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ABSTRACT

Proposing that Thomas Hardy's fiction exhibits strong Gothic sensibilities which offer insight into his artistic vision and add to the power of his fiction, creating a new form of the Gothic, a Victorian Gothic, this dissertation reassesses the Gothic strains in Hardy's fiction. The dissertation is in eight chapters: (1) Introduction to Hardy's Gothic Sensibility and His Unique Achievement; (2) The Gothic Tradition; (3) Hardy's Direct Connection with Things Gothic: Sources for His Gothic Sensibility; (4) Hardy's Minor Fiction: His Short Stories; (5) Hardy's Minor Novels: Beginning His Victorian Gothic; (6) Hardy's Major Fiction: Development of His Gothic Aesthetic; (7) Hardy's Major Fiction: Gothic Tones of "Tess" and "Jude"; and (8) Conclusion--Hardy's Victorian Gothic, and the Modern Tradition. One hundred and fifty-two footnotes are attached, and a 75-item bibliography concludes the work. (SR)

THOMAS HARDY'S VICTORIAN GOTHIC:

REASSESSING HARDY'S FICTION

AND HIS GOTHIC SENSIBILITY

BY

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE

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THOMAS HARDY'S VICTORIAN GOTHIC

(DISSERTATION ABSTRACT)

Although critical commentary over the last century has tended to dismiss the Gothic strains in Thomas Hardy's fiction, this dissertation proposes that these Gothic conventions offer insight into his artistic vision and add to the power of his fictions. The realism and naturalism in his novels have been vastly overplayed at the expense of the more sensational, irrational elements. Hardy's fiction exhibits a strong classical Gothic sensibility that more closely addresses the true nature of his vision. As a Victorian writer trying to appeal to the social mores and literary tastes of his time, Hardy's Gothic sensibility led to his creation of a new form of the Gothic, a Victorian Gothic.

Giving both a synopsis of the Gothic tradition and Hardy's connection to it, this thesis explores the Gothic elements in selected short stories and the major and minor novels and how such elements intrude on the illusion of a realistic portrayal. Strong emphasis is placed on the blending of Gothic romanticism with late nineteenth century realism in the major novels, an intermixture which heightens the thematic and dramatic effects with which Hardy was concerned.

With this background, we can better assess the fiction in ways not done before. A deeper look at his use of Gothic conventions allows modern readers to undercut the historical barrage of critical controversy concerning

Hardy's place in English letters. It allows for a reassessment of his literary vision and his style and offers a plausible approach to his art.

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Further difficulty for him and for the writer included a thirteen-hundred mile move by the writer away from the university and away from Dr. Dvorak's advice. Thank goodness for Express Mail, Bell Telephone, and mutual patience.

Although the research and first readings of books began in New England, the main portion of this dissertation was written in Meridian, Mississippi, the locus of the move, under the duress of a new full-time job at the Meridian Branch Campus of Mississippi State University. Foremost, added to the distance factor was

another stress factor - the writer's pregnancy which made the timing of finishing the project and earning the degree rather tight. In any case, such is life, though it may be ironically likened to some of the unlikely circumstances found in Thomas Hardy's most "sensational" novels.

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PREFACE

The eight chapters of this dissertation comprise six main sections. The first chapter will introduce Thomas Hardy's Gothic sensibility and his unique achievement. The second chapter will be an overview of the Gothic tradition in late eighteenth - early nineteenth century British fiction. Included will be a fairly complete listing of the Gothic literary conventions we find in Hardy's works.

Following will be a chapter on how Hardy comes out of this tradition; it will include both a biographical and critical study of Hardy's interest in superstitions, balladry, folklore, Gothic architecture, and Gothic fiction. It will detail his sources for his Gothic sensibility.

The fourth section will assess how he makes use of Gothic elements in some of his shorter fiction. These few selected short stories span Hardy's writing career and demonstrate his pervasive use of Gothic conventions.

Chapter five covers all of Hardy's minor novels that reflect his Gothic aesthetic. It will include a brief rhetorical study of the Gothicism of Hardy's style and his use of a vocabulary and imagery of the older Gothic mode and how such techniques lead him to the artistry of his major works. In this section we should see how Hardy's Gothic sensibility leads to his creation of new form of the Gothic, a Gothic for Victorian audiences.

Beginning the fifth major section, the sixth chapter will assess the Gothicism of three of his five major novels: Far From the Madding Crowd, The Return of the Native, and The Mayor of Casterbridge. Following will be an extensive analysis and rhetorical review of Hardy's major Victorian Gothic novel, Tess of the D'Urbervilles. This chapter will also cover Jude, the Obscure, Hardy's last and most pessimistic major work.

The final section, the last chapter, will make a final assessment of Hardy's Gothic sensibility and how we can better appreciate and understand his themes and the style he uses to express those themes. It will explore how our notion of his creation of a Victorian Gothic most clearly explains what Hardy is doing in his later fiction and how his artistic vision of the realistic and romantic strains of literature create, in effect, a unique fiction for his nineteenth-century readership.

For purposes of consistency and completeness, I have chosen to discuss within each section the minor and major works chronologically, according to their publishing dates. The classification between "minor" and "major" fiction was based on much critical opinion and assessment; however, I did discover that most of the major works embodied the characteristics of a Victorian Gothic mode and demonstrated a sophistication and artistic exploitation of Hardy's Gothic sensibility. They stand out from Hardy's

other fiction by their realistic and full-bodied characterizations of major personalities as well as his projection of these protagonists into his more romantic Gothic mode.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO HARDY'S GOTHIC SENSIBILITY AND HIS UNIQUE ACHIEVEMENT

Fifteen years after his death, Thomas Hardy had not "yet achieved a settled status in English literature. No traditional image of him has yet grown up...," reported David Cecil in 1943 in Hardy, the Novelist.[1] Now in 1989, sixty-one years after Hardy's death, the collective body of contemporary opinion regarding his literary stature is just as controversial.

Called the last Victorian by some, Thomas Hardy is simultaneously praised and damned by literary critics. He is alleged to be a regionalist, a romantic, foremost a realist, and a brilliant but "flawed" novelist. Critical opinion has run the gamut with Hardy simply because his writing style and personal philosophy are unique, eclectic, and resistant to the pat labels and categories of standard critical nomenclature. We intend to show that a new nomenclature can be applied to reassess Hardy's unique achievement in English letters.

Spanning his literary output of poems, short stories, essays, biographies, and novels over sixty years of his life, literary critics and scholars have castigated him for inconsistencies in his writing syle and artistic vision. The realism and literary naturalism in his works have been vastly overplayed at the expense of the more sensational, irrational, and melodramatic elements. It is

the intermix of these last few elements with his realism that leads us to the idea of Hardy's Victorian Gothic.

It is my contention that Hardy's fiction exhibits a strong classical Gothic sensibility that more closely addresses the true nature of his vision and his themes. This Gothic sensibility, too, offers readers a fresh perspective on his fiction. Hardy has, in effect, created a new fiction which, taken in the context of his audience and his style and his intent, we are calling a Victorian Gothic.

This thesis will explore the Gothic elements in Thomas Hardy's fiction and how they intrude on the illusion of a realistic portrayal. I believe that if we look closely at these elements we will better understand what Hardy is trying to say. By examining the Gothicism of his five major novels -- Far From the Madding Crowd, The Return of the Native, The Mayor Of Casterbridge, Tess of the D'Urbervilles, and Jude, the Obscure, I feel we can better appreciate and understand and classify the fiction in ways not done before as other than merely realistic, romantic, sensational or naturalistic. We will also examine briefly the Gothicism of some of his short stories and minor fiction.

A deeper look at his use of Gothic conventions will allow modern readers to reassess his work and to undercut the historical barrage of critical controversy concerning Hardy's "place" in English literary history. We may be

able to better understand his work historically, artistically, and critically. Readers will now be able to see the context of his work as a whole and his fictional output as part of a traditional body of English literature; they will also see how Hardy went beyond the classical English Gothic romance to sustain a unique prominence in English letters.

We cannot dismiss Hardy's literary use of Gothic conventions. Although several critics and biographers have indicated his interest in the Gothic and even the Gothicism of some of his minor works, no thorough analysis of the aesthetic use of Gothic conventions in Thomas Hardy's major fiction has yet been done. Rather, Hardy the writer has been criticized severely for sensationalism and awkwardness in his fiction. Few studies to date have examined the Gothicism of his novels and shorter fiction as a key to understanding his fictional technique and artistic vision.

For example, notwithstanding its stature as a naturalistic tale of a pure young country girl's seduction and abuse by a harsh Victorian society, Tess of the D'Urbervilles also projects itself as a Gothic tale. Few critics or scholars would argue that Tess's plight is realistic, yet Hardy is writing more than realistic fiction. Stylistically, Tess of the D'Urbervilles is filled with Gothic elements: ghosts, grotesque figures, animated portraits, eerie and threatening landscapes, as

well as "sympathetic" houses, settings, and weather. The plot is highly contrived, full of the "awkward" coincidences that we find in the heyday of English Gothic fiction. Tess is the "pure" heroine of Gothic romance stories who must fight for her virtue against austere male domination. Such is the format of the archetypal late eighteenth-early nineteenth Gothic novel. Yet, since the story, setting, and characterization of Tess is so much more than that found in traditional Gothic tales, Tess the novel is so much more. It is a Gothic novel for the Victorian mind; it is the prime example of Hardy's Victorian Gothic.

As do many of the great social novelists of his age, Hardy includes a great deal of the supernatural and weird in Tess of the D'Urbervilles as well as in his other works. A cursory review of stories like "The Withered Arm" delivers the Gothic macabre with Rhoda's inexplicable and prophetic dream resulting in the putrefaction of Gertrude Lodge's limb. The Gothic overtones in the first meeting between the young Cythera and Manston at the Old House or Edward's image rising as a ghost before the young heroine in Desperate Remedies cannot be overlooked in Hardy's body minor fiction. And a combination of the grotesque and horrifying of Little Father Time's murder and subsequent suicide of Sue and Jude's babies is evident in such acclaimed novels as Jude, the Obscure. Although it

would be hyperbole to classify major works like Tess of the D'Urbervilles and J· de, the Obscure as simply Gothicnovels, Hardy's fiction contains Gothic strains which cut into his realism and naturalism and offer us further insight into his unique dramatic vision.

If we examine closely how the Gothic elements function in the novels and just how pervasive his use of Gothic conventions is, we could better reassess Hardy's controversial fictional techniques. Such an analysis would be crucial to the understanding of the works themselves as well as to an appreciation of the unique artistry of this major English novelist.

An understanding of Hardy's Gothic sensibility and his creation of a Victorian Gothic aesthetic would enable readers to sympathize with character plights, accept more readily the often cumbersome coincidences of plot, and understand Hardy's singular, eclectic narrative patterns. Focus on Hardy's Gothic aesthetic can provide a fresh perspective on his major works as well as open other works of Hardy to new interpretations.

CHAPTER TWO: THE GOTHIC TRADITION

There is no question that the Gothic mode in architecture and literature presented a dynamic heritage for the budding poet and novelist, Thomas Hardy. To fully appreciate the Gothic literary heritage out of which Hardy and other late Victorian writers have come, we must first examine the Gothic as a genre historically. We must also identify those Gothic conventionas he uses so predominately in his fictional works.

The term "Gothic" itself (Gothic, Gothique, Gothic) has undergone several definitions and applications. The term was applied rather loosely to whatever seemed to be medieval in its lack of restraint and sensationalism[2] It referred back to the ancient Gothic Period which, according to German scholars, ranges circa 250 to 600 A.D. Ostrogotha, King of the barbaric, warlike Goths, had been celebrated in ancient heroic poetry. Gothic was non-classical, connected to Christianity, and in architecture related to the fantastic, imaginative, irrational, and emotional.[3] Today the term Gothic means barbarous, violent, crude, medieval, and supernatural.[4]

In Hardy's lifetime it was a revival in architecture. England around the 1840's eexperienced a return to ancient Gothic forms in architecture especially for churches. Gothic Revival, as the period was called, began in mid-nineteenth century England. It was artistic work inspired

by the art of the Middle Ages since the Renaissance, affecting English church architecture from 1820 to 1870, and in the Victorian period, from 1851 to 1900.[5]

The Gothic Revival ("Neo-Gothic" as it was later called) was an expression of Romanticism. It was bold, dramatic, closely linked to nature, and evoked the brooding melancholy and mystery of the Middle Ages. The intention was to suggest impressions and arouse associations in the mind that would recall the idealized vision of the Middle Ages as depicted in legend and romantic novels. In England, however, the return to these ancient romantic forms played a subtle if not direct role in the imaginative life of the young stonemason-to-become-writer, Thomas Hardy.

But it is the literary heritage of the Gothic that concerns us most here. Not only is the Gothic a derivative form, but many other literary forms owe much to the Gothic. The history of the Gothic novel over the centuries is not an easy one. It must include the origin of the genre in England as well as the subsequent subliterary forms, plus the infusion of Gothic strains in other literary forms. From an actual Gothic genre, we get a Gothic tradition that is still vibrant today in the works of Truman Capote, Joyce Carol Oates, science fiction writers and others.

The English Gothic novel developed into a literary genre with its own conventions (use of the supernatural, the haunted castle, the ruin, resurrection of the dead, vibrant paintings, etc.) at the end of the eighteenth century. This birthing process was not a smooth one; as soon as one Gothic novel was written, another appeared widening the scope or adding characteristics to the form. Other countries such as Germany, France, and America contributed, further enriching the genre. So popular was the Gothic novel with the public in the early 1800's that weak imitations of the form began what some critics label the Gothic decline which Jane Austen clearly satirizes in Northanger Abbey in 1818. (The Gothic Epoch is about 1764 to 1820.) In the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the Gothic novel had what Devendra Varma calls a "disreputatble existence."[6]

The period of the "classic" Gothic novel was over, yet the genre was not yet finished in its development. There was the novelistic genre and also "Gothicism." The tradition was carried on both sides of the Atlantic in such Gothic-like novels as Emily Bronte's Wuthering Heights (1847) and Herman Melville's Moby Dick (1850). It was not until Henry James's The Turn of the Screw (1898) that we find the added dimension of psychology to the genre. From here on, the development of the Gothic is sporadic, yet definitely a prominent influence for all

later literature, including that of Thomas Hardy.

ESSENCE OF THE GOTHIC

By "truly Gothic" we mean that readers enter a true fantasy world, a world of the supernatural in which conventional reality is superseded by the nightmare worlds of ghosts and demons and peopled by madmen and tyrants in an atmosphere of unreality that stretches the emotions and imaginations of its readers. Gothic is the world of the dream most often turned nightmare. We do not contend that the main body of Hardy's fiction fits this exact mode, but that an essential sense of the Gothic mode pervades much of his work. In fact, Hardy extends this classic genre to create his own style of Victorian Gothic fiction.

Dread and fear are at the core of the literary convention we call the Gothic,[7] a dramatic extension of the neo-classical cult of Sensibility. In English poetry and fiction in the second half of the eighteenth century, Gothic denotes sensationalism in the Romantic return to magic, mystery, and chivalry -- concepts imbedded in the local lore and consciousness of Hardy's parents and grandparents. As a genre in itself rather than merely a set of literary conventions, an often debated critical issue, the Gothic novel does appear as a species of fiction with a group of common themes, motifs, and structural devices that spans several centuries and several countries -- Great Britain, Germany, France, and

America, in particular.

A complete discussion of the genre would include examination of motifs from ancient medieval romances, Shakespeare's villainous murderers and murderesses, as well as the psychological problings of writers such as America's Edgar Allan Poe in mid-mineteenth century America, Germany's E.T.A. Hoffmann, and England's Henry James. In addition, it could even include current popular works such as those of Stephen King and other contemporary science fiction and thriller writers.

Such an extensive cross-continental, multi-century examination, nevertheless, would get away from the historical impetus of what is an English literary development. Montague Summers in The Gothic Quest[8] (1964) delineates the 1790's as the "heyday" of the Gothic novel in England, the novel of escape from everyday life. Its themes, supernatural paraphernalia, mystifying settings, sexual intrigue, and evoked feeling s of wonder and dread have become the essential elements of what we now call the Gothic novel.

HISTORY

The Gothic Novel historically has been around a long time. Notwithstanding its antecedents in Medieval romance, the tragedies of Shakespeare, the epic poems of Milton, the popular Anglo-Oriental tales such as the Arabian Nights in the early 1700's, and in the Graveyard

School of Poetry in the 1740's, it had developed as a genre even before Horace Walpole's publication of The Castle of Otranto, A Gothic Story in 1764, the work most critics tag the first Gothic novel. We say "before" since Thomas Leland's publication of Longword, Earl of Salisbury in 1762 is considered to be the prototype for the Gothic Historical novel.

In its particular development in Great Britain, spanning several decades into Hardy's nineteenth century world, the Gothic novel has added new dimensions in character and plot development to the Romantic novel in the addition of conventions such as ruins, ultra-romantic settings, supernatural events, and despotic and irrational heroes and heroines. The Gothic novel is a novel of imaginative romantic fantasy, differing from romantic fiction by presenting nightmare instead of dream, fiendish anti-heroes rather than moral saviors, and fantasy rather than reality. Born as an imaginative response to Augustan classicism and Richardsonian literary didacticism, the Gothic Novel blossomed in the era of Romance as a particularly dark and exaggerated form of the Romantic tradition in England with which Thomas Hardy was perennially fascinated.

As a developing genre, the Gothic novel went through several stages. Some critics classify the historical development of the genre in England in this manner:

Sentimental or Early Gothic as in Horace Walpole, William Beckford (who in Vathek presented Gothic tales with an Oriental cast to them), Clara Reeve, Sheridan LeFanu; the Historical Gothic -- Thomas LeLand, Sophia Lee, her sister, and others; and Terror Gothic as in Mathew Lewis, Ann Radcliffe, and Charles Maturin. Devendra Varma in The Gothic Flame (1957) divides the genre into three major but unequal and overlapping developments: the Gothic Historical (Reeve, Lee, and Sir Walter Scott's Waverly novels); the School of Terror (Walpole, Radcliffe and dim suggestions of the supernatural; and the Schauer-Romantiks of the School of Horror (Lewis and Maturin) where lurid violence and cruelty are the norm.[9]

EARLY GOTHIC

From the publication of Walpole's Castle of Otranto in 1764, the Gothic novel as a genre takes form. Inspired by his love of classical Gothic architecture as evidenced in the design of his home Strawberry Hill in the high Gothic style and by his ennui with with conventional domestic literature of the eighteenth century, Walpole wrote this best seller in about two months, his urge to write compelling after he had had a preternatural vision of his own -- a giant hand above a stairway in his Gothic home. In Otranto, Walpole establishes certain patterns which have become standard Gothic fare -- the Gothic castle, the monomaniac Gothic villain, the passive and suppressed Gothic heroine whose virginity is under attack, events of

the supernatural, and even the name 'Gothic.'

Walpole was an innovator; he took a literary risk and was rewarded with instant popularity for his work which broke from the restrictions of realism and rationality. Following in his footsteps, but attempting to curb his extravagance is Clara Reeve who publishes in 1777 The Old English Baron. Using Walpole's imaginative setting of a castle, Reeve puts forth a drama of contemporary life and manners in a medieval setting. In fact, she tries to "tame" or legitimize his vision of a distinct fantasy. Instead of presenting an entire castle as a counterpart to the immensity of Manfred's obsession, Reeve's story presents only one haunted room. Yes, there are ghosts and nocturnal spectres, but they are housed within "reasonable" bounds and are explained away at the end by the author. Reason and rationality finally encompass the tale; the legitimate heir is rewarded with the virginal maiden as well as with the once-haunted premises. It is, however, a very different kind of reason and realism that Hardy exhibits in his full-bodied characters and novels.

VULGAR GOTHIC

Spurred on the imaginative and sentimental outlet that Gothic writing provided, "Gothic" novels were mass produced, so many in fact that they were labeled "penny dreadfuls" and "shilling shockers." Many English writers became fascinated with both French[10] and several

German tales of terror, and translating German stories into English (and visa versa) became a national pastime. When he was fifteen Hardy was part of this interest in German literature and language and began teaching himself German by translating stories from a periodical, The Popular Educator.[11]

HISTORICAL GOTHIC

Historical Gothic novels soon followed. Inspired by Leland's Longword (1762), Sophia Lee wrote Recess (1783) about Elizabeth I. The primary difference from the "straight" historical novel was the inclusion of spectres, visions, and other Gothic conventions. Although Summers devotes an entire section to this genre, historical Gothic is not the focus of the primary literary development of the genre. We must note, nonetheless, that Hardy as a youth read Sir Walter Scott's heroic historical gothic romances.

SCHOOL OF TERROR

The next phase of the Gothic novel seems to have had the most dominant influence on Victorians like Hardy. It is Ann Radcliffe several years later who, by publishing five Gothic romances between the years 1789-1797, combines the traditions of horror and sentiment found in these early Gothic novelists. She also adds her own touches; Radcliffe added landscape to the convention of fiction. What is most notable about her Mysteries of Udolpho (1794)

and The Italian (1796) is her panoramic expressions of the scenery. Instead of drawing room terror in the castle at hand, Radcliffe takes readers to exotic places. With her heroine Emily St. Aubert, we cross the Apennnies, travel to Venice for a short time, settle for the peak of her subjugation in Italy at the dark castle of Udolpho, and finally return to France.

There is no question that the Radcliffean landscape widened the scope of the Gothic novel and offered imaginative escapes to foreign lands. Not only did she draw upon less artificial sources of fear and use more believable ones (banditti, monks, tyrants, the Inquisition, dying nuns,) but her heroes softened become prototypes for the Byronic Hero. She had many followers and many who were upset that she explained away heroine Emily's visions and villain Montoni's scare tactics.

It is important, too, to note the "delicacy" and propriety of her heroines; they are classic virginal damsels in distress, so bound by propriety and social convention that, like Emily, they do not accept succor from an admirer even though it means exposing themselves to an even more dangerous and real threat. (Such reminds us mostly of Bathesheba or Tess!) It is from Radcliffean strains that Hardy most nearly imitates the Gothic format. With the powerful landscape of Egdon Heath in several books, Radcliffe's concerns with landscape become his. In

addition, and more will be noted later, his complex heroines who allow propriety to rule their hearts remind us (except for their absurd excesses of lamentation and totally chaste behaviors) of the Radcliffean Gothic heroine.

TERROR GOTHIC/SCHAUER-ROMANTIK

No matter what, in the Gothic tale of terror thus far, no real rapes occur -- there is only the threat of such sexual activity. In Otranto Manfred literally chases the young and beautiful Isabella, who was going to become his daughter-in-law, until she flees with the aid of the valiant "hero" to the safety of the subterranean passages of Manfred's castle itself. It is in similar subterranean recesses that Mathew Gregory Lewis's demonic monk Ambrosio consummates his depraved sexual passions with Matilda, the sorceress witch. Instead of the threat, the real terror of rape, incest, murder, and licentiousness occur. The pious monk Ambrosio debauches, kills, rapes, commits incest, and finally sells his soul to the Devil. The Schauer-Romantic Gothic novel holds nothing back, just as Hardy does in Victorian novels like Tess and Jude where rape and murder become part of the fabric of the tragic plots. No holds are barred to present terror and create dread in readers of the genre, and for Hardy's audience to shake up their prudishness regarding sexual matters.

Maturin does as well in Melmouth, the Wanderer (1820). He gives graphic details of the lovers who resort to cannibalism while being confined and starved to death in prision. Maturin takes us to the very cell of corruption of a monastery and exposes all sorts of vile spectacles -- beatings of innocent youths for not performing menial tasks, deathbed confessions of monks who find comfort for their own guilt in deliberate torments of others. The story of the innocent Immalee is told in open sexual terms. She submits to her demon lover, the Wandering Jew. In the School of Terror Gothic, innocence and purity do not last. Devils are not imaginary; rather, they are active participants in the narrative structure. Maturin's Melmouth has been called the last Gothic novel. After Melmouth, the extremes of Dark Romanticism seemed to be met.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

In 1818, near the end of the classic English Gothic period come two notable developments in the genre, both by women. The first is Mary Shelley's Frankenstein (1818) which adds a new, "scientific" dimension to the genre. Instead of the Gothic ruin or castle, we are now in the laboratory. Instead of sexual lust and fervor, we now have Gothic heroes obsessed with truth and Promethean desires to extend the limits of knowledge. Hence, here is the birth of the mad scientist. The second and probably most

significant is Jane Austen's parody of the classic Gothic novel in Northanger Abbey (1820), published twenty years before Hardy's birth. Northanger Abbey marked the end of the classic Gothic period in literature.

Now for the next few decades of the nineteenth century cheap penny editions of Gothic romances have their heyday, filling the popular mind with fair damsels and nasty villains enmeshed in sensational plots. (Varma calls these Gothic fragments, serials, tales and shockers as the first phase of the disintegration of the Gothic.[12]) It is these last remnants of Gothic style storytelling that we can be sure were readily available either in the lending libraries or on the streets to an avid reader like Thomas Hardy despite his classical self-education. Because these cheap penny dreadfuls were not made from strong quality paper or bindings, they were often disposable and certainly difficult for historians to document.

In fact, F.B. Pinion feels that the numerous imitators of Charles Dickens, Charles Reade, and Wilkie Collins, in addition to the "sensation writing" that became the "reproach and abomination of Victorian popular literature"[13] surrounded Hardy from his birth.

According to Pinion, the third quarter of the nineteenth century flaunted inexpensive but affordable sensation fiction that appealed to the nerves instead of to the imagination. "Even with the move toward realism,

sensation fiction were best sellers."[14] Financially, these shockers were a boon for publishers and writers. There were lighter paper taxes and lower publishing costs than for full length novels. These books were available for six or seven shillings each, and if published in monthly pamphlets, for about five shillings each; they cost about one third the original price.[15] Needless to say, these cheaper books sold in high quantities in Hardy's day.

The birthing process of the English Gothic novel, spanning technically from 1762 to 1820 was complex and derivative from earlier romantic fiction. The early productions each took on certain attributes. Walpole set up the machinery, Reeve and Radcliffe refined it and brought it into the realm of conventional morality, and Lewis and Maturin pushed the machinery and setting to their ultimate expression of terror. Their gothics are all anticlerical nightmares which led to the focus on the psychological aspects of the villains and victims as seen in later Victorian and twentieth century writers.

Critical literary historians tell us that there is ample evidence to support the notion of the strong effect of the Gothic genre on Victorian writers and specifically on Hardy. Varma feels the Gothic made an "indelible stamp" on romantic characters and contributed a sense of structure and a certain spirit of curiosity before the

mystery of things. He states that before the romantic spirit was made to blend with the spirit of realism. "The Victorian writers are indebted to the technique and devices of Gothic fiction: most of their works were patterned and modelled after the demoded species."[16] Judith Wilt, in her Ghosts of the Gothic; Austen, Eliot, and Lawrence (1980), feels that the Gothic archway of a cathedral gives symbolic dimension and direction to a union of lovers and that ...it is this idea that draws Lawrence to literary Gothic too, to the Hardy in whose novels 'the condemnation shifts over at last from the dark villain to the white virgin,'..."[17] William Patrick Day, likewise, in In the Circles of Fear and Desire; A Study of Gothic Fantasy (1985), connects the Gothic to the Victorians. His view focuses on the nature of male and female identities and conventional concepts of family that the Gothic novel exploits. According to Day,

> Gothic fantasy is in part an attempt by nineteenth-century culture to both express and relieve its fears about its own concepts of identity. The nature of the family and of masculine and feminine identity are also central themes of the nineteenth-century realisitic novel, from Austen through Hardy.[18]

In The Divided Self; A Perspective on the Literature of the Victorians (1969), Masao Miyoshi states that the revival of Gothicism in the last decade of the nineteenth century is so prominent that it scarcely needs mention.[19]

Hardy most especially would have turned to the genre in order to evoke his own personal concerns of the class system he found in his Victorian world. The Gothicism of his own works allowed him to dramatize his own frustrations as one struggling from the lower classes to establish a more respectable social identity. Only in the fantasy aspect of the Gothic could he escape via his hero and heroines the rigidity of nineteenth century morality. The Gothic novel offered an escape route for the English middle class and a bridge for the gap between romanticism and realism.

The Gothic novel as a genre has a well established tradition in England, and there is no doubt that Hardy was exposed to the Gothic flame. The Gothic heritage in both architecture and literature presented a dynamic backdrop for the budding poet and novelist. Its development was fertile and fluid all through his childhood and rather significant for his middle class aspirations and concerns.

All this is Hardy's heritage, and he goes even further with the genre. Professing to use truth and verisimilitude[20] for his fictional characters, Hardy gives us real people in Gothic-like situations. (Hardy had professed that a writer's true object is a "representation of life.") From the stereotypical Gothic monomaniac, we get bold and conniving villains; from virginal Gothic heroines who fear to cross certain moral boundaries, we

get innocent maidens immersed in the psychological and social complexity of their own minds. Hardy extends the Gothic mode to some degree by using its machinery yet establishing tragic overtones in his fiction. While not merely a Gothic novelist or even a realist or romantic, Thomas Hardy creates his own original form of Gothic fiction for his Victorian audiences.

CHAPTER THREE: HARDY'S DIRECT CONNECTION WITH THINGS GOTHIC; SOURCES FOR HIS GOTHIC SENSIBILITY

Not only as a stonemason sculpturing the Gothic features of English churches, but more as an imbiber of what is essentially Gothic, Thomas Hardy inhaled the spirit of Gothicism from his early youth onward. Young Hardy lived in a rural culture that incorporated ghosts and eerie past histories and heroes and heroines into its everyday folkways. Such was the culture and mythology of the folk of Dorset from which Hardy developed and which he hoped to preserve in his writings.

Certainly there is biographical evidence that the two women most dominant in Hardy's youth --his paternal grandmother Mary Head Hardy (d. 1857) and his mother Jemima Hand Hardy (d. 1904) -- fostered his Gothic sensibility via home tales of local superstition, ballads, and sensational tales meant to excite the imagination of youth. Widowed in 1837, Mary Head, "Granny" as he called her, exposed the young Hardy to all the memories and old customs she could muster during her twenty-year stay in the Hardy cottage. As Michael Millgate reports in Thomas Hardy, A Biography (1985), Mary Hardy was "an important daily presence during Hardy's early years, the source of many of the stories and songs with which he grew up."[21]

Jemima, however, took up the slack as far as sensational storytelling goes. Although Millgate indicates

that she was ostensibly "cold" in her manner, she

> had inherited in full measure the ancient pessimism of the rural poor, their perpetual imagination of disaster, and she kept it alive with a diet of sensational tales...The devil played an active role in Jemima's morality and fate stood waiting with hand uplifted to knock down all human aspirations...[22]

Biographer Robert Gittings testifies that Hardy's grandmother was the "fascinating source" of traditions, folklore and legends but was equally matched by Jemima's "extraordinary store of local legend and story."

Myth became commonplace in Hardy's youth. Hardy grew up hearing sensational tales such as his own encounter sleeping with a snake that had crawled into his baby cradle. Nature afforded him and the countryside with much imaginative lore. His father's deep interest in nature and natural phenomena and the savage events from his parents' own childhood memories were mythologized in the young boy's imagination. Certainly such stories had a direct and overpowering influence on the shy and "morbidly sensitive boy"..." who was "perhaps over-quick to read horror into any situation."[23] The parents and grandparent with whom Thomas Hardy had most contact in his developing years contributed heavily to his vivid, if not Gothic, imagination.

In fact, all of the youthful Hardy's experiences with his native countryside contributed to his "willing suspension of disbelief." Not only did Hardy's

grandmother and mother keep him immersed in Gothic-like lore with their storytelling and living superstitions, but the young lad was certainly exposed to Bockhampton, Stinsford, and Puddleton folkways and legends when he accompanied his musical father with the violin at weddings and other local functions and gatherings. Especially at these lively social occasions, Hardy was sure to hear the songs and especially the ballads of suspicious events and surreptitious lovers. (Hardy's success in characterization is making his major characters not just types as in these ballads, but rather complex humans who experience extraordinary events and coincidences - i.e. - the residues of the old ballads.) In this way and others Hardy became intimate with his rural countryside, knowing all the local rumors and legends and histories and crimes attached to each cottage or natural element in his birth parish of Higher Bockhampton.

Cecil reports that

> Hardy's stories are full of relics of English popular superstition which played so large a role in the histories he listened to round the fire in the long winter evenings--the witchcraft and the wax images in The Return of the Native, the midsummer rites by which girls sought to divine the name of their future husband in Tess and The Woodlanders; while country customs and ceremonies and gaieties, carol-singing, harvest homes, maypoles and mummer's plays, are scattered broadcast over his pages.[24]

Even before he was fifteen years old, Hardy saw an effigy

burning during anti-Catholic riots and viewed a local hanging through a telescope as an early teen. These rites, ghost tales, ballads, and local legends are the "stuff" of Gothic romance that Hardy imbibed early on. It is no wonder that Hardy's prose tends toward the Gothic and captures for us some of these rural ballads and local events. He feared losing them forever, unless he captured such associations with the past in his writings.

All this rural cultural background accounts for some of the Gothic quality of Hardy's literary imagination and even for what critics have called the awkward coincidences of plot that appear everywhere in his fiction. Most feel as we do, however, that rather than being a fault in plot structure or artistry, Hardy was deliberately being imitative of his native cultural lore. In fact, one could even say that the coincidences and improbable events in stories and novels for which he has been severely criticized are "substitutes" for several characteristics of the old Wessex ballad. For example, improbability and accident replace the devils, demons, fairies, ghosts, witches, etc. of the old ballads.[26] Penelope Vigar argues even more strongly against faulting Hardy for his sensational plots.

> Those critics who find fault with his plot-structures simply on the grounds of their improbability are making the mistake of judging Hardy on the grounds of orthodox realism, which he likewise emphatically rejected.

> To him the plot is not to be composed of a succession of ordinary credible events; neither is it to serve primarily as a chart or ground-plan on which to demonstrate a preconceived didactic viewpoint.[26]

Gothic was what Hardy was weaned on and what he hoped to pass on in his fiction.

In addition, from the age of sixteen, in 1856, he did receive formal training in Gothic architectural aesthetics when he was apprenticed to Dorchester architect John Hicks as a draughtsman specializing in the repair of Gothic churches. At twenty-one years of age, he was hired by London architect Arthur Blomfield as "a young Gothic draughtsman who could restore and design churches and rectory houses."[27] His childhood imagination, his first vocation as draughtsman and stonemason, and later his chosen vocation as novelist all leaned toward the Gothic style.

HARDY'S READING

It is, however, in Hardy's reading that we most readily find an aesthetic sense leaning toward the classical Gothic style detailed in an earlier chapter. We can speculate about what specific Gothic literature Hardy ever read, but several scholars and biographers and family members have documented what literary works he actually did read, either by referencing Hardy's handwritten notations in various texts in his home library or by noting the various books he makes mention of in his

various journals, essays, biographical reminiscences, and fictional writings.

Everyone who knew Hardy agrees that he was a voracious reader starting from his boyhood days. In 1848 his mother gave him works like John Dryden's "Virgil" and Samuel Johnson's Rasselas. All his life he was fascinated with the Napoleonic Wars by local lore of a possible military invasion and his youthful reading of Gifford's melodramatic History of the Wars of the French Revolution (1817), which we can assume led Hardy to writing The Trumpet Major (1880) and The Dynasts (1903)(ironically the most Gothic-free of all his works.) His lifetime appreciation of the Romantic Percy Shelley was nurtured at age eight or nine when he stayed at the inn famed for the weekend rendezvous of Shelley and Mary Godwin. As a boy Hardy read the romances of Dumas pere (in translation), Shakespeare's tragedies (mostly for their plots), and even disparaged the ghost in Hamlet for not living up to his part.[28] In The Early Life of Thomas Hardy (1928), Florence Emily Hardy reports that at age fifteen Hardy began studying German from a periodical entitled The Popular Educator, important for our purposes since a Gothic love of the sensational and extraordinary flourished throughout German literature, the Sturm and Drang and Romantic Movements (Goethe, Schiller, etc.) inclusive. Millgate states that Hardy collected books in

his childhood and wept over cheap editions of the romances of Bulver Lytton.[29] He also loved the heroic Gothic romances of Scott.

In Thomas Hardy, A Study of His Writings and Their Background (1962), William Rutland outlines the reading career of the young and old Hardy. Noting that Hardy read profusely from the lending libraries in the 1860's, Rutland documents Hardy's reading the current literary and philosophical thought (Thomas Huxley, Charles Darwin, John Stuart Mill, etc.) of his age, in addition to authorized versions of the Bible, the Dorset poet William Barnes, the poet George Crabbe, Anthony Trollope, Shelley, and William Wordsworth.[30] Rutland points to Hardy as primarily a man with a strong emotional nature, not a rational or scientific one, reading more poetry than fiction.[31] Yet not much of Hardy's "popular" reading tastes, if he had some as we strongly suspect, have been indicated.

For our purposes we must consider that Gothic literature and its sub-literary forms: sensation fiction, cheap serial editions, penny dreadfuls, and shockers were the popular readings of the day and readily available to Thomas Hardy. There is no question that Hardy was a voluminous reader in several arenas and that the Gothic mode, either of the "classic" element by Walpole or Mrs. Radcliffe or of the more sensational kind of Monk Lewis, was at least available to if not casually read by him.

There are, however, two sensationalists popular in his day that we do know that Hardy read: William Harrison Ainsworth and Wilkie Collins. Hardy tells us that novelist and dramatist Collins (1824-1889) was his favorite boyhood author. Remembered for his thrillers, The Woman in White (1860) and The Moonstone (1868), Collins sought to evoke sensational qualities in his fiction (as well as in his personal life, thwarting Victorian morality by having not one, but two mistresses).

Ainsworth's connection with Hardy has been clearly substantiated by Carl J. Weber.[32] Not only did magazine journalist and historical novelist Ainsworth (1805-1882) introduce the wily Dick Turpin in his first novel Rookwood (1834), but Weber makes conclusive comparisons between scenes from that book and Far From the Madding Crowd. If he read Rookwood, we can also assume that Hardy read some, if not most of Ainsworth's thirty-eight other novels, sensational and archaeological in interest, that were published in Hardy's life time.

According to Weber, "Ainsworth began his career with the idea of reviving for a nineteenth century public the terrors which had thrilled the readers of Mrs. Radcliffe."[33] Weber also notes that Ainsworth's lasting claim to fame lies not in his giants, dwarfs, globlin riders, highwaymen, heroes, and villains but rather in his profound influence on Thomas Hardy who grew up in a

society giving an enthusiastic welcome to this literary Gothic revivalist. In addition, Weber compares the two writers stylistically, indicating that not only the interest in folklore and popular stories of superstitions, but in the "trite superfluidies" of expressions that Hardy was apprenticed to this man. Close scrutiny in the diction and the plots can testify that the "shadow of William Harrison Ainsworth falls across"[34] many pages of Hardy's Wessex fiction.

If terror and sensationalism are key ingredients to Gothic romance, we must also include Hardy's reading of Edmund Burke's essay "A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the the Sublime and Beautiful," first published in 1756.[35] Hardy used Burke as a handbook to achieve an elevated prose style and he supports several of Burke's ideas about achieving the sublime even in commonplace events. As a student of Burke, Hardy believes a writer "aims at illusion" in his audience. Hardy consciously strove to achieve "effects of pure spectacle and horror."[36] In Life, he wrote about being a tale teller like the Ancient Mariner not "...warranted in stopping wedding guests unless [we} he has something...unusual to relate."[37] From Burke, we can establish the origin of some of Hardy's views toward sensational literature.

Burke asserted that pain and pleasure were both of a positive nature and that "...terror is in all cases... the

ruling principle of the sublime."[38] Burke observed that fear was the ruling passion that robbed the mind of its powers of action and reasoning and that words affect the passions. Thus Hardy's tragic characters like Eustacia and Bathsheba and Henchard and Tess and Jude who are easily affected by others' words and their own fears and misgivings lose "rational" thought through a distortion of their emotions. This is the sublimity of fear that we find in classic Gothic models and in Thomas Hardy's fiction.

On less philosophical grounds, we can easily justify Hardy's use of sensational ingredients and even awkward plotting in his fiction. Foremost it was to sustain his Victorian serial readership and secondly, as earlier mentioned, to preserve his Dorset folk traditions

There is no question that he adapted storylines for Victorian audiences who he was told by his periodical editors, including Leslie Stephen and George Meredith, "required" tight plotting and some noteworthy event to sustain interest in each serial of a whole novel. These often "cliff-hanging" episodes are the cry of the critics but also Hardy's attempt to please his audience. In April 1891 in The New Review, Hardy wrote in his essay "The Science of Fiction" that the writer "cannot escape...the exercise of Art in his labour or pleasure of telling a tale...the novel should keep as close to reality 'as it can' (his italics); a remark which may be interpreted with infinite latitude, and would no doubt have been cheerfully

accepted by Dumas "pere" or Mrs. Radcliffe."[39] Hardy took latitude with "reality" in his fiction and felt that "realism" was an "unfortunate, an ambiguous" word. In the same essay he added that "Nothing but the illusion of truth can permanently please, and that "Creativeness... is apparently ceasing to satisfy a world which no longer believes in the abnormal..."[40] Hardy worried that modern audiences were losing their ability to imagine and that writers accordingly were giving way to realism. By dealing with both "art" and "realism" in his fiction, Hardy managed to merge the two realms into a special one -- a Victorian Gothic for realism-seeking, romance-minded Victorians.

This leads to Hardy's second major reason for turning to the Gothic and to melodrama and to sensationalism in his novels: for the primary purpose of sustaining the quickly dying village traditions. Known often as a regional novelist, it is clear that Hardy wrote to preserve historically the folk traditions of the West country of England. In 1902 he wrote to Rider Haggard that the "vast mass of unwritten folk-lore, local chronicle, local topography, and nomenclature -- is absolutely sinking, has nearly sunk, into eternal oblivion."[41] Thus we get the Wessex novels and Hardy's attempt to salvage the oral histories he was told by his parents and grandmother and which he heard in the old ballads in his

youth. It is the main reason that he focuses on the forms of the past, including the Gothic.

Ultimately Hardy thwarted all labels and categories applied to him by the critics whom he disparaged throughout his writing career. He stated that his writings were truly yet merely "impressions of the moment and not convictions or arguments." Hardy wrote in his "General Preface to the Novels and Poems" of 1812 that he had not advanced a consistent philosophy and that it was unlikely that his imaginative writings could demonstrate a cohesive theory of the universe. Rather he concluded earlier in his diary that a writer works out his own philosophy out of his own surroundings and experience.[42] And this, we feel, is exactly what he has done.

We have shown that Hardy's experiences especially as a youth were based on imaginative tale-telling and folklore which are the core elements of Gothic fantasy. Whether they be ghosts or demons or haunted houses or secret pasts or virginal damsels in distress, Gothic conventions pervade his fiction and his literary imagination. Over the years Hardy worked out his own formula of fiction, and overbearing critics should look to his historical impetuses and personal experiences and philosophic views before they unjustly condemn him for the "creative" Gothicism of his fiction.

CHAPTER FOUR: HARDY'S MINOR FICTION: HIS SHORT STORIES

We must now turn to an examination of some specific examples of some of this "creative" Gothicism in Hardy's works. Some of his short stories and most of his minor novels demonstrate the beginning of his Victorian Gothic mode which he masters in some of the later major novels. These shorter and earlier works do, however, exemplify clearly Hardy's early attempts at verisimilitude with Gothic overtones and his fascination with the realm of the supernatural. They are the initial steps to a Victorian Gothic.

In the minor fiction we find one-dimensional romantic characters in preposterous circumstances next to to semi-realistic characters or next to psychologically "real" characters or even next to similarly unrealsitic characters. Innocent but impetuous and romantic Elfride Swancourt, for example, in A Pair of Blue Eyes, finds herself involved with Henry Knight, a first-class Victorian prude. Notwithstanding his aristocratic bearing and intellectual probing, he is the epitome of the Victorian bore whom Hardy despised. Elfride is the classic Gothic heroine of struggling aims, and Knight is equally a "romantic" figure with his stick-figure morality. Like Angel Clare in Tess, he lacks pure human understanding. Unlike Angel and Tess, however, Elfride

and Knight find themselves near Death's door when they almost-but-not-quite fall off a steep cliff. Both are saved, of course, by the miraculous quick thinking of the young maiden who uses her underwear as rope to save her lover. Such sensationalism! Of course, at the very same time, her previous lover goes by in a passing ship. Such coincidence!

There is very little realism here or in many of the other minor works, but there is much Gothic sensationalism such as two people hanging off a dangerous cliff, or as in Two on A Tower facing a wind storm in a high tower as the force of the gale takes off the top of the building. These are some of the ultra-romantic aspects of Hardy's minor novels, but they demonstrate his commitment not only to his serial readers, but also to the telling of an exciting, sensation-filled story. When he moves away from the wholly improbable and incredible and blends it with the more realistic and more believable, we get closer to his unique development of a semi-realistic, semi-Gothic Victorian mode.

SHORT STORIES

Several of Hardy's short stories similarly offer us strong Gothic fare. Ghosts, eerie landscapes, grotesque psychological distortions of reality, fantastical visions, exaggerated human obsessions and powers, and demonic dreams prophetically turned to horrible realities inhabit

the backgrounds and plot events of many of Hardy's pieces of shorter fiction. These shorter minor works demonstrate the powerful influence of Gothic melodrama, superstition, and coincidence on Hardy's artistic creativity. Although Hardy feels that a certain type of reality needs to be the base of fiction, only to some degree does he uphold that notion. It is clear from these brief examples and the bulk of his major works that the wonders and sensational events of Gothic romance are part and parcel of his view of fictional reality. We cannot perceive a Hardy aesthetic without the abnormal, the imaginative, the unusual, whether they be invested in inexplicable narrative events or psychological subtleties of complex and realistic characters.

Five stories in particular written and published throughout his writing career offer us a strong sampling of Hardy's developing Gothic sensibility: "A Changed Man" and "A Tryst At An Ancient Earthworks" both published in A Changed Man in 1881; "Barbara of the House of Grebe," in A Group of Noble Dames, published 1891; "Fiddler of the Reels" from Life's Little Ironies, published in 1892; and "The Withered Arm" from Wessex Tales published in 1888.

The first two stories revolve around the theme of the infringement of the ghostly past on the present. "A Changed Man" and "A Tryst At An Ancient Earthworks" are works where reality turns into Gothic gloom. Dread of the

past and of the unknown motivate characters' perceptions and actions. While these stories are by no means Gothic tales, they demonstrate Hardy's tendency to impose a supernatural significance on ordinary events. We also see Hardy's rhetorical maneuvers to create the supernatural and the Gothic out of the depths of the human minds of his characters. This is, of course, years before Freudian psychology.

"A CHANGED MAN"

"A Changed Man" concerns the myth of a ten-foot high ghost that followed the Hussars regiment. Nothing much is made of this spectral visitant until many years after wartime. The leader of the Hussars, Captain Maumby, after marrying the woman of his choice, Laura, becomes a clergyman. When he dies of cholera (Ghostly retribution or not as the cause is left up to the reader.), she does not marry another lover because of his memory (ghost) of "the thin figure of him, moving to and fro in front of the ghastly furnace in the gloom of Dunover Moor."[43] Such spectral visitation or perception whether real or nightmare is like Reeve's hero's in The Old English Baron envisioning supernatural phenomena in and hearing voices in a solitary room of the old haunted mansion. Hardy's Gothicism comes from his use of an incubus and its intrusion on apparent conventional reality of characters' lives, prohibiting them from logical, free action.

"A TRYST AT AN ANCIENT EARTHWORKS"

Laura's imaginative reactions are like those of the narrator in "A Tryst At An Ancient Earthworks," a story in the same collection. The narrator and friend meet at an old Celtic/Roman ruin and discover some artifacts and a skeleton. The narrator's tone is rather matter-of-fact, and the reader's imagination is stirred when he adds ghostly imaginings to his catalogue of events. If the setting were not spooky or Gothic enough, Hardy adds sounds of the preternatural. The narrator acknowledges that "acoustic perceptions" multiplied that night.

> We can almost hear the stream of years that have born those deeds awsay from us. Strange articulations seem to float on the air from that point, the gateway... There arises an inexplicable fancy that they have human voices; if so, they must be the lingering air-borne vibrations uttered at least fifteen hundred years ago.[44]

Here, after he has spent much of the story telling us all the details of his exploration of this ancient site, the narrator indulges in romantic fantasy -- the notion of the ghostly voices of ancient inhabitants of the region. We are sure it is the same kind of imaginative folklore and history that Hardy gleaned from living in the isolated rural countryside of western England.

In both stories, the past intrudes upon the present in Gothic overtones. Hardy undercuts the reality of the scene with the powerful forces emanating from the past,

whether attached to a place as the classical Gothic authors would do or to a character. Written early in his career, these stories exemplify Hardy's leaning toward lore and imaginative fancy inherent in the Gothic.

"BARBARA OF THE HOUSE OF GREBE"

The story "Barbara of the House of Grebe," told by the old surgeon in A Group of Noble Dames, however, is almost purely Gothic in tone and atmosphere and in its macabre psychological reality. It contains even more Gothic strains. This tale is Gothic in its construction, characterization, and atmosphere. It is full of a very real sense of personal horror -- the horror and terror of the mind. If the Gothic is to demonstrate terror, the cruelty of Lord Uplandtowers toward his supple and emotional young wife and the actual terror and dismay and sickness she exhibits from his harsh treatment of her (to eliminate her soft feelings for her former husband Edmond Willowes, a rather strikingly beautiful man with whom she had eloped) demonstrates terror.

The reader can understand the jealousy of Uplandtowers to possess fully the affection of his wife and to continue his family lineage, (which and ironically is done via the survival of only one daughter of their eleven offspring). However, he gains her affections morbidly and cruelly by scaring her with a scarred statue of her beloved Edmond. Not only does she shriek during

one of her nightly rendezvous with the statue enclosed in a secret closet in her boudoir, but she falls down in a faint and then later in an epileptic seizure when she sees the beloved idol mutilated, an action done by Uplandtowers to end these nocturnal vigils of his wife. It is only night after night when the mutilated statue is in their shared bedroom that the real torture and terror affect Barbara to the point of utter desolation and emotional distress.

There is no question that Uplandtowers is the Gothic villain by setting up this grotesque punishment to force a certain reaction from his already emotionally fragile wife. Hardy appears "coy" when he states that the lord was a "subtle," man, never thinking in the present circumstance "of the simple stategem of constant tenderness." Lord Uplandtowers gets his desired wish, but Hardy uses every twist of fate found in a Gothic classic. Not only does Barbara learn actually to despise the memory of her former handsome mate, but now she dotes to excess on Uplandtowers, unable to bear being away from his side.

The story abounds in a sinister Gothic atmosphere with descriptions of the sealing of the statue in a secret compartment in Barbara's boudoir. Most of the events of the tale occur during the nighttime. Even more sinister effects are created, however, in the human actions and reactions of the main characters. Reacting to the mutilated statue, for example, Barbara begs Uplandtowers to take the statue away when it is at the foot of their

bed. Wax candles burn on each side to thrust viewing upon her terrified eyes.

> In short,he allowed the doors [of the wardobe] to remain unclosed at the foot of the bed, and the wax-tapers burning;and such was the strange fascination of the grisly exhibition that a morbid curiosity took possession of the Countess as she lay,and, at his repeated request, she did again look out from the coverlet, shuddered, hid her eyes, and looked again, all the while begging him to take it away, or it would drive her out of her senses. But he would not do so yet, and the wardrobe was not locked till dawn... The scene was repeated the next night.[45]

This could be a scene out of Radcliffe's Udolpho, where Emily is kept secluded against her will. It also reminds us of the macabre psychological terror of the distraught nun chained against the wall in the underground recesses of an abbey and forced to endure terrible hardship in Lewis's The Monk.

Because of her husband's ferocious insistence, our heroine is overcome by terror with a fit. Like that of a classic Gothic monomaniac, Lord Uplandtowers' jealousy was out of proportion, just as were his wife's adoration and sleepwalking visits to her first husband's statue.The actions of both husband and wife are grotesque, and the result is a Gothic tale of love and sadistic coercion. Hardy has indulged his artistic imagination to create a sensation-filled tale of human cruelty that reminds us of the excesses of the shilling shockers of his day.

"THE FIDDLER OF THE REELS"

Hardy's gripping short narrative of an elusive devil fiddler who entices and entrances young women, "The Fiddler of the Reels,"[46] is filled with Gothic inexplicability. It is the story of one young maiden's dream of love turned to personal nightmare by the "fantastical playing" and supernatural pull of Wat Ollamoor's fiddling.

In this tale, Hardy goes out of his way to dramatize in full Gothic diction the perverse power that the slick Ollamoor induces over one Stickleford maiden, Car'line Aspent. We can also see strong folkways in this tale such as a strong love of musical festivities and the rural distrust of strangers. Hardy makes much of Ollamoor's unknown origins and his unwillingness to playing church music or entering the local church. Nicknamed Mop for long curls "not altogether of Nature's making," this devil figure was envied by men for his "power over unsophisticated maidenhood, a power which seemed sometimes to have a touch of the weird and wizardly in it." Hardy's diction is carefully chosen to accentuate the devil associations he is creating for Ollamoor. In the guise of telling a Wessex folktale, Hardy ultilizes the more colorful and imaginative aspects of Wessex traditions.

Not only does Hardy describe Mop as a suspicious agent of evil, but his victim is in some ways the Gothic

heroine, a victim of her own fears and desires. Torn between her desire for normalcy in marriage and motherhood, Car'line is unable to shake off the strange infatuation and magical pull of Mop's music to save her soul or that of her infant daughter. Seized by "a wild desire to glide airily in the mazes of an infinite dance," she succumbs to his diabolic music which had "still all the witchery that she had so well known of yore, and under which she had used to lose all her power of independent will." Because she falls under the spell of the demonic music, Car'line loses her daughter to the devil figure who seems to have spirited the child away.

This story is special in that Hardy inserts some historical truth. Hardy surrounds Car'line's perverse situation with realistic and historical details like the Exhibition of 1893 (for which the story was originally written), the up and coming modernity reaching these small towns with the connection of the railway to the region, and other realistic details of small rural folk.

The essence of the story is folklore dressed in realistic detail in the midst of a Gothic fantasy. Fear of Mop's mesmerizing music creates dread in Car'line and in readers who also fear succumbing to the devil's ways. It is Hardy's use of the diction of exaggeration and sensationalism that creates the story's Gothic effects. It does also demonstrate Hardy's artistic tendency to impose

realistic detail on romantic characters and events, a primary characteristic of his Victorian Gothic.

"THE WITHERED ARM"

It is, however, the story of "The Withered Arm" (1887)[47] that truly evokes Hardy's Gothic sensibility. Like the previous one, this story captures the essence of folk experience and morality. Gertrude Lodge, the pretty young wife of the once filandering landowner, becomes the innocent Gothic victim in a romantic love triangle, powerless to thwart the supernatural forces set upon her. It is a highly contrived tale that evidences the folk logic that the new wife be punished for her husband's callousness.

The Gothic conventions in this tale include a symbolic and sometimes threatening landscape, a prophetic and inexplicable dream, the realistic effects of superstitions come true, the realistic possibility of the existence of witches and the effect of their spells, and ironic twists of fate. Hardy uses the supernatural as well as the innocent Gothic heroine stereotype as well. This story is also filled with the coincidences of plot and sensational effects for which many critics have faulted Hardy, but which fit perfectly into the Gothic mode from which he wrote.

This story indicates a subtle change in the style and artistic vision of Thomas Hardy. It is one of his very best

tales, but it is his use of language and understatement rather than overstatement that is important as part of his development of a unique Gothic form seen in later works.

"The Withered Arm" contains little of the exaggerated diction of the previous tales, yet the Gothic effect is even more pronounced because of the Radcliffean and simple way Hardy creates the supernatural. Instead of describing the most potent supernatural event with sensational excess, Hardy describes Rhoda's dream of Mrs. Lodge's distorted phantom struggling with her in a straightforward manner.

> Rhoda Brook dreamed...that the young wife...with features shockingly distorted, and wrinkled as by age, was sitting upon her chest as she lay. The pressure of Mrs. Lodge's person grew heavier; the blue eyes peered cruelly into her face; and then the figure thrust forward its left hand mockingly, so as to make the wedding ring it wore glitter in Rhoda's eyes. Maddened mentally, and nearly suffocated by pressure, the sleeper struggled; the incubus... withdrew to the foot of the bed, only, however, ...to resume her seat, and flash her left hand as before. Gasping for breath, Rhoda, in a last desperate effort,swung out her right hand, seized the confronting spectre by its obtrusive left arm, and whirled it backward to the floor...[48]

Instead of emotional ravings, we get a scene of a ghostly brawl, one which ties in neatly with the events that are to follow.

Hardy gives us the verisimilitude of the scene through Rhoda's ponderings of being a witch and by the

details to which she clings to explain away the eerie episode. (Because the dreamer questions the actuality of the dream, this dream sequence also reminds us of Elfride's in A Pair of Blue Eyes.) That Rhoda feels it was not a dream and that her boy also heard a noise in his mother's room at the very same hour of the proposed struggle, she could not explain. The unreal is treated as the real -- i.e. the nightmare world of the classic Gothic novel. Details like the shape of her own four fingers on the disfigured limb of Mrs. Lodge is all too real to Rhoda who fears herself possessed with the powers of a witch, a thought generated by local superstition.

Such supernatural happenings create the movement of the plot, leading the young wife to Conjuror Trendle who lends more mystery and superstition to the phantom encounter. More local rumor and guilt about her possible powers cause Rhoda's exodus from their Holmstoke hamlet, an exodus which concludes with her prophetic reappearance at a critical juncture in the tormented young woman's search for a cure for her withered limb. Again by the suggestion of the conjuror, Mrs. Lodge journeys to apply the affected limb to the neck of a hanged man, only to find that the corpse is that of Rhoda and Lodge's illegitimate son. The young woman is not able to apply the conjuror's remedy to turn her blood, but actually the experience and shock of seeing her husband and Rhoda and

their dead son overcome her, and three days later she dies.

Irony, pessimistic fate, and the macabre comprise this tale and make it one of the most Gothic of all Hardy's stories. The dread that we feel for the young wife's predicament and the terror of a ghostly encounter that is real for Rhoda are those found in the Gothic novel. Hardy has written a masterly tale in fine Gothic style.

BEGINNINGS OF THE VICTORIAN GOTHIC

These short stories were composed across the span of Hardy's novel writing career. Some, like "Barbara of the House of Grebe" and "The Withered Arm" are masterly tales with powerful Gothic attributes. Along with others not mentioned in this essay, they are also stories which confirm that Hardy did indeed possess a strong Gothic sensibility. For the purposes of this thesis, they demonstrate his proclivity to impose unrealitic, sensational events onto a realistic rural setting.

Yes, it is true that Hardy romanticizes and dramatizes the rural background to his fiction in order to preserve the fantastical qualities of the old rural imagination. Gothic characters of fantasy and romance and macabre, inexplicable events go hand in hand with this rationale. It is, however, noteworthy that Hardy professed realism as well as sensationalism in essays and

letters, and that this combination, started here in the shorter fiction, and later developed in the longer novels, becomes the basis of his unique Victorian Gothic.

CHAPTER FIVE: HARDY'S MINOR NOVELS: BEGINNING HIS VICTORIAN GOTHIC

Thomas Hardy's novels point more directly to his development of a mode of Victorian Gothic. As in his short stories, some of his novels demonstrate his ability to blend the realistic elements of rural life with the more sensational attributes of Gothic romance and other forms of romance literature.

For the most part, however, Hardy does not achieve a fully depthful, realistic narrative in his minor novels. Most of them are simply too filled with the coincidences of plot, oddness of characters, and efflusiveness of diction and style of which both nineteenth and twentieth century critics have complained. Contemporary reviewers have not considered many of these novels seriously because they felt that a Victorian writer should confine himself to realism, or at least to the leading dictates of the fiction of his age. The Victorians needed the escape literature but professed to seek historical accuracy and realism in literature. Overtly, they attempted to reject romantic forms, and yet consumed as many forms of popular literature as they could.

Based on the advice of his publishers, who often rejected his works because they were either too preposterous or too unrealistic, Hardy had to learn to temper his vision and his style. He had to keep the

serial readers interested with narrow escapes and near misses, but he also had to make the characters psychologically real for his audience. Most often critical commentary revolves around the social and most especially the sexual issues Hardy raised in his fiction. Too often Hardy capitulated to Victorian prudery. Such a task gave him the impetus to bowderize his own fiction and to be aware of the demands of a convention-bound readership. In his early novels we see his Gothic sensibility, and in many cases his rather awkward attempts to produce works that fit awkwardly with his own vision of literature and that of his Victorian audience.

DESPERATE REMEDIES

Hardy's first published novel, Desperate Remedies, is probably the most Gothic and sensational of all his works. (Florence Emily Hardy reports in The Early Life of Thomas Hardy that Macmillan refused to publish Desperate Remedies, and Hardy realized that they were "not in the way of issuing novels of a sensational kind," and he sent the manuscript to Messrs. Tinsley, a firm which did.) Modeled after Wilkie Collins' detective thriller Old St. Paul's (1841),[49] Desperate Remedies holds the full Gothic flair. We have the fair damsel in distress, the threatening masculine villain, the underlying secret bonding good and evil characters together, a pretty

ghastly murder plot, and the classic Gothic mansion.

In addition, and an aspect of the novel on which Robert Morely, Hardy's Macmillan editor, based his rejection of the book as "abominable", the sexual intrigues in this first fictional work are explicit. (This is considered Hardy's first novel since we are not counting The Poor Man and the Lady which was Hardy's very first novel manuscript and which for several reasons was ultimately never found intact. Parts of the work are said to be incorporated in Desperate Remedies and other of Hardy's later novels.) Not only does the aristocratic mistress of the mansion conceive out of wedlock -- a narrative detail to outrage the soberest of Hardy's Victorian readers and editors -- but the several scenes of the virginal Cythera and her older counterpart in bed are filled with rather explicit lesbian overtones. In total, the novel may be as Morely had suggested, "ruined by the disgusting and absurd outrage which is the key to its mystery ...too abominable to be tolerated..."[50]

In addition to the eccentric plot design, it is for his Gothic excesses and the affected diction of the cheap nineteenth century Gothic shocker that Hardy is faulted in this novel. Added to his censure of the book as uneven in plot and prosaic in style, biographer Robert Gittings faults Desperate Remedies as an inconsistent mixture of Wilkie Collins' sensationalism and classical Gothic

romance.[51]

> Indeed, almost mathematically, the first half of the book is semi-Gothic romance; the second half is the realistic detective-type affair of clues and the unravelling of factual incidents that lead to the exposure of a murder...The final chapter clears up the circumstances of the murder, by the villainous steward's confession of how he killed and concealed his wife, and then reveals the original Gothic mystery, namely that his power over the Lady of the Manor derives from his being her illegitimate son.[52]

Not only would Victorian readers react against an aristocrat lady bearing a child unlawfully, but they would also react against the high improbability of the plot.

As in the older Gothic form, Gittings feels Hardy's powers of description are overdrawn in this book. For example, we can find the heightened effects and emotion of the Gothic in Hardy's description of the evil manipulator Manston playing the organ for the innocent young Cythera. With the full exaggeration of a Gothic romance, a violent storm outside forces the maiden to get near the powerful male. Hardy describes the girl's fascination first with the music and then with the man.

> He [Manston] now played more powerfully. Cythera had never heard music in the completeness of a full orchestral power, and the tones of the organ, which reverberated with considerable effect in the comparitively small space of the room, heightened by the elemental strife of light and sound outside, moved her to to a

> degree out of proportion to the actual power of the mere notes, practised as was the hand that produced them. The varying strains - now loud, now soft; simple, complicated, weird, touching, grand, boisterous, subdued...shook and bent her to themselves, as a gushing brook shakes and bends a shadow across its surface...[53]

To give the heightened effect of emotion affecting Cythera, Hardy lists several adjectives and conflicting ones that epitomize the musical strains that the magnetic Manston is playing. In this episode, in effect, Hardy is trying to create the effect of Mop Ollamoor's hypnotic musical power in "Fiddler of the Reels."

As in traditional Gothic storytelling, Nature plays a dramatic role in the dramatic human action of the tale. In the course of listening, Cythera becomes excessively influenced by the music, the thunder, and the lightening.

> She was swayed into emotional opinions concerning the strange man before her; now impulses of thought came with new harmonies, and entered into her with a gnawing thrill. A dreadful flash of lightning then, and the thunder close upon it. She found herself involuntarily shrinking up beside him, and looking with parted lips at his face.[54]

First a fear of nature invades our heroine, and then an involutary adoration for the man playing the wild music. Using nature's fury as his background, Hardy paints the entire scene in romantic tones.

Words like "gnawing thrill" and "dreadful flash" and the sequence of conflicting adjectives - "simple,

complicated, weird, touching, grand, boisterous, subdued" - in the previous quotation remind us of Gothic overkill. Even Cythera feels that she has been put under the spell of this powerful man, and it is no wonder that minutes after she leaves him when the violence of the storm had abated that she envisions her beloved Edward's ghost rising before her. Such a vision and such description are fully Gothic style.

Desperate Remedies indicates Hardy early emphasis on the sensational and the emotionally drawn scene. It is the first novel that clearly establishes his Gothic sensibility, although the lack of realism in the characters and in the plotline fail to reach the subtleties of his Victorian Gothic.

UNDER THE GREENWOOD TREE

Even though Under the Greenwood Tree, A Rural Painting of the Dutch School (1871) follows the publication of Desperate Remedies, Hardy does not really use any mentionable Gothic conventions in that text. It paints a rustic love story between Dick Dewey and Fancy Day that, like the book, follows the natural rhythm of the seasons. Its original title, The Mellstock Quire, more explicitly points to the disappearance of local man-made entertainments and religious accompaniments. A new vicar and a new organ, which Fancy happens to play, replace the long-standing choir, and it is more for the loss of such

original musicianship that Hardy is nostalgic in the novel. Rarely, except for a moment of feeling captured as a "prisoner" when Dick drives Fancy out of Budmouth in a wagon, does Hardy use the more melodramatic diction of Gothic fiction. Rather, we remember the book more as a lyrical print of a natural romance in a natural rural setting.

A PAIR OF BLUE EYES

It is not until A Pair of Blue Eyes (1873), Hardy's first serial publication of a novel and the first with his name on it, that we see a more predominant Gothic influence, most probably to keep his pending readers "hanging on" for the next installment. Not by any means a Gothic novel per se, A Pair of Blue Eyes exhibits many Gothic characteristics, including a literal cliff-hanging scene over which much critical fuss has been made. (Several critics argue over Hardy's source material for this scene. Most likely, as John Halperin suggests, it is based on an actual episode that Leslie Stephen encountered and published in Fraser's Magazine in November 1872.)[55] Hardy's first mention of the book, in a letter to William Tinsley of 20 October 1871, indicates that the storyline lacks any of the "Schauer-Romantik" mode of classic Gothic terror fiction since he refers to it as a story with a "plot, without a crime." There is no literal crime in the story, except for the usual bruisings of the heart between

young lovers.

There are, however, significant reasons for examining certain aspects of the novel -- its plot design of dramatic coincidences, its few striking scenes scattered throughout the plot for heightened effects, and the "unreserved" innocence of its young heroine Elfride Swancourt. All these are the incipient markings of some of Hardy's more dramatic, more Gothic, and more tragic works. In th ove triangle between Elfride, her first lover Stephen Smith, and her second Henry Knight are the chaste forerunners to the tragic personalities of Tess of the D'Urbervilles begun sixteen years later. We could say that A Pair of Blue Eyes contains seedlings of Gothic conventions and diction that reveal Hardy's later reliance on Gothic effects to achieve his particular blend of themes of the haunting past, the inevitability of tragic misunderstanding between lovers, and a pessimistic sense of fate ruling the lives of the innocent.

The most predominant Gothic convention in the novel takes shape in the form of the threatening phantom of Mrs. Jethway, widowed and crazed by the death of her beloved son who happened to love the young Elfride. She is determined to wreck vengeance on Elfride by casting a dark and perceptive shadow on all of our very young heroine's love affairs. Whenever Elfride gets caught in an intense moral snare of wanting to confess her prior innocent

alliances but being unable to do so because of Knight's idealistic rectitude about former lovers, Mrs. Jethway appears on the scene to torment Elfride.

From the very beginning, Mrs. Jethway is the "shadowy phenomenon" accompanying Elfride and Stephen in their rendezvous. When Knight appears on the scene to take Elfride's heart away, Mrs. Jethway's form is even more formidable and persistent. In church when she wishes to catch a glimpse of "the glory of the dying sun" as it falls on Knight's form, Elfride becomes arrested by the "bleak barren countenance" of the widow Jethway, reminding her always of her innocent but flighty past. It is Mrs. Jethway who is the only member of the small Endelstow parish to be present during Elfride and Smith's thwarted elopement, and it is she who writes to Knight to condemn Elfride for deception and inconstancy for that behavior. She is the Gothic veiled figure tormenting Elfride's peace of mind on the Juliet making its way down Southampton Water, and readers are led to wonder if the determined pathetic figure really did enter Elfride's cabin and disturb her sleep or if it were a dream fostered by Elfride's sense of guilt for not telling Knight everything about her past. In true Gothic, the phantom would be there, palpable, inexorable; however, it is the emotional state of an innocent girl with a stalking conscience that

creates such a dramatic Gothic effect of fear and dread.

That Mrs. Jethway crosses the paths of both Elfride and Knight throughout the story is only one of the many improbable coincidences of plot that raise our eyes to Hardy's Gothic sensibility. Not only does he have Knight find the widow's body buried underneath the crumbling church tower, but the dramatic visits to the Luxellian vaults and to the Cliff Without a Name add to the pervasive sense of doom in Elfride's courtships. In these passages, Hardy uses forms of the classic Gothic to enhance the interpersonal relationships of his characters.

Foremost we have the Gothic splendor of the fastidious, intellectual Knight hanging by a thread off a dangerous cliff. Whether it was this event or Elfride's quick thinking which saves Knight's life that begins love to grow in the cold intellectual is only part of the drama. Gothic characters are often caught in such death-defying circumstances, and this literal "cliff-hanger," based partly on an episode in her youth that Emma Hardy once related to her husband, typifies Hardy's use of such moments of crisis to reveal true character. Instead of thoughts of terror, the well-read and well-bred Knight lingers on thoughts of the worth of his existence over that of lower forms of life as he concentrates on a fossil. Such turning of a potentially tragic event into a

Darwinian escapade warrants one editor's noting of Hardy's turning the tragic into the ludicrous.[56] In chapter thirty-one Elfride keeps the notion of death's association with the cliff alive when she refuses to return to the spot and shudders, "Death stares me in the face in the person of that cliff!" In classic Gothic romance, such personification of evil in natural forces is commonplace.

Following the Gothic convention of a macabre, gloomy setting typical we might say of Maturin, Hardy stages dramatic scenes in traditionally Gothic places -- a burial vault in particular. Early on is a vault scene in which Elfride and Stephen ironically share a seat upon the tomb of the luckless Jethway boy. When questioning Elfride about the whereabouts of her former "lover," Elfride states that having been buried the same day Stephen first came, Felix Jethway is "under us. He is under this tomb. He is dead, and we are sitting on his grave." Later, it is in the same vault that Elfride faces her first betrothed when Knight is by her side. Hardy dramatizes the event with emotionally dramatic diction: "To Elfride the intense agony of reproach in Smith's eyes was a nail piercing her heart with a deadliness no words can describe." Prophetically, she explains her discomfort in the dim tomb with "I don't like being where Death is so emphatically present." Such a line echoes throughout the book -- when

she and Knight were on the boat and when she fears returning to the Cliff With No Name, the original scene of drama between life and death for her and Knight. It is again to this vault that Hardy returns to complete the emotional climax of the story -- having both Smith and Knight watch, with their own ironic pain of her loss, Elfride's young husband Lord Luxellian sob over her coffin. All these coincidences of setting and scene add the Gothic flavor to this novel and demonstrate Hardy's incipient Gothic sensibility.

Such emotional sensationalism is characteristic of early Gothic romances. In his March 1895 preface to A Pair of Blue Eyes Hardy foretells readers that the region in the book is the "region of dream and mystery" with

> ghostly birds, the pall-like sea, the frothy wind, the eternal soliloquy of the waters, the bloom of dark purple coast that seems to exhale from the shoreward precipices,...like the twilight of a night vision.[57]

Yet, the novel is not a totally Gothic dream world turned nightmare. It is not classic Gothic because Hardy does attempt to make Elfride's psyche and behavior "real" for his readers. It is not Hardy's creative Victorian Gothic because it lacks the subtleties of versimilitude blended with romanticism. In addition, Hardy is more interested in dramatizing Darwinian concepts of evolution and the prejudices of social snobbery in this book,

Knight's contemplating his value versus that of primitive life forms and Dr. Swancourt's rejection of Stephen Smith, respectively, serving as prime examples of these themes. Still a young writer, Hardy experiments in each subsequent book, fluctuating between his own personal love of the marvelous and his artistic desire to be lifelike in his writing. In the two novels that follow A Pair of Blue Eyes, he tries comedy first and then history for his fiction.

THE HAND OF ETHELBERTA AND THE TRUMPET MAJOR

Like The Hand of Ethelberta, A Comedy in Chapters (1876), The Trumpet Major and Robert His Brother (1880) lacks strong Gothic qualities. Nothing in the Gothic mode really occurs except Hardy's patterning of the self-disciplined, morally astute Gothic heroine. While Ethelberta Petherwin becomes part of Hardy's social satire of the cultural elite and marries for convention's sake and her impoverished family's sake, she stars in a comic novel, not a Gothic one.

In The Trumpet Major, Miss Anne Garland, who finds her widowed mother insufficient as a means of controlling Anne's destiny, is the prim and proper Gothic virgin desired by men. Instead of a Gothic villain, however, she has three suitors -- Festus Derriman whom she manages to outrun and outwit and two brothers, John and Robert

Loveday, the former who loves her totally and the latter who wins her heart since their childhood romance. There are no Gothic castles or crumbling towers, but only lovely landscapes to capture each scene. The only real threat to the heroine and villagers is the rumor of Napoleon's impending assault. Little Gothic is to be found in this novel or in Ethelberta.

A LAODICEAN

A Laodicean (1881) reminds us in many ways of the Gothic elements in A Pair of Blue Eyes, yet Hardy has added some key ingredients of the Gothic, namely a palatial estate and castle filled with intrigues from the past and owned by a beautiful, virtuous maiden, and secondly, a true devil-figure in the form of an illegitimate son. Vigar finds the storyline largely dependent on irregular patterns of chance, coincidence and deception,

> where the probable is sacrificed willingly for an insistence that in life anything is possible. In this novel, though, there is little to justify our acceptance of the unexpected."[58]

While she finds the book supplied with "all the Gothic trimmings of romance and intrigue," Penelope Vigar faults the novel with lacking any background of mystery or fantasy and yet attempting to depict a "believable manifestation of reality."[59] In other words, A Laodicean

offers us Gothic fare with a background of normality. That Hardy dictated it to his first wife Emma while he was ill and confined to bed merely adds to the awkwardness of the loosely drawn but extended plotline.

The major Gothic trimmings in this book include secret pacts between characters to "ensnare" the heroine Paula Powers into marriage and, of course, against the backdrop of the Gothic staple - a haunted palace. The heroine Paula Powers is unlike most of our frail and often impoverished Gothic mistresses. Forerunner of Sue Bridehead in some ways, (mostly for her lukewarmness and independence), Paula has economic independence, inheriting her railroad magnate father's fortune and buying the de Stancy castle and homestead. It is this homestead and wealth, however, which bring about the types of intrigues and snares that we commonly find in Gothic romance.

As with Walpole's Otranto, the haunted palace is crucial to the classic Gothic. While phantoms may not lurch out of portraits, the thirteenth-century de Stancy castle offers us a Gothic ruin. George Somerset's first view is described in classic Gothic tones:

> ...then there appeared against the sky the walls and towers of a castle, half ruin, half residence, standing on an eminence hardby. ...The castle was not exceptionally large but it had all the characteristics of its most important fellows. Irregular, dilapi-

dated, and muffled in creepers as a great portion of it was...[60]

Darkened by ivy and with the moon's reflection on it, the ruin is an example of secular Gothic architecture and the reason the young architect George Somerset is so interested in sketching it in the first place. It housed a "crypt-like hall"; a central pillar on which was reputed to have the "most hideous grotesques" of all England on its capitals and was behind locked doors. Some of the mythology and legend which relate to the castle add to its Gothic nature. Our sensible Somerset becomes trapped in a tower as did someone in the past. Wilkins, the young man who purchased the de Stancy castle from Sir William (Charlotte and Captain William de Stancy's father) when he was young, ironically and mysteriously goes blind and never gets to inhabit the castle. Thus we get further preternatural history associated with the ruin and the rationale for the building's going to ruin for so long until Paula's arrival on the scene.

Further discord is associated with the castle. Its renovation is the cause of the professional rivalry between the hero Somerset and another architect Havill, who has some part in William Dare's treachery against Paula.

Moreover, there is a history, a living past so to speak, that goes along with the de Stancy mansion.

Initially we get this Gothic sense of the intruding past with the ghostly feelings of her habitation of the de Stancy homestead. Paula is "nouveau riche" and the living de Stancys, one of whom becomes her betrothed, remind her not so subtlely that she is the intruder. Even though William de Stancy's father lost his family's legacy, they are still from the stocks of the landed, titled aristocracy. We are reminded of this throughout the book, especially with the large old paintings and de Stancy portraits that adorn the walls of the de Stancy castle. It is no wonder that in realistic fashion to rid the homestead of its ghosts, Hardy has to burn the castle to the ground.

The palatial de Stancy estate owned by the heroine lacks full Gothic glory without the presence of a major Gothic convention -- the mysterious villain. William Dare, the illegitimate son of Somerset's rival for Paula's hand, Captain de Stancy, is Hardy's first full Gothic devil figure. Not only do we suspect him as the mysterious arsonist of the castle at the end of the story, but throughout the book he is described much like Melville's confidence man in the book of that title. Like the Devil, Dare appears ageless and of indistinct nationality. Havill cannot guess if he's French, English, Indian or American. All we really know about him is that he cons everyone,

even his own father. Like the phantom Mrs. Jethway, he is everywhere -- secretly in the castle, near the core characters on their continental journeys, and almost omnipotent, it seems. When asked by his father where he came from, he answers much as the devil would. "From going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it, as Satan said to his Maker." Hardy suffers not from subtlety when at the end of this same chapter the captain calls his illegitimate son "quite a Mephistopheles."

TWO ON A TOWER

Following A Laodicean are the equally improbable events and characters of Two on a Tower, published one year later in 1882. Two on a Tower is replete with drama, heightened emotion, secrecy, marriage annulments, visions of a ghost, unlikely coincidences, secret pacts and trysts, and an ultra dramatic ending. Fiery emotions and passions are displayed in the artificial style of the Gothic shocker. We have last-minute switches of wedding plans and instantaneous realizations of pregnancy the day of long leavetakings. The emotionally wrought landscape in this novel molds itself into an unrealistic Gothic-style ending.

The Gothicism of this novel lies primarily with Hardy's depiction of the emotional sensationalism of the heroine, the dark Lady Viviette. Although editor F.B. Pinion calls Two on a Tower not one of Hardy's more

serious novels but rather a tragi-comedy,[61] certain passages display the overwrought diction of the Gothic of Mrs. Radcliffe and that of Maturin. Exaggeration of emotion such as this is intrinsic to the Gothic aesthetic.

For example, when Lady Viviette Constantine, who has literally been deserted by Lord Constantine (who is on an African hunting safari) cuts a lock of the sleeping young Swithin St Cleeve's hair, we know this is the act of a desperately lonely and bored woman. The act is one of stealth and leads up to her undying love for the young astronomer. His presence in her tower had arisen as "an attractive intervention between herself and despair." However, because of her superior age and social stance in life, despair is all she ever really gains from their ultimate union.

The Gothic effects of their times together are crystalized in the convention of tormenting and violent weather. Nature's "crushing mechanics" heighten the emotional intensity of their plans for a secret elopement.

> While these tactics were under discussion the two-and-thirty winds of heaven continued, as before, to beat about the tower...'The disposition of the wind is as vicious as ever,' she answered...And,... a circular hurricane, exceeding in violence any that had preceded it, seized hold upon Rings-Hill Speer at that moment with the determination of a conscious agent. The first sensation of a resulting catastrophe was conveyed to their intelligence by the

> flapping of the candle-flame against the lantern-glass; then the wind, which hitherto they had heard rather than felt, rubbed past them like a fugitive. Swithin beheld around and above him,...the open heaven, with its racing clouds, remote horizon, and intermittent gleam of stars. The dome that had covered the tower had been whirled off bodily; and they heared it descend crashing upon the trees. ...Swithin stretched out his arms towards Lady Constantine, whose apparel had been seized by the spinning air, nearly lifting her off her legs. She, too, was as yet unharmed. Each held the other for a moment, ...fearing something further would happen...[62]

Hardy uses such sensational diction to heighten the drama of the emotional moments between our primary characters. The tension of the moment is mimicked by the apparently grotesque wind. It is as if fate in the guise of the wind agrees with Viviette's pessimistic view that "...something would occur to mar our scheme!"

The "something" remains until the end of the story where we find the most improbable of all the events. St Cleeve returns to the tower five years after the main pulse of their union, and Viviette knows from his one look at her now more matronly form, that he no longer loves her. In spite of his initial response to her, and probably for the sake of their young child, he does propose a new union between them. But Hardy's flair for the Gothic takes hold now. Only thirty-five years or so of age and a new mother, Viviette dramatically dies in his arms, unable to bear the thought of such happiness. Such

an ending is Gothic in form and substance and a rather sensational way to end this novel.

THE WOODLANDERS

Written as a "tragic counterpart to Under the Greenwood Tree," The Woodlanders (1887) evidences a maturing of Hardy's style. Many critics, including Pinion, feel it is some of his best writing, most especially since he wrote more freely, not restricted by the demands of weekly serialization for "its insistent demand for events."[63] Maybe because he did not have to sustain instant reader interest, Hardy focused more on the countryside and his theme of protest against English divorce laws and the restraints of social convention. As a "traditional pastoral,"..."an idyl of Little Hintock,"[64] The Woodlanders focuses more on the subversive forces in a pastoral world rather than on those of the supernatural. For these reasons, and that the novel maintains a background that maintains the traditional order of the natural world, the novel is rather less of the Gothic mode of some of Hardy's previous fiction. (It is the least often read of Hardy's "great" Wessex novels, and because the impact of Gothic elements is rather limited, we have decided to discuss its relevance to our theme here rather than in the next section for "major" fiction.)

The Woodlanders lacks the Gothic sensationalism of

most of Hardy's other novels, but it does contain elements that reflect a sort of Gothicism. James F. Scott, points out that there is little reference to Gothic convention in this novel except perhaps for the mantrap[65] set by jealous Tim Tangs for the philandering Dr. Fitzpiers.

According to Scott, the man-trap itself is reminiscent of Gothic torture engines, but becomes the symbol of man's inhumanity to man.[66] Mary Saunders describes it as a an iron monster with menacing teeth that is described as combining the aspects of a shark, crocodile, and scorpion.[67] She finds the obsolete man-trap, used by farmers from Elizabethan times to the 1830's to catch poachers, an appropriate symbol for the social entrapment and marital mismatches in the story itself. The story's heroine, Grace Melbury, for example, is "trapped" by convention and her father's desire to see her upwardly mobile socially, and she succumbs by marrying the socially higher Dr. Fitzpiers. The marriage is a disaster on several fronts because Fitzpiers literally goes after the aristocratic Felice Charmond. Foremost, even though she and Fitzpiers eventually reconcile, Grace's marriage has cost her a life of love with her natural lover, Giles Winterbourne, who eventually dies from protecting Grace. Despite the human drama involved, The Woodlanders is more

mellow in tone and composition than his other "Gothic" novels.

There are, however, several minor incidents in the book which are indebted to Hardy's Gothic aesthetic. In chapter nineteen, Fitzpiers tells Grace he was "doomed" to join in their picnic, and by doing so draws from her father and the other picnic folk several ghost stories,

> ...sundry narratives of their fathers', their grandfathers', and their own adventures in these woods; of the mysterious sights they had seen - only to be accounted for by supernatural agency; of white witches and black witches: and the standard story of the spirits of the Two Brothers who had fought and fallen, and had haunted King's Hintock Court a few miles off till they were exorcised by a priest, and compelled to retreat to a swamp, whence they were returning to their old quarters at the rate of a cock's stride every New Year's Day,...[68]

Such folklore and tale-telling are part of Hardy's attempt to preserve the cultural folk heritage of his birthplace.

These village tales and the Midsummer Eve experiments of the young maidens undergoing enchantments which would give them glimpses of their future marriage partners add the touch of superstition to the pastoral tale. When Giles Winterborne asks one of the girls attempting to flee the scene of the ancient rite the cause of their flight, she responds in pure folk imagination. "We saw Satan pursuing us with his hour-glass. It was terrible!"

Other than containing a brief episode with a wind ghost, the novel skirts around Gothic sensationalism. Keeping herself away from Fitzpiers by harboring herself alone in Winterborne's cabin, Grace attempts to sleep during a violent wind storm, described by Hardy in a Gothic lingo similar to that in Two on A Tower

> The wind grew more violent, and as the storm went on it was difficult to believe that no opaque body, but only an invisible colourless thing, was trampling and climbing over the roof,making branches creak, springing out of the trees upon the chimney, popping its head into the flue, and shrieking and blaspheming at every corner of the walls...the assailant was a spectre which could be felt but not seen.

Here the wind takes on the characteristics of a ghostly menace and the tone of the passage goes on to offer us even more terrible images.

> Sometimes a bough from an adjoining tree was swayed so low as to smite the roof in the manner of a gigantic hand smiting the mouth of an adversary, to be followed by a trickle of rain, as blood from the wound.[65]

The image of the gigantic hand, in particular, brings us directly back to Walpole's preternatural vision at Strawberry Hill, the genesis of the English Gothic movement.

THE WELL-BELOVED

The last of Hardy's minor novels, The Well-Beloved (1892, revised 1896), begins with a Gothic flair -- an

apparition -- but soon loses all of its potential Gothic tones. It is a rather absurd, fantastical tale based on the incompatible ingredients of a grim tragic-comic realism (according to Pinion) and fantasy. The hero, Jocelyn Pierston, has a vision of the love of his youth, Avice Caro hovering over her grave. Such an image is based on the folk belief that spirits attend to their burial sites. At first he assumes the incarnation to be true, but soon learns that the ghost was really the daughter of his beloved; twenty years later, the same situation occurs, and he falls in love with the granddaughter of his first beloved. Ultimately the tale is Pierston's search for beauty and perfection; aptly so, he is an artist.

Jocelyn's quest for his "well-beloved" becomes allegorical, for his real beloved is "his own self-image, his 'wraith' or double 'in a changed sex.'"[70] While there is little Gothic sensibility exhibited in this story, such sentiments of one's seeking his "other half" in a life partner turns us to the themes of Hardy's major works, Tess of the D'Urbervilles and Jude, the Obscure between which The Well Beloved was written. Although the book has great insight on the idealistic, artistic quest for ultimate beauty, it is still a minor work of Hardy's that does not exhibit the sense of human tragedy or the blend of Gothic tones and realistic tones that we find in his

major novels. Those, we contend, exhibit some of the most dominant characteristics of the classic Gothic novel blended into a subtle realism.

CHAPTER SIX: HARDY'S MAJOR FICTION; DEVELOPMENT OF HIS GOTHIC AESTHETIC

Thomas Hardy's unique Gothic aesthetic is felt most strongly and most effectively in his major works of fiction. Except for the third novel, and because of its overall pessimism (a charge Hardy avidly denies) possibly the last novel, all of what we consider his five greatest novels - Far From the Madding Crowd, The Return of the Native, The Mayor of Casterbridge, Tess of the D'Urbervilles, and Jude, The Obscure - demonstrate fully Hardy's unique Victorian Gothic. Not only do these novels encompass Hardy's greatest themes and most tragic characters, but they most clearly demonstrate first, his predominant use of Gothic conventions and secondly, how the Gothic elements function in novels of "vraisemblance." The "vraisemblance" of which we speak is found in the characterization of his protagonists.

In these major works of fiction, Hardy's novelistic verisimilitude is enhanced (and not necessarily faulted) by these Gothic absurdities, and we respond with both incredulity and poignant insight as to the human condition. Morton Zabel's critical essay "Hardy in Defense of His Art: The Aesthetic of Incongruity"[71] found in Hardy, A Collection of Critical Essays (1963) edited by Albert Guerard covers this issue extensively. Zabel seeks to assess what Guerard and others have called the "uneven" quality of Hardy's work. Hardy himself professed to be an

anti-realist in his fiction, yet he does seek to achieve the "truth" of human nature. He tells us in "The Profitable Reading of Fiction," (1888) that his concern is "an honest picture of human nature", not necessarily the day-to-day details of mundane life. Although in this same essay he identifies the reader in his quest for a "true exhibition of man," Hardy felt that

> The reader be not too critical... his author should be swallowed whole, like any other alterative pill. He should be believed in slavishly, implicitly. However profusely he may pour out his coincidences, his marvelous juxtapositions, his castastrophes, his conversions of bad people into good people at a stroke, and 'vice versa,' let him never be doubted for a moment.[72]

In other words, Hardy firmly believes that the writer can impose the marvelous, the coincidental, the absurd on the supposed verities of fiction. And Hardy certainly does so in both his major and minor fiction, the latter unable to achieve the tragic heights of his major novels.

Hardy asserts that realism in literature does not have to be restricted by barriers to the imagination; the "truth" of fiction lies in the heart of the reader. Zabel, who calls Hardy "a realist developing toward allegory," finds that Hardy's most important concern in his writing was blending his "rural realism" with ironic or "tragic mischance," the type we find replete in classic sensation literature.

> The most important tension for Hardy -- the very heart of his aesthetic in fact -- was the simple desire to juxtapose plausible human beings and strange common event, the real and the fantastic.[73]

In traditional Gothic romances, writers presented innocent propriety-bound maidens hounded by vicious monomaniacal villains, the unreal next to the unreal. In Hardy's minor fiction, we see the incipient development of this aesthetic by Hardy's utilizing such motifs in his fiction, the main difference being that the characters in the minor fiction lack the "vraisemblance" and tragic implications of those in the major works. When Hardy is able to create tragedy from a poor girl's seduction and rejection by lovers, when he is able to transform a wandering peasant into a man with an indomitable will, when he is able to symbolize the threat of a storm as indicative of human turmoil, then we are able to let the barriers to our imaginations down and accept the truth of great fiction.

In some of his short stories and early novels, for example, we see realism "blended" with the Gothic absurd. A country woman's jealousy over her former lover's new wife appeals to our illusion of actual life, yet a dream bearing palpable consequences to the new wife does not. Sometimes the effect is comic, and sometimes the effect is "almost, but not quite" on the mark of great literature. A heroine, for example, undergoes Gothic-like escapades: near calamities, threatened improprieties, and

victimization by others or by circumstances, yet she is never quite real for us. Viviette in Two on a Tower and Elfride in A Pair of Blue Eyes are perfect examples. Their many escapades between two attentive lovers simply cannot go unnoticed time after time either by family members or by the more curious and watchful country folk. Either the heroine's character is too much in the mode of the Gothic heroine stereotype or the circumstances in which she finds herself are too coincidental, too absurd, too unrealistic, to give us a cogent view of either the character or the book as a whole.

Conversely, Hardy also presents us with unrealistic, often idealistic and often grotesque characters, and Gothic stereotypes in quite realistic settings. Instead of the Gothic aura of a threatening landscape for a hapless victim, Hardy gives us a villain, a threat - a Troy, a Wildeve, an Alec, - in realistic rural environments juxtaposed to full-bodied, complex, realistic heroines. The surrounding rural folk who comment on their masters and mistresses also provide that element of "rural realism" In either case, Hardy's greatest fiction embodies Gothic conventions superimposed on realistic trappings, and the result is a unique form we are calling Hardy's Victorian Gothic. The point is that Hardy extends the Gothic mode by employing some of its formulaic elements in his most serious and most realistic fiction. The sensationalism of his lesser works has been tempered with

the realism of his greater works, thus possibly the basis of the distinction between Hardy's major and minor fiction. The combination of the two modes in a single fiction permits Hardy his unique place in English letters and in the development of the Gothic.

FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD

Written in 1873-74 between A Pair of Blue Eyes and the comic The Hand of Ethelberta, Far From the Madding Crowd (1874) stands out as Hardy's first major work of fiction. Certainly, as Virginia Woolf has complained, the prose contains stylistic inconsistencies - clumsy, "bookish elaborations as well as "uncompromising sincerity" and sonorous symmetry.[74] But is the masterly combination of romance and realism, superficiality and depth, and character and plot that make this novel so extraordinary and certainly a cut above works like Desperate Remedies or Two on a Tower.

For our purposes, the Gothic characteristics of the pathetic fallacy, the use of nature to to heighten the effects of terror or horror, and the histrionics of nature to dramatize further human suffering, come to fruition in Far From the Madding Crowd. Not only does the novel carry the Gothic elements of the irrationality of events and characters, but it also presents them in a pastoral setting of country realism and tradition that Hardy feared would be lost to the world. In this novel we find the

first use of the term "Wessex," an appellation Hardy "had thought to reserve to the horizons and landscapes of a partly real, partly dream-county."[75] The duality of the real and the dream in that statement reflects how the Gothic functions in this novel: as a supportive counterpoint to a human story. The partly real aspects - the Weatherbury burial customs, the divination practices, the harvest homes, the attachment to the soil - coincide artistically with the partly-dream, irrational, comic, and grotesque aspects - the unrealistic coincidences, the egocentric villainy, thwarted burials, and whims of fate. Far From the Madding Crowd includes much of the machinery of the Gothic with its graveyard landscapes, rural superstitions, bits of horror and threatening weather, and yet the novel's power comes from the blend of these elements in a realistic human drama where the versimilitude of Bathesheba's character and the power of natural laws direct the pulse of this fiction. It is the first representation of Hardy's successful Victorian Gothic.

The primary Gothic elements in this novel revolve around Bathsheba's developing identity. There is no question that her emotional development is the crux and primary focus of the book. She matures in the course of the story from a rather vain and headstrong young girl, impressed by her own good looks and those of the dashing

Troy, to a woman, suffering from the inconstancy and callousness of an unworthy husband, who can recognize the worth of human integrity, in herself and in Gabriel Oak.

That Bathesheba winds up with the noble Oak, whose character undergoes very little change in the book, adds a romantic touch to the book, but it is the ultra-romantic, sensational elements that call attention to Hardy's Gothic sensibility. Among others these include two major sensational events - the famous storm scene and the shooting of Troy. Because in these scenes Hardy avoids the dominance of the fanciful over the realistic, the novel maintains its tragic tones and does not drown in melodrama.

A primary Gothic aspect to this novel includes the intertwining of natural events to human ones. Changes in Nature's mood often reflect character changes. Nature, like a great Gothic villain, threatens human affairs, but it is Hardy's delicate treatment of setting and character development that keeps the scene from being incredible and wholly Gothic. A look at the famous storm scene demonstrates Hardy's success.

Hardy sets up the human drama of Bathsheba's love affairs against the eeriness of a late August night.

> The night had a sinister aspect. ...The moon...had a lurid metallic look. The fields were sallow with the impure light, and all were tinged in monochrome...The same evening the sheep trailed homeward

> head to tail, the behaviour of the rooks had been confused, and the horses had moved with timidity and caution... Thunder was imminent...[76]

There is no question about the "vraisemblance" of this passage. Like an artist who has sketched this scene many times, Hardy etches in minute detail the essence and reality of an approaching storm, including the reactions of the animals.

Against the realism of nature, Hardy imposes his artistic will, and we get incident upon incident to draw up the reader's excitement. Ironically, Sergeant Troy chooses this night for the harvest supper dance and for a wedding celebration. Fortuitously, the forty-five minutes of "thunderous footing" required for the selected tune "The Soldier's Joy" to which Bathsheba and Troy dance precedes Nature's impending "dance of death" to the immediate region. Foreshadowing still the terror and human circumstance to come, Hardy allows for a series of small natural events seen only by Oak (i.e. the toad crossing the road, the slug, the spiders getting inside, the sheep terrorized into confusion) to build up the tension of the scene and of the night. Added to this are the human events - Troy's refusal to heed Gabriel's warning about an impending hard rain, Bathsheba's unheeded warning against more drink for the folk, and the separation of the men and women, in particular indignant Bathsheba from her

hedonistic mate. When Gabriel closes the door on the drunken revelers, all the able-bodied farm men, to protect them from the storm, Hardy accentuates with strong Gothic exaggeration Nature's impending terror.

> A hot breeze, as if breathed from the parted lips of some dragon about to swallow the globe, fanned him from the south, while directly opposite in the north rose a grim misshapen body of cloud, in the very teeth of the wind. So unnaturally did it rise that one could fancy it to be lifted by machinery from below. Meanwhile the faint cloudlets had flown back into the south-east corner of the sky, as if in terror of the large cloud, like a young brood gazed in upon by some monster.[77]

Images of the dragon or monster for the thundercloud add Gothic intensity to the scene.

Confusion is about to erupt. "Rumbles became ratttles," and the heifers gallop in terror. Four blue streaks of lightning flash, followed by the fifth "with the spring of a serpent and the shout of fiend." Thunder comes in with "diabolical" sounds to initiate the "dance of death."

Oak and Bathsheba are the only two dance partners now, sharing the terror of the night and the threat of the lightening as they attempt to save her harvest. They appear in this eerie atmosphere as two dark forms, two shadows, working against the violence of the night. We take note of Hardy's diction.

> Heaven opened then, indeed. The flash was almost too novel for its inexpres-

> sibly dangerous nature to be at once realized, and they could only comprehend the magnificence of its beauty. It sprang from east, west, north, south, and was a perfect dance of death. The forms of skeletons appeared in the air, shaped with blue fire for bones - dancing, leaping, striding, racing around, and mingling altogether in unparalled confusion. With these were intertwined uldulating snakes of green,...

Hardy stretches the pathetic fallacy to Gothic extremes and parallels the fervor of the natural events with the fervor of human sensations. Oak and Bathsheba become transfixed by these natural terrors, and yet are saved from electrocution by Oak's rod.

> In the meantime one of the grisly forms had alighted upon the point of Gabriel's rod, to run invisibly down it, down the chain, and into the earth. Gabriel was almost blinded and he could feel Bathsheba's warm arm tremble in his hand -- a sensation novel and thrilling enough; but love, life, everything human, seemed small and trifling in such close juxtaposition with an infuriated universe.

Hardy's Gothic sensibility is essential to the drama of the scene. We feel Oak's emotions toward this woman in the height of Nature's actions.

At the end of the storm, Bathsheba confesses the circumstances under which she married Troy, and Oak works on the ricks in reverie about the "contradictoriness of that feminine heart." Soon to follow will the revelations of the storm's actual damage and the human damage with

subsequent chapters on Boldwood's agony in not gaining Bathsheba's hand and Fanny's reappearance. Hardy shows us in this novel the tragic implications of foolish human behavior and also the whims of fate and nature that affect human beings so poignantly.

One of the most Gothic-like represenations in the book lies in Hardy's symbolic use of a "gurgoyle"[78] which ruins Troy's final romantic tribute to his dead mistress. The grotesque, Hardy describes, as a combination of a dragon, a fiend, and a griffin - a "horrible stone entity...fashioned as if covered with a wrinkled hide." Water snorting from out of its mouth, this grotesque fountain had laughed at the surrounding landscape for four hundred years, and, as if sadistically, "directed all its vengeance" into Fanny's grave. When Troy oversees the damage by the beast's jaws, he becomes distraught, as if, Hardy tells us, "his intention had been known and circumvented." He loses the illusion of himself as a hero of sorts and feels miserable. He flees the village. We keep the illusion of reality of a freak accident juxtaposed to the impotence of the wily Troy whose every action toward Fanny Robin has been catastrophic. Realistically or unrealistically, "Something" keeps Troy from actualizing happiness.

Troy's reappearance on the scene at Boldwood's Christmas party initiates the second most powerful

blending of Gothic tension and realistic human drama in the book. After his unrealistic comic reappearance as a sideshow performer dazzled by Bathsheba's beauty once again, Hardy prepares us for his final dramatic showing in the novel - his death scene.

Prior to Troy's public confrontation with his unsuspecting wife, the chorus in the novel - the rustics - build up the tension in the scene by talking about the strange events surrounding Troy's original disappearance and the possibility of his return to Casterbridge. Further suspense comes when the rustics hear Boldwood's pleading impatience for Bathsheba to arrive at his party. Soon three of them, Smallbury, Tall, and Samway, recognize Troy's features and debate what to do in the "ticklish business" of their masters. Soon after, the party commences, and Boldwood wrests an emotional promise of marriage out of Bathsheba if Troy does not return. We hear the desperation in her acquiesence to his marriage plans. Quivering and agitated, she at last "burst out crying, 'And you'll not--press me--about anything more--if I say in five or six years?' she sobbed, when she had the power to frame the words." Such is the tone of Gothic melodrama, the heroine beset by a monomaniacal lover.

But soon, the reality of Bathsheba's marital condition is revealed, and instead of Boldwood, she is beset by her missing spouse, Troy. Hardy saves this

climactic event from total Gothic sensationalism when he frames Troy's shooting by the distraught and desperate Boldwood with straight-forward writing and simple human reactions. When Troy stands in the doorway, "there was an unearthly silence, all looking towards the newcomer." Bathsheba's brow contracts, her whole face goes pale, as she rigidly stares at her supposedly dead husband. At the sound of Troy's belligerent laughter, Boldwood recognizes the villain. but as Troy turns to Bathsheba, we see her react as any "real" woman would do.

> The poor girl's wretchedness at this time was beyond all fancy or narration. She had sunk down on the lowest stair, and there she sat, her mouth blue and dry, and her dark eyes fixed vacantly upon him, as if she wondered whether it were not all a terrible illusion.[79]

Although she is "almost" in a Gothic heroine's swoon she does not succumb and quickly shrinks back from Troy's touch as he seizes her arm. At his touch she gives a "quick, low scream" which is followed immediately "by a sudden deafening report that echoed through the room and stupefied them all." In bewilderment and despair, Boldwood shot Troy and he fell. Boldwood soon flees.

These are the sensational events of classic Gothic romance, but Hardy controls the stage. "The suspense is conveyed through understatement, in Hardy's calm presentation of the facts, without any extra heightening

or embellishment."[80] We feel Troy, despite his one act of kindness to Fanny after her death, is the traditional Gothic villain of this novel. Throughout the novel, from his dazzling sword display to his callous treatment of the one woman he says he truly loves to his gambling and drunken ways, Troy has been displayed as the conventional villain. In this particular scene, his "mechanical" laugh when he enters the room and his seizure of Bathsheba's arm support this notion. Yet Hardy tempers his death . According to Vigar, "realism predominates over sensationalism," and "Hardy is no more than a reporter."[81]

Far From the Madding Crowd indicates a distinct artistic development in Hardy's Gothic aesthetic, and , in fact, in his literary vision. There are, of course, strong elements and tendencies toward Gothic sensationalism of his earlier works, but Hardy artistically goes much further. Bathsheba is not merely a Gothic heroine, beset by forces beyond her control. Through her headstrong self-will, vanity, and poor judgement, she in some ways contributes to the tragedy of her marriage to Troy and her relationship to the intense Boldwood. Hardy develops her character more fully than that of a simple Gothic heroine, and we accept and applaud her final attachment to Oak, who, like a conventional Gothic hero maintains constancy, love, and fortitude in the face of overwhelming odds.

The grace in this novel is Hardy's sensationalism tempered with mundane realism. The rural truths of the sheep and the storm and the hay and the yokels who chorus the entire action offer us fictional realism. As one critic puts it:

> For the first time, the distinction between romance and reality ceases to be an artistic flaw in the unity of the novel, and the formula which counters the mundane with the incredible, the beautiful with the grotesque, is extended to its very theme.[82]

Far From the Madding Crowd is the start of Hardy's mature aesthetic of a Victorian Gothic mode which leads him to dramatic and yet realistic treatment of the characters, plot, and settings of his other major novels.

THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE

We find Hardy's next major work, The Return of the Native (1878), the most complex structurally and probably next to Tess, the most involved with the classic Gothic mode. The novel is riddled with Gothic conventions and becomes the next prime example of what we are calling Hardy's Victorian Gothic. This novel represents rather clearly our notion of Victorian Gothic in the blending of human misery and human truth with the demonic, the macabre, and the coincidental.

Some of the Gothic staples used include: domestic situations to enhance terror and excitement (the mummers' performance at the Yeobrights), use of a supernatural atmosphere (Guy Fawkes burnings and the predominance of night scenes), grotesque characters (the Reddleman), and improbable and irrational circumstances (chance meetings, missed door knockings, etc.). The coincidences in the book strain readers' credulity, but somehow Hardy manages to project a powerful human drama.

Rather than with the Gothic, The Return of the Native has often been critically compared to classical tragedy.[83] Hardy puts the setting, characters, and incidents on a tragic scale by steeping the book in classical associations. His rhetoric is grandiose. Foremost, for example, Eustacia is shown to be a goddess, a Promethean rebel, a Queen of the Night. Although we do not discount

such comparisons, we feel they work well with our theme. In fact, they add to the contrast between Hardy's verisimilitude and the absurdity and use of exaggeration associated with Gothic romance. Instead of a Gothic castle, we have the all-encompassing Egdon Heath to provide us with visions, spectres, superstitions, evil spirits, and demons. Instead of a preternatural ghost, we have a red one, Diggory Venn, the reddleman. And, foremost, the Gothic staple of a villain, of a demon, of a larger-than-life presence is accounted for in Hardy's depiction of Eustacia Vye, Promethean Rebel.

Predominant throughout the entire story is Egdon Heath which sets the Gothic-like tone, atmosphere, and setting of the complex human drama that enfolds. Intense, inexplicable, indomitable in its "Titanic form," Egdon is both a backdrop for classical tragedy and a backdrop for Gothic romance. The heath is, in fact, a major sinister force, if not a major character, that dominates the lives of the folk of Weatherbury. We first notice Hardy's personification of the heath in the subtitle to Chapter One, "A Face on Which Time Makes But Little Impression." He further characterizes the heath's powerful existence.

> The Egdon was aroused to reciprocity; for the storm was its lover, and the wind its friend. Then it became the home of strange phantoms; and it was found to be the hitherto unrecognized original of those wild regions of obscurity which are vaguely felt to

> be compassing us about in midnight dreams of flight and disaster,... It was at present a place perfectly accordant with man's nature...like man, slighted and enduring; and withal singularly colossal and mysterious in its swarthy monotony...It had a lonely face, suggesting tragical possibilities.[84]

According to this description, Egdon Heath carries all the mystery and dark presence of a Gothic castle; it is the site pre-eminent of the human machinations that we find in the archetypal Gothic romance novel. Hardy has created a Gothic "ruin" out of the landscape's naturally ageless "wild face."

The dreamlike/nightmarish Gothic atmosphere is also present. Egdon is a "bad place to get lost in," a lesson lost on Damon Wildeve and Eustacia Vye as they attempt a nocturnal escape late in the story. It is, however, kind to those like Clym and Thomasin and Diggory Venn who accept its bounty and respect its formidable beauty. When people, like Eustacia, light a fire on the heath in an act of "Promethean rebelliousness," on come "foul times, cold darkness, misery and death. Black chaos comes...," and distorts human figures.

> ...for as the nimble flames towered, nodded, and swooped through the surrounding air, the blots of shade and flakes of light upon the countenances of the group changed shape and position endlessly. All was unstable; quivering as leaves, evanescent as lightning. Shadowy sockets, deep as those of a death's head, suddenly turned into pits

> of lustre; a lantern jaw was cavernous, ...wrinkles were emphasized to ravines, or obliterated entirely by a changed ray. Nostrils were dark wells; sinews in old necks were gilt mouldings; ... eyeballs glowed like little lanterns. Those whom Nature had depicted as merely quaint became grotesque, the grotesque became preternatural; for all was in extremity.[85]

What we have here is the grotesque and macabre inherent in Gothic fiction. It is as if Hardy were describing a witches' sabbath painted by Goya or evil monks depicted by Maturin. Hardy gives the heath supernatural power to create eerie grotesque creatures and monsters out of the people attending its noctural rites. Those who never learn to accept the heath find evil in its recesses, such as Eustacia to whom there were "demons in the air, and malice in every bush and bough."

In his Victorian Gothic, Hardy includes a preternatural figure -- the everpresent Reddleman. Diggory Venn is one of the noctural creatures of the heath and a "Mephistophelian" visitant who manages to become Egdon's ally. His is a mysterious and supernatural presence on the heath; he knows all its secrets, appears omnipotent for the human intrigues fostered in the heath, and stays omnipresent like a preternatual essence. He knows when Eustacia is to meet secretly with Damon Wildeve on the heath or at her home with Clym Yeobright, and that Wildeve gambles away Thomasin's money. His lack of

knowledge, i.e. to whom the money really belongs, merely aids him further in "fouling up" others' lives. He pretty well interferes in all the private relationships between the main actors. Colored "lurid red" from his profession, his is thought a devil or ghost and is the subject of horrid dreams.

> A child's first sight of a reddleman was an epoch in his life. That blood-coloured figure was a sublimation of all the horrid dreams which had afflicted the juvenile spirit since the imagination began.[86]

Hardy intentionally emphasizes Venn's mythic qualities, implying that his redness is that of a sinister devil or ghost. "Reddle spreads its lively hues over everything it lights on, and stamps unmistakably, as with the mark of Cain, any person who has handled it half an hour..." Venn appears to have capacities beyond those of ordinary humans. "Venn ...could feel himself to be in direct communication with regions unknown to man."

We know, of course, that Venn is a "good" presence on the heath and a kind man, although some critics question the results of his interference.[87] He loves Thomasin and would do anything to make her happy; eventually, he marries his beloved Thomasin when he is white, losing in fact his fantastical and grotesque qualities. Hardy uses his grotesque presence in the novel as representative of that which the reader should swallow whole. He is a

remnant from the Dorset past and an imaginative element that Hardy does not want to lose to posterity. Next to the verities of the heath and the dark and the folk customs, Venn becomes the unbelievable character of goodness and awe.

Eustacia Vye, however, is the character supreme who brings shades of Gothic romance to Hardy's pen. She is a demon, a conjuror over Wildeve, beckoning him to her as a moth to a light. Except for her girlish fantasies and hopes of escape from the hellish Egdon Heath, she reminds us of Radcliffe's wicked abbess in Udolpho or Lewis' lovely but wicked Matilda in The Monk.

Throughout the novel, Eustacia is associated with darkness, fire, and hell. First seen as a "strange phenonmenon," Eustacia is the "queen of solitude" on the ageless heath. Strange in her ways, she is thought by the local folk to be a witch, a term she uses to refer to herself ("the witch of Endor") when she summons Wildeve to her one night. The belief in her powers of black magic are so strong that Susan Nonesuch resorts to voodoo herself by melting down a wax figurine representing Eustacia.

Most of the rumors regarding Eustacia stem from her strange nocturnal behaviors and her isolation from the rest of the village. Hardy tells us that her heedlessness of the night "betokened among other things an utter

absence of fear." Hardy goes out of his way to make her like Venn, a supernatural presence on the pagan heath.

> Eustacia Vye was the raw material of a divinity. She had pagan eyes, full of nocturnal mysteries...--she might have been believed capable of sleeping without closing them up. Assuming that the souls of men and women were visible essences, you could fancy the color of Eustacia's soul to be flamelike.
>
> Viewed sideways, the closing-line of her lips formed, with almost geometric precision, the curve so well known in the arts of design as the 'cyma recta,' or 'ogee.' The sight of such a flexible bend as that on grim Egdon was quite an apparition.[88]

Thought of as a demon by the locals, she becomes for us one of the numinous spectres of Gothic romance, reminding us of the mythic past.

Hardy also treats her as a goddess. She is imperious and regal in her manner with all other characters - Wildeve, Mrs. Yeobright, and even Clym her husband.

> Her presence brought memories of such things as Bourbon roses, rubies, and tropical midnights; her moods recalled the lotus-eaters and...her motions, the ebb and flow of the sea; her voice, the viola...her general figure might have stood for that of either of the higher female deities. The new moon behind her head, an old helmet upon it, a diadem of accidental dewdrops round her brow, would have been adjuncts sufficient to strike the note of Artemis, Athena, or Hera respectively...[89]

Whether Artemis or Athena, Eustacia remains in the reader's imagination as someone more than life; she

epitomizes for him, however, the human quality of yearning. She is both goddess and pitiable humanity.

Using the dark gloom of Egdon Heath , we can view her differently. Instead of a goddess, we view Eustacia predominantly as a dignified witch. "Egdon was her Hades, and since coming there she had imbibed much of what was dark in its tone..." Though Queen of the Night, Eustacia is merely a nineteen-year old daydreaming girl. David Eggenschwiler believes she is self-deluded and that the novel demands conflicting attitudes toward Eustacia.[90] Whether a regal queen of the nighttime or a mock-heroine, Eustacia's preternatural perfume permeates the heath and the story with strong Gothic overtones. She is Hardy's pre-emininet Victorian witch.

THE MAYOR OF CASTERBRIDGE

The character of Eustacia Vye dominates The Return of the Native just as the character of Michael Henchard dominates the entire sequence of The Mayor of Casterbridge (1885). This novel carries less of a Gothic flare than Hardy's other major works. Except for the sensationalism of the skimmity ride, the melodrama of the threatening bull-in-the-barn episode, and the pathos of Henchard's vision of himself in the river, the novel maintains more the mode of classical tragedy. The few melodramatic incidents add to the tension of the storyline and for the development of the characters, but missing is the exaggerated diction and overblown rhetoric. It represents Hardy's narrative thrust into tragedy, yet unlike the previous novel, we are not in the secluded atmosphere of Egdon Heath with all its ominous tones. We do not have grotesque characters such as the Reddleman, nor do we have human moths succumbing to the flame of love. Rather, we have human beings in the busy market town of Casterbridge sorting out their produce as well as their love lives. We have the realistic low-lives of the tavern. We also have the monumental tragic character of Michael Henchard.

Like its predecessor, The Mayor of Casterbridge maintains a focus on the monumental ego of one character circumventing his own human aspirations -- Henchard. Because good is his basic nature and greatness his

potential, Henchard achieves the stature of a tragic hero. His predecessor does not. Eustacia has Henchard's monumental appetite for life, but she is, in fact, only a young girl, and a selfish one at that. Rather than Henchard, Eustacia is more easily compared to another character in The Mayor of Casterbridge --Henchard's mistress, Lucetta. Lucetta is a dark seductress like Eustacia who draws both the man of reason, Donald Farfrae, and the man of passion, Henchard, to her side; sexuality is their drawing card. Yet, Hardy's treatment of Eustacia is steeped in Gothic tones and a dark Egdon atmosphere. Symbolically Hardy compares her power over Wildeve as that of a light to a moth; Lucetta's sexuality and femininity, however, is described and suggested on a human level only. Furthermore, Eustacia lacks a quality of character that would engage readers' sympathies. Henchard, on the other hand, is a mature man whose story Hardy subtitles as one of "a man of character." His persona engages us, and our concern is unlike that for a character found in a Gothic sensation novel.

Gothic conventions are barely used in this novel, the one staple from Mrs. Radcliffe being the white virgin figure in Elizabeth Jane, (whom we feel is a passive, colorless creature.) She "earns" the level-headed white knight Donald Farfrae, yet her "victory" does not grab us

with the intensity of a Gothic romance. Farfrae is simply too reasonable, too cautious, and possibly too conventionally virtuous -- a portrait of modern, post-industrial Victorian society rather than a Hardyan view into Casterbridge's more mythic rural past.

This novel also lacks some of the flair of the Gothic from its semi-historial basis. The Mayor of Casterbridge was Hardy's tenth novel, written when he was in his middle forties. Although Frederick R. Karl[91] contends that the novel objectifies what he calls Hardy's "anti-realism," the basis of some of the plot is historical. The storyline was stimulated by his reading in the 1830's and 1840's a country record about a "wife auction." The two other historical events were a royal visit by Prince Albert to Casterbridge in 1849 and the uncertain harvests which immediately preceded the repeal of the Corn Laws. Hardy also keeps to his theme that "character is fate;" Henchard holds our interest but without sensational descriptive effects. Hardy uses more actual place names, and though he takes authorial liberty with dates of actual events, the whole action of the story ranges from 1831 to 1856.[92]

It is significant, too, that Henchard is a Victorian lower class hero, and unlike the heroes of Gothic romance, is not secretly an aristocrat. While implausible events,

frequent coincidences, and abundant unlucky circumstances substantiate Hardy's unique "anti-realism," they do not detract from the tight plot structure and unsentimental story of this impulsive, superstitious man.

In spite of his grotesque acts -- selling his wife, mistreating Elizabeth Jane, and jealously raging against Farfrae -- Henchard maintains his heroic stature. Like Shakespere's Lear and Sophocles's Oedipus, he is blinded by his own passions. Nonetheless, Hardy avoids a Gothic excess of feeling through controlled diction. Henchard may be superstitious, but the supernatural does not override his imagination or the plot. Even in his moments of greatest despair, the prose is tight. Upset about finding out that Elizabeth Jane is not his own child, Henchard merely "looked out at the night as at a fiend...thinking that the concatenation of events ...was the scheme of some sinister intelligence bent on punishing him." He is reduced to melancholy, and the episode brings on pathos for a man who seems to be unable to accept love, and who blames outside forces rather than his own limitations. He remains isolated throughout the novel.

The most melodramatic element of Gothicism in the book comes during Henchard's comtemplation of suicide after he has lost his position, his good name, and his "adopted" daughter. Even here Hardy describes him as under the cloud of fatalism, not under the control of a

malevolent Gothic curse.

> His mood was no longer that of the rebellious, ironical, reckless misadventurer; but the leaden gloom of one who has lost all that can make life interesting, or even tolerable... The merest trumpet or organ tone was enough to move him...But hard fate had ordained that he should be unable to call up this Divine spirit in his need. The whole land ahead of him was as darkness itself; there was nothing to come, nothing to wait for.[93]

We recognize this as the mood of despondency of a proud man having lost his incentive to live. Yet as he contemplates jumping into the river, Henchard stops himself, not from a ghostly vision as he first intimates, but from the remains of the skimmity plot.

> ...he perceived with a sense of horror that it was 'himself.' Not a man somewhat resembling him, but one in all respects his counterpart, his actual double, was floating as if dead in Ten Hatches Hole.
>
> The sense of the supernatural was strong in this unhappy man, and he turned away as one might have done in the actual presence of an appalling miracle.[94]

Soon after he rationalizes the event, recognizing that the effigy may have killed Lucetta (who dies in a Gothic swoon from the scare) but keeps him alive. Such rationalization is not that of a Gothic character; rather Henchard feels that he is in "Somebody's" hands.

There is no Gothic villain in this novel, nor do we have the total gloom of a Gothic atmosphere. The action of

the story pulses from Henchard's irrational behaviors and supports the "fairy tale" atmosphere surrounding the narrative. It takes Hardy's next major novel to bring all the realistic and romantic elements together to blend into Hardy's special Victorian Gothic.

CHAPTER SEVEN: GOTHIC TONES OF TESS AND JUDE

TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES

Not only is Tess of the D'Urbervilles (1891) Hardy's most acclaimed novel, but it also is his most Gothic in form and substance. It is filled with the folklore, pagan ritual, primitive rites, coincidences, darkness of tone and atmosphere, and haunting legends found in classical Gothic romance and in Hardy's own imaginative background. In truth, Tess is the work of fiction that inspired this thesis. So much of the novel patterns itself around the classical Gothic romance. The entire tale is filled with the background of Hardy's native Dorset folk primitivism, fatalism and magic, and he fully uses the artifice of accident and coincidence as elements of the grotesque and of the supernatural embedded behind the folk traditions of his native countryside. In fact, as Rosemary Eakins contends in "Tess: The Pagan and Christian Traditions," "...traditional material becomes the very fabric of the book, woven into almost every aspect of the tragic story."[95]

We cannot dismiss Hardy's intentions here, for these Gothic elements add to the impact of the story. They complement its realism and naturalism. Tess's journey from innocence to experience denotes her as what Ian Gregor calls "a daughter of her age."[96] Her plight is

that of an innocent caught up in the reality of nature in the face of a prudish and unyielding Victorian moral system. Changes in Victorian economics also affected her, and one could say that in actuality her misfortunes are economic ones. She is also "a daughter of doomed rural England which Hardy loved"[97] and which was quickly disappearing with the advent of rail transportation systems, factory work in the cities, and the displacement of cottagers.

Furthermore, the Gothic conventions and folk traditions "are peculiarly suited to the story of a woman vitimised by the dual standards of nineteenth-century morality."[98] Rather than call it an anti-realism, we have chosen the term "Victorian Gothic," for the tale was fashioned for the moral restrictions and imaginative recesses of Hardy's late nineteenth century audience. Because Hardy blends the stark realism of Tess's plight and that of the surrounding countryside with the more sensational romantic conventions of classical Gothic literature popular over a century ago for over forty years, we have chosen the term Victorian Gothic to capture the essence of Hardy's unique achievement. It suggests a romantic literary mode that searches into the dark recesses of the imagination as well as one that appeals with its verisimilitude, realism, and social concerns to a Victorian readership. The result is not merely Hardy's

idiosyncratic artistic vision and style, but also a unique form of Gothic fiction.

In Tess we have the Gothic absurd juxtaposed to harsh naturalistic realism. On the same landscape that we find a poor girl walking for miles across the barren Flintcombe Ash to beg for some financial assistance from her in-laws, we also find a devil figure making her swear on a pagan stone, a macabre ritual found frequently in the sensation fiction of the early and middle 1800's. Prior to this episode, the same figure appears satanically in a vegetable garden in which Tess labors rather unromantically; this scene is followed by a similar one later in the novel when the garden is now superseded by a post-industrial threshing machine driving on the humble beauty. Instead of one devil, she is now between two, one a man, one a machine. The point is that the ultra-realism and even historical accuracy of the rural displacement of families in the 1840's about which this novel was conceived is surrounded by improbable, senationalism that reminds us acutely of Gothic tales. Our realistic heroine suffers from her own short sightedness and innocence and from supernatural omens and curses. From the Victorian present she is swooped back into the mythic pagan past unable to thwart the fate that Hardy and the President of the Immortals has in mind for her.

Tess Durbeyfield is a Hardyan tragic figure, like Henchard before her. We respond to her with pathos and compassion. The Gothic conventions Hardy uses to dramatize her plight increase the effect of her moral and social isolation in the harsh environments in which she lives. Although the critical tendency has been to dismiss these Gothic elements, especially the coincidences and mischances, they do not detract from Hardy's fatalistic vision of the state of man.

In Tess as in the other major works, we have the Gothic absurd in a realistic, naturalistic setting. We have a Gothic villain and a morally pious knight involved with our budding, struggling womanhood who must struggle against both characters. In many ways Tess can be seen as the innocent Gothic heroine -- Hardy does subtitle the novel "A Story of a Pure Woman"-- but because of the depth of her suffering from outside forces and from her own human limitations, she achieves a poignant reality. Aligned with nature, she is not a mere doll as Alec Stoke-D'Urberville and even Angel Clare would have her. She is capable of pain, guilt, delusion, fortitude, perversity, idealism, and courage -- the qualities of a tragic heroine. As a Victorian heroine, she must withstand the victimization of "unfair standards of morality which condemn in a woman behaviour condoned in a man."[99] Though surrounded by Gothic and fatalistic and naturalistic

literary conventions, Tess projects herself realistically and humanly. The novel is the epitome of Hardy's Victorian Gothic as we have defined it.

THOMAS HARDY'S GOTHIC SENSIBILITY IN TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES

In the July, 1892, preface to the fifth edition of TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES, Thomas Hardy replies to critical reviewers that "a novel is an impression."[100] If we take this comment as Hardy's truth as author and creator of this tragic narrative, then we are justified in claiming the Gothic impression such a story has on us. Stylistically. it is filled with Gothic elements: ghosts; grotesque figures; animated portraits; eerie and threatening landscapes; as well as "sympathetic" houses, settings and weather. The plot is highly contrived, full of awkward coincidences. As in archetypal Gothic fiction, Tess is the "pure" female who must fight for her virtue and true natural self against austere male domination throughout the book. Like an archetypal Gothic heroine, Tess herself undergoes an emotional and trying battle of her mind between dreamy illusion and reality, creating, too, the murky atmosphere upon which Gothic fiction thrives. Hardy emphasizes her tragedy by depicting her trials in scenes of mist, fog, and grayness. The landscapes she traverses throughout the book all present an unstable, hazy, threatening environment, the usual

accompaniment to a Gothic tale. Hardy includes a great deal of the supernatural and weird in Tess as well as in his other novels as a metaphor for the psychological distress of his characters and as a means to achieve a certain dramatic tension in plot and character development. Hardy's use of Gothic conventions with which he and the Victorian literary world were very familiar sensitizes his readers, often by contrast, to the realistic and rather caustic social forces and changes occurring in the English countryside during the latter part of the nineteenth century.

In addition, the Gothic tradition offers us a way to view Hardy's dramatic literary style. It answers the stylish problems of Hardy's prose narratives and alerts us to his fundamental artistic sensibility. Although it would be hyperbole to classify it as a predominantly Gothic novel, Tess of the D'Urbervilles contains romantic, Gothic strains which offer us further insight into Hardy's dramatic purposes in the book. Tess demonstrates Hardy's Gothic sensibility which in turn enables readers to sympathize with the heroine, accept the often cumbersome coincidences of plot, and get swept away by the dramatic pulses of the narrative itself. Hardy may be concerned with presenting Tess as a pure woman who dramatically indicts shallow Victorian morality, but the Gothic style of certain scenes and the use of many of the Gothic

conventions alerts us to his fundamental artistic sensibility and provides a discipline for us to examine Tess and, by association, his other works.

"The Gothic world is one of unresolved chaos, of continuous transformation, of cruelty and fear, of the monstrous that is the shadow and mockery of the human."[101] Gothic characters often undergo irrational, highly emotionally-charged traumas and represent sexual stereotypes. In her reference guide to women's Gothic and Romantic fiction, Kay Mussell describes the heroes and heroines and villains of Gothic fiction, emphasizing their sexual roles and search for love:

> Women are cast as victims in a man's world, but through the demonstration of feminine virtues, the victim proves herself worthy of salvation through the love of the hero, who becomes her deliverer from the terrors that beset her. The Gothic villain, on the other hand, is capable of manipulating terrifying props and producing fear and danger, but he or she is defeated by true love.[102]

True love is the essential appeal of romantic fiction as well as Gothic fantasy. Carole Ann Howells finds the Gothic heroine and "idealized image of beauty...the image of sublimated sexual fantasy"[103] who falls in love with Byronic figures. In his book on Gothic fantasy, William Patrick Day sees Gothic females as models of virtue and propriety, always victims of masculine rage and violence and under patriarchal domination.[104] As a result,

patterns arise whereby women are repressed, imprisoned, and subjected to acts of violence and lust while they strive for respectability and moral stability. All of these characteristics can refer to the text of Tess.

If the archetypal Gothic pattern emphasizes the submission of the woman to patriarchal authority,[105] readers can easily view Hardy's Tess in this way. Her father's headstrong self-infatuation with his noble descent from Sir Pagan D'Urberville merely brings her down, literally to retrieve both her parents from the local ale house. Because of his lack of propriety and common sense, she must offer to bring their beehives to market whereby upon the accidental death of Prince, she takes on full moral responsibility for her family's welfare. It is a "blighted star" upon which the destitute Durbeyfields' fortunes rest. Out of their scanty protection, sixteen-year old Tess falls prey to Alec Stoke-D'Urberville's lust and dominance. Later she is the victim of Angel Clare's moral outrage against her past "sins," and she passively accepts his condemnation as her justice only to be victimized again by the satanic Alec. She fits the archetype of the Gothic heroine who must prove through her suffering and silence that she is worthy of an "Angel's love, not only to be his wife in name, but to be taken to his bed, an act Angel consummates only after Tess's fate is sealed. Superficially, her suffering

and deprivation after their marriage has made her "worthy" of his love.

It is important to note here that although Tess can be likened to the usual Gothic heroine, she is much, much more. In most cases the Gothic heroine remains physically intact;[106] Tess does not. She is physically violated by Alec, the villain figure. The depth of her emotions and thought lends itself more toward realism than romanticism, although the romanticsim and idealism we find in this novel are often part of the character's own psyche; she dares to hope that someone pristine like Angel will love her and remove her from the threats of the outside world. She is however, cruelly mistaken. Her tragedy is realistic. Additionally, though he presents her with realistic sentiment, Hardy also presents Tess with Gothic overtones. Like a Gothic heroine, she must submit to her father's foolish tyranny, a lover's physical abuse, and her husband's moral rage. It is her sexuality that initiates her moral troubles; it is her female sex which sets her at the mercy of masculine abuse.

The emphasis on the sexual relationship of Gothic heroes and heroines is central to the understanding of the imaginative life of the middle class in the nineteenth century. Gothic fantasies through conventions such as character doublings, fearful dramatic situations and

environments, and their thematic focus on male-female roles served as escape literature for Victorian readers worried about the central issues of sexuality and home life. Victorian audiences devoured these Gothic fantasies for their psychological catharsis. Application of Freudian psychology to this literature indicated that Gothic romances were the "suppressed neurotic and erotic impulses of educated society." Varma in The Gothic Flame suggests that the scenes of horror may have been the "harmless release of that innate spring of cruelty which is present in each of us.....inextricably connected with the forces of life and death."[107]

Furthermore, in his study of Gothic fantasy, In the Circles of Fear and Desire, William Patrick Day takes a psychological look at the appeal for Gothic fiction for the Victorians. He sees such fiction as attempts in part for the expression and relief of nineteenth century culture's fear about its own concepts of male-female roles and the role of the family from out of which sexual identities are formed.[108] Sexuality, according to Day, is the central issue in the violence in Gothic literature because the fears, anxieties, and terrors that pervade such male-female inter-actions reflect the basic insecurities of nineteenth century readers. When a virtuous young lady, like Tess for example, is being harassed by her father, Alec, or Farmer Groby for that

matter, it is really a power play of male domination, part of the dynamics of power and violence of which sex is the core. That John Durbeyfield is incapable of protecting either physically or economically his young daughter throws moral responsibility upon Tess herself and leaves her wide open to sexual power plays by men. He has not provided the financial or ethical protection a poor young virgin needs in the face of a male-dominated society. He has not properly fulfilled his role as patriarch. Yet, by being so head-strong and shiftless, he literally puts his young daughter into moral and physical jeopardy--open to sexual abuse. A nineteenth century reader must see this as an indictment against such fatherhood.

Motherhood does not fare well either in Tess. Joan Durbeyfield shows herself to be as irresponsible as her husband--drinking at the ale house, having too many children, slacking off her housework, and foremost lacking that higher sense of moral responsibility that Tess herself has. As a mother figure she does not properly warn Tess of the dangers of men-folk, nor does she provide an appropriate role model for her daughter.

Tess of the D'Urbervilles seems to be part of the literary tradition that calls our attention to the major concerns of the Victorian world--home and family and sex. As with Gothic fantasy where the tensions about the role of the family and the submission of the weaker sex to the stronger are internalized, Hardy's Tess indicts the

concept of the family and male-female roles. Day and other critics indicate that Gothic writers were not the only ones to write for a society worried about such precepts. Nineteenth century realist novels from Jane Austen to Hardy examine the nature of the family and masculine and feminine identities as well.[109]

In any case, our concern here is the nature of Hardy's presentation of themes similar to those in classic Gothic stories. In Tess he gives us a naturalistic late Victorian novel (1891) yet often uses a vocabulary and imagery of the older Gothic tradition. James F. Scott reports that "Hardy found ... aesthetics of the sublime and endorsement of the techniques [of mischances of fate, witchcraft, diabolism] that came naturally to him."[110] In fact, in a brief discussion of Hardy's use of the Gothic in his minor fiction, Scott suggests that both Hardy "and the Gothic writers drank of the same water."[111]

Whether Hardy consciously imitated the Gothic writers is not the point. We cannot deny that he certainly used similar conventions from this tradition with which to heighten the appeal of his stories. "Schooled in the doctrine of the sublime style, both Hardy and the Gothic romancers strove to project into their scenes a feeling of awe and terror."[112] Tess's baptism of Baby Sorrow is most notably a scene depicting Tess's terror and divinity and

simultaneously evoking awe and terror in readers, as well as those watching Tess "christen" her infant son. Hardy describes this event as would a Gothic craftsman. On the night of the child's death, at the "solemn" hour of one, Tess has mental images of gore and malignancy over the unbaptized baby's impending death.

> She thought of the child consigned to the nethermost corner of hell, as its double doom for lack of baptism and lack of legitimacy; saw the arch-fiend tossing it with his three-pronged fork, like the one they used for heating the oven on baking days; to which picture she added many other quaint and curious details of torment taught the young in this Christian country. The lurid presentiment so powerfully affected her imagination in the silence of the sleeping house, that her nightgown became damp with perspiration, and the bedstead shook with each throb of her heart.[113]

In this scene Hardy shows himself able to conjure up grotesque, macabre violence. The Gothic gloom of her thoughts parallels the utter gloom of the situation surrounding her.

From darkness we then move to light and to awe. From this Gothic scene of imagined horror, we move to one of Gothic sublimity, this time in the depiction of Tess baptising her baby. She wakes up her sleeping bothers and sisters and performs the baptismal ritual before them. They become bedazzled by her presence. In her white nightgown, Tess goes from morbid thoughts of devilish

torments to almost a physical sublimity. Hardy's language grows elaborate.

> The ecstasy of faith almost apotheosized her; it set upon her face a glowing irradiation, and brought a red spot into the middle of each cheek; while the miniature candle-flame inverted in her eye-pupils shone like a diamond. The children gazed up at her with more and more reverence,...She did not look like Sissy to them now, but as a being large, towering, and awful --a divine personage with whom they had nothing in common.[114]

It is the language of exaggeration which tints Hardy's prose style in Tess with Gothic overtones.

Furthermore, both he and writers of the Gothic take their subject matter from the same sources: legend, folklore, and superstition. (Ruth Firor, in fact, has written an entire book, Folkways in Thomas Hardy (1931), which details Hardy's extensive use of folklore.)[115] They were drawn to the same literature: MacPherson's Ossian; Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, particularly Shakespeare whom Hardy loved; and the Gothic novels of Harrison Ainsworth and Sir Walter Scott. In his later career he even defends "sensation-fiction" in which the psychical adventure rather than the physical is of primary interest.[116]

In his fiction, Hardy sketches his characters with an emotional intensity akin to the classic Gothic which we can relate to Hardy's own personal experience. Millgate

reports that Hardy himself was "obsessed" by the struggle between the soul and body.

> and "haunted by the sheer irrevocability of moments of decision and choice--the opportunity lost, the word unuttered, the road not taken, the beloved recognized or reclaimed too late. It is upon such moments, explored in their irony and despair, that so many of his novels and stories turn...

Especially in Hardy's London years, Millgate indicates that flux of Hardy's emotions in poems which indicate Hardy's rapid alternations between romantic enthusiasm and sullen self-reproach.[117] We can extend such personal flux to his writing. This alternation is comparable, for example, to Tess who wavers at the Crick dairy about whether or not she should tell Angel about her past. As a storyteller, Hardy felt writers were

> essentially Ancient Mariners, justified in delaying the hurrying public...when possessed of something more unusual to relate than the ordinary experience of every average man and woman."[118]

Yet, what does all this mean for an examination of Hardy's art? Historically, we can establish his reading of Gothic novels, his concern with sensationalism in fiction, and his study of landscape art and Gothic architecture. In his works we can find themes and plot conventions and techniques comparable to those of Gothic romancers, most especially dramatic landcapes against

which his virtuous heroines wage moral battles against Gothic-like villains. The ideal place for the Gothic villain to work out his seductive machinations is the castle or pagan ruins, which Hardy tells us are all over the English countryside, and most pointedly, found in crucial parts of Tess. We can even find Gothic strains in his own emotions. Yet it is in the language of his fiction which truly warrants our attention to his Gothic sensibility. It is the way he describes certain scenes, the way he presents certain dramatic situations, that evokes our awareness to his artistic sensibility to label it "Gothic." Foremost, it is Hardy's use of language which highlights a Gothic reading of Tess. The book is filled with the props, landscapes, imagery, tone and theatrical effects of the classic Gothic; they are secondary, however, to his descriptive passages which are clearly Gothic in staging and tone. Key episodes point to the novel's Gothic aura.

In the first part of the book, Hardy establishes the fantasy or dreamworld of the Gothic through careful staging. Terrible things happen to Tess when she is asleep, first the death of Prince and then her "rape" by Alex. Like Gothic writers, Hardy has a dreamworld become one of nightmare. "Webs of vapor" form "veils between the trees" on the night Alec rapes her. A line like the

following sets the mood of eerie silence. Nature blends into the mystery. "With the setting of the moon the pale light lessened, and Tess became invisible as she fell into reverie upon the leaves where he had left her." Her reveries and the vapory mist add just the touch of moonlit mystery to her plight. The scene of her "fall" -- an ancient archetypal forest --is also fitting. "The Chase was wrapped in thick darkness." Hardy uses words such as "obscurity," "He (Alec) could see absolutely nothing but a pale nebulousness." "Everything else was blackness alike." "Darkness and silence ruled everywhere." "Primeval yews and oaks of the Chase" surround them as Hardy notes that Tess was without her "guardian angel" in this devil's lair. Her sensitive "gossamer" tissue is "doomed." Hardy even teases with the idea that Tess's ancient knightly ancestors had trespassed in the same way upon innocent peasant girls.

Gothic archetypes of the innocent female victim and the masculine villain play out their established roles. Here begins the "immeasurable social chasm" that divides Tess from her previous innocent self which left Marlott in the vale of Blackmoor. In the second phase of the story, "Maiden No More," she is a person who does not find "any especial burden in material things." Again she is veiled in mist, yet now she knows the meaning of "serpent

hisses." Her eyes were "dazed" by Alec who had earlier been described satanically as having "an almost swarthy complexion...with touches of barbarism in his contours... and bold, rolling eyes." His black mustache also highlights his role as demonic lover.

Alone, after Alec drops her off on her sad return to Blackmoor Vale, sad Tess and "sad October...seemed the only two existences haunting that lane." Immediately Hardy's description evokes the emotional intensity of Gothic horror.

> Against the peaceful landscape,
> the pale decaying tints of the
> copses, the blue air of the
> horizon, the staring vermillion
> words--Thy, Damnation, Slumbereth,
> Not--shone forth seeming
> to shout at her...but the words
> entered Tess with accusatory horror.[119]

She finds the words "horrible," "crushing, killing," and "throbbingly" she resumes her walk, not believing God said such things. Later her "depression was then terrible, and she could have hidden herself in a tomb." Tess's fancy becomes "peopled by phantoms" -- "a cloud of moral hobgoblins by which she was terrified with reason. She fancied herself an anomaly."

Back at home, after the baby is born, she lives as a "stranger, an alien" even though she does work harvesting in the field. Out here she is observed dandling the infant with "gloomy indifference that was almost dislike"

and then "violently kissing it some dozens of times." Her moods and her actions are grotesque and exaggerated. She feels herself to be a grotesque, a ghost of sorts. Her shame --her thought of the world's concern was an illusion. "She was not an existence, an experience, a passion, a structure of sensations, to anybody but herself. To all humankind besides, Tess was only a passing thought." This idea of the ethereal nature of Tess is dramatized and stated most clearly in the baptismal scene previously mentioned. (It is a baptismal ritual radically different from Mrs. Morel's baptismal blessing of Paul to the sun with the blessing of Nature in D. H. Lawrence's Sons and Lovers. Other than the obvious, one out-of-doors, the other inside, it is the spiritual communion with Nature that separates these two rituals.)

In the next phase of the novel, Tess and Nature are one. The new season installed flowers, leaves, nightingales. Hardy maintains such imagery for the "dew-fresh daughter of the soul." At Talbothays "Tess was the merest ideal phenomenon to Angel Clare as yet--a rosy, warning apparition... Hardy paints them in half-tones, and they see each other in half-tones. The following passage indicates the continuous mystical nature --the abstraction of their idyl at the dairy.

> The spectral, half-compounded, aqueous light which prevaded the open mead

> impressed them with a feeling of isolation, as if they were Adam and Eve... At this dim, inceptive stage of the day, Tess seemed to Clare to exhibit a dignified largeness,...and almost regnant power --possibly because he knew that at the preternatural time hardly any woman so well endowed a person as she was likely to be walking in the open air within the boundaries of his horizon ... at the 'preternatural time' he sees her.[120]

In the next paragraph, they walk in "luminous gloom" and her "face seemed to have a sort of phosphorescence upon it." She looked ghostly, "as if she were merely a soul at large." Not just a pretty milkmaid, Tess becomes a "visionary essence of woman" to Clare. The nomenclature is that of the Gothic sublime.

In the fourth phase of the book, after Clare returns from a visit home to Emminster, Tess is wrung by emotion at his proposal--a true romantic heroine drifting by her passions into acquiescence to this dream of marital joy. "Every see-saw of her breath, every wave of her blood, every pulse singing in her ears, was a voice that joined Nature in revolt against her scrupulousness" in refusing him. Here she's the femme fatale full of exaggerated emotions. She cries to her pillow, "I can't bear to let anybody have him but me!...O my heart---O-O-O!"

Conversely, Clare was "god-like" in her eyes. "There was hardly a touch of earth in her love for Clare." He was "more spiritual than animal." But nothing goes smoothly

for Tess. "Her idolatry of this man was such that she herself feared it was to be ill-omened." Even on their drive to the railway station to deliver Crick's mild, they travel in grayness with the backdrop of the "extreme mist" of the "swarthy and abrupt." slopes of Egdon Heath. Ironically, they pass one of the several Caroline manor houses of the ancient Norman D'Urbervilles --one of Hardy's infamous coincidences. For Hardy, it is again his way of having the past taunt Tess even here in her Talbothays haven. All light here is mist, secluded, feeble, smoky. They "plunge" into "thick night."

Despite Tess's happiness in her betrothal to Clare, Hardy reminds us of her past goblins. She fights to keep them at bay. She is the Gothic heroine displaying a heightened sense of emotional response. She walks in brightness, yet against a somber background.

> Her affection for him was now the breath and life of Tess's being. It enveloped her as a photosphere, irradiated her into forgetfulness of her past sorrows, keeping back the gloomy spectres that would persist in their attemptsto touch her -- doubt, fear, moodiness, care, shame. She knew that they were waiting like wolves just outside the circumscribing light, but she had long spells of power to keep them in hungry subjection there...in the background those shapes of darkness were always spread...receding... or approaching... a little every day.[121]

As Hardy reminds us, Tess is a simple rustic girl under

twenty-one years of age, trapped like a bird. Again Hardy's language is picturesque to evoke an anesthetic response on the reader and a visual correspondence suggestive of her inner psychological state. Here she is happy, buoyant, yet "like a bird on a springe."

True to a Gothic fantasy, our hero and heroine have bouts of guilt and tension. Foreboding and shadows go along with every bout of happiness Tess attempts. "Sinister contingencies" flail her mind, and she "moves about as in mental cloud." Clare has a nightmare of fighting the fellow who insulted Tess --foreshadowing a later and more significant "freak" in his sleep as well as the ominous return of the insulting stranger. On the day of the wedding, Tess does not see the road to the church. All was a "luminous mist." After the wedding service, she lives in a "highly charged mental atmosphere" and becomes disturbed when she sees the carriage. True to Gothic sensibility, she feels she has seen it before, possibly in a dream. She is unaware of the legend of D'Urberville coaches --a well known superstition of their country. Hardy brings to life this legend as well as the superstition about an afternnon cock crowing as a warning of doom for Clare and Tess as they drive off.

Giving sinister traits to inanimate objects has always been a staple ploy of the Gothic. In Tess Hardy

uses the two life-size portraits of her ancesters at the D'Urberville mansion to foreshadow the disaster that is about to come to the newlyweds. Hardy describes these grotesque facsimiles as haunting "the beholder afterward in his dreams," and even Clare admits that maybe he should not have brought Tess under their lurid glare when she becomes frightened by them. Here Hardy dramatizes the notion that Tess cannot escape her past. Likewise during her confession, the diamonds about her neck give off "sinister winks," and the ashes from the fire "like a torrid waste" give off a "lurid red-coaled glow" which peers into her hair and brow. He makes the Gothic atmosphere complete with eerie effects of the fire's glow. "A large shadow of her shape rose upon the wall and the ceiling." Doom is inevitable for Tess; personified objects attempt to warn her.

The Gothic tones reach higher levels in the latter part of the book. Hardy invokes the supernatural and macabre in the fifth phase, "The Woman Pays." After he hears Tess's heartfelt admission, Clare's laughter is described as "horrible," "unnatural and ghastly as a laugh in hell." His sleepwalking incident and placing himself and Tess in a tomb goes beyond any credibility except as Gothic drama. It is the metaphoric parallel to the death that she will suffer at the hands of Fate. Right from

this bizarre world, we see Tess face the realistic world of Flintcomb Ash. Hardy's imagery and language change and adapt to the realism of her plight. When she leaves to visit her inlaws, she becomes absorbed not in mist, but rather in the "pearly air of the foredawn." She walks fifteen miles toward Emminster, not to the aid she desperately seeks, but into further despair and torment, into her original tormentor --Alec.

As soon as Alec becomes momentarily paralyzed upon seeing Tess, the atmosphere becomes charged with Gothic overtones. He makes her swear upon a stone pillar at Cross-in-Hand not to tempt him. Half frightened, Tess obeys. In chapter forty-give, a mile beyond she learns from a solitary shepherd that the old stone was never a cross, but a thing of ill-omen

> put up in wild times by the relations of a malefactor who was tortured there by nailing his hand to a post, and afterwards hanged. The bones lie underneath. They say he sold his soul to the devil and that he walks at times.

Soon after the "dare-devil" Alec Stoke-D'Urberville haunts Tess, proposes, and uses Angel's own words to "pave" his way back to Tess.

No matter what goodness and steadfastness she displays, Tess is the Gothic heroine under persecution by sinister forces. Hardy's imagery consistently points her

in the direction of hell. When she has to go to Blackmoor Vale, Hardy dramatizes her entry by mentioning all the old and scary superstitions of the vale. It is a midnight walk she takes to get there, and the "shawdowy hour" brings to mind the old character of the place: pricked and ducked witches, hunted harts, and green-spangled fairies. "...the place teemed with beliefs in them still, and they formed an impish multitude now." If this were not enough, as she walks toward her home, a sign creaks and branches wave and wink at her. There is no question that, like a Gothic romancer, Hardy is setting Tess up for the Devil's appearance. Just a few pages later Alec reappears, this time literally the Devil in the garden. It is no surprise that when he speaks with Tess in the garden, he ironically suggests the Adam and Eve myth from Genesis and that Tess clearly infers that he is "Satan."

Such consistent imagery clearly suggests that Hardy wrote the story of Tess with a strong Gothic sensibility. In addition to what has already been examined, Hardy plays out the rest of his Gothic props: the mystery of the D'Urberville coach, the ominous family crypt where the devil (Alec) suddenly reappears, the heroine's faint and despair at such a demonic place, and finally her submission to evil. It is not a wonder then at the end of the book that we perceive her as unnatural and possibly

out of her mind. Hardy has staged her emotional and mental turmoil so that is is conceivable that our heroine would be capable of killing Alec once her "Angel" returns. Hardy's Gothic descriptions of formidable landscapes, supernatural omens, and the classic gloomy tone and atmosphere lend themselves to our suspension of disbelief and to our acceptance of Tess's fate.

By recognizing Thomas Hardy's use of Gothic conventions, twentieth century readers can make sense out of Tess of the D'Urbervilles. We can more easily accept Alec's appearances and reappearances at dramatically inopportune moments in Tess's story. Dramatically, we can sympathize with our heroine who is under fire from all sorts of sinster forces, including her own sense of shame and guilt. We can see Tess as Hardy conceived her --a "pure" woman who maintains her moral innocence despite the physical violations she endures. In this light, Angel Clare merely represents conventional nineteenth-century morality which only condemns and threatens Tess's "innocence." If the Gothic romance served to relieve the inner tensions and insecurities of the middle-class nineteenth-century reading public, Tess of the D'Urbervilles serves likewise.

It also, however, indicts traditional morality. There is no question that Tess is also a book of Hardy's

realism: it is a true and harsh landscape that Tess traverses in the story. Tess is a realistically drawn character who suffers through harsh moral decisions. Yet, it is a different kind of realism from that exhibited in his contemporaries --George Eliot, Dickens, and Jane Austen.[123] And it is important to recognize the particular nature of Hardy's aesthetic. "His aesthetic sensibility had found its first satisfaction in the venerable fantasy of Gothic style."[124] He does maintain a Gothic sensibility throughout Tess. Recognizing such allows us to make sense of Tess and sensitizes us to the artistic style of his other novels. Hardy not only was a craftsman of Gothic churches; he also crafted fiction with a Gothic sensibility.

Tess of the D'Urbervilles then becomes the prime example of our idea of a unique Victorian Gothic. The story and the character herself are the blends of the real and the absurd, the credible and the incredible, the verisimilar and the fantastic. The book demonstrates for readers a unique fiction, Gothic in tone and atmosphere and rhetoric and realistic in theme, characterization, and setting. Hardy has gone beyond the traditional scope of the Gothic novel and has crafted a unique form of it. Written for his Victorian audiences, Tess is Hardy's prime Victorian Gothic.

JUDE, THE OBSCURE

From Tess we move to Hardy's last novel, Jude, the Obscure (1895). The pessimism of Hardy's final great novel evidences a dark despair in his view of the human condition that goes beyond the scope of what we are calling his Victorian Gothic. Jude, the Obscure contains only a few Gothic elements, but they do not function in the same manner or with the same effect as do those of Hardy's other major fiction. In his other works, elements of Gothic romance and sensationalism blend with the realism of his narratives. In this book, however, Hardy's overall sustaining impression is of naturalistic determinism and moral pessimism. The story of the failed union between Jude Fawley and his cousin Sue Bridehead becomes a historical document of late nineteenth century English intellectual thought.[125] Hardy himself cried that Jude was his "last defiance against Victorian obsessions." Possibly because the scope of Hardy's social criticism through the novel extends to such a breadth and depth of philosophical and religious thought, "a series of seemings and personal impressions" he tells us in his preface, we cannot accept the meagre romanticism in the story.

Proposing that Gothic literature created prototypes of man divided: the Gothic villain, Byronic Hero, and Shelleyan solipsist[126] critic Masao Miyoshi finds Jude

Fawley a similar prototype of the modern man who is both at war with himself and his conflicting desires and one whose introspection leads him headlong into despair and further isolation. Instead of an external monster, Jude creates his own. The supernatural ghost in Gothic fiction is internalized in Jude, and in his other self Sue, and they are their own worst enemies. Not only do the characters Jude and Sue compromise their own romanticism,[127] but their spiritual malaise signifies more of the use of a naturalistic technique rather than a romantic or Gothic one.

Miyoshi calls Jude "Hardy's most preposterous" novel.[128] There is very little of the Gothic supernatural here, but rather more of the village traditions and beliefs that Hardy saw exterminiated even in the isolated Dorset countryside. (The pastoral episodes and a love philtre made from pigeons' hearts that Dr. Vilbert sells to Arabella are prime examples.) There is, however, the effect of horror created in this novel that matches that of the Schauer-Romantik and "vulgar" Gothic. Instead of horror and dread from the actual plot events, the horror presented here is a psychological one -- the pessimistic realization that illusions and hope are unattainable in the modern age. Pagan and classical imagery heighten the drama; ancestral curses belie the plot; yet ultimately the book does not conform to traditional aesthetic criteria.

We have instead, Irving Howe notes, a mixture of psychological of psychological veracity and crude melodrama..."[129]

Crude melodrama is a way to characterize the "penny dreadfuls" and "shilling shockers" available to the reading public in Hardy's day. Most of Jude, the Obscure vies away from such sensational writing. Exceptions include only the grotesque characterizations of Arabella and Little Father Time and the ancestral curse of marital disaster about which the Widow Edlin informs Jude. The grotesque characterization of the sensual Arabella, casting a pig's pizzle at the young Jude and trapping him into lustful bouts of marriage, merely presents the rigors of rural life and animal passions "out there" boldly for the modern middle class reading audience. Having the last say in the novel, Arabella is the strong animal nature of man and woman that we human must all accept. She does not create the horror that we find in the destructive actions of the grotesque anomaly Father Time.

Little Father Time is by far the single most exaggerated, preposterous characterization in this novel. He is a Gothic artifice; his presence is a symbolic representation of the distortion between human idealism and simple humanity. It is appropriate that is Sue who unintentionally convinces the "aged" youngster that human

life and sexual expression only create unhappiness. It is appropriate since she herself succumbed to a physical existence with Jude when she was actually desired a purely spiritual one. Father Time's understanding is limited, but his cries against Sue hit a grain of truth in her heart and in his distorted understanding. His actions become those of a monster.

Hardy introduces Father Time as a Gothic horror.

> He was Age masquerading as Juvenility, and doing so badly that his real self showed through crevices. A ground swell from ancient years of night seemed now and then to lift the child in this his morning-life, when his face took a back view over some great Atlantic of Time, and appeared not to care about what it saw.[130]

Later, after he has killed the two Fawley babies and himself, Father Time becomes a symbol of the fatalism of the modern world. Trying to appease Sue's sense of guilt from the murders, Jude indicates that such an action by the despondent child was inevitable.

> It was his nature to do it. The doctor says there are such boys springing up amongst us -- boys of a sort unknown in the last generation -- the outcome of new views of life. They seem to see all its terrors before they are old enough to have staying power to resist them. He says it is the beginning of the coming universal wish not to live.[131]

Little Father Time, then, becomes a prophet of twentieth century disillusionment. He is Hardy's statement of the

malaise of the times. When Sue rejects love, the only saving grace that Jude knows, it is also Jude's death knell. He faces his "self-spectre" and yearns to die.

Many critics find the conglomeration of such "impressions" of life an untenable mixture for fiction. They cannot seem to adjust their assessment of the work into a cogent whole. Instead they find flaws with the realism of Hardy's vision or with the naturalism of his literry technique. Mizener, who feels Jude is essentially realistic, finds the book neither simply historical or autobiographical.

> The result of all this is a novel which is formally neither fish, flesh, nor good red herring, a novel whose tremendous verisimilar life is constantly being sapped by a series of irrelevant devices and yet remaining as a systematic artifice, 'a paradise of loose ends.'[132]

Like Miyoshi, he finds that the story violates principles of verisimilitude and faults Hardy for his disregard of the laws of reality.[133]

For our purposes, such criticism only supports our notion that Hardy creates in fact a unique form of literature. Since this was Hardy's last novel, it marks a change in his artistic vision, one we feel has demonstrated a belief in romantic wonders in a realistic world. Most of these wonders are aspects of the marvelous, which, due to their somber tone and effect and

supernatural content, ally themselves and their author to the Gothic tradition. Hardy does not restrict his vision or his artistry to one stream of literature. He mixes the modes. He creates new forms. He imposes Gothic sensationalism and even absurdity on to realistic environments, settings, characters abd plots. He puts the Gothic shadow of death in solid form on the realistic psyches of his characters. Little Father Time projects Jude and Sue's worst delusions. Out of the demands for realism from his Victorian audience, Hardy has molded a new Gothic, a Gothic aesthetic for his contemporary Victorian readers.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION - HARDY'S VICTORIAN GOTHIC AND THE MODERN TRADITION

HARDY AND A VICTORIAN GOTHIC

There can be no question that Thomas Hardy wrote with a strong Gothic sensibility throughout his literary lifetime as a novelist. From his short stories to his first attempts at novel writing up to his masterpieces of fiction, Hardy chose to use conventions of the classical Gothic romance developed almost a century before his own heyday in publishing novels (1870-1896). Whether it be in matters of rhetoric or plot design, Hardy favored the emotionally charged and highly contrived for his narrative designs. He believed that a writer, like the Ancient Mariner, did have the task of spellbinding his audience.

But Hardy also believed that a novel should represent the truth of human life. As a Victorian, Hardy could not escape the demands of his age, an age that needed an imaginative escape in its literature and also an identification with the characters and their relationship to their society and to the world. Hardy knew that readers could only fully understand his characters if they could share their feelings.[134] For that matter, Hardy and other Victorian writers had to be realists, interested in both the details of everyday living and the nature of their society. Hardy's success in these precepts line up with the other great Victorian novelists who, like George Eliot

and Charles Dickens, interest his audience in the most ordinary of characters.[135] This Hardy does with ease most especially with the rural folk of the west country. Critics have praised him for the realistic dialect of his rustics as well as the realistic portrayal of country customs.

Others find that depicting nature is Hardy's strongest suit. Virginia Woolf points out that Hardy

> proves himself a skilled observer of nature;the rain he knows, falls differently as it falls upon roots or arable;he knows that the wind sounds differently as it passes through the branches of different trees. But he is aware in a larger sense of Nature as a force; he feels in it a spirit that can sympathise or mock or remain the indifferent spectator of human fortunes.

She further adds that as a sensitive writer Hardy knew that a novel gives "truthful if harsh and violent impressions of the lives of men and women."[136] A glance at any of his major works testifies to this skill. Hardy gives realistic portraits of landscape against which his characters must make critical choices in their lives. Conversely, he gives realistic portraits of characters who must struggle against the perversities of nature.

Our concern here, however, is to assess Hardy in the light of his achievement of a Victorian Gothic. He is both realist and Gothic romancer. He is a Victorian moralist

who often chose, rather awkwardly and unwisely at times, to moralize and preach to his audience. Restrictive social conventions, economic disparities, destructive religious dogma, and the inherent greatness of those in the peasant and working classes are demonstrated widely throughout some of his greatest fictions, the characters of Gabriel Oak, Tess Durbeyfield, Angel Clare, Michael Henchard, Jude Fawley, and Sue Bridehead to name a few.

Yet, Hardy chose to present such themes and such characters in his own peculiar way. He chose to use conventions of the Gothic romance to dramatize the lives of his most human and most realistic characters and situations. He imposed the faculty of the creative imagination to heighten the tensions of the human struggle in an increasingly indifferent world. He chose the heightened diction and drama of the old Gothic mode to reflect the terrifying realities of the natural world and to present the equally terrifying realities of the modern world. J. Hillis Miller tries to define Hardy's achievement.

> Hardy's writing is an indirect way of exploring the real world. It goes away from reality to try to return to it by a long detour, or to try to reveal the otherwise invisible nature of the real by means of the fictive. It attempts to reach reality by the way of the fictive.[137]

Miller realizes that Hardy has chosen an imaginative mode

to reveal both seen and unseen realtiies of life. Not a "precise" writer like Henry James, Hardy instead demonstrates rugged honesty in his projection of the world and a sober presentation of the human plight.[138] We feel he uses the Gothic mode to accomplish, partially, such an artistic vision.

We also feel that Hardy should not be castigated for this singular approach to Victorian fiction as nine decades of controversial critcism have done. Hardy's Victorian audiences gave him mixed reviews throughout his publishing career, and Hardy countered with an express distaste for literary criticism. Contemporary critics have done the same. For example, with his own cast of modern pessimism in a recent article in The Southern Review, Herbert Muller delineates Hardy's major faults, citing that Hardy is "unusually poor material for Marxist or Freudian interpretation, or for subtle analysis in any mode."[139] Muller represents a body of modern critics who fault Hardy for what he calls "his mania for hounding his characters to the grave and for employing the most fantastic means to get them there." Nevertheless, this critic summarizes with a nostalgic wish to return to the majesty of Hardy's fiction. Even he states that Hardy's "greatness is of an elemental kind to which one cannot easily pay tribute..."[140] Such a comment reminds us of Virginia Woolf's mixed assessment of Hardy's genius.

"Hardy's genius was uncertain in development, uneven in accomplishment, but when the moment came, magnificent in achievement." Calling him a "writer of marked idiosyncrasy," she admits that "No style in literature, save Scott's, is so difficult to analyse; it is on the face of it so bad, yet it achieves its aim so unmistakably."[141]

Hardy used both the rhetorical flair and the contrived conventions of bizarre, grotesque, and improbable incident of the Gothic romance. Yet he manages, somehow, the critics confess, to give the world powerful fiction. Guerard focuses on our thesis that Hardy uses the Gothic mode effectively as a means to intensify the realism of his work.

> Hardy's 'Gothic'-flavoured episodes, his frequent portrayal of the macabre and other-worldly add, at their best, yet another dimension to the 'truth' of the novels as he [Hardy] sees it, an intensification of the imaginary world they present.[142]

Guerard further turns to Hardy's own attitudes about literature to warn critics of finding too much fault with Hardy's use of such sensational techniques.

> Those critics who find fault with his plot-structures simply on the ground of their improbability are making the mistake of judging Hardy on the grounds of orthodox realism, which he likewise emphatically rejected. To him, the plot is not to be composed of a succession of ordinary credible events; neither is it to serve primarily as a chart or ground-plan on which to demonstrate a preconceived didactic viewpoint. Rather, he sees the

> plot as a thread on which to display his pictures of life, his 'seemings' or glimpses into 'the heart of the matter; and the suspense and twists of fortune are important to him chiefly in so far as they serve to gratify 'the love of the uncommon in human experience.' The essential form of Hardy's novel is of an imaginative response to reality.[143]

Thomas Hardy uses Gothic conventions as part of this imaginative response to reality. He uses mischances and coincidences and improbablilities to dramatize mankind's role in the cosmic scheme of the world.

For the most part, the root of the critical controversy stems from some critics' inability to accept Hardy at his word that he had not a consistent, cohesive philosophy of the world. Disparaged as an atheist, heretic, determinist, and pessimist, Hardy wrote in his General Prologue to the Novels and Poems of 1912 that he had not advanced a consistent philosophy by his pen and that it was unlikely that his imaginative writings spanning over forty years could demonstrate a cohesive theory of the universe. Rather, he indicates that his writings are truly yet merely "impressions of the moment and not convictions or arguments." He also wrote earlier in his diary that a writer works out his own philosophy out of his own surroundings and experience.[144] Mrs. Hardy wrote that Hardy thought of himself as rather an irrationalist because of his inconsistencies. Moreover,

he believes man's actions were ruled by his passions, his emotions, rather than by reason. Tess's pride, Henchard's jealousy, Jude's despair all fit this belief. The Gothic mode not only offered Hardy a means to an imaginative reality, but its emphasis on emotions and irrationality most aptly fits Hardy's desire to intensify the alienation of man from nature and his confrontation between his illusions and an indifferent natural and social world.

Hardy wrote in 1886 that his "art is to intensify the expression of things...so that the heart and inner meaning is made vividly visible." [145] The Gothic mode offers him the means to his artistic vision. Its intensity of mood and atmosphere, its flexibility in style and its emotional appeal answer for us the reason for the ultimately sensational and imaginative artistry with which he crafts his fiction. Hardy shares with other Victorian humanitarians the notion that one purpose of great fiction is to "seize and embody values of the heart, ...of the passions."[146] Because he has chosen a Gothic mode to embody the values of the heart, Hardy the Victorian has created a unique Victorian Gothic that simultaneously sets him apart from his contemporaries and yet connects his art to literary traditions of the past and of the future.

HARDY, THE MODERNIST

It is the peculiarity of his approach and the

uniqueness of his style that makes Thomas Hardy stand out from his own generation of novelists. Some literary critics have asked if he is the last of the Romantics.[147] Others deem him the last of the romantic Victorians. Critical assessment is still in flux regarding Hardy. Samuel Chew asserts that Hardy is not an innovator, and that as an ingenious artist "his Art and craft are Victorian."[148] Frederick Karl disagrees, finding that although Hardy's roots are solidly within a nineteenth-century intellectual framework, his characters and plots move differently from his Victorian contemporaries. Hardy, he states, exhibits "a different kind of realism from that exhibited in George Eliot, Dickens, Jane Austen and Thackeray."[149] Morton Zabel considers him "a realist developing toward allegory"[150] while we know that Hardy himself condemned those writers who sacrificed the imagination to realism.

Editor of Hardy, A Collection of Critical Essays (1963), Albert Guerard summarizes that Hardy is a "major transitional figure between popular moralists and entertainers and serious visionary novelists of today."[151] He points to Hardy's modernity and the difficulty in categorizing his especial genius.

> Today Hardy would appear to survive rather as a popular and even primitive novelist, reaching us through pure artistic gifts and antique simplicities of understanding and art. His sluggish

> schematizing intellect may repel us. But his dark wisdom and brooding temperament prevail. In the 1930's Hardy's gloomy visions seemed perverse; this is hardly true today. The love of the macabre coincidence and grotesque mischance, the cruel imaginings and manipulations, all the bad luck and all the mismatched destinies, the darkness of the physical world and moral landscapes, the awareness of dwindling energies, and the sense of man's appalling limitations--all these are peculiarly modern. ...All this is but to say that Hardy was both a serious man and a popular traditional story-teller;and that he was, moreover, simultaneously ancient and modern.[152]

Guerard is not the only critic to discern Hardy's modernity. The projections of human fatalism in his last book in particular address the malaise of a modern age.

Modern and prophetic though he may be, Hardy went back to the ancient Gothic formula to achieve certain heightened literary effects. He even went back to the pagan origins of Britain in works like Tess of the D'Urbervilles to reach special dramatic heights. Likewise, he maintained his popularity in the late nineteenth century by appealing to the concerns and imaginative needs of his Victorian audience. Although a 1982 review of Michael Millgate's biography Thomas Hardy calls Hardy the "first modern English novelist," we know him to be a creator of a unique form of gothic romance, a Victorian Gothic, for he stretches his artistic vision to encompass an aesthetic of the past and of the Victorian era and one which satisfies his own unique Gothic sensibility.

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[89]Ibid.

[90]Eggenschwiler, refer to note 83.

[91]Frederick R. Karl, "The Mayor of Casterbridge: A New Fiction Defined," Modern Fiction Studies, 6 (1963): 195-213.

[92]Pinion, p. 43.

[93]Thomas Hardy, The Mayor of Casterbridge (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962), chap. 41.

[94]Ibid.

[95]Rosemary Eakins, "Tess: the Pagan and Christian Tradition," Novels of Thomas Hardy, ed. Anne Smith (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), p. 107.

[96]Ian Gregor, The Great Web: The Form of Hardy's Major Fiction (London: Faber & Faber, 1974), p. 181.

[97]Margaret Drabble, ed., Genius of Thomas Hardy (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), p. 79.

[98]Eakins, p. 107.

[99]Ibid., p. 111.

[100]Thomas Hardy, "Preface to the Fifth and Later Editions," Tess of the D'Urbervilles (New York: Airmont, 1965), p. xxx.

[101]Day, p. 8.

[102]Kay Mussell, Women's Gothic and Romantic Fiction. A Reference Guide (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1981), p. xi.

[103]Coral Ann Howells, Love, Mystery, and Misery: Feeling in Gothic Fiction (London: Athlone Press, 1978), p. 11.

[104]Day, p. 103.

[105]Ibid., p. 76.

[106]Howells, p. 9.

[107]Varma, p. xiii.

[108]Day, p. 5.

[109]Ibid.

[110]James F. Scott, "Thomas Hardy's Use of the Gothic: An Examination of Five Representative Works," Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 17 (1963), p. 367.

[111]Ibid., p. 364.

[112]Ibid., p. 365.

[113]Tess, chap. 15.

[114]Ibid.

[115]Ruth A. Firor, Folkways in Thomas Hardy (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1931).

[16]Life, p. 204; also cited in Vigar. Hardy wrote: "A 'sensation-novel' is possible in which the sensationalism is not casualty, but evolution; not physical but psychical...The difference between the latter kind of novel and the novel of physical sensationalism--i.e. personal adventure, etc.--is this: that whereas in the physical the adventure itself is the subject of interest, the psychical results being passed over as commonplace, in the psychical the casualty or adventure is held to be of no intrinsic interest, but the effect upon the faculties is the important matter to be depicted."

[117]Millgate, p. 295.

[118]Florence Emily Hardy, The Later Years of Thomas Hardy (New York: Macmillan, 1930), pp. 15-16.

[119]Tess, chap. 12.

[120]Ibid., chap. 24.

[121]Ibid., chap. 20.

[122]Ibid., chap. 31.

[123]Karl, p. 195.

[124]Cecil, p. 22.

[125]Miyoshi, p. 305.

[126]Ibid., p. xiv.

[127]Michael E. Hassett, "Compromised Romanticism in Jude, the Obscure," Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 25 (1971): 432-443.

[128]Miyoshi, p. 305.

[129]Irving Howe, "Introduction," Jude, the Obscure (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), p. xxiii.

[130]Thomas Hardy, Jude the Obscure (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), Part V iii.

[131]Ibid., Part VII ii.

[132]Arthur Mizener, "Jude, the Obscure as a Tragedy," Southern Review VI (Summer 1940): 193-213.

[133]Miyoshi, p. 305.

[134]Jeannette King, Tragedy in the Victorian Novel (Boston: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 62.

[135]Ibid., 51.

[136]Woolf, p. 223.

[137]J. Hillis Miller, Thomas Hardy Distance and Desire (Boston: Cambridge University Press, Belknap Press, 1970), p. xiii-xiv.

[138]Dale Kramer, Thomas Hardy, the Forms of Tragedy (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1978), p. 19.

[139]Herbert J. Muller, "Novels of Hardy Today," Southern Review VI (Summer 1940), p. 215.

[140]Ibid.

[141]Woolf, p. 225.

[142]Guerard, p. 9.

[143]Ibid., pp. 8-9.

[144]Dave, p. 10.

[145]Early Life, pp. 231-232.

[146]Zabel, p. 29.

[147]Wilfred Dvorak, Opening lecture of Nineteen-Century British Literature: Thomas Hardy class, University of Rhode Island, January 22, 1987.

[148]Samuel Chew, Thomas Hardy: Poet and Novelist (New York: Gordon Press, 1928).

[149]Karl, p. 195.

[150]Zabel, p. 195.

[151]Guerard, p. 3.

[152]Ibid., pp. 8-9.

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