

¹¹Hardy, Apology to *Late Lyrics and Earlier* in *Thomas Hardy's Personal Writings*, ed. Harold Orel (London: Macmillan, 1967), p. 53.

¹²Hillis Miller, p. 4.

¹³*Personal Writings*, p. 52.

¹⁴Donald Davie, *Thomas Hardy and Modern British Poetry* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 28.

¹⁵Paulin, p. 138.

The Count-House: Wheel Friendship

The count-house is collapsing. Each blank pane
 no longer holds a sharp clairvoyant eye
 that pierced into the darkness of the mine,
 examining the actions of the men
 that smoked across the best part of the lode,
 dulled it with a candle, reeking slime,
 or beat it with their saturated clothes
 to keep the higher tribute. Now its doors
 no longer catch each whisper, chance remark,
 each clandestine agreement in the sett
 to cheat upon the bargain, mix the stones,
 to cache away the prills behind the rock
 then shin up through the winze, or climb the rise
 to trespass on the distant owner's stopes
 and carry off the veinstuff. Warping, torn,
 their ceilings damp with fungus, grey decay,
 still heavy with suspicion, deep mistrust,
 the offices no longer hold the books,
 the scanning of the quick illiterate glance
 examining the earnings on the page,
 the details of the paybills, of the fines,
 the statements of the richness of the pitch
 disguised beneath the figures in the script,
 to interrupt the contract, steal the ore.

John Gurney.