

This article discusses the notion of architectural space in two novels by Jane Austen and Thomas Hardy. Hardy was for a time an architectural draughtsman and a member of the AA (his name was removed from the membership list in 1872 after he defaulted in his subscription!) Austen's primary interest was in people. As Pevsner says in his pioneering essay, 'The architectural setting of Jane Austen's Novels'

(Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes volume 31 1968, pp.404-22) 'she is without exception vague, when it comes to describing buildings.'

Julienne Hanson's essay is based on a study carried out at University College London, under the direction of Bill Hillier and Adrian Leaman.

TIME & SPACE in two nineteenth century novels

Julienne Hanson

It is possible to trace major structural changes in the form of the novel; Williams notes that one such development occurred in the 1840s, between the era of Austen and Hardy, which he relates to new forms of consciousness within society.¹ Barthes traces similar developments in French literature of the period.² One of the most striking of these changes, is the emergence of *milieu*. From playing an insignificant part, time and space become manifest and significant to the narrative. It is proposed to explore the abstract issues regarding novels as social artifacts by focusing upon the more concrete problem of contrasting the categories of space and time in two novels by Austen and Hardy respectively,³ in the light of the hypothesis that Austen's novels appear to be 'mechanically solid' in the Durkheimian sense, (the space/time continuum is suppressed) whilst those of Hardy appear to be 'organically solid' (the space/time continuum is highlighted).⁴

Pride and Prejudice

A case study in mechanical solidarity?

In his introduction to *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* Durkheim explores in detail the spatio-temporal and social implications of mechanical solidarity in 'primitive' societies.⁵ These societies are characterised by a lesser development of individuality. A similar homogeneity is experienced in the external circumstances of the group. Mechanically solid societies display a minimum of difference or variations, with a characteristic intellectual and moral conformity. All grounds for dissent are removed or deliberately suppressed. People behave in a similar way, even to stereotyped movements. Participation in culture and social ritual is collective; all is egalitarian, uniform and simple. Conformity of conduct and of thought tend to result in the repression of the individual and the dominance of the collective. Everything is reduced to the indispensable—mechanical solidarity results in a society of essences.⁶

Mechanically solid societies tend to be impervious

to history; they reproduce mechanically the effects which are the reason for their existence. Society is not galvanised by any concept of evolution or progress, but on the contrary, social investment is made in preserving established procedures and practices. Time exists through a spotlighting of social events, as opposed to an historical continuum. Similarly, the social organisation is the model for the spatial organisation, and exists as a reproduction of it. Tribal space is defined with the help of a conceptualised topography.⁶ Just as 'primitive' societies are surrounded by the substance of history, yet remain oblivious of it, so Austen suppresses the historical and temporal context of her novels, and concentrates upon the social context. *Pride and Prejudice* is typical of Jane Austen's novels in that it is set in an aspatial rural locality, in Hertfordshire. The reader has the suspicion that any location would suffice, provided it were approximately 40 miles from London. Within this anonymous locality, is scattered a network of villages and country houses which constitutes the socially acceptable community. The village of Longbourn, for example, derives its sole importance from the fact that the Bennets are the principal (and so far as the reader is aware, the only) inhabitants. No further details of the spatial qualities of Longbourn are furnished. Similarly, Meryton, one mile from Longbourn (in any direction) is significant only because it acts as the focus for social relations, such as the monthly assemblies. Neighbours are not the people who live in the same village, but those who are socially recognised, and thus may be visited. Across her undifferentiated rural background Austen scatters a series of nodes, Lucas Lodge, Netherfield Park, Longbourn, Meryton. The remainder of the space is simply not seen, and is therefore not described.

Towns are likewise aspatial; they are symbols rather than physically-experienced places. Watering places, and seaside resorts appear as socially evil influences. All Austen's elopements and affairs take place in such resorts as Bath, Lyme or Southend; Ramsgate is the scene of Miss Darcy's projected elopement, and Brighton that of Lydia's actual elopement, in *Pride and Prejudice*. London is seen as an ambiguity, symbolic, on the one hand as the source of refinement, culture and Society whilst on the other, it is 'at war with all respectable attachments' and the source of vice and evil. Both aspects are balanced, perhaps cancelled out, in *Pride and Prejudice*. Darcy, as the arbiter of good taste, has a house in Town, (the 'correct' part of Town, Grosvenor Street), and the advantages of London tutors are sought for Miss Darcy, Miss De Bough, and Miss Bingley. Unfortunately, as well as being a resort of polite society, London is also a place of trade. One of Elizabeth Bennet's misfortunes is her low connections in Cheapside, in the form of an uncle in trade, who lives within sight of his warehouses. This paradox is mediated formally in society, by the regulation of visits

between fashionable and impure areas of town.⁷ Here, space serves as a social insulator. Informally, the paradox is mediated through the demonstration of Mr Gardiner's moral worth, which enables Darcy to sustain the connection with 'fortitude'. Interestingly, London is described as 'full' or 'thin', denoting not a scattering of settlement, but a density of polite society.

The exception to this aspatiality is Darcy's country house at Pemberly, which is a bounded zone of internal complexity, in the form of an ideal, as opposed to a real, estate. Pemberly House resolves a typical neo-classical problem of the combination of man's art in improving and correcting nature's faults, with his taste in following and enhancing nature's qualities. Every room is well-proportioned, lofty and handsome, each prospect is an object of delight, all the furnishings are tasteful. 'Elizabeth was delighted. She had never seen a place where nature had done more, or where natural beauty had been so little counteracted by an awkward taste'.⁸

Small nodes in the landscape formed by Lucas Lodge or Longbourn have a shrubbery, or wilderness, 'contrived' in accordance with the principles of good taste. The word 'contrived' is used here advisedly, for in all Austen's novels, nature is subverted to social purposes. Man-nature relations are transformed into man-man relationships, through the concept of improvement.⁷ It must be remembered that land is seen here primarily as an index of wealth and status. It is not only the foundation of wealth, but the improvement of country houses absorbs much of the increase in wealth of the land-owning oligarchy, derived from the enclosure of estates, agricultural improvements, fortunes made in trade, or from military success.

In Austen's countryside, there is no such thing as a natural landscape. Even the countryside between nodes is subverted to social purposes, taking the form of an opposition between the *picturesque* landscape, which is unnaturally deformed, and the *utilitarian*, which is unnaturally ordered.¹⁰ Apart from serving as a focus for aesthetic disputes, the country is merely a place to walk, a source of 'novelty and amusement' as a focus for social outings to view the scenery of the Lakes or the Peak District, and a place where the weather occurs.

The countryside of Austen is not a place which is farmed. This is striking, in view of the social unrest resulting from the Parliamentary Enclosures,¹¹ consolidation of estates, the obliteration of whole villages to form new prospects, the disappearance of common land, the introduction of the copyhold, rises in rent, Spennhamland, the increase in vagrancy, Poor Rates, fluctuating grain prices, incendiarism and rioting, and rural depopulation.

The careful reader is aware that Mr Bennet has a farm, and that Charlotte manages domestic fowl, but the running of estates or farms is entrusted to agents or tenants who do not exist socially. The poor exist merely as objects to be patronised. Austen transforms the working sub-structure of the productive process into a super-structure of social improvement, which is thus isolated and focused in minute detail.

The suppression of contemporary political and social life renders Austen's novels atemporal as well as aspatial. The action of *Pride and Prejudice* is galvanised by the arrival of Mr Bingley at Netherfield Hall, and is concluded once her heroine has been steered to marriage, on a settled

plane of absolute and infinite bliss. Within the novel, a series of social events are spotlighted within the undifferentiated stream of time, Jane's visit to Netherfield, Mr Collins' visit to Longbourn, Mr Bingley's party, Elizabeth's visit to Hunsford Parsonage, Elizabeth's visit to Pemberley, Lydia's stay in Brighton, Lady Catherine's call to Longbourn, Darcy's visit and proposal.

Each social event moves the action forward towards the inevitable conclusion. Social time is constructed from two 'seasons'. On the one hand, the 'social season' regulates the passage of rituals, the length of time of calls, the correct measure of constancy and affection, and the appropriate times for social relief from oppressive situations. On the other hand, the 'natural seasons' regulate the passage of sentiments presenting an idealised picture of the man-nature relationship.

The repression of actual physical space and time leads to a highlighting of social space and time, which is regulated by rituals to which all the participants in the action conform.¹² Boundaries are drawn in the social space of Austen's novels, which all her characters recognise and respect. Precise rules of etiquette dictate who may be introduced to whom, a problem which pre-occupies Mrs Bennet at the opening of *Pride and Prejudice*. Those who contravene the correct forms of social behaviour are ostracised. Mr Collins, taking advantage of his socially ambiguous position as a clergyman, dares to introduce himself to Darcy, and is consequently snubbed. Lady Catherine De Bough, equally nice in her regulation of social space, stops her carriage at the gate of Hunsford Parsonage, but rarely deigns to descend or enter the house, except with the air of one who is conveying a great privilege. In Austen's society, the movement of a chair may be employed to signify sympathy or withdrawal. In a clearly stratified class society, there are invisible restrictions, boundaries and chasms, which the properly differential person will not traverse. Elizabeth is certain that there is 'a gulf impassable' between herself and Darcy, after the elopement of Lydia and Wickham. All physical contact is minimised, emotion is conveyed by a look or a blush. Inevitably the social takes precedence over the individual; consequently the social space is repressive. Elizabeth takes refuge in her room, 'so that she might think with freedom'. Mr Bennet forms a sacrosanct space in his library, to which he retires from the interminable rituals of the family and society. Conventional devices, such as low conversations in public places disguised by music or other social behaviour, alleviate the repression. To advance the plot, these are often overheard, or misinterpreted. Even the forms of social ritual conducted within social space are remarkably similar to those of mechanically solid societies – dances, dinners, evening entertainments – which are ceremonies and celebrations of the values of the community.

All this serves to define and regulate a kind of elaborated 'kinship system' for the transmission of wealth and culture, within a small section of society, high bourgeois society, and the landed country families and minor aristocracy. The yeoman farmers define the lower end of this 'knowable community', and the rank of knighthood defines the upper limit.¹⁷ Within this limited social group, minute differences of property and connections are observed with scrupulous accuracy. It is a matter of some moment just who may be 'connected' to whom, and the settlement and resolution of paradoxes is made with precision by Jane Austen, through a series of marriages, false-marriages, elopements, secret engagements, and contracts, in which actual wealth and moral virtues are accurately balanced. These moral settlements, removed from any real social, spatial or temporal basis, appear to have the veracity of eternal laws, particularly since the reader is able to apprehend the beginning and the end of the novel simultaneously. *Pride and Prejudice* is a novel of essences, both at the level of the plot, and at the level of characters, many of whom are distilled into caricatures.

The paradox of *Pride and Prejudice* is the achievement of a unity of tone, of a settled and confident judgement, of a highly distant management of events, in an era which was actually full of change and threat. By the date of publication of *Pride and Prejudice* the transformation of society from a mechanically solid state, to that of organic solidarity, was well under way. Austen's contemporaries were faced with challenges offered by a morality of improvement, both of external circumstances and of oneself. The problem of how to absorb the best aspects of the new bourgeoisie without succumbing to the worst manifestations, was intractable in the world. Austen's achievement is to realise through her novels a solution to these contradictions, which is both static and progressive.⁵ Her model is mechanically solid, aspatial, atemporal and causal. Within the domain of representations she produces a normative prescription for action.

Jude the Obscure

A representation of organic solidarity

In the chapter entitled 'The Process of Organic Solidarity' in *The Division of Labour in Society*, Durkheim explores in detail the spatio-temporal and social implications of organic solidarity in 'advanced' societies.¹³ The differences between mechanically solid and organically solid societies relate both to the size of organisations and to their complexity. Organically solid societies are characterised by differentiation of social systems, each of which performs specialised functions within the society. Not only are all the social elements not of the same nature but they are not arranged in the same manner, being co-ordinated and subjugated to a source of central control. In general,

division of labour is by occupation rather than by lineage. Organically solid societies are further characterised by the greater development of individuality, and choice, with differences and variations assumed as natural and appropriate. Participation in culture is individual, and relates directly to the society at large. Frequently those who produce and evolve cultural artifacts are at variance with, or rejected by, the rest of the community. Organically solid societies are subject to social disequilibrium and latent antagonism, creating both order, through relations of production and distribution, and entropy, in the form of social conflict. Such societies are dynamic as opposed to static and depend on a process of evolution and change.

Organically solid societies tend to interiorize history, and exploit temporal continuity. Space is similarly exploited to alleviate or reinforce the social structure, and greater emphasis is placed on the symbolic properties of space. Spatial relations, geometric properties, symmetry and manifest orders are emphasised, whilst universalised ordering increasingly replaces segmentary accretion. Objects 'are not juxtaposed linearly as the rings of an earthworm, nor entwined with one another, but co-ordinated and subordinated one to another around the same central organ'.¹⁴

Just as organically solid societies are aware of, and exploit the possibilities of space and time, so Hardy highlights the possibilities of the spatio-temporal context in alleviating or reinforcing the social context through sympathy or irony of time and place. In his novels, space and time are manifest and powerful, not suppressed or stereotyped as in the novels of Austen. *Jude the Obscure* is the most mature of Hardy's novels, set typically in Wessex, a part of England with which Hardy was intimate.¹⁵ This reflexive sense of identity is intrinsic to Hardy's work, even to the naming of places, Christminster, Aldbrickham, Kingsbere-sub-Greenhill, Mistover Knap; and of people, Jude Fawley, Richard Phillotson, Clym Yeobright, Eustacia Vye, Damon Wildeve.

In the novels of Hardy, the environment takes on a symbolic significance as an ironic or bitter reflection of moral conflict or social state, or as a sympathetic reinforcement echoing the moods of his characters. Thought processes are intensified by the natural processes which surround his characters, until they seem a paradoxical reflection of their emotions. Solemn events take place in uncongenial surroundings, or the surroundings may prevent events from occurring at all. The atmosphere of a registry office is so disturbing to Jude and Sue that they are unable to proceed with the ceremony. Similarly, environment may reflect or epitomise personal conflicts. The antithesis of liberation and modern ideas, and traditionalism and social conformity, in Sue and Phillotson is found in their house at Shaston. Such that 'the two styles seemed to nod to each other across three centuries

upon the shaking floor.¹⁶ The oppression of Sue's body and the depression of her spirits is echoed by the oppression she feels in the house. Hardy recognises this as reflexive awareness of landscape, and not as environmental determinism.

In *Jude the Obscure* the symbolic properties of space are highlighted. Marygreen, as rootless as Jude himself, is stripped of its history, tradition is ousted by utility, and the profit motive replaces culture and sensitivity. Christminster is buried under history, the repairs to the physical fabric and the bolstering of the social fabric draining the productive life of working labourers, and Aldbrickham is the source of superficiality, the veneer of culture, and artificial airs and graces. 'The more you have the better Aldbrickham, which is a finer town than all your Christminsters.' Shaston is the resting place of kings, yet ironically the resting place of the fairground folk during the winter months.

Equally important, is the organically solid concept of spatial relativity and relationships. The idealised picture built-up by young Jude on his pilgrimages to the Brown House, depends on his being within sight, but not within reach, of Christminster, whilst the fact that the city lies to the north-east of Marygreen, across the field where Jude confronts Farmer Troughton is, in itself, significant in arousing a mixture of curiosity and dread in Jude's mind. The distant, ethereal view of the city sustains that initial curiosity, giving it a tangibility and a permanence. The very street lamps seem to young Jude to represent 'the more thoughtful and mentally shining ones therein'. Having thus idealised the distant city, Jude uses mechanically solid principles to crystallise his initial impressions.¹⁷ Word-of-mouth plays a significant part in the crystallisation, from the carter who himself distributes second-hand intelligence, and from the quack Vilbert. Cultural objects are seen as impregnated with the spirit of Christminster, in the form of Latin grammars which reinforce the impression of scholasticism. Jude himself becomes a stonemason as a direct result of his ideas about city life. The more starved and barren actual life is, the more the ideal it generates will be twisted into disembodied illusions.

When Jude's vision of Christminster is realised, he takes to the city mechanically solid conceptions of how culture is transmitted – based on a tradition which is non-literate, verbal (dialect and folk-song), place-based and full of social ritual, (harvest-home, club walking) – on the assumption that simply by living in a place one becomes suffused with its culture. This mechanically solid view does not work in Christminster but it is some time, not until after he becomes aware of the failure of Phillotson to achieve his aims, before Jude begins to make practical enquiries.

'He saw what a curious and cunning glamour the neighbourhood of the place had exercised over him. To get there and live there, to move among the churches and halls and become imbued with the genius loci, had seemed to his dreaming youth, as the spot shaped its charms from its halo on the horizon, the obvious and ideal thing to do . . . It would have been better for him in every way if he had never come within sight and sound of the delusive precincts, had gone to some busy commercial town with the sole object of making money by his wits, and thence surveyed his plan in true perspective.'¹⁸

It is at this point that Jude, as an isolate deprived of class and kin, faces the global order which separates him from the power and class structure which belongs on the far side of a literal, as well as figurative, wall. It is many years before Jude realises the full significance that his boyhood dream of becoming a bishop has, in organically solid terms of the class struggle.¹⁹

Contemporary social problems of the mobility of labour, differentiation and specialisation, education as a means to social advancement, alienation and isolation, class prejudice and social solidarity, rural and national economics, and the clash between the still mechanically solid rural communities and the organically solid sections of society, are all powerfully present in the works of Thomas Hardy.

The symbolic nature of Christminster permeates *Jude the Obscure*; it results in a number of powerful descriptions of the city, including those of Jude's impressions on arrival, the view from the college library, the irony of situation of Jude, Sue and their children on Remembrance Day, the oppressive aspect of the colleges to Father Time, and the circumstances of Jude's death, which are too many to discuss in detail here. One of the most vivid of paradoxes which Hardy raises is that of Jude, the stonemason and builder of colleges committing an act of vandalism, by writing on the walls of the colleges with a lump of workman's chalk. Another is that of the worker-in-stone for posterity, creating images of Christminster in dough, for immediate consumption; lovingly debasing the very thing which he idolises. Such paradoxes are inbuilt, and intrinsic to Hardy's novels, but they are not resolved; as the characters are faced with, and attempt to solve one problem, new orders of problems and paradoxes are created out of the solution. If anything, Hardy emphasises, not dissolves the problems of the world, thus challenging the social mores.

Not only are the symbolic properties of space made manifest and powerful in Hardy's novels, so also are the symbolic properties of time. Hardy's characters are portrayed as part of an historic continuum, through both artifacts in the landscape and through architecture.²⁰ In *Jude the Obscure* the medieval colleges of Christminster are seen as imbued with the spirits and knowledge of past scholars, with which Jude is mentally linked across the ages. However, in reconstructing the damaged mouldings of the colleges, Jude discovers that an historical continuity is not with dead souls of scholars, but with the tradition of craftsmen whose physical effort had built the edifices which surround him. It is here that Jude finds some temporal identity, as part of an historical tradition.

What Jude does not see is that his labour-power is exploited to prop up the structures which exclude him, and that his work is directed towards the reinstatement of the old world rather than the production of a new social order. These ideas are also explored by Sue, who attempts

to discard the influences of history, but substitutes one form of ideology for another. Hardy demonstrates that it is possible neither to escape from history nor to create history where none exists. This awareness of the continuum of time (like the notion that a man may be behind or ahead of time) and of the relational nature of time (like Jude's lament that a moment's weakness can upset a lifetime's plans, or Phillotson's realisation that a life of effort may end in a 'return to zero') permeate Hardy's writings. His novels are essentially infinite structures; the reader is drawn into a continuum in which a number of significant events have already occurred; and his novels do not end with all the problems solved and all the knots untangled. Hardy does not suffer from the 'happy ever after' illusion of religion or fairy tale.

Hardy exploits the symbolic properties of time to add irony to the passage of events. All Jude's misfortunes, and his eventual death, in Christminster, are highlighted by Remembrance Day, 'Humiliation Day for me', to which the 'Tutor of St. Slums' seems irresistibly drawn. Jude deliberately returns to Christminster with Sue and his family on Remembrance Day, being reflexively aware of the stark contrast between his failure to realise the dream of becoming an academic, and the success of the newly-graduated Doctors emerging from the colleges in procession, and 'passing across the field of Jude's vision like inaccessible planets across an object glass.' Even the simile which Hardy uses is one of the planetary cycle, indicative of a reflexive awareness of predictable and sought-for events, on another plane. Jude's death takes place on the day of the 'Remembrance Games', the final irony being added by the tumult, occasioned by the conferring of Honorary Degrees on members of the aristocracy, floating into the room in which the corpse of Jude is being laid-out. It must be stressed that this use of coincidence by Hardy is not like that of Jane Austen, who uses providence to manipulate the action. Here, coincidence merely alleviates or reinforces events which have already occurred as the result of rational action, and providence in no way determines their happening.

The result of this exploitation of both space and time is to produce a dynamic tone. Paradoxes are not resolved, and conflicts are continually created. Just as the mechanically solid novel relies largely on social ritual to achieve a cool and measured tone, so here the organically solid novel emphasises or challenges the effects of social ritual.²¹ Hardy's characters, far from exhibiting mental and moral conformity, are exposed as individuals, each of which having a dominant personal history and psychology which influence the individual in his struggle to resolve both personal and social conflicts. Hardy is more often concerned with non-conformity than conformity, with the breakdown of social ritual rather than its reinforcement,

and with the possibility of social change rather than with the continuity of established customs and proceedings. He appears concerned with a substantive description of action, and the possibility for the future creation of social uncertainty.

The social use of myth and art

It is argued in this paper that Austen's novels are mechanically solid, and produce a normative description for action, whilst those of Hardy are organically solid, and offer a substantive description of action. Whilst this statement offers a more complete description of the novels of Austen and Hardy, it contains little explanatory power. It is possible to suggest alternative definitions for the novel; it explores the potentials and possibilities of any given theory of reality, or the novel looks at descriptions of the world in order to discover its structures. It is reasonable to link these alternative suggestions about the nature of the novel, to the wider descriptions of myth and art, offered by Claude Levi-Strauss, in *The Savage Mind*: 'The creative act which gives rise to myths is in fact exactly the reverse of that which gives rise to works of art. In the case of works of art, the starting point is a set of one or more objects and one or more events, which aesthetic creation unifies, by revealing a common structure. Myths travel the same road, but start at the other end. They use a structure to produce what is itself an object consisting of a set of events (for all myths tell a story). Art thus starts from a set (object + event) to the discovery of its structure. Myth starts from a structure, by means of which it constructs a set (object + event).'²²

Thus the novels of Austen may be seen as myths, whilst those of Hardy appear to correspond to works of art in the sense of Levi-Strauss, as opposed to the socially understood meaning of 'art' which is enshrined in a gallery or museum, and is often closer to myth! Both myth and art, as defined above, are third world objects. Thus, whilst novels are unfalsifiable, in the Popperian sense, they are third world representations of social mores.

Myth is characterised by the suppression of historical continuity and spatial quality. In the 'Overture' to *The Raw and the Cooked*, Claude Levi-Strauss discusses an analogy between myth and music, as 'instruments for the suppression of time'.²⁴ This timelessness and spacelessness is also noted by Leach in *Genesis as Myth*:

'Myth proper lacks a chronology in any strict sense of the word, for the beginning and the end must be apprehended simultaneously; significance is to be discerned only in relations between component parts of the story; sequence is simply a persistent rearrangement of elements which are present from the start.'²⁵

Similar features, which have already been discussed in this paper, are discernable in the novels of Jane Austen, which endow them with a synthetic form, and prevent

their disintegration into a confusion of paradoxes. Again, myth is a normative model for action, which describes how things should be done, rather than how things are. It is a mediator of paradoxes: sacred-profane, human-superhuman, mortal-immortal, male-female, pure-impure, good-bad, life-death.

Mediation is non-rational and frequently providential. Austen's novels share with myth this characteristic of mediation: sense-sensibility, prejudging-rejudging, independence-conformity, individual-society, playfulness-regulation, order-disorder, and she introduces the traditional mythological devices of coincidence and providence to mediate binary oppositions. In *Pride and Prejudice*, most of the action depends on providential meetings of the characters. This is not to deny the occurrence of chance, but simply to suggest that in the novels of Jane Austen the workings of providence are not random. The acquisition of a large fortune or a title from unexpected sources is a frequent device by which characters constrained by lack of wealth or connections, may be set free to marry without disapproval. Such things do occur in reality, hence the popularity of the lottery, otherwise the myth would not be credible. In *Mythologies*, Barthes suggests that the function of myth is to distort reality, not to make it disappear.²⁶ In myth, the odds are stacked!

Paradoxically, it is the non-rationality of myth which renders it resilient to disclosure. Failure of the normative model in reality is believed to be 'caused' by the incorrect application of the forms of ceremonial surrounding the myth, not the failure of the myth itself. This is the case with the novels of Jane Austen, since failure of the model she offers may be blamed on incorrect etiquette or imprudent conduct. The efficacy of myth, and of the novel as myth, lies not in its nature as a system of signs, but in the fact that the myth-consumer, or reader, takes signification for a system of facts. The anonymous nature of myth is of great importance, for from the moment that the myth is recognised as such, it exists only as an element in a tradition, and no longer as an expression of truth. Jane Austen is a 'successful' myth-maker, in that her myths are resilient to disclosure. It is the contention of this paper that Austen's novels, far from being relevant to twentieth century society, are of value as historical intelligibilia. The social order which her novels transmit has been superseded by new mythological forms, such as the romance and the thriller.

If myth transmits an existing social order, art attempts to discover, and even challenge, the boundaries of meaning within existing systems of representations. This challenge to the boundaries is described in *Radical Perspectives in the Arts* by Stefan Morawski:

'The dwindling of the authority of representation in the arts is to be witnessed in every sort of version. Poetry has tended to become "concrete", almost wholly graphic. The novel is in an experimental stage where both time and space and characterisation are submitted to shuffling and dicing, where the plot and narration have scarcely kept a hand hold. Theatre has turned towards ritual spectacle and happenings.²⁷ Art is characterised by the exploitation of space and time, even by the revolution of a Kantian view of the world. A similar reflexive awareness of time and space is found in the novels of Thomas Hardy, in

which paradoxes are transformed into higher orders of paradoxes without being resolved.

Art, provides a substantive model of action by looking at things and events in an attempt to discover their meaning. It is a process by which paradoxes are created; art-non-art, art-life; a well-known example is the work of Man Ray, whose 'ready-mades' are not common objects to use, although they are presented as an attempt to transcend the separation of art from life, since the objects he enshrines are deliberately stripped of their functions.²⁸ Hardy's novels share with art the characteristic of creating new paradoxes with each attempt to solve the old antitheses. The reader's interpretation adds yet more problems and paradoxes to the structure. He is drawn into the attempt to mediate, and thus reveal in new forms, irreconcilable opposites. In other words, every work of art actually occurs by a collaboration of the artist and the art-consumer, which is reflexive in nature.

Whilst art contains the potential for the destruction of what constitutes a work of art, every negation of art is itself a work of art.²⁹ Revolutionary art may be seen as residing outside the realm of everyday life, requiring mediation in the form of myths about art, to restore it to society, particularly those based on systems of exchange value. Interestingly Hardy who was initially outside society, is now in the process of being reinstated, though the mediation of myths about Hardy. These include the view of Hardy as a traditional Wessex chronicler, or as an environmental determinist. Both art and myth are systems of representation and systems of communication. On the one hand, is myth, which starts from a structure, by means of which it constructs a set, object + event, resolving or suppressing the paradoxes into a static model which is non-rational, distilled to essences, providential, and non-reflexive. Myth is mechanically solid, space and time are suppressed, and is a normative description *for* action. The novels of Jane Austen may be described as myths. On the other is art, which starts from a set, object + event, to the discovery of its structure, restating the paradoxes in new forms, or creating higher orders of paradoxes in a dynamic model which is rational, elaborated, random and reflexive. Art is organically solid, space and time are exploited, and is a substantive description *of* action. The novels of Thomas Hardy may be described as art. The power of art lies in its ability to revolutionise the social order; the strength of myth, including myth about art, lies in its ability to reinforce the existing social order. Once more a binary opposition is created which demonstrates the ultimate paradox that whilst representations may either reinforce or alleviate the existing social order, they cannot discover realities.

References

¹ Raymond Williams *The English Novel* Paladin 1974.

² Roland Barthes *Writing Degree Zero* Cape, 1969.

³ One major novel *Pride and Prejudice* in the case of Austen, and *Jude the Obscure* in the case of Hardy, will be discussed in depth, but wherever possible, additional relevant material from other works by the same authors will be drawn upon.

⁴ This concept of mechanical solidarity is obviously generalised – it is realised by different societies in a variety of ways. Furthermore, the conditions for both mechanical and organic solidarity exist within all societies and are brought together in a stable relationship by each society. It is possible, similarly, to trace a generalised concept of mechanical solidarity in the output of Jane Austen, or of organic solidarity in the works of Hardy, which are realised in different ways and to varying extents in individual novels.

⁵ Emile Durkheim *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* Allen and Unwin, paperback edition, 1976.

⁶ The concepts of social time and tribal space are explored in the chapter 'Universalisation and Particularisation' of Claude Levi-Strauss *The Savage Mind* Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1962.

⁷ 'We live in so different a part of town, all our connections are so different, and as you know we go out so little, that it is very improbable that they (Jane and Bingley) should meet at all, unless he really comes to see her'.

Again, the sociospatial insulating properties of London are exploited by Lydia and Wickham, on the occasion of their elopement.

⁸ Property relationships, furniture and interior fittings are observed and classified in minute detail in a similar way to the classification of the natural environment by 'primitive' societies.

⁹ The morality of improvement plays a significant part in all Austen's novels, and is perhaps encapsulated by Henry Crawford in *Mansfield Park*.

¹⁰ See the discussion on the Picturesque by Edward Ferrars in *Sense and Sensibility*, or on the composition of a picture by Henry Tilney in *Northanger Abbey*.

¹¹ 'Enclosure' is mentioned by Austen only once: in *Sense and Sensibility*. Mr Dashwood complains that the enclosure of Norland Common is creating a drain on his income.

¹² *Northanger Abbey* in particular burlesques the regular duties and conventions which are necessary to a member of polite society.

¹³ Durkheim, op cit.

¹⁴ Emile Durkheim *The Division of Labour in Society* Free Press, 1964.

¹⁵ Much has been made of this love of Wessex, which this paper suggests is simply a concern for ethnographic detail which might be expected from an organically solid writer. Hardy makes a point of revisiting the actual scenes which he depicts in *Jude* in 1892, before commencing to write.

¹⁶ Thomas Hardy *Jude the Obscure* Macmillan, The New Wessex Edition, 1974.

¹⁷ John Berger describes similar attitudes by contemporary peasant societies in *A Seventh Man* Pelican, 1975.

¹⁸ Hardy, op cit.

¹⁹ Whilst Hardy's immediate concern is with a small section of society – small traders, farmers, shopkeepers, professionals (exactly that section of society which is too poor to 'know' yet insufficiently poor to be patronised in the novels of Austen) their changing way of life is consistently related to the wider power structure.

²⁰ Hardy depicts the physical process of change and mutation in the fabric of the colleges, the patching and copying carried out in deference to an historical tradition, the merits of age in converting uninspiring buildings to objects of aesthetic value, the role of the professions in deracinating village vernacular, and the stultification of style, into neo-Gothic and neo-Classic.

²¹ In *Jude* Hardy challenges the social ritual of marriage, as an institution which is always liable to break down. In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* the sacrament of baptism is scrutinised, and in *The Hand of Ethelberta* Hardy explores the social rituals surrounding the class system and polite society.

²² Levi-Strauss, op cit.

²³ Just as the possibilities for both mechanical and organic solidarity exist in any society, it is feasible to suggest that the potential for both myth and art exists in any novel. This may explain both the satirical content of Austen's novels, and the near approach to environmental determinism exhibited in the novels of Hardy.

²⁴ Claude Levi-Strauss *The Raw and the Cooked* Cape, 1970.

²⁵ Edmund Leach *Genesis as Myth* Cape, 1967.

²⁶ Roland Barthes *Mythologies* Paladin, 1973.

²⁷ Stephan Morawski 'What is a work of art' Lee Baxendall (ed) *Radical Perspectives in the Arts* Pelican, 1972.

²⁸ For example, *The Gift*, a household laundry iron with nails glued to it by their heads to the ironing surface, so that they protrude, a negation of the 'ready made' state of either component or the entire synthesis.

²⁹ Duchamp, Stockhausen, Joyce.