn between submission to his father and a desire to assert himself as an individual, and the suffering he experiences seems to perpetuate this dichotomy. Edwin's submissiveness is implicit in his acceptance of the torment that Darius inflicts upon him--from his father's denial of his plan to become an architect to his refusal to grant his son a partnership. On one occasion, after his father has humiliated him before the entire staff, he is tempted to walk out on the tyrant: "But Edwin had never done it. Always it was 'the very next time!'" Edwin was not capable of doing it. His father had a sort of moral brute-force, against which he could not stand firm" (C, pp. 160-61). Darius' influence, moreover, seems to limit his son's development: "In his father's presence he could never feel that he was a man. He remained a boy, with no rights, moral or material" (C, p. 298).

Darius' domination of his son sours Edwin's desire to learn and makes him scornful of his father and his accomplishments. He is critical, for instance, of his father's physical appearance and many of his personal habits. Edwin "thought Darius a gross, fleshy organism, as indeed he was, and he privately objected to many paternal mannerisms, of eating, drinking, breathing,
eructation, speech, deportment, and garb" (C, p. 246). Edwin also condescends to his father because of the shop's untidiness, which even on his first afternoon at work he finds offensive: "The disorder filled him with contempt. It was astounding that his father could tolerate such disorder . . . " (C, p. 68). The sudden change in his father's attitude towards him after he prevents the accident in the shop makes Edwin contemptuous: "Edwin had not dreamt that mankind, and especially his father, was characterized by such simplicity. And yet, on reflection, had he not always found in his father a peculiar ingenuousness, which he could not but look down upon?" (C, p. 110). The mutual incomprehension of father and son is conveyed by the inclusion of the phrase, "look down upon," in Darius' version of the same event: "He had always looked down upon that son as helpless, coddled . . . " (C, p. 111).

On two occasions in the novel, Darius' treatment of his son actually provokes thoughts of revenge in Edwin. When Darius humiliates him in front of Stifford he thinks: "'By God! If ever I get the chance, I'll pay you out for this some day!' And he meant it" (C, p. 161). Edwin's thoughts take a similar turn when Darius thwarts his plans to marry Hilda:
'When you're old, and I've got you'—he clenched his fists and his teeth—'when I've got you and you can't help yourself, by God it'll be my turn.'

And he meant it. (C, p. 298)

Since the novel's universe functions according to the principle that each individual is a sufferer worthy of compassion, such notions are counter-productive to Edwin's development. Indeed, the need to revenge himself upon his father is so powerful that even after he has learned to regard Darius as a victim he berates him for wanting to grow mushrooms: "Edwin hated him, and there was a bitter contempt in his hatred" (C, p. 379).

Edwin's view of Hilda is also mixed with a considerable amount of hostility because of the pain that she causes him to suffer. His animosity begins when she fails to conform to his conventional expectations of womanhood. When he first hears of Hilda from Charles Orgreave he immediately conjures up an image of a woman who is even "more romantic and strange than Janet Orgreave; he pictured her as mysteriously superior. And he was afraid of his own image of her" (C, p. 186). But when he first sees Hilda he dismisses her as "an ugly young woman" (C, p. 189), and when he is introduced to her he is "confirmed in the impression of her obdurate ugliness" (C, p. 194). His latent dislike of her
is activated by the energetic personality she reveals in her defence of Victor Hugo: "Her interruption on behalf of Victor Hugo seemed to be savage. Girls ought not to use that ruthless tone. And her eyes were hard, even cruel. She was less feminine than masculine" (C, p. 206).

Although it appears that Hilda is attracted to Edwin, he is by no means so certain; after all, it is still conceivable that she is a religious fanatic who followed him into the new house in order to express her gratitude for his illuminating pronouncement on belief. He wants her to be infatuated with him because it appeals to his vanity, yet at the same time he is repelled by her and furthermore "he despised her because it was he, Edwin, to whom she had taken a fancy" (C, p. 210-11). Thus he determines to deal harshly with her as a kind of punishment for her defects of character and appearance, and as a means of eliciting from her a declaration of intent: "'I'll make you show your hand—you see if I don't! You think you can play with me, but you can't!'" (C, p. 221). As they watch the Centenary celebration, Edwin makes two remarks—"'More blood!'" (C, p. 231) and "'It only wants the Ganges at the bottom of the Square'" (C, p. 231)—that summarize his vision of the festival as a primitive ritual and that are designed both to test Hilda's faith and to wound her as much as possible: "He had chosen to say
it to her because he despised her, because he wished to trample on her feelings. She roused the brute in him, and perhaps no one was more astonished than himself to witness the brute stirring" (C, p. 231).

Although by Book Four of the novel Edwin's view of Hilda has changed from hate to love, it is expressed, nevertheless, as a desire to inflict pain upon her. In a chapter entitled "The Bully," Edwin compels Hilda to accept his assistance, and when she cries after he berates her, he is overcome with a sensation of wanting to increase her agony: "He could have taken her and beaten her in his sudden passion—a passion not of revenge, not of punishment! He could have made her scream with the pain that his love would inflict" (C, p. 458). Presumably, Edwin feels that his domination of Hilda is a means of penetrating her air of mystery and of revealing to her the depth of his affection. Indeed, his masterfulness fulfills a commitment that he made to himself during the Centenary: "'If I had you to myself, my lady, I'd soon teach you a thing or two!" (C, p. 225). In Brighton, ten years later, he "looked at her like a conqueror. He had taught her a thing or two" (C, p. 460). This attitude, like his earlier animosity, shows little understanding of Hilda and the torment she has had to bear.
The misery that Edwin suffers at the hands of his father and Hilda does not produce a comprehensive vision of his environment. Although he learns to identify with social outcasts and to recognize human suffering, he does not relate these insights to his personal world. He does learn to accept pain as a condition of his existence, but he remains unable to perceive this quality in the lives of those around him, especially Darius and Hilda. The compassion that Edwin sees in Hilda's gesture to Mr. Shushions is without question the most profound and influential learning experience in Clayhanger. It should be noted, however, that prior to this incident Edwin undergoes a series of linked episodes that contribute to his total education. Although the principal focus of Clayhanger is on Edwin's increasing awareness of the forces that animate his world, he also acquires a lesser brand of knowledge. This kind of understanding befits the novel's resemblance to the Bildungsroman, which has been described as a novel of comprehensive development. What is significant about these incidents is not so much the substance of what he learns, though it does help to reconcile him to life in the Five Towns, but that his learning is stimulated by the kindness of benevolent father figures. These episodes demonstrate that tyranny tends to stunt Edwin's development, despite his desire to learn, while it flourishes under benign attention.
Edwin experiences three moments of kindness in the first book of the novel that compel him to learn—to reconsider an established attitude—and that occur under the auspices of paternal figures: Darius, Big James and Mr. Orgreave. The latter two characters possess qualities, such as their amiable attitude towards Edwin, that establish them as unequivocal alternates to Darius. As Big James and Edwin set out on their walk through town on the night of the Free and Easy, it is noted that "By taking the boy's hand, Big James might have poetically symbolized their relation" (C, p. 75). Mr. Orgreave is likewise benevolent in his dealings with Edwin: "he chatted with him as though they were old friends and had parted only the day before; he also chatted with him as though they were equals in age, eminence, and wealth" (C, p. 118). A further point of contrast between the printer and the architect lies in their physical portraits. In opposition to Darius' disrepair, Mr. Orgreave is so immaculate that he seems to disregard his attire: "His clothes were extremely elegant and nice in detail... but he seemed to be perfectly oblivious to his clothes..." (C, p. 118).

One occasion when Edwin is forced to re-think his conception of the world takes place immediately after he saves the new machine from destroying the shop. Darius'
tears at this time produce in him "an immense stupefaction at his father's truly remarkable behaviour. What! ... He had to begin to revise again his settled views" (C, p. 108). Yet until he is able to perceive his father as a victim, he is unable to place a meaning on this experience. Indeed, under the burden of Darius' harshness he soon forgets this instance of his father's weakness. But after Edwin has witnessed Hilda's gesture, he recalls the forgotten episode as soon as Darius is taken ill. Auntie Hamps cites her brother-in-law's tears as evidence of his decline to which Edwin replies: "That's nothing. I've known him to cry before!" (C, p. 317). The lapse between experience and signification in this case stresses the immediate nature of the development that derives from the incidents involving Big James and Mr. Orgreave.

Edwin's sexual awakening on the night of the Free and Easy occurs under the guidance of Big James. In Darius' absence—he is appropriately out of town on business—his foreman becomes a surrogate father to Edwin. Although Edwin does not grasp the social implications of the clog, he is struck by the dancer herself: "He did not know what to think of Florence, the champion female clog-dancer. ... He felt that she had put him under the necessity of reconsidering some of his fundamental opinions" (C, p. 88). This experience is soon trans-
lated into a greater understanding of the relations between men and women. Earlier, he had been critical of Miss Ingamells, his father's shop assistant, for her infatuation but after seeing Florence "he was obliged to admit within himself a lessening of scorn for the attitude towards each other of Miss Ingamells and her young man. He saw those things in a new light" (C, p. 88). The sexual thrill that he discovers through Florence is employed to emphasize his excitement when he mails his disputatious letter to Darius (C, p. 137) and when he is accepted by his fellow businessmen as an equal (C, p. 353).

Mr. Orgreave is instrumental in stimulating Edwin's interest in architecture and in cultural pursuits in general. Edwin's initial fascination with architecture fades until he inspects the Stych Pottery under the guidance of Mr. Orgreave, who considers its window to be a thing of beauty: "Edwin had to readjust his ideas. It had never occurred to him to search for anything fine in Bursley. The fact was, he had never opened his eyes at Bursley" (C, p. 121). Although his renewed plans to become an architect are defeated, the curiosity that is provoked in this incident survives and helps to enhance his acceptance of life in the Five Towns. After his eyes have been opened to the beauty of the Stych Pottery, he begins to see the region in a new light: "he now..."
genuinely regarded it as an exquisitely beautiful edifice, on a plane with the edifices of the capitals of Europe (C, p. 121). Edwin later paints a picture of the window, and it hangs on the wall of the Orgreaves' breakfast-room (C, p. 259). His architectural enthusiasm later focuses on the new house his father builds, and the learning that derives from this episode reflects on other areas of his life: "He saw even printing in a new light" (C, p. 167). Finally, Osmond Orgreave and his family introduce Edwin to a world of music, books and fine-living that is utterly foreign to the austere atmosphere of the Clayhanger domicile and which brings him much pleasure.

Edwin's treatment of young George Cannon in Book Four of Clayhanger illustrates that Edwin has learned from the behaviour of Big James and Mr. Orgreave towards himself rather than from his father's conduct toward his son. When Edwin observes George lying near death his attitude of benevolent paternalism emerges most forcefully. He experiences "an immense desire to watch over his rearing with all insight, sympathy, and help, so that in George's case none of the mistakes and cruelties and misapprehensions should occur which had occurred in his own" (C, p. 517). And, indeed, in all of his dealings with George, Edwin treats him as an "equal" (C, p. 471) just as Mr. Orgreave rather than his father dealt with
himself as a young man. Edwin, moreover, is able to assist George in situations that parallel incidents in his childhood for which he received little aid. George, like Edwin, wonders why the potteries are located in the Five Towns, but unlike Edwin, who "had puzzled over the same question and for a long time had not found the answer" (C, p. 473), his curiosity is soon assuaged. Edwin not only responds to George's inquiry with a complete explanation, but he also takes him on a comprehensive tour of the industry. Like Edwin, George has some artistic ability which his surrogate father encourages by giving him "the most complicated box of water-colours that his shop contained" (C, p. 477). Edwin, of course, had to buy for himself his first set of water-colours.

Hilda's gesture of comfort towards Mr. Shushions has a galvanic influence on Edwin's existence that illustrates even more forcefully than the instances cited above the enormous power of compassion to effect change. The bare facts of the incident are in themselves unexceptional: Edwin and Hilda observe Mr. Shushions, who is by now infirm in both body and mind, being tormented by a group of bullies, and they intercede to prevent the old man from being subjected to further ridicule. Hilda comforts him with what Edwin perceives as a "lovely gesture" (C, p. 237) before he is led away by Albert Benbow. Yet
the impact of this scene upon Edwin is much greater than
this outline could possibly suggest: "The transformation
in her amazed Edwin, who could see the tears in her eyes.
... This tableau was imprinted forever on Edwin's
mind... for Edwin it remained one of the epochal things
of his experience" (C, p. 237). The memory of this inci-
dent echoes in Edwin's consciousness throughout the
remainder of Clayhanger. Although he does not see her
again after the Centenary for fifteen months, "the recol-
lection of her gesture with Mr. Shushions prevented him
from dismissing her out of his head..." (C, p. 260).
When he visits her in Brighton many years later, he again
remembers "her divine gesture over the fond Shushions"
(C, p. 463).

There are a number of reasons why Hilda's act of
kindness has such an impact on Edwin. The most important
of these, at least as far as the furtherance of his edu-
cation is concerned, originates in the significance that
is attached to Mr. Shushions. He is senile, physically
decayed, clothed in a bizarre manner and, like the rest
of the crowd out which he emerges, a devout Methodist.
Edwin has already characterized the Centenary celebrants
as victims of a primitive religion, but he feels utterly
detached from their plight. In Mr. Shushions he sees a
figure who is representative of the crowd's brutality but
whose individual suffering is so great that it forces him to identify with the old man's condition.

Edwin was revolted by the spectacle of the younger men baiting him. He was astonished that they were so short-sighted as not to be able to see the image of themselves in the old man, so imprudent as not to think of their own future, so utterly brutalized. He wanted, by the simple force of desire, to seclude and shelter the old man.... He wanted to restore to him... the dignity and self-respect which he had innocently lost.... And it was for his own sake, for the sake of his own image, as much as for the sake of the old man, that he wanted to do this. (C, P. 235)

Mr. Shushions is thus a symbolic figure whose suffering transcends the individual level because it is a fate that in one form or another awaits all men. Edwin's identification with the old man's condition, for the first time in the novel, links his awareness of social victimization with his experience of personal misery.

Edwin's desire to assist Mr. Shushions stems from his implicit recognition that, while individual suffering is universal, there are degrees of pain. Thus the commonality of human misery makes it incumbent on those, who for the moment experience little torment in their lives, to assist their less fortunate fellows. Hilda's gesture towards the feeble old man agitates Edwin because it actualizes thoughts that he is too diffident to put
into action. Hilda's act also makes Edwin fall in love with her, because it implies to Edwin parallel ratio-
cination. She, too, has suffered, and she treats Mr.
Shushions with compassion out of an awareness that she
shares his condition. Since Edwin identifies with the
old man, he sees in Hilda's gesture a possible source
of comfort for his own personal torment. The effect of
this incident on Edwin is heightened because it appears
completely to contradict her earlier fractiousness. This
seemingly paradoxical behaviour is the source of the aura
of mystery that surrounds her and that plagues Edwin
throughout the rest of the novel.

Mr. Shushions, of course, has a much greater signif-
icance in Edwin's personal affairs than the young man
ever realizes. Although Edwin vaguely recalls his
previous encounter with the dotard, their earlier meeting
does not figure in his comprehension of the present sit-
uation. Yet the influence that Mr. Shushions has had
on Edwin's existence is implicit throughout the scene.
As Edwin watches the Centenary festivities, he wonders
"by virtue of what decree he . . . had been lifted up
to splendid ease above the squalid and pitiful human
welter" (C, p. 225). The answer to his rhetorical ques-
tion lies in Mr. Shushions' act of kindness to Darius
and his family, a solution which Edwin will never be
aware of: "Edwin, who, all unconscious, owed the very fact of his existence to the doting imbecile, regarded him chiefly as a figure in a tableau, as the chance instrument of a woman's beautiful relegation" (C, p. 237-38). Hilda's gesture of compassion, however, parallels Mr. Shushions' earlier act of kindness. Edwin's appreciation of the former exhibits a general understanding of the charitable impulse that transformed his father's life, even though he will never have any knowledge of the particular details of Darius' past.

Mr. Shushions represents the alternatives that are available to Edwin in his personal relations and his social vision in the latter half of the novel. Hilda's gesture demonstrates the way that victims, in both personal and social spheres, should be treated. In the very midst of the pain that he suffers after learning of her marriage to George Cannon, he recollects "Hilda's divine gesture as she bent over Mr. Shushions on the morning of the Centenary" (C, p. 301). On the other hand, the vow that Edwin makes to revenge himself upon Darius after their altercation over the proposed partnership is inspired by the thought of Mr. Shushions' enfeeblment: "his imagination quickened by the memory of Mr. Shushions" (C, p. 298). This option represents the status quo both personally and socially. The powerless,
from the starving crowds of Darius' childhood to Edwin himself, have been consistently suppressed by those more powerful than themselves. It is an alternative that is all the more tempting to Edwin because of the suffering that has been inflicted on him by his father. Mr. Shushions, furthermore, is a link between Books Two and Three, since Edwin thinks of Hilda's gesture at the end of the former and Darius attends his funeral at the beginning of the latter.

Although Hilda's gesture has a profound effect on Edwin, there is scant evidence throughout the remainder of Book Two that he has learned from the experience. Perhaps the sole indication of an advancement in his development lies in his support for the striking potters, which exhibits much greater sympathy for their lot than did his rather detached view of the Centenary crowd: "If you ask me, I'll tell you what I think--workmen on strike are always in the right; at bottom I mean. You've only got to look at them in a crowd together. They don't starve themselves for fun" (C, p. 264). Otherwise, there appears to be little change in Edwin's view of the world, a state of affairs that can be attributed to the fact that the abuse he suffers after the Centenary is the most severe in his experience: Hilda rejects him without a word, and Darius accuses him of theft and
denies him a share in the business. Thus the self-perpetuating tendencies of misery forestall the furtherance of his education. Indeed, the changes in the circumstances of his existence that occur as a result of Darius' illness and Hilda's poverty are necessary before he can put what he has learned into action.

Edwin's learning in Book Three of *Clayhanger* is demonstrated by the sympathy and care that he shows towards Darius in the throes of his illness. He regrets, for example, the one occasion when his desire for revenge is expressed: "As he looked at the poor figure fumbling towards the door, he knew the humiliating paltriness of revenge. As his anger fell, his shame grew" (C, p. 379). When he realizes the full implications of Dr. Heve's prognosis—that he will be free at last of his father's heavy-handedness—his reaction is one of sadness rather than joy: "His reason asked harshly why he should be desolated, as he undoubtedly was. The prospect of freedom...ought to have dazzled and uplifted him...But it did not..." (C, pp. 325-26). A further sign of Edwin's sympathy for his father's condition is his vigil at Darius' bed-side during the final, excruciating stages of his illness. Edwin's concern for Darius is in part provoked by the avaricious manner in which the rest of the family responds to his sickness.
Within the first week after Darius is stricken, Auntie Hamps and the Benbows are inquiring about his will, and Albert tries to borrow one thousand pounds from his father-in-law. Clara and Auntie Hamps, furthermore, persistently treat the invalid with excessive and uncomprehending care: hence the chapter title, "The Victim of Sympathy" (C, p. 328).

The primary reason for Edwin's charitable attitude towards Darius after he is stricken is that he is now able to identify with his father and his suffering. After the near accident in the shop in Book One, Edwin makes "no attempt to put himself in his father's place" (C, p. 116), but once Darius falls ill, Edwin accomplishes what he was unable to do earlier. He opens his father's safe, the symbol of Darius' authority, and in so doing he is able to "perform a feat which very few children ever achieve; he put himself in his father's place" (C, p. 346).

Edwin's identification with Darius also extends to the physical degradation to which his father is subjected. Indeed, he feels that his father's condition not only reflects upon himself but also on mankind as a whole: "The mere sight of a man so broken and sad was humiliating to the humanity which Edwin shared with him" (C, p. 387). Edwin, furthermore, now considers that Darius' disease somehow influenced his behaviour long before it became...
a visible affliction: "He blamed himself... for all the anger which during all his life he had felt against his father... His father had not been a tyrant, but a victim. His brain must always have been wrong!" (C, p. 344). Whatever the medical credence of Edwin's realization that his father has always been a victim, the observation is accurate enough in its essence.

Edwin has, in fact, met the implicit challenge posed at the beginning of Clayhanger: although he still does not recognize "the little boy from the Bastille," he does perceive the indelible effect that the past has had upon Darius.

Edwin's identification with his father's torment also influences his behaviour in the social world. He is flattered by the Felons' acceptance of himself as an equal, and he is tempted by their paternalistic condescension towards the proletariat. On the other hand, he has learned that all men, even if they are Felons as Darius was, are at bottom victims. The pettiness of the Felons' concerns is brought home to Edwin as he watches his father struggle between life and death.

Did any of them ever surmise that they had never come within ten miles of life itself, that they were attaching importance to the most futile trifles? Let them see a human animal in a crisis of Cheyne-Stokes breathing and they would know something about reality! (C, p. 466)
Hence Edwin votes for the Labour candidate in the by-election, although he is disenchanted with the gullibility of the lower classes—"He despised Labour" (C. p. 413)—because Labour's mandate, much more than that of their political foes, is to alleviate human suffering. As a result of this act Edwin achieves a measure of emancipation in his personal world:

'I don't care if we're beaten forty times,' his thoughts ran. 'I'll be a more out-and-out Radical than ever!' And he felt sturdily that he was free. The chain was at last broken that had bound together those two beings so dissimilar, antagonistic, and ill-matched—Edwin Clayhanger and his father. (C. p. 417)

Edwin's social and personal independence is further emphasized by the Conservative allegiance of both Mr. Orgreave and Big James (C. p. 412), figures who directed his education as a young man.

In Book Four of Clayhanger Edwin still suffers from his obsession with Hilda's mysteriousness, but at the same time he is able to regard her with compassion as a fellow sufferer. When he finally confronts Hilda in the run-down boarding house she operates in Brighton, he immediately recognizes this quality in her: "He now saw Hilda exclusively as a victim, whose misfortunes were innumerable" (C. p. 448). After he obliges Hilda to
accept his assistance, Edwin realizes that because of her credulous yet intense character, suffering is an inevitable consequence of her existence:

"He had bullied her, her who, he was convinced, had always been the victim. In spite of her vigorous individuality she was destined to be a victim. He was sure that she had never deserved anything but sympathy and respect and affection." (C, pp. 464-65)

Her final revelation, "that she was the victim of a bigamist" (C, p. 519), simply confirms this view for Edwin.

Edwin's compassion for her increases when in the novel's final scene he discovers that, despite her bigamous marriage, she has always loved him and has believed that he understood her situation. In a gesture of kindness that is comparable to those of Hilda and Mr. Shushions and that marks the culmination of his development, Edwin comforts Hilda for all that she has endured. His understanding, moreover, dissipates the mysteriousness that has surrounded Hilda throughout the novel. When she complains, "'You don't know me!'" (C, p. 528), he replies, "'Don't I?' he said, with lofty confidence" (C, p. 528). Edwin, furthermore, is under no illusion that he has conquered Hilda. He regards her as an exceptional being, who is capable of what Charles Greave calls "'the grand style'" (C, p. 511). It is these moments of
transcendence—her gesture to Mr. Shushions, her love for Edwin—which justify Edwin’s love for her and allow him to accept her tempestuous nature:

Drowning amid the waves of her terrible devotion, he was recompensated in the hundredth part of a second for all that through her he had suffered or might hereafter suffer. The many problems and difficulties which marriage with her would raise seemed trivial in the light of her heart’s magnificent and furious loyalty. He thought of the younger Edwin whom she had kissed with rapture, as of a boy too inexperienced in sorrow to appreciate this Hilda. He braced himself to the exquisite burden of life. (C, p. 528)

Edwin’s ultimate ability fully to appreciate Hilda occurs, not simply as a consequence of the passage of time, but because of his willingness to learn about the world. As though to indicate that his education is now at an end, the title of Book Four is “His Start in Life” (C, p. 418).

Edwin’s final acceptance of Hilda is reflected in the social world as an occurrence of almost apocalyptic proportions. He is quite conscious himself that the significance of his attachment to Hilda supersedes the ordinary course of events. When he and Hilda are sequestered in the sickroom beside the recumbent patient, George Cannon, he senses that “they were by themselves not in the room but in the universe” (C, p. 518). He is aware that through his relation with Hilda he is not
just inaugurating a new life for himself but that he also is founding a new generation. He is very conscious that he, sitting "in his father's place, in his father's very chair, was thus under the spell of a woman whose child was nameless" (C, p. 527). Darius' chair was the symbol of his authority and Edwin, in accepting Hilda and her child, is initiating a new order that is free from the prejudices of the past. Edwin is also cognizant that his attitudes set him apart from the rest of his family: "He smiled grimly at the thought of Auntie Hamps, of Clara, of the pietistic Albert! They were of a different race, a different generation! They belonged to a dead world!" (C, p. 527).

Edwin's sense of the near apocalyptic nature of his forthcoming marriage to Hilda is not solipsistic aggrandizement, but is a view that is corroborated by events in the external world. An atmosphere of illness and death seems to be omnipresent in the last two books of Clayhanger, a condition that suggests the leaders of the previous generation are dying and that their deaths leave a vacuum that must be filled. Book Three is framed by the deaths of Mr. Shushions and Darius Clayhanger, and Book Four opens with the passing of Charles Parnell, the Irish nationalist, and concludes with the deaths of the Duke of Clarence and Cardinal Manning. The latter two
are victims of the flu epidemic of January 1892 which in
the Five Towns strikes George Cannon, Mr. Orgreave and
the vicar. In the Five Towns, the flu is metaphorically
described as a fog that blankets the district: "the fog
itself seemed to be the visible mantle of the disease"
(C, p. 502). 19

To Edwin, George's illness is far more disturbing
than even his father's sickness was: "It was more shame-
ful: a more excruciating accusation against the order
of the universe" (C, p. 516). George's malady epitomizes
the struggle between a world that seems actively malevo-
 lent towards man and one in which compassion can alleviate
human pain and suffering. George's survival is an endorse-
ment of the practical application of compassion, for it
is only due to the extraordinary precaution Hilda takes
in bringing Charlie Orgreave with her to the Five Towns
that he does defeat the malady. As if to signal George's
improvement, the fog lifts: "Dawn had broken. The fog
was gone . . . " (C, p. 521). During the evening of
George's crisis the Duke of Clarence and Cardinal Manning
have died. The deaths of these two figures, whose signifi-
cance encompasses church and state, suggests an absence
in social authority that must be filled. 20 Edwin, in
his new role as husband and father, must assume social
responsibility and put into action the understanding of
individual human suffering that he has learned during the course of Clayhanger.

In Clayhanger Bennett employs various motifs that are designed to lend the novel overall unity. Several of these—the references to Florence Simcox, the three moments when Edwin must reconsider his views of the world, the link Mr. Shushions provides between Books Two and Three—have already been mentioned. Other motifs that have not yet been touched upon are the renewal of Edwin's declaration of learning, the contrast in the backgrounds of Darius and his son and the three gestures of compassion. Bennett is also concerned with establishing a bond between the personal and social worlds of the novel, and much of its imagery as well as certain aspects of the narration is used for this purpose. The narrator is employed in other instances to reflect Edwin's development.

Edwin's conscious desire to learn and improve himself is one of the main unifying agents in Clayhanger. It is first expressed at the start of the work, and at the beginning of each of the novel's three remaining books Edwin repeats his resolution to start a new life, to develop into a better person. In Book Two this commitment is inspired by the construction of the new
house: the inauguration of the new house was to be for Edwin, in a very deep and spiritual sense, the beginning of the new life! (C, p. 173). It is, moreover, the same kind of inspiration that he underwent at the start of Book One: "The seriousness which he had felt on the day of leaving school revisited him" (C, p. 174). His approach of a significant age, thirty, stimulates a similar reaction at the opening of Book Three: "in the immediate future shone the hope of the new life, when programmes would never be neglected" (C, p. 306).

Although these examples reveal Edwin's will to improve himself, the development that he achieves in Books Three and Four is not of the intellectual sort that he envisions. It is more humanistic in nature and is acquired through experience rather than volition. Indeed, his resolutions are evidence of the priggishness that is a feature of his character in the first half of the novel. At the outset of Book Four, however, while he again determines that "He must change. He must turn over a new leaf" (C, p. 420), his resolve is inspired by a recognition that he has been defective in his treatment of others and not by an awareness of his intellectual shortcomings.

There are specific contrasts in the early careers of Edwin and his father which, besides the instinctive
sympathy that they engender for Darius, help to unify the book. Edwin goes out into the working world at the age of sixteen: his father started working at seven. If one compares the education of father and son it is soon evident that Darius scarcely learned to read and write while Edwin, in spite of his years of schooling, is quite ignorant of the world. Edwin can afford the luxury of contemplating why the potteries are located in the Five Towns, whereas Darius actually laboured in the industry. Edwin's desire to learn is symbolized by fire; Darius, on the other hand, must steal flame, like a miniature Prometheus, in order to light his master's stove (C, p. 40).

The three seminal moments when compassion is exercised to alleviate the pain of a victim lend Clayhanger further structural support. Edwin's assistance to Hilda and her son in Book Four bears some resemblance to Mr. Shushions' act of kindness towards Darius and his family. Edwin saves Hilda and George from the workhouse, and both he and Mr. Shushions are referred to as the "benefactor" (C, p. 46, p. 462). On each of the three occasions, the philanthropist stoops over the victim in order to administer aid. When Darius emerges from the Bastille, for instance, he observes his mother "on her knees in the cold autumn sunshine, and hysterically clasping the knees
of the man . . . " (C, p. 45), whom he recognizes as Mr. 'Shushions. During the Centenary,' Edwin is struck by "The tableau of the little, silly old man looking up, and Hilda looking down on him . . ." (C, p. 237). Edwin, at the end of the novel, is described in a similar position over Hilda: "He bent over a face that was transfigured" (C, p. 527). The stooping posture suggests that the gesture is inspired by the benefactor's realization that, at bottom, he shares the suffering that is visible in the victim's demeanour. These three incidents, furthermore, are apportioned so as to occur at the novel's beginning, middle and ending, and thus they provide Clayhanger with a fundamental structure.

Bennett uses a variety of symbols in Clayhanger in order to enhance Edwin's development and to cement the relationship between the book's social and personal worlds. The opening scene of the novel, like that of The Old Wives' Tale, contains elements that are central to the remainder of the text. Edwin's stance of confused ignorance is symbolically expressed in this scene, and at the same time it introduces one of the book's major images, the suffering animal. On his way home from school for the final time, Edwin pauses "on the steep-sloping, red-bricked canal bridge, in the valley between Bursley and its suburb Hillport" (C, p. 15). The bridge
reifies his passage from the world of a schoolboy to the world of an adult. The canal bridge does not figure again in *Clayhanger*, but it does appear at the end of *These Twain* in a similar point of transition in Edwin’s life: “He stopped and sat on the parapet. In his schooldays he had crossed this bridge twice a day” (TT, p. 413). In this case, he has finally accepted Hilda, regardless of the turmoil that she causes in his life.

The young Edwin, at any rate, observes from his vantage point on the bridge two canal boats: one proceeding southwards, bringing clay to the potteries, and the other heading north, carrying away the finished goods from their place of manufacture:

Thirty yards in front of each boat an unhappy skeleton of a horse floundered its best in the quagmire. The honest endeavour of one of the animals received a frequent tonic from a bare-legged girl of seven who heartily curled a whip about its crooked large-jointed legs. The ragged and filthy child danced in the rich mud round the horse’s flanks with the simple joy of one who has been rewarded for good behaviour by the unrestricted use of the whip for the first time. (C, p. 16)

But Edwin, beset with the worries of youth, does not see in this vista “a willing beast and a gladdened infant, but the puzzling world and the advance guard of its
problems bearing down on him" (C, p. 16). The scene over which Edwin ponders represents the pottery industry, or for that matter any industrial process. He watches the raw materials being brought in and the finished goods taken out of the region: the beginning and end of the cycle of manufacture. This cycle lies at the heart not just of the Five Towns but also of any industrialized society, and in this sense Edwin is gazing with perplexity at a microcosm of the modern world.

Edwin recognizes that there is a greater significance to be gleaned from the scene which for the moment eludes him. He asks his companion, Charlie Orgreave, "Why should they choose just this place to make crocks in?" (C, p. 19), an inquiry which for the time being goes unanswered. His curiosity about manufacture and by implication the broader questions posed by industrialized society is a device that is used to test Edwin's education in the novel. During the excitement of his first week in the printing office, for instance, "he forgot to inquire why earthenware was made in just the Five Towns" (C, p. 98). When asked the same question nearly twenty years later, however, Edwin's response indicates that he has learned a great deal in the interim.
The connection between the girl and the horse is characteristic of the relationships that exist in the social and personal worlds of Clayhanger. The industrial society relies on the efforts of an entire class of workers, who, like the horse, labour in poverty, terrible working conditions and ill-treatment. In each of the instances cited earlier in reference to the oligarchic nature of the society, the dehumanization of the working classes is conveyed by means of animal imagery. In the personal sphere the punishment that is exacted on the horse is similar to the way that Edwin is treated by both Darius and Hilda, and he often feels like an animal in their presence. But the child, in her tattered clothing, is also a victim, and in order to suggest the universality of individual suffering, Darius Clayhanger, member of the social elite and tormentor of his son, is likened to animals throughout the book.

During the Sunday school Centenary the children in St. Luke's Square are "penned like sheep, and driven to and fro like sheep by anxious and officious rosettes" (C, p. 224). And like the animals they are compared to, "They knew not precisely why they were there" (C, p. 224). The adults who lead them into the Square are likened to "hens" and "peacocks" (C, p. 215). Edwin, who while escorting Hilda through the crowd remains unconscious
of the condition he shares with the suffering masses, feels that "they seemed to have no more in common with himself and her than animals had" (C, p. 225). The striking potters, on the other hand, are like a pack of wild dogs: "Angry howls shot up here and there, snappish, menacing, and bestial" (C, p. 283). One of them is described shouting with a "tigerish passion" (C, p. 283), a phrase which relates back to the rebellious boy, "a captured tiger" (C, p. 44), who is whipped in front of the young Darius at the Bastille. After their meeting, the strikers get drunk in the public houses and then brawl in the streets: "they were driven to brutishness" (C, p. 286). During the by-election Edwin refers to the easily manipulated lower classes as "Sheep" (C, p. 411), and while in Brighton he pitied the "ragged snarling touts who had fawned to him at the station" (C, p. 439).

In the novel's personal realm, Darius treats his son with less care and consideration than he would a dog. During the portrait of Edwin's inadequate education it is noted that "His father had enjoyed success with dogs through treating them as individuals. But it had not happened to him, nor to anybody in authority, to treat Edwin as an individual" (C, p. 25). At the end of Book One, the reader discovers that Darius gave
up his hobby of breeding dogs because it interfered with his all-important business (C, p. 142). It is hardly likely that such a man will allow his son to pursue his dreams, especially if they appear to endanger his firm. When Edwin sees his father and Mr. Shushions talking together, "He sidled, just like an animal, to the doorway . . ." (C, p. 35) in an unsuccessful effort to avoid them. After Darius gratefully bestows the supervision of the newspaper subscriptions upon his unwilling son, Edwin feels like a captured animal: "He felt it round him as a net which somehow he had to cut" (C, p. 116). When Hilda approaches him in the new house Edwin is struck with a similar sensation: "she could push up a window--she would doubtless mount the stairs and trap him!" (C, p. 206).

Darius Clayhanger's repeated association with animals emphasizes the intense misery to which he has been subjected. At the Bastille he and his family are depicted as standing beside its perpendicular walls "like flies against a kennel" (C, p. 44). He is twice described as having a mouth like a seal (C, p. 32, p. 329), and Edwin calls him, not to his face one night, "Loathsome beast!" (C, p. 251) and a "'rhinoceros'" (C, p. 291). He is often troubled with dyspepsia because he eats "exactly as if throwing food to a wild
animal concealed somewhere within the hemisphere..." (C, p. 156). The animal imagery employed in the first two books of the novel is utilized increasingly after his illness. As he surveys the shop before signing over his power of attorney to Edwin, he wows about like "a wild animal, or like a domestic animal violently expelled" (C, p. 348). Darius, the man who once treated his son as a creature inferior to a dog, breathes "like a blown dog that has fallen" (C, p. 405), and he seems in his devotion to his nurse "to fear and love her as a dog its master" (C, p. 403). The horrific imagery of insects crawling over carrion is used to describe his condition in Book Three. Edwin thinks of his family taking advantage of his father in his illness: "they must settle on the old man instantly, like flies on a carcass!" (C, p. 354). As he writhes on his bed in the final stages of his illness, "his body seemed to have that vague appearance of general movement which a multitude of insects will give to a piece of decaying matter" (C, p. 403). And at the very last, he becomes simply "the human animal in its lonely struggle" (C, p. 407).

On one occasion in Clayhanger animal imagery is used in reference to both the social and personal worlds. During the celebration of Queen Victoria's Silver Jubilee, an incident that Bennett also refers to in a story
entitled "Baby's Bath" in *The Grim Smile of the Five Towns*, almost all the upper strata desert the town, leaving behind them "the poor, the spiritless, the afflicted, and the captive" (C, p. 364). The Jubilee, in other words, simply stresses the gulf separating the lower classes from the upper. In order to expiate their sense of guilt, the city fathers arrange for an ox to be roasted and feasted upon by the "aged poor" (C, p. 367) of the town. But the roasted ox, instead of augmenting the celebration, spoils in the hot weather and thus reinforces the desolation of those who are left in the town: "The spectacle was obscene, nauseating to the eye, the nose and the ear. . . . Above the tortured and insulted corpse the air quivered in large waves" (C, p. 366).

Edwin is transfixed by this scene because he associates his father's physical debasement with the indignity to which the ox is subjected. Edwin, moreover, imagines the rest of the family feasting on Darius' misfortune, and willingly consuming spoiled flesh, in order to ensure their personal futures: "He pictured the repasts with savage gloating detestation—burnt ox, and more burnt ox, and the false odious brightness of a family determined to be mutually helpful and inspiring" (C, p. 368). He is visited with a similar suspicion on the first evening.
of Darius' illness when Maggie "had transformed the meal into a kind of abnormal horrible feast by serving cold beef and pickles—flesh-meat being unknown to the suppers of the Clayhangers save occasionally on Sundays" (C, p. 331). In both cases, Darius is the symbolic meat upon which they feast. Edwin is especially sympathetic to his father in this instance because as a young man Darius once treated him "like a burnt sacrifice" (C, p. 63).

One reason why the social oligarchy is relatively stable is that the police, acting as agents of the upper echelons, suppress the animal energies of the mob. At the Centenary they throw up "a line of constables which yielded only to processions and to the bearers of special rosettes" (C, p. 224). It is one of these constables who attempts to manage the victim, Mr. Shushions. Policemen also appear to break up the squabble among the drunken strikers (C, p. 289). In Brighton, the separation of the classes is ensured by the presence of "enormous policemen, respectfully bland, confident in the system which had chosen and fattened them..." (C, p. 438). Police also figure in Edwin's personal world as surrogates for his harsh, repressive father. On his way home from school for the last time, Edwin passes "an immense constable, clad in white trousers, with a gun under his arm for the killing of mad dogs..." (C,
p. 28). He feels threatened by the authority figure, whom he soon must confront over the matter of his career, to such an extent that he fears being killed out of hand, like a rabid dog. After meeting Hilda in the new house Edwin sees a policeman on his beat as he strolls home, and when he reaches his destination he can recall nothing of the walk "save for the policeman" (C, p. 212). The figure of the constable, who represents repressive authority, suggests that Edwin's burgeoning feelings for Hilda are in some way illicit and that they will ultimately bring him into conflict with Darius.

An image that is linked with the police is the criminal, a condition that appears to be the consequence of suffering. While the only actual malcontent in Clayhanger is George Cannon, who is imprisoned for bigamy, the behaviour of the police towards the lower classes suggests that they are considered almost inherently criminal. The Bastille, for example, is a symbol of this relationship between poverty and crime. The image, however, is used extensively in Edwin's personal sphere, thereby demonstrating the universality of human misery and anguish. Mr. Shushions' longevity, for instance, is somehow transmogrified into a kind of vice: "Mr. Shushions's sole crime against society was that he had forgotten to die" (C, p. 238). Darius, after
he becomes ill, is like a criminal for whom "Nothing was real except imprisonment on a bed..." (C, p. 404).

Edwin and Maggie, when confronted with an example of their father's decline, try to remember that he "was a victim and not a criminal" (C, p. 360). These examples, of course, metaphorically connect Darius' imprisonment in the Bastille with his condition as an invalid.

Edwin often considers himself a culprit of some kind in his relations with his father and Hilda. He thinks to himself, for instance, that "it was not a crime... to wish not to be a printer" (C, p. 62). As he prepares to write to his father of his architectural hopes, he gathers his material together "tripping like a thief" (C, p. 135). He justifies his presence in the new house by instinctively thinking that "He was engaged in no crime" (C, p. 177). When he approaches Darius to inform him that he plans to marry, "In spite of himself he felt like a criminal" (C, p. 294). This image is also manifested in Darius' accusation of theft. Prior to Hilda's desertion, Edwin in his love for her is compared to "a prisoner on whom the gate of freedom is shut for ever" (C, p. 268). In Book Four, however, Edwin's sense of wrong-doing in Hilda's presence is intensified. At the prospect of meeting her again, he thinks it odd that "he should feel like a criminal, should have the crimi-
nal's shifting downcast glance!" (C, p. 430). She makes him feel variously "like a criminal" (C, p. 445), "like a thief, like a spy" (C, p. 514) and, after their initial encounter, that he has committed "a perfect crime of clumsiness" (C, p. 450). In These Twain Edwin recognizes these experiences of his own when he assists the sinner, George Cannon, to start a new life.

Elevation, as in Anna of the Five Towns and The Old Wives' Tale, is used occasionally for symbolic purposes in Clayhanger. It is most evident at the Sunday school Centenary when the upper classes watch the poor from windows high above St. Luke's Square. Edwin's position in this scene is of interest because he rents barrels for Hilda and himself from which the Square is "suddenly revealed as a mass of swarming heads" (C, p. 228). The barrel places Edwin halfway between the social poles, and it signifies his intellectual detachment from the scene: it is while in this position that he recognizes the primitivism of the spectacle he is witnessing. It is also while Edwin and Hilda are still on their barrels, and view the crowd "in the lordly and negligent manner of people on a height ..." (C, p. 232), that Mr. Shushions reappears. At Hilda's insistence, Edwin is forced to descend from the barrel, thereby relinquishing his removed perspective, and to immerse himself in the
multitude: "Descended from the barrel, he was merely
an item in the loose-packed crowd" (C, p. 234). He is
now among those whom moments before he had regarded as
victims, and it is at this point that he first realizes
he shares Mr. Shushions' suffering: thus his relative
elevation in this scene is used to underscore his
insight. Elevation, used properly to relieve pain, is
an implicit aspect of Hilda's gesture, wherein the
strong stoop to aid the weak.

Height in other instances in Clayhanger is asso-
ciated with learning and depth with human misery and
degradation. Edwin selects an attic, for instance, as
the site of his project of self-improvement. Darius is
allowed by his teacher, as a reward for his diligence,
"to sit, during lessons, on the topmost visible step of
the winding stair" (C, p. 37). Mr. Shushions later takes
Darius "up into the deserted gallery of the chapel" (C,
p. 38), where he gives him a Bible as a present before
entering the working world. But unlike his son, Darius
is forced into the metaphorical and actual cellars of
human experience where life is brutalized: "He descended
by twenty steps to his toil, and worked in a long cellar
which never received any air... and never any day-
light at all" (C, p. 41). The mark of this episode is
left on Darius forever, and as a result he is linked with
cellars later in the novel. The feral creature that lives within him is never visible but occasionally can be heard "in its dark dungeon" (C, p. 156). The curses he hurls at Maggie after he becomes ill are provoked because she won't let him grow mushrooms in the cellar. It is also worth noting that the primitive deity who enters into Edwin's vision during the Centenary, and whom Hepburn regards as a surrogate of Darius, occupies a cellar.22

Edwin is perceived in Clayhanger through the eyes of those whose familiarity with him ranges from that of a complete stranger to family and friends, and in this manner the narrator, like the images discussed above, is instrumental in joining the book's social and personal worlds. Edwin's bedroom in the new house, for instance, is described from the perspective of a complete stranger: "A stranger entering would have beheld a fair-sized room, a narrow bed, two chairs. . . . A stranger might have said in its praise that it was light and airy" (C, p. 244). He is often viewed through the eyes of the community as a whole: "His first passage down Trafalgar Road to business was notoriously hurried; the whole thoroughfare was acquainted with its special character" (C, p. 314). After he takes over from Darius it becomes common knowledge "that between nine and ten he could not be seen at
the shop" (C, p. 418). In his personal world, the chief commentator on his behaviour is his father. Janet Orgreave also ruminates upon his appearance at some length at the beginning of Book Two: "She had never been able to decide whether or not he was good-looking ..." (C, p. 153). Edwin, to young George Cannon, is "the great bearded man" (C, p. 475), and Auntie Hamp's also recalls his hirsute appearance when she thinks of her nephew, "The bearded Edwin, one of the chief tradesmen in town" (C, p. 424).

The view of Edwin as a member of his community is occasionally employed in Clayhanger to emphasize the inadequacy of external appearance as an indicator of one's inner thoughts and emotions. After his intense experience during the Centenary festivities, for example, Edwin is abruptly depicted from a detached perspective: the "people who . . . were strolling slowly away, saw a fair young man, in a stylish suit, evidently belonging to the aloof classes, gazing at nothing whatever, with his hands elegantly in his pockets" (C, p. 239). Indeed, his appearance is so misleading that "few of the mature people who saw him daily . . . could have believed him to be acquainted with sorrow like their sorrows" (C, p. 279). This technique is similar to the practice of suddenly altering perspective that is utilized in The
Old Wise's Tale.

These various views of Edwin, aside from uniting the novel's social and personal spheres, comprise a multi-faceted portrait of the protagonist that is not directly attributable to the narrator. This impression of objectivity, however, conceals the fact that the novel is narrated from a point of view that is very near to Edwin's. Indeed, the narrator is unable to enter the minds of other characters except insofar as they reflect on Edwin. Hilda Lessways, for example, is depicted entirely from Edwin's perspective which serves to heighten her aura of mystery. The sole exception to the narrator's concentration on Edwin is Darius, whose childhood history and thoughts on a wide range of subjects are described. The detailed portrait of Darius shows him to be the victim of his past experiences and not the illogical despot of Edwin's fancy. Once his suffering becomes visible after his breakdown, however, the narrator regards him with increasing detachment.

Clayhanger is the first novel in Bennett's Clayhanger trilogy: the other two volumes are Hilda Lessways and These Twain. Hilda Lessways, which is narrated as exclusively from Hilda's viewpoint as Clayhanger is from Edwin's, covers the years 1878 to 1881, during which the
heroine meets both George Cannon and Edwin and marries the former. These Twain begins shortly after Edwin and Hilda's marriage and concludes in 1897 when they are on the verge of moving away from the Five Towns. A fourth novel, The Roll-Call, is related to the trilogy in that it depicts the career of George Cannon, Edwin's adopted son, as a London architect.

The other two novels in the trilogy are inferior to Clayhanger, although they contain several similar elements. Hilda Lessways, like the youthful Edwin Clayhanger, is motivated by a powerful but unfocused wish to develop herself, and at the end of the novel, despite the mishaps that befall her, her desire to learn is not extinguished. Indeed, she feels that she has developed as a consequence of the vagaries of fate to which she has been subjected. These Twain, on the other hand, is concerned with development within the circumscribed area of marriage. The learning that is achieved is not a bilateral movement towards marital harmony, but rather a reiteration of Edwin's acceptance at the end of Clayhanger of Hilda's energetic but contradictory personality. This novel is much more satisfying than Hilda Lessways, but its rather modest range of concern limits its value.
Both Hilda Lessways and These Twain lack the comprehensive social vision that lends a further dimension to Edwin's education and adds a greater weight to his insight. Hilda Lessways, for example, is set in various locales—Turnhill and Bursley in the Five Towns, as well as London and Brighton—but since Hilda is not as interested as Edwin in her surroundings the reader learns little about the society that she occupies. The social background of These Twain, however, is described in greater detail than that of Hilda Lessways, and it exhibits the same concern for the downtrodden, though not expressed with the same intensity, that figures in Clayhanger. Edwin, as the enlightened employer, is troubled by the effect that industrialization has upon his workers, while the tour of Dartmoor prison, like the Bastille scene in Clayhanger, shows human beings in a state of extreme misery.
Notes

1 In *The Journals of Arnold Bennett*, ed. Newman Flower (London: Cassell, 1932), I, 333 (Oct. 21, 1909), Bennett remarks that in order to assemble the novel's social background he has read "When I Was a Child [a memoir of life in the Potteries] and all I need of Shaw's North Staffordshire Potteries, and tonight re-read the 'Social and Industrial' Section of the Victoria History." He later remarks--*The Journals*, I, 339 (Nov. 19, 1909)--that he has made a "list of all social, political, and artistic events, which I thought possibly useful for my novel between 1872 and 1882."


3 In *Arnold Bennett* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1967), p. 30, John Wain suggests that Edwin belongs to "a fragile social layer, a thin, delicate shell of middle-class refinement which supports itself, somehow, over the dark and seething mass of the populace." There is, however, little sense that, as Wain seems to imply, the activities of the poor could lead to a violent social upheaval. Change, it would appear, can be effected only if the social leaders recognize the commonality of human suffering and act upon their realization. It should also be made clear that those in power in *Clayhanger* are the middle-class--independent businessmen like Darius--and not members of the aristocracy, who only occasionally figure in the Five Towns fiction. Many of the middle-class characters, like Darius, have only recently emerged from the proletariat, and if anything this common heritage makes them more suspicious of the lower classes.

4 As this instance indicates and as Edwin's background as a whole corroborates, Bennett draws deeply on his personal experience in *Clayhanger*. 
The distinction between the author and the narrator, as a consequence, is often more blurred than it is in the other novels. The novel is related from a perspective that is similar to Edwin's, and first person narration is used more frequently and much less effectively than it is in The Old Wives' Tale.

The Journals, I, 363. (Jan. 11, 1910)

In Arnold Bennett: Romantic Realist (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1971), p. 40, Walter Wright states that the Brighton section of Clayhanger and the related passage in the Journal constitute Bennett's "most nearly explicit expressions of socialism."

In Clayhanger the separation between personal and social worlds that takes place in both sisters' lives in The Old Wives' Tale is apparent from the outset. It is immediately evident that the novel's social world is national in scope and that Edwin's circle of family and friends is representative of only a certain element of British society, whereas characters like Henry Mynors and Ephraim Tellwright in Anna of the Five Towns are social leaders as well as important figures in Anna's personal life.


Before naming Clayhanger, Bennett--The Journals, I, 339 (Nov. 19, 1909)--briefly considered another title for the novel: "Still lacking a title for it. If I thought an ironic title would do, I would call it 'A thoughtful young man.' But the public is so damned slow in the uptake." This discarded title suggests Edwin's priggishness in the first part of the book and stresses the length of time that it does take him to educate himself.


14 The friction between father and son is one of the ways in which Clayhanger exhibits a similarity to the Bildungsroman. In Season of Youth (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1974), p. 19, Jerome Buckley notes that one feature of the Bildungsroman is "a living father who mistrusts and seeks to thwart his [the hero's] strongest drives and fondest desires."

15 In The Journals, I, 343 (Dec. 8, 1909), Bennett, after an evening at the theatre, makes a note that later is used as the source of the clog dance scene in the novel: "I was profoundly struck by all sorts of things. In particular by the significance of clog-dancing, which had never occurred to me before."

16 The hymn from which this phrase is taken is by Richard Heber, "Hymn. 280," Methodist Hymn and Tune Book (Toronto: Wm. Briggs, 1918). The full stanza supports the primitiveness and universal nature of Edwin's vision:

> From Greenland's icy mountains,
> From India's coral strand,
> Where Afric's sunny fountains
> Roll down their golden sand,
> From many an ancient river,
> From many a palmy plain,
> They call us to deliver
> Their land from error's chain.

17 Buckley, p. 13.

18 Edwin's desire to become an architect at the beginning of the novel stems largely from an ardent wish to avoid working 'for Darius, rather than from an inherent fascination with the profession. When he discovers a volume containing illustrations of European capitals, his interest appears self-induced: "At first his interest in them . . . was less instinctive than deliberate" (C, p. 68). It should also be kept in mind that architecture was at the time considered an attractive profession, combining the skills of the engineer with those of the artist. Thus Edwin's architectural interest is another indication of his callowness at the start of Clayhanger.
It should be noted that the dense fog also seems to isolate the lovers from the world and thus enhance Edwin's sense of the universal. Pathetic fallacy is employed in other instances in the novel to stress the tumultuous character of Edwin and Hilda's relationship. It begins to rain at their tryst in the new house, and later when Hilda tours the printing shop she must make her way "Through November Pain" (C., p. 270). Edwin visits Hilda in Brighton when the wind is blowing at almost gale force: "Preston Street was dark and lonely. The wind charged furiously through it, panting towards the downs" (C., p. 443).

In "Manning, Henry Edward," DNB, 2nd ed. (1917), XII, 952, James McMullen Rigg notes that Cardinal Manning was a well-known advocate of labour's right to protect itself from exploitation, and during the 1880's he served on royal commissions on working class housing and education. Another figure of national import, Charles Parnell, who dies in Book Four, was best known as a supporter of Irish rights. Their deaths suggest that the new order requires not just leadership, but leadership that is mixed with compassion for human suffering. The condition of the working man and the Irish question, it might be added, figures in *Clayhanger* as examples of social injustice.

The symbolic quality that Edwin attaches to the new house is an association that is made in other Edwardian fiction and in part is linked to the contemporary fascination with architecture. Perhaps the most famous of these houses can be found in Forster's *Howards End*, but other emblematic dwelling places appear in Wells' *Tono-Bungay* and Galsworthy's *A Man of Property*. Richard Gill studies such houses in *Happy Rural Seat* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1972), while Jefferson Hunter devotes a chapter of *Edwardian Fiction*, "The Backward Hunt for the Homely," (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1982), pp. 189-214, to a similar discussion.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

After the publication of *The Old Wives' Tale* in 1908, Bennett was conscious that he had almost fulfilled the literary potential that he had discovered in the Potteries as early in his career as 1897. He remarks, in a letter to Edward Garnett written on November 23, 1908, that "I have no intention of sticking exclusively to the Five Towns. I often feel that I am short of room there."¹ This sense of confinement and completion in the Five Towns' landscape led him to declare unequivocally in 1912 that "I shall only write two more books about them [the Five Towns], as I have exhausted my material there, & besides I want to write about London--largely because so many people seem to be convinced that I can't write about London."² After *The Price of Love* (1914) and *These Twain* (1916), Bennett used London as the major setting for his fiction and with a few minor exceptions wrote nothing more about the Five Towns.

Before Bennett was able to turn his attention to London, however, an event occurred that altered the world beyond recognition. The First World War devas-
tated the contract between man and society that, although under increasingly greater strain, was still a fundamental assumption of most Edwardian fiction. Richard Ellman, writing about the war's impact on the Edwardians, observes that it "made everything harder. The Edwardian confidence in artistic sensibility was broken down; the possibility of nothingness seems to replace the conviction of somethingness." The post-war sense of "nothingness" was largely responsible for the emergence of modernism which was chiefly concerned with an exploration of literary representations of consciousness and self.

Realism was not necessarily an inappropriate tool with which to render the altered relationship between the individual and his social order, but it did have to be adapted in order to meet the conditions of the post-war milieu. Writers like John DosPassos, V. S. Pritchett, Graham Greene, Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald all discovered methods of adjusting realism to the modern environment. But Bennett, like his Edwardian coevals Wells and Galsworthy, was for the most part unable to make the adjustments required to portray the altered world with fidelity. One commentator remarks that Mr. Prohack represents "a seamless continuation of Edwardian England," a judgment that might be applied equally to books like Lilian and The Imperial Palace.
It is only in two novels written after World War One, Riceymen Steps and Lord Raingo, that Bennett can be said to have successfully adapted realism to the post-war environment, and as a result these works can be regarded as a continuation of the interests that dominate him in the Five Towns fiction. The universe described in both books readily separates into social and personal worlds, but unlike the earlier works there is little contiguity between them. In both instances, Bennett's main attention is focused upon the characters' personal lives, while their social context appears to be superficial or simply irrelevant to the author's concern. Riceymen Square, for example, is situated in the heart of London, but it remains relatively isolated throughout the novel from the surrounding metropolis. Sam Raingo, on the other hand, is a successful businessman who becomes a peer and a minister of the crown during the course of the book, yet his worldly accomplishments seem trivial when compared to the serious issues, such as love and death, that he is confronted with in his personal life.

The personal worlds of both novels are dominated by forces of decay that the protagonists are unable to either halt or comprehend. Lord Raingo is preoccupied with his health from the book's outset; in its opening
scene, for example, he undergoes a medical examination in order to allay his fears about the condition of his heart, and in the final third of the novel he falls ill and gradually deteriorates until he dies from a combination of pneumonia and pleurisy. He is also surrounded by death and suffering in the lives of those close to him: his wife, Adele, is killed in a traffic accident; Delphine, his mistress, commits suicide over a suitor who was killed in the war; and his son, Geoffrey, is a shell-shocked war veteran. This list of misfortune conveys to the reader a sense of meaninglessness that is intensified when it is contrasted with the pettiness of the political transactions that are carried out in the novel's social world.

In Riceyman Steps Bennett re-examines a character type, the miser, that he had studied frequently in the Five Towns books. Henry Earlforward, unlike Ephraim Tellwright, is not a power in business circles, nor is his miserliness balanced by an affectionate temperament, like that of Jimmie Ollerenshaw in Helen with the High Hand. Earlforward's parsimony is manifested as a denial of all pleasures, even those, like taking proper nourishment, that are necessary for his well-being. The tentative efforts made by Violet, the widow he marries during the course of the novel, to alter this state of affairs
are, predictably, futile. Bennett expresses Earlforward's condition of spiritual stagnancy as a physical disorder, the stomach cancer that ultimately causes his death. His decline, which like that of Lord Raingo occupies a considerable portion of the book, is contrasted with the instinct for self-preservation exhibited by his servant, Elsie, whose need for food increases in direct proportion to her master's deteriorations.

Unlike the characters of the Five Towns fiction, the protagonists of these two novels show little understanding of the forces that govern their worlds. Sam Raingo, who in his skilful handling of political machinations might be likened to a character out of C. P. Snow's Corridors of Power, is at a loss when faced with the disintegration that prevails in his personal world. Although he does not fear death, his indifference appears to stem more from a lack of imagination than from comprehension of what is happening to him. Henry Earlforward's parsimoniousness, on the other hand, remains remarkably consistent throughout Riceyman Steps; indeed, he dies in the very act of inspecting the contents of his safe. Elsie's resistance to the disease that surrounds her in Riceyman Square is not acquired through learning but is rather an instinctive, almost reflexive response.
The adjustments that Bennett makes in his use of realism are also evident stylistically. In *Lord Raingo*, for instance, he makes a much greater effort than in his earlier work to depict the psychological make-up of his central character. It must be noted that this attempt is only partially successful and the section of the novel that makes the most extensive use of psychological realism, Sam Raingo's protracted ratiocinations during his fatal illness, fails to capture the reader's interest. Bennett demonstrates considerable mastery, on the other hand, in his use of symbolism in *Riceyman Steps*, and certain of these symbols, like the windows that Elsie scrupulously cleans, derive from the typology that he institutes in the *Five Towns* fiction.

Bennett's view of the world in *Riceyman Steps* and *Lord Raingo* as well as in the Potteries fiction is that of a realist. The *Five Towns* books, however, were written at a point in time when interest in the relationship between man and society was yielding to the kind of exploration of the individual consciousness that is characteristic of the modern novel. Nevertheless, it is unwise to dismiss Bennett simply because his concerns do not coincide with those of modernism. Indeed, despite the fictional directions taken by such writers as Joyce and Woolf, realism has continued to
occupy a prominent place in modern writing. One of the
many writers who comes to mind in this respect is
Margaret Laurence, whose Manawaka novels comprise a
fictional landscape that she uses, like Bennett in the
Five Towns works, to examine the relationship between
the individual and the outer world. The correspondence
between the Manawaka books and the Five Towns fiction
can even be extended to several of the individual novels.
A Jest of God and Anna of the Five Towns, for example,
both concern emotionally repressed, single women, who
are chained to demanding parents, while the aging pro-
cess is studied closely in both The Stone Angel and The
Old Wives' Tale.

Anna of the Five Towns, The Old Wives' Tale and
Clayhanger, like the Manawaka fiction of Margaret
Laurence, transcend their setting and the particular
age in which they were written. The various world
views that Bennett advances in these three novels are
still recognizable, while the need to learn that moti-
vates his characters is a theme that, in one form or
another, is central to all literature. The skillfulness
with which he expresses his major concerns is worthy of
particular note, since a deficiency in style has been
one of the chief criticisms of his work. The time has
come to set aside the judgments of the past and to begin
to evaluate Bennett's writing on its own merit.
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