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A New Wessex: The Influence of Shakespeare on Genre in the Novels of Thomas Hardy

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English from
The College of William and Mary

by

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Accepted for High Honors
(Honors; High Honors, Highest Honors)



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Introduction

The works of William Shakespeare are some of the greatest contributions to literature, and given the many literary giants of the nineteenth century—Thackeray, Dickens, Trollope, the Brontës, Eliot, Hardy, Wilde, and Shaw, to name a few—it is impossible to label only one as the consummate ‘Shakespeare of the Victorian Era.’ However, as F.B. Pinion writes, “Few writers can have had a closer knowledge of Shakespeare than [Thomas] Hardy.”¹ Novelist and poet Thomas Hardy was exceptionally well-versed in the works of Shakespeare, filling his novels and poetry with allusions and parallels to the Bard’s texts, and he has been linked with Shakespeare in criticism since 1892.² Through the influence of Shakespeare’s words, plots, and characters on his writing, Thomas Hardy can be considered a ‘Shakespeare of the Victorian Era.’

Thomas Hardy was born on 2 June 1840 in Higher Bockhampton, Dorset to Thomas Hardy and Jemima Hand Hardy. Though a poor family—Thomas Hardy, Senior, was a mason—Jemima ensured that her eldest son, Thomas, was provided with the best education available. Through oral tradition, exposure to books, and instruction in his chosen hobbies and interests, Thomas Hardy was raised in an intellectually and creatively nurturing environment that placed him on the pathway to his later career.³ In 1864, after some time working as a mason and architect, Hardy determined to pursue his

¹ F. B. Pinion, *A Hardy Companion: A guide to the works of Thomas Hardy and their background* (New York, NY: Macmillan and Co. Ltd: St. Martin’s Press, Inc., 1968) 215.

² Dennis Taylor, “From Stratford to Casterbridge: The Influence of Shakespeare,” *The Ashgate Research Companion to Thomas Hardy*, ed. Rosemarie Morgan (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2010) 123; Marlene Springer, *Hardy’s Use of Allusion* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1983) 3-4.

³ Michael Millgate, *Thomas Hardy: A Biography Revisited* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2004) 40, 42.

desire to write by engaging in literary journalism to pay for a poet's lifestyle.⁴ Though some smaller works and a few poems⁵ were published over the next few years, it was not until 1871 that Hardy's first novel, *Desperate Remedies*, was published anonymously (the manuscript of a prior, unpublished novel, *The Poor Man and the Lady*, remains lost). Despite his successes in his fiction and longer works, Hardy always considered himself a poet rather than a novelist, and preferred writing poetry. Over the course of his life, Hardy wrote fifteen novels, fifty-five short stories, one verse drama, one play, and almost a thousand poems, in addition to many non-fiction works.

Thomas Hardy's writings express the extent to which their author was a product of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, gathering influence from prominent literary trends, contemporary social and political issues, and the distinctions between urban and rural life. He adopts a largely rural perspective, portraying the tensions between the simplistic or relatively 'free,' and the threats of progress, technology, and societal conventions—what in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891) he refers to as “the ache of modernism.”⁶ Hardy was both steeped in the culture of the world into which he was born and made clear his resistance to it.⁷ He saw the bleakness of society and feared for its future. Michael Millgate notes,

⁴ Ibid. 83-84.

⁵ In his biography, *Young Thomas Hardy* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1975), Robert Gittings discusses how Hardy's sonnets of the 1860s are “not so skilful in escaping the purely Shakespearean echo,” which illustrates how the influence of Shakespeare's writing bled into both Hardy's novels and his poems (82).

⁶ Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, ed. Sarah E. Maier (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press Ltd., 2007)150.

⁷ Ralph Pite, *Thomas Hardy: The Guarded Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006) 16.

Hardy was born just in time to catch a last glimpse of a rural world that, especially in so conservative a country, had existed largely undisturbed from medieval times, and that was about to be radically disrupted by the new forces [...] that impinged upon it during the course of the nineteenth century. Hardy, looking back, mourned the lost vitality and continuity of the old rural England that had been so largely destroyed during his lifetime.⁸

Hardy's writing descended deeper into pessimism as his career progressed, making it increasingly easy to associate him with tragedy. Even his earlier novels and poems, which show a greater variety in terms of genre, illustrate the beginnings of his later insistence upon placing his characters in unfortunate circumstances. Furthermore, his drawing from Shakespeare's tragedies in the creation of some of his plots, such as those of *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, and *Jude the Obscure* (1895), cast him as a writer reliant on tragic conventions, rather than an author interested in portraying a range of genres.

What I seek to do is turn this widely accepted view of Hardy as a wholly tragic writer on its head. I do not deny Hardy's tendencies towards tragic events and his pessimistic perspective in his later writings, but rather believe that to look at Hardy through the lens of tragedy alone is both problematic and limiting. Hardy's works are made more interesting by the fact that they are not completely tragic, even in the most apparently tragic moments. My method is to explore Hardy's relationship with Shakespeare once again, but this time, I want to look at his reliance on Shakespearean comedy and romance as well as tragedy. This paper will divide Hardy's career into thirds, focusing on five of the most famous Hardy novels—*Far From the Madding Crowd*, *The Return of the Native*, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *The Woodlanders*, and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. The first chapter will look at Hardy's novels up to *The Mayor*

⁸ Millgate 39.

of Casterbridge, exclusive, and how Hardy creates the world of Wessex in these early works. Paying particular attention to *Far From the Madding Crowd* and *The Return of the Native*, I will discuss the links between Hardy's early novels and two of Shakespeare's comedies: *As You Like It* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Through these comparisons and analyses of references to other Shakespearean works, I will show how the beginning of Hardy's career illustrates his experimentation with genre in relation to the formation of Wessex, and how this prefaces his use of genre in later writings. The second chapter will focus only on *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, a novel that represents a crucial shift in Hardy's writing and the development of Wessex. I will examine the parallels between *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and *The Winter's Tale*, and illustrate how this connection, rather than that between *Mayor* and *King Lear*, provides a more valuable and holistic analysis of the novel and indicates Hardy's movement towards the romance genre. The third chapter will explore the similarities between two of Hardy's later novels, *The Woodlanders* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, and Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. These novels are some of the most overtly pessimistic and apparently tragic of Hardy's works, but even they do not adhere faithfully to tragic norms.

*

Shakespeare pervaded the culture of Victorian Britain. As the pinnacle of English writing, the works of Shakespeare were essential reading for any who considered themselves truly 'English.' Adrian Poole comments, "The Victorians had Shakespeare in their bones and their blood [...] He was certainly all around them, in paintings and print and cartoons, in the air they breathed, in the china they ate off [...]" Shakespeare

sometimes seemed the Victorians' utterance,"⁹ and Peter Holbrook states that "quoting from [Shakespeare] is just what educated people did then."¹⁰ Even in the early nineteenth century, before Victoria ascended the throne, writers such as Keats and Austen were displaying Shakespearean references in their work. In a century when 'Englishness' was adulterated by the growing presence of Jewish, Indian, Chinese, and Japanese cultures, Shakespeare's continued popularity represented the strength of 'pure' Englishness. Shakespeare wrote during a golden era in English culture, discussed British history in several of his plays, and the prevalence of his work around the world mirrored the power of the entire British Empire. He was "King Shakespeare," the perfect playwright whose growing popularity in the nineteenth century nurtured a Victorian idyll that the aristocracy believed to be true.¹¹

Shakespeare influenced many writers of the Victorian era, particularly in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, such as Dickens, Thackeray, Eliot, and Trollope.¹² This particular period of Shakespearean influence ended around 1875, just as Thomas Hardy's career as an author was beginning to blossom. Hardy directly partook of the cultural presence of Shakespeare. In 1863, the same year he began seriously to consider a profession as a writer, Hardy purchased Charles Knight's *Pictorial Edition of Shakespeare's works*, one of the crucial editions for popularizing Shakespeare during the nineteenth century.¹³ Eager to glean techniques from the Bard, Hardy annotated the

⁹ Adrian Poole, *Shakespeare and the Victorians* (London: Arden Shakespeare [The Arden Critical Companions], 2004) 1-2.

¹⁰ Peter Holbrook, "Thomas Hardy," *Scott, Dickens, Eliot, Hardy* (2011) 140.

¹¹ Poole 193; Russell Jackson, "Shakespeare their contemporary," *Shakespeare in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Gail Marshall (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012) 80.

¹² Poole 4.

¹³ *Ibid.* 45.

copies of Shakespeare's works that he owned throughout his life.¹⁴ This not only indicates what sections particularly interested Hardy, but also provides, when viewed in conjunction with the contents of his letters, a rough timeline of when Hardy read or examined certain plays and poems. Hardy utilized these underscored and circled lines and phrases to develop his own authorial voice, adopting Shakespearean turns of phrase, quoting directly from Shakespeare's works, or drawing inspiration from his plots. Beyond experiencing Shakespeare from a literary standpoint, Hardy was also an avid theatregoer. Hardy's letters, personal writings, and the recollections of his acquaintances make certain that he saw a fair number of Shakespeare's plays, including *Macbeth*, *Cymbeline*, *As You Like It*, *King John*, *Othello*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*.¹⁵

Hardy established a concrete connection to Shakespeare by setting his works in Wessex, a Shakespearean world that paralleled the counties of Dorset, Devon, Wiltshire, Hampshire, Somerset, and portions of Berkshire and Oxfordshire. By creating Wessex, Hardy granted himself creative license in his settings, and simultaneously built a bridge between rural, fictional Wessex, representing Hardy's own nostalgia, and the modern, increasingly bleak England in which Hardy himself resided.¹⁶ In the 1895 preface to *The Return of the Native*, Hardy writes about Egdon Heath, "It is pleasant to dream that some spot in the extensive tract whose south-western quarter is here described, maybe the heath of that traditionary King Of Wessex—Lear."¹⁷ The realm in which Hardy's fiction and

¹⁴ Hardy also extensively annotated his copy of William Dodd's *The Beauties of Shakespeare: With a General Index* (Halifax, Milner, and Soweby, 1863), which he purchased in 1865. See Dennis Taylor 126.

¹⁵ Millgate 95, 211, 268.

¹⁶ Pite 20.

¹⁷ Harold Orel, *Thomas Hardy's Personal Writings: Prefaces, Literary Opinions, Reminiscences* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1966) 13.

poetry exist becomes the ancient kingdom of Shakespeare's Lear, long since transformed into Victorian England. Setting his novels in Wessex grounds them in a Shakespearean framework by which many of them may be interpreted. Hardy's use of the Victorian idyll to which Shakespeare's works contribute is both ironic and revealing: the former, because Hardy makes clear that such an idealistic perspective on Victorian society is incorrect, and the latter, because his continued use of Shakespeare as a foundation for his works suggests a nostalgia for what historian Peter Laslett famously referred to as "the world we have lost."¹⁸

Claims that Hardy's Wessex was meant to parallel existing places in southern England troubled its creator, for even though maps of Wessex and descriptions of particular locations do represent specific places in reality—Casterbridge for Dorchester, Christminster for Oxford, and so forth—the setting of his works was meant to be something more. Millgate suggests that Hardy "conceived of Wessex as possessing a more than purely regional integrity, as becoming in course of time and composition a distinct, internally coherent fictional entity, an imaginative construct grounded in geographical actuality."¹⁹ Arthur McDowell similarly refers to Wessex as "imagination and actuality in one. It is imaginatively true [...] and Hardy begs us not to believe in any other Wessex."²⁰ Hardy himself calls Wessex a "partly real, partly dream-country" in his 1912 preface to the Wessex Edition of *Far From the Madding Crowd*, which indicates that although Wessex is meant to parallel reality in some respects, it also creates a

¹⁸ Peter Laslett, *The World We Have Lost* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965), 3. Laslett says, "the world we have lost, as I have chosen to call it, was no paradise or golden age of equality, tolerance, or loving kindness" (3). Hardy's world, as I will discuss later, does not adopt a "golden age" view in his creation of Wessex, though he mourns the loss of simplicity nonetheless.

¹⁹ Millgate 332.

²⁰ Arthur McDowell, *Thomas Hardy: A Critical Study* (London: Faber & Faber Limited [Folcroft Library Editions], 1971) 48-49.

purposeful distance between the stories and the world of the reader.²¹ Moreover, the phrase “dream-country” connotes a different set of standards in Wessex than in reality, for in dreams and in fiction, the rules of everyday society no longer apply.

In a similar way, several of Shakespeare’s plays transport the characters and readers, or audience members, to a place outside of ‘normal society’ where different conventions function. Each of the four plays I will examine in this paper—*As You Like It*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *The Winter’s Tale*, and *The Tempest*—exemplify this phenomenon. In every case, the characters seek escape from court life, whether in the forest, in Bohemia, or on a deserted island, just as Hardy places his characters within the alternative world of Wessex. These locations epitomize the “green world” Northrop Frye describes in *Anatomy of Criticism*:

Shakespeare’s type of romantic comedy follows a tradition established by Peele and developed by Greene and Lyly, which has affinities with the medieval tradition of the seasonal ritual play. We may call it the drama of the green world, its plot being assimilated to the ritual theme of the triumph of life and love over the wasteland. [...] Thus the action of the comedy begins in a world represented as a normal world, moves into the green world, goes into a metamorphosis there in which the comic resolution is achieved, and returns to the normal world. [...] The green world has analogies, not only to the fertile world of ritual, but to the dream world that we create out of our own desires. [...] Thus Shakespearean comedy illustrates, as clearly as any *mythos* we have, the archetypal function of literature in visualizing the world of desire, not as an escape from “reality,” but as the genuine form of the world that human life tries to imitate.²²

Shakespeare’s comedies and romances—which Frye also discusses as another, later form of the comedies—thrive within this “green world,” this “dream world” (the same phrase used by Hardy in his description of Wessex). By looking at Hardy’s novels in conjunction with Shakespeare plays that utilize a “green world,” I hope to elucidate the

²¹ Thomas Hardy, *Far From the Madding Crowd*, ed. Jonathan A. Cook (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 2005) 4.

²² Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957) 182-184.

ways in which Hardy aligns with Shakespearean comedies and romances through setting.²³

As the goal of this paper is to challenge conventional views of Hardy as largely a writer of tragedy by examining the extent of his influence from Shakespearean comedy, it is important to discuss first the categorization of Shakespeare's works into particular genres. Tradition stretching back to the First Folio separates Shakespeare's dramatic canon into comedies, tragedies, and histories, but the divisions are ambiguous at best.²⁴ Literary scholarship has made further divisions in genre categories for Shakespeare, designating four of his later plays—*Cymbeline*, *Pericles*, *Prince of Tyre*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*—as 'romances,' and dividing the rest of the comedies between the labels of 'apprentice' plays, 'festive' or 'golden' comedies, and 'problem plays.'²⁵ Shakespeare's late comedies were first distinguished as romances by Edward Dowden in his 1875 book, *Shakspere: A Critical Study of His Mind and Art*, and he does so because although those four plays "connect themselves, of course, with the Comedies [...] there is a grave element in them which is connected with the Tragedies which preceded them."²⁶ The fact that the separation of the First Folio comedies into 'comedies' and 'romances' in scholarship occurs in 1875 is particularly significant for Hardy, for by that time, his career was just beginning to blossom following the publication of *Far From the Madding Crowd*. As the label of 'romance' to describe four of Shakespeare's late plays grew more

²³ Kiernan Ryan discusses how Shakespeare uses his "parallel 'second world'" as a comparison to Elizabethan society, much as Hardy does with Wessex and Victorian society (see Kiernan Ryan, "Shakespearean Comedy and Romance: The Utopian Imagination," *Shakespeare's Romances*, ed. Alison Thorne [New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003] 29).

²⁴ Lawrence Danson, *Shakespeare's Dramatic Genres* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2000) 11.

²⁵ Danson 58-59.

²⁶ Edward Dowden, *Shakspere: A Critical Study of His Mind and Art*, thirteenth ed. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., Ltd., 1906) xi. See Jackson 84-87 for further discussion of Dowden's contribution to Shakespeare scholarship.

popular in Shakespeare scholarship, it is likely that Hardy, who was so familiar with Shakespeare, would have become acquainted with the distinction fairly early in his career.

The line separating comedy and romance is blurry, but amongst Shakespeare's plays, there are a few characteristics that distinguish between them. Comedies such as *As You Like It* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are generally lighthearted, centering on a love story and ending in marriage. Some comedies also delve into the pastoral mode, which I will discuss in greater depth in the chapter on Hardy's early novels. Romances such as *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*, like Shakespeare's early comedies, contain humour, cheerful moments, love plots, elements of pastoral, and involve marriages or promises of marriages.²⁷ Where the difference arises is in the contemplation of the darker aspects of the world in the romances, and in the particular breed of happy ending that they put forth. In the romances,

Shakespeare still thought of the graver trials and tests which life applies to human character, of the wrongs which man inflicts on man; but his present temper demanded not a tragic issue,—it rather demanded an issue of joy or peace. The dissonance must be resolved into a harmony, clear and rapturous, or solemn and profound. [...] While grievous errors of the heart are shown to us, and wrongs of man to man as cruel as those of the great tragedies, at the end there is a resolution of the dissonance, a reconciliation. This is the word which interprets Shakespeare's latest plays—reconciliation.²⁸

Redemption, reconciliation, or absolution—any such word depicts the fundamental quality of romances, especially of their endings. By the end of the play, wrongs have been forgiven, but the tragedy of the past is not forgotten, as in earlier comedies such as *Much Ado About Nothing*. The mixture of tragedy and comedy that becomes manifest in

²⁷ Danson 13; E. C. Pettet, *Shakespeare and the Romance Tradition* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1970) 87; Carol Gesner, "The *Tempest* as Pastoral Romance," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 10.4 (1959): 532.

²⁸ Dowden 406-407.

romance grants it the alternate name of ‘tragicomedy.’ Characters in romances become aware that the world is flawed, but the play still projects hope for the future. Such hope could come in the form of a marriage, love, reunion, sexuality or fertility, or simply contentment. I will continue to discuss both comedy and romance, as used by both Shakespeare and Hardy, in the rest of this paper.

The separation of Shakespeare’s plays by genre is hardly perfect, for the plays themselves cannot fit neatly within the standards of each genre. We see in Shakespeare moments drawn from farce, pastoral, and satire; the inhuman and supernatural appear beside great battles, witty repartee between lovers, intrigue, murder, and court scenes. With such a wide range of subject matter, and much greater variety of endings than either death or marriage, it is impossible to classify Shakespeare’s plays according to genre concretely and effectively. Furthermore, with no definitive criteria to distinguish each genre, and with the complexity of the history of some genres, such as romance, there is little chance that this can or will change. In fact, it should not change; for as Lawrence Danson states, “genre [...] is a system in which each new member changes the system: a form always in the process of reforming itself.”²⁹ Shakespeare was not ignorant in his lack of conforming to genre classifications; rather, he was “a spirited experimenter, intensely unaware of genres without in any way being confined by them.”³⁰ This experimentation allowed Shakespeare to ‘reform’ the genres in which he wrote.

Thus, for Thomas Hardy to be considered a ‘Shakespeare of the Victorian Era,’ it requires a less constricting description of Hardy’s writing than as largely tragic. Just as Shakespeare experimented with genre, mixing and defying traditional definitions of

²⁹ Danson 5.

³⁰ David P. Young, *The Heart’s Forest: A Study of Shakespeare’s Pastoral Plays* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972) 2.

tragedy, comedy, and romance, so, too, does Hardy's work transcend genre boundaries, ranging from his attempt at sensation fiction in *Desperate Remedies* (1871) to the more lighthearted *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872) and *The Trumpet-Major* (1880), to the dark despair shown in *Jude the Obscure*.³¹ In his general preface to the Wessex Edition of his novels and poems, Hardy separates his works into three categories: "Novels of Character and Environment," "Romances and Fantasies," and "Novels of Ingenuity."³² These divisions are significant because they show Hardy's interest in how his novels were to be understood and classified. In addition, the second category, "Romances and Fantasies," is especially interesting, for it shows Hardy's awareness of romance as its own genre, or of the possibility of it being its own genre. Although none of the novels on which I plan to focus were placed in that group, it nevertheless connects Hardy's writings with romance, and does not discount the possibility that other novels could possess romantic characteristics.³³

Hardy's close connection with Shakespeare may stem from nothing more than a "kinship" Hardy felt "with Shakespeare and his age," but even so, to focus mostly on his allusions to Shakespeare's tragedies is a limiting view.³⁴ Hardy, like Shakespeare, emphasizes the "impure multiplicity of their art, the way that particular genres, for instance, are continually being broken apart or mixed with others."³⁵ His drawing from Shakespeare's comedies, tragedies, histories, romances, and sonnets substantiates this claim, for by juxtaposing elements from different genres, Hardy contributes to the

³¹ See Mary Rimmer's introduction to *Desperate Remedies*; Thomas Hardy, *Desperate Remedies*, ed. Mary Rimmer (London: Penguin Books, 1998) xix.

³² Orel 44-45.

³³ The works that Hardy did classify as "Romances and Fantasies" are *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873), *The Trumpet-Major* (1880), *Two on a Tower* (1882), *A Group of Noble Dames* (1891), and *The Well-Beloved* (1897).

³⁴ Orel 143.

³⁵ *Ibid.* 175.

“impure multiplicity” of writing. Therefore, if Hardy is to be considered a “Shakespeare of the Victorian era,” then it is necessary for scholarship to look beyond the tragic elements of his novels, and examine how, like Shakespeare, Hardy molds, mixes, and reforms genre standards through his writing.

Chapter One:

The Early Wessex: *Far From the Madding Crowd* and *The Return of the*

Native

*The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven,
And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.
-A Midsummer Night's Dream, 5.1.12-18*

The beginning of Thomas Hardy's career as a writer reveals his search for a literary voice: it took the publication of several novels before he achieved his first success with *Far From the Madding Crowd* in 1874, and his second with *The Return of the Native* in 1878. Despite this slow start, it is nonetheless evident that Hardy had Shakespeare on his mind in his early works; *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873) is riddled with references to *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet*, several characters in *A Laodicean* (1881) perform *Love's Labours Lost*, and the title of *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872) is derived directly from Amiens's song from *As You Like It*, although the novel's original title was *The Mellstock Quire*.

The success of *Far From the Madding Crowd* came not only from its plot, characters, and tone, but also from its subject matter; Hardy was examining rural life in a way that appeared to contemporary audiences as a new, and potentially more accurate, representation. The depiction of country life in Wessex earned Hardy an initial association with Shakespeare in reviews of his writing as early as 1876.³⁶ The first usage of the word "Wessex" appeared in the serialized version of *Far From the Madding*

³⁶ Dennis Taylor 152.

Crowd to describe the region in which the book is set, and as Hardy continued to write following its publication, he gradually developed the parallel world of his novels, going so far as to add references to Wessex locations in later editions of his first novels — particularly the Wessex Editions printed in 1912. After *Far From the Madding Crowd*, however, was a lull in the popularity of Hardy's works—*The Hand of Ethelberta* (1876) did not sell with quite so much enthusiasm as its predecessor—that spurred his editor, Leslie Stephen, to encourage Hardy to return to the influences and subjects that provided him with his initial success, including Shakespeare.³⁷ With this in mind, Hardy wrote *The Return of the Native*, a novel characterized by the resurgence of the voices of rural characters after the relatively metropolitan focus of *The Hand of Ethelberta*. *The Return of the Native* illustrates one of Hardy's primary strengths: "his capacity to mediate between essentially rural material and a predominantly urban audience."³⁸

The dichotomy between rural and urban, appearing both within Hardy's works and as a part of the dynamic between text and reader, is similarly apparent in two of Shakespeare's comedies: *As You Like It* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In both plays, the characters, all part of courtly life (including the fairies of *Midsummer*), choose to escape the confines of that life in favour of the rural, dreamlike, or even magical. Regardless of the way in which that escape becomes manifest, it occurs in every case within a sylvan landscape, either the Forest of Arden or the forest outside of Athens. The characters simultaneously inhabit the rural and the urban, just as several of Hardy's characters in his early novels do, or wish to do. Additionally, the novels written before *The Mayor of Casterbridge* constitute the period of experimentation in which Hardy

³⁷ Millgate 167.

³⁸ Millgate 245.

formed and molded Wessex to suit his evolving writing styles and the demands of his readers. The creation of a parallel world such as Wessex is also present in, and crucial to, both *As You Like It* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, as their settings are examples of fictionalized reality in which the characters attempt to navigate different social conventions. It is therefore fitting to examine Hardy's earliest novels, especially *Far From the Madding Crowd* and *The Return of the Native*, in relation to these two Shakespeare plays.

There is no doubt that Hardy was familiar with both *As You Like It* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In April 1867, Hardy penned the poem "To An Impersonator of Rosalind," and later wrote an undated poem entitled "The Two Rosalinds" in response to a production of *As You Like It* he had seen. He also annotated passages from both plays, including Jaques's famous monologue beginning, "All the world's a stage,"³⁹ and one of Hermia's lines to Lysander in act one, scene one of *Midsummer*.⁴⁰ Literary criticism has also drawn parallels between Rosalind, a character admired by Hardy for her attitude and unique femininity, and Bathsheba Everdene, the protagonist of *Far From the Madding Crowd*.⁴¹ Furthermore, in a letter to Augustin Daly from 1895, Hardy states, "We could come to-morrow, Tuesday, to the play,"⁴² the performance of which he later says to have "enjoyed [...] much."⁴³ This "play" is *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which he saw in July 1895. Although this performance

³⁹ William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, ed. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine (New York: Washington Square Press [Folger Shakespeare Library], 1997) 2.7.145.

⁴⁰ Dennis Taylor 149.

⁴¹ Michael Squires, "Far From the Madding Crowd as Modified Pastoral," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 25.3 (December 1970): 305.

⁴² Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy*, ed. Richard Little Purdy and Michael Millgate, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988) 81.

⁴³ *Ibid.* 82. Hardy also mentions *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in a letter from March 1924, in which he references Snug the Joiner as the lion from "Pyramus and Thisbe."

occurs long after the success of *Far From the Madding Crowd*, it is likely, given his familiarity with other Shakespearean works prior to 1895, that this was not Hardy's first exposure to the play.

To elucidate how connections between *As You Like It*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and Hardy's early novels complicate views of Hardy as a tragic novelist, obvious similarities between the texts must be addressed. With Shakespeare as such a prominent influence upon Hardy's writing, it is important to acknowledge these similarities, as they aid in revealing the depth of Hardy's dependence upon Shakespeare's works. Thus the discussion of Hardy's early career must begin with Wessex itself, and its similarities to the "green worlds" that appear in *As You Like It* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Following this, I will analyze the characters living within Wessex, especially the strong female characters that drive the action of *Far From the Madding Crowd* and *The Return of the Native*, and their parallels to those in the two Shakespearean comedies. The third section will examine the interactions between character and setting in the form of the paranormal and otherworldly, which figures largely in *The Return of the Native* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Finally, the implications of these similarities will be discussed in relation to the genres of both the two plays and the Hardy novels, with special emphasis placed upon how the construction of a story's end can dramatically influence genre classification.

I. “A bad place to get lost in”:⁴⁴ Arden, Arcadia, and the Creation of Wessex

*But whate'er you are
 That in this desert inaccessible,
 Under the shade of melancholy boughs,
 Lose and neglect the creeping hours of time [...]
 -As You Like It, 2.7.114-117*

The quotation above is drawn from a monologue spoken by Orlando upon discovery of the Duke Senior's camp in the Forest of Arden. The lines describe the threatening nature of the forest as Orlando has experienced it thus far, but the words contrast the apparently lazy, relaxed lifestyle of Duke Senior and his companions whilst living in exile there. Orlando's words complicate the vision of Arden as an Edenic escape from the realities of civilization. Before this speech Orlando cries, “I almost die for food, and let me have it,” showing that the forest is neither a place of bounty, nor is it kind to those who are unprepared.⁴⁵ Duke Senior readily admits that “we have seen better days,” but even with such moments of realism in which the inconvenience and discomfort of their situation is made clear, the play as a whole casts Arden in a rosy light that supports the play's comedic classification.⁴⁶ Such concessions on Orlando and Duke Senior's parts reveal that the unfriendly and threatening can and do exist in comedy, though they do not feature at the forefront. Therefore, calling *As You Like It* a comedy does not necessarily imply that all is perfect in the Forest of Arden, however idyllic it may appear. What makes Orlando's description of the forest all the more fascinating is Hardy's own interest in it; in one copy of the play, he specifically marked these four lines, and it is probable that Hardy channeled the message of these lines in the initial

⁴⁴ Thomas Hardy, *The Return of the Native*, ed. Nancy Barrineau, Margaret R. Higonnet, and Simon Gatrell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 36.

⁴⁵ *As You Like It* 2.7.109.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 2.7.125; Springer 32.

creation of Wessex.⁴⁷ Wessex, like Arden, is an ambiguous mixture between “desert inaccessible”⁴⁸ and “golden world.”⁴⁹

The characters of *As You Like It* attempt to return to an Edenic state in the Forest of Arden, but the state of things there is hardly paradisiacal.⁵⁰ The first reference to the Forest of Arden establishes a misleading perspective; Charles, the wrestler in Duke Frederick’s court, tells Oliver,

They say he [Duke Senior] is already in the Forest of Arden,
and a many merry men with him; and there they
live like the old Robin Hood of England. They say
many young gentlemen flock to him every day and
fleet the time carelessly, as they did in the golden
world.⁵¹

Here, “the golden world” refers not to the world before the fall of man, but a prosperous, Arcadian state that involves a strong communion between man and the natural world, much like that felt by several Hardy characters, including Marty South, Giles Winterbourne, and Gabriel Oak. The comparison of Duke Senior to Robin Hood similarly stresses a symbiosis between man and nature. Arden is a haven for all who live there, a “world of pastoral ease and idyllic innocence, or guilelessness and faith”; for Duke Senior and his companions, it is a place of safety in exile.⁵² For Rosalind and Celia, it is not only that, but it also symbolizes freedom from gendered standards, civic duties, and social expectations. As Celia says before she and her cousin depart, “Now go

⁴⁷ Dennis Taylor 149.

⁴⁸ *As You Like It* 2.7.114.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 1.1.117-118.

⁵⁰ Kiernan Ryan, *Shakespeare’s Comedies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) 200-202.

⁵¹ *As You Like It* 1.1.113-118.

⁵² Albert R. Cirillo, “*As You Like It*: Pastoralism Gone Awry,” *ELH* 38.1 (March 1971): 26.

we in content / To liberty, and not to banishment.”⁵³ In the Forest of Arden, Rosalind and Celia may adopt new identities, and with them the freedom to act ‘as they like it.’

Arden is not as much like “the golden world” as Charles claims or Rosalind and Celia believe, however. Touchstone exclaims, “Ay, now am I in Arden, the more fool I. When I was at home I was in a better place, but travelers must be content.”⁵⁴ The outward glory of Arden and the freedom it suggests do not replace the comforts of home, nor are such glory and freedom all that they initially appear to be. Those living there are hungry, uncomfortable, and weathered from living outdoors.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the time spent in the Forest of Arden mends the conflicts of the play; it is a “place where sanity is restored, where the possibility of order exists,” just as much as it is a “temporary refuge.”⁵⁶ Similarly, though the characters of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* flee to the woods, where all is resolved in the end, that forest is “a place of confusion and madness, the world of the ‘dream.’”⁵⁷ The characters first perceive the forest as a safe space apart from civilization where they can settle their disagreements, but are soon proven wrong by the antagonism of its fairy occupants. Moreover, considering the Athenian forest as another ‘dream-world,’ not only because it is fictional, but also because of its associations with magic and the proliferation of dream-like trances that occur there, ties the forest to Hardy’s own description of Wessex as a “partly real, partly dream-country.”⁵⁸

⁵³ *As You Like It* 1.3.144-145.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 2.4.15-17.

⁵⁵ For further discussion of the less idyllic qualities of rural life in *As You Like It*, see A. Stuart Daley, “The Dispraise of the Country in *As You Like It*,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 36.3 (Autumn 1985): 300-314.

⁵⁶ Cirillo 21.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Far From the Madding Crowd* 4.

In the 1895 preface to *Far From the Madding Crowd*, Hardy looks back upon his creation of Wessex:

I first ventured to adopt the word ‘Wessex’ from the pages of early English history, and give it a fictitious significance as the existing name of the district once included in that extinct kingdom [...] Since then the appellation [...] has become more and more popular as a practical provincial definition; and the dream-country has, by degrees, solidified into a utilitarian region which people can go to, take a house in, and write to the papers from.⁵⁹

Although Wessex was derived from reality, paralleling very real places in southwestern England, Hardy used the county as a way to distance his readers from reality. It is a place steeped in the ancient and traditional, and, perhaps, the mythical. Wessex fictionalizes the everyday, and though that may appear to romanticize the rural, as early critics claimed, it actually manages to reveal the divide between the rural and urban, and the societal pressures and conventions originating outside of Wessex, and the views and morals of Wessex inhabitants. Scottish writer Andrew Lang mentions that in *Far From the Madding Crowd*, “the old and new must meet here and there, with curious surprises, and our world may find itself face to face with the quaint conceited rustics of Shakespeare’s plays [...] He [Hardy] contemplates his shepherds and rural people with the eye of a philosopher who understands all about them, though he is not one of them.”⁶⁰ The dichotomies between real and fictional, and urban and rural, that appear in Hardy’s novels are equally apparent in the Forest of Arden and the Athenian forest of Shakespeare’s comedies. Ken Talbot van den Burg writes of *As You Like It*, “In the forest scenes, the spectators are required to imagine a fictive landscape which is not

⁵⁹ Ibid. 3-4.

⁶⁰ *Far From the Madding Crowd* 432.

physically present.”⁶¹ The forest sanctuaries of both comedies are essentially fictional, just as Wessex is. Although the Arden of *As You Like It* most likely refers to Ardennes, a forested region covering portions of Belgium, Luxembourg, France, and Germany, the existence of another Forest of Arden in Warwickshire, England, one which Shakespeare himself may have visited, creates an even closer parallel that Shakespeare’s audiences would have noted. The English Arden also connects to Hardy’s Wessex in their geographic proximity. The Athenian forest from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* possesses less clear parallels in reality, but the use of Athens and the connection to the familiar Greek myth surrounding Hippolyta, who appears within the play, ground the setting of the play in relative reality.

Apart from brief descriptions scattered throughout *Far From the Madding Crowd*, there is little depiction of Wessex nature itself; rather, what the reader learns of Wessex comes from the activity of its inhabitants. Gabriel Oak, for instance, is “the true growth of Wessex soil,” and his name calls to mind the world with which he is so in tune.⁶² He is shown at many points tending his sheep or working the land to different capacities, and, like the god Pan, plays his flute “with Arcadian sweetness.”⁶³ This reference to Arcadia once again ties Wessex to the Forest of Arden, and the presence of the music played by Gabriel references Shakespearean comedy, for songs, a symbol of festivity or a contrast to serious events, are found more frequently in Shakespeare’s comedies than in his tragedies and histories, and those that do appear in the latter two are often sung by fools or the insane. Gabriel, as neither fool nor madman—he is, after all, associated with

⁶¹ Ken Talbot van den Burg, “Theatrical Fiction and the Reality of Love in *As You Like It*,” *PMLA* 90.5 (Oct. 1975): 886.

⁶² *Far From the Madding Crowd* 432.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 49.

the strong, sensible oak—becomes a representative figure of the pastoral and traditionally comedic, just as Amiens's song describing the pleasures of life in the Forest of Arden is a moment of reveling in the rural, as well as a moment of humour, as Jaques soon turns the song on its head in parody.

Gabriel is not alone in representing the idyllic rural atmosphere that Hardy adopts in creating Wessex. This atmosphere is associated with pastoral, which is a literary mode that presents stereotypical, halcyon images of rural life, and which may appear in the genres of comedy, tragedy, or romance. The sheep shearing, for example, is quintessentially representative of a pastoral world, and Hardy's description of the event presents images of prosperity, fertility, nostalgia, and a relaxed attitude towards the tasks of life:

It was the first day of June, and the sheep-shearing season culminated, the landscape, even to the leanest pasture, being all health and colour. Every green was young, every pore was open, and every stalk was swollen with racing currents of juice. God was palpably present in the country, and the devil had gone with the world to town. Flossy catkins of the later kinds, fern-sprouts like bishops' crosiers, the square-headed moschatel, the odd cuckoo-point [...] and the black-petaled doleful-bells, were among the quainter objects of the vegetable world in and around Weatherbury at this teeming time [...] They sheared in the great barn, called for the nonce the Shearing-barn. [...] The old barn embodied practices which had suffered no mutilation at the hands of time. Here at least the spirit of the ancient builders was at one with the spirit of the modern beholder. [...] This picture of to-day in its frame of four hundred years ago did not produce that marked contrast between ancient and modern which is implied by the contrast of date. In comparison with cities, Weatherbury was immutable. The citizen's *Then* is the rustic's *Now*. [...] In these Wessex nooks the busy outsider's ancient times are only old his old times are still new; his present is futurity. So the barn was natural to the shearers, and the shearers were in harmony with the barn.⁶⁴

Rural Wessex is characterized by simplicity of life that hearkens back to a time before industrialization and the rise of the metropolis; the architecture of the shearing-barn is one with the landscape, just as the landscape is one with those who tend it. The second

⁶⁴ Ibid. 152-154.

chapter of *Far From the Madding Crowd* provides the first detailed picture of nature, describing nighttime on Norcombe Hill, “an ordinary specimen of those smoothly-outline protuberances of the globe which may remain undisturbed on some great day of confusion, when far grander heights and dizzy granite precipices topple down.”⁶⁵ Such a suggestion of the permanence of Wessex and the rural in contrast with the transience and vulnerability that lies behind progress, technology, and the urban is characteristic of comedy: the positive, fruitful, and healthy will surpass and reproduce beyond the demise of all that is harmful, toxic, or sterile.

The rural landscape portrayed in Wessex is timeless in Hardy’s view at this point in his career, but in his later novels, the outside world encroaches upon a Wessex that is no longer immortal. Time exists in Wessex, but it is skewed by the slow approach of the future, making “his old times [...] still new.”⁶⁶ The passage of time is visible in the relationship between Gabriel and Bathsheba, Fanny Robin’s pregnancy, the watch that signifies Sergeant Troy’s questionable ancestry, and after Troy’s faked demise, but Wessex itself appears unchanging. The same occurs in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*: within the deceptive span of a few hours, a night’s worth of pranks, trysts, and utter confusion occurs, and for Lysander, Demetrius, Hermia, Helena, Titania, and Bottom, the night’s events are no more than dreams, which are fleeting in reality.

Although there exist traces of pastoral idyll in the appearance of Wessex, it, like Arden or the Athenian forest, is not without its dangers. Gabriel’s livelihood as a shepherd is destroyed when his flock of sheep falls through a gap in the hill, killing all two hundred of them. He observes the “pastoral tragedy” with “pity for the untimely fate

⁶⁵ Ibid. 17.

⁶⁶ Ibid. 154.

of these gentle ewes and their unborn lambs,”⁶⁷ followed soon after by a sense that “no more seemed to be left in him. He leant down upon a rail, and covered his face with his hands.”⁶⁸ What marks this occurrence as peculiar is how this tragedy is succeeded by recovery and movement forward, with continued hope, however small, for the future; such a sequence of events aligns with comedy or romance. The narrator states that after Gabriel witnesses the deaths of his sheep, “Stupors, however, do not last for ever, and Farmer Oak recovered from his.”⁶⁹ This is perhaps to be attributed to the nature of Gabriel’s character as a pastoral figure, but it also illustrates how Hardy is toying with the idea of tragedy as only a transient part of life, rather than the defining aspect of a story. Gabriel proceeds from this episode “a free man with the clothes he stood up in, and nothing more”; like the expatriates living in the Forest of Arden, he abandons the relative comforts of his old life and moves forward into the realm of insecurity and ‘freedom.’⁷⁰ Other “pastoral tragedies” occur throughout the novel as well, such as the bloating of Bathsheba’s sheep from the consumption of too much clover, the fire on Bathsheba’s farm that Gabriel aids in extinguishing, and the near-destruction of the hayricks during a fierce thunderstorm.⁷¹ Gabriel disrupts all of these tragedies and aids in the recovery from those tragedies, whether they affected other characters (often Bathsheba) or himself. In this way, Gabriel acts as a vehicle for the novel’s eventual non-tragic ending. Through the appearance of “pastoral tragedy” and natural disasters in the novel, it is clear that Wessex is not as Edenic as it may seem; it is no place for the fainthearted, and the landscape can and will resist mankind at times. More serious tragedies outside of the

⁶⁷ Ibid. 42.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 45.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 45.

⁷⁰ Ibid. 46.

⁷¹ Ibid. 42.

direct influence of the Wessex landscape also lend the novel a less comedic atmosphere, notably the deaths of Fanny Robin and her unborn child, and the murder and incarceration of Sergeant Troy and Boldwood, respectively.

By the publication of *The Return of the Native*, the nature of Wessex is at the forefront of Hardy's writing. The first chapter of the novel is devoted entirely to the description of Egdon Heath: no creatures appear, human or otherwise, until the next chapter. The Heath is an "unenclosed wild," a "waste" that is somehow majestic and regal; it possesses a "great and particular glory" attuned to darkness, sorrow, and a subdued monochrome.⁷² The forest that serves as the setting for much of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is likewise threatening: its native inhabitants and rulers are dangerously unpredictable, even ruthless, and the invading Athenians are wholly subject to their whims. Christian Cantle calls Egdon Heath "a bad place to get lost in, and the winds do huffle queerer to-night than ever I heard 'em afore. Them that know Egdon best have been pixy-led here at times."⁷³ This statement draws direct parallels to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, for even Titania, who reigns over the forest alongside Oberon, falls prey to fairy magic. The fact that Christian's comment comes in the third chapter provides the reader with knowledge of the setting from early in the novel. It is a place where the otherworldly exists amongst the everyday, as I will discuss later. Egdon Heath becomes its own character over the course of *The Return of the Native*, acting as antagonist to Eustacia Vye and indirectly causing the deaths of Eustacia, Damon Wildeve, and Mrs.

⁷² *The Return of the Native* 9.

⁷³ *Ibid.* 36.

Yeobright.⁷⁴ Before discussing the relationship between Wessex and its residents, however, those residents must first be described on their own, and how their individual plots are analogous to those of the characters in *As You Like It* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

II. Strong Women and the Romantic Plot

*"Perhaps I like you a little more than little, which is much too much! Yes—Shakespeare says so, and he is always right."*⁷⁵
—Paula Power to George Somerset, *A Laodicean* (1881)

The female protagonists of Hardy's novels are not easily forgotten, whether as present as Arabella Donn and Sue Bridehead of *Jude the Obscure*, or as subtly haunting as Marty South of *The Woodlanders*. The precedent for Hardy's notably strong—or prominent, at the very least—female characters comes in some of his earliest fiction works, and most famously in the forms of Bathsheba Everdene and Eustacia Vye. The willful independence and fatal beauty of these women evokes the tradition of such characters in Shakespearean comedy as Katherine of *Taming of the Shrew*, Beatrice of *Much Ado About Nothing*, Portia of *The Merchant of Venice*, and Rosalind of *As You Like It*. Bathsheba and Eustacia are easily the most prominent characters in their respective novels, and are both independent of mind and heart, which grants them a certain degree of power. The connections between these two heroines, other women in Hardy's novels, and the women of Shakespearean comedy are vital to the discussion of Hardy as something other than a 'tragic writer.' Women and the love stories that surround them

⁷⁴ Ibid. xi-xiii. In his introduction to the novel, Simon Gatrell refers to the heath as simultaneously a stage upon which the action of the novel takes place, a connection between characters, a psychological and mythological presence, the bane of Eustacia's life, and as something "vitaly animated" (xiii).

⁷⁵ Thomas Hardy, *A Laodicean*, ed. John Schad (New York: Penguin Books, 1997) 212.

are more often the subject of comedies and romances than of tragedies, and the notable couples who do appear in tragedy are never graced with happy endings. In the female characters of *Far From the Madding Crowd*, *The Return of the Native*, and other earlier novels such as *Under the Greenwood Tree*, *The Hand of Ethelberta*, and *A Laodicean*, Hardy presents the option of strong women who may or may not undergo tragic circumstances at some point, but who are often offered a chance at happiness in love.

The first impression of Bathsheba Everdene that Hardy grants his readers and the other characters is that of a proud woman in exile. Leaving her previous life to live with her aunt, Mrs. Hurst, Bathsheba does not know that she will soon be abandoning all that she knows for a life as an independently wealthy farmer and landowner. Within the span of a few chapters, she becomes fully immersed in the ways of Wessex, to the point where she successfully assumes both the traditionally feminine qualities of beauty, poise, and fickleness in love, and the male responsibilities that come with running an estate. Bathsheba's initial appearance in the novel illustrates the masculine power that stems from her feminine wiles: "She simply observed herself as a fair product of Nature in the feminine kind, her thoughts seeming to glide into far-off though likely dramas in which men would play a part—vistas of probable triumphs—the smiles of a phase suggesting that hearts were imagined as lost and won."⁷⁶ The depiction of Bathsheba at this moment draws heavily from the character of Rosalind in *As You Like It*. Rosalind is not the vain creature that Bathsheba is, but the two women do undergo parallel transformations as their stories unfold. Rosalind enters the Forest of Arden with the few possessions left to her—a new identity, new clothes, and her cousin Celia—in the same way that Bathsheba rides atop a wagon carrying all that she owns as she enters Wessex by becoming present

⁷⁶ *Far From the Madding Crowd* 14-15.

in the novel. Additionally, Rosalind, like Bathsheba, leaves court to become a landowner in the Forest of Arden; she buys a cottage and flock of sheep with Corin's help, and although the audience never sees her sylvan abode, Rosalind and Celia's ownership of the cottage is mentioned several times throughout the play.

Furthermore, both Bathsheba and Rosalind are characterized in ways that do not ascribe fully to conventional, contemporary views on masculinity or femininity. Bathsheba learns to work in a man's profession, but even before then, does not fear defying expectations for femininity; Gabriel witnesses her riding bareback, lying on her back, and as she does so, her dark hair trails loosely over her jacket.⁷⁷ Rosalind is humourously androgynous in her adoption of both her 'actual' female sexuality and her male guise of Ganymede, and with them the courting of men (Orlando) and women (Phebe), which is further complicated by the fact that the initial casting of Rosalind would have been granted to a male actor. Rosalind asks Celia, irony ringing through her words, "Good my complexion, dost thou think though I am caparisoned like a man, I have a doublet and hose in my disposition?"—when, in fact, she does.⁷⁸ Bathsheba makes a similar comment in conversation with Liddy; Liddy tells her that she seems "to swell so tall as a lion" when she is angry, and Bathsheba, "somewhat seriously alarmed by this Amazonian picture of herself," responds, "I hope I am not a bold sort of maid—mannish?"⁷⁹ Liddy assures her that she is not, only "so almighty womanish that 'tis getting on that way sometimes."⁸⁰ Liddy is the Celia to Bathsheba's Rosalind throughout the novel; she is the only female companion Bathsheba has, and Bathsheba's most

⁷⁷ Ibid. 23-26.

⁷⁸ *As You Like It* 3.2.198-200.

⁷⁹ *Far From the Madding Crowd* 211.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

genuine, feminine moments come in discussion of woman's lot with Liddy. By drawing an "Amazonian picture" of Bathsheba, Liddy also ties her mistress to Hippolyta, "the bouncing Amazon, / Your [Oberon's] buskined mistress and your warrior love."⁸¹ Her similarity to Hippolyta becomes most evident in her marriage to Sergeant Troy.

Bathsheba's behaviour as a strong-willed woman extends into her romantic relationships with Gabriel Oak, Sergeant Troy, and William Boldwood. During the first conversation between Gabriel and Bathsheba, it is made clear that "she was not a shy girl by any means," and that Bathsheba's character defies the feminine norm in rural Wessex: "Rays of male vision seem to have a tickling effect upon virgin faces in rural districts [...] Yet it was the man [Gabriel] who blushed, not the maid [Bathsheba] at all."⁸² Bathsheba has no interest in Gabriel or any man, and rejects his marriage proposal with vain, proud words. Bathsheba's words are genuine in the sense that she is speaking truthfully, though harshly, whereas Rosalind's words, "And I for no woman," in act five, scene two of *As You Like It* are veiled in deceit, for despite their truth, her disguise as Ganymede prevents her fellow characters from perceiving why her statement is true.⁸³ Gabriel remains constant to Bathsheba as suitor, friend, and employee regardless of her behaviour towards him; Celia tells Rosalind that "the oath of a lover is no stronger than the word of a tapster," but Gabriel illustrates his admiration and love for Bathsheba through more than his initial expression of feeling.⁸⁴ His fidelity to Bathsheba, like Orlando's to Rosalind, eventually earns him the place of her husband.

⁸¹ William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine (New York: Washington Square Press [Folger Shakespeare Library], 1993) 2.1.72-73.

⁸² *Far From the Madding Crowd* 27.

⁸³ *As You Like It* 5.2.92.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 3.4.29-30.

The development of the relationship between Bathsheba and Farmer Boldwood additionally illustrates her connection to Shakespearean comedic heroines. The sending of the valentine to Boldwood incites his obsessive love for her, a love that eventually destroys him, but Bathsheba's intentions behind sending the card are playful. She does it to amuse herself more than anything else; she neither desires to be flirtatious nor has any interest in obtaining Boldwood's affections. The narrator claims, "Bathsheba was no schemer for marriage, nor was she deliberately a trifler with the affections of men, and a censor's experience on seeing an actual flirt after observing her would have been a feeling of surprise that Bathsheba could be so different from such a one, and yet so like what a flirt is supposed to be."⁸⁵ The action of sending the valentine parallels somewhat the love-poems Orlando composes for Rosalind, which he carves into the trees. Orlando's sentiments are genuine, seeking to convey the depth of his love for Rosalind, whereas Bathsheba's actions parallel Rosalind's own deceptive behaviour that unintentionally confuses the hearts of several other characters. Bathsheba is placed on the receiving end of such deep affection later in the novel, when the extent of Boldwood's obsession with her becomes known. He is persistent to the point of being irritating or even discomfiting, but his 'love' for her— his possessive obsession over her— is true nonetheless.

A different side of Bathsheba appears in her courtship and marriage to Sergeant Troy, the most prominent example of masculine prowess in the novel. Troy becomes symbolic of a conquering army, "brilliant in brass and scarlet."⁸⁶ The scene of their first meeting is highly sexualized, the sharp spur of his military uniform becoming wedged

⁸⁵ *Far From the Madding Crowd* 132.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* 172.

into the trimmings of Bathsheba's dress in such a way that Troy calls her "a prisoner."⁸⁷ Troy quickly shows himself to be a cad well-versed in the arts of seduction and flattery, but his charm still manages to ensnare Bathsheba. The erotic atmosphere surrounding their encounters is particularly potent in the chapter, "The Hollow Amid the Ferns," in itself a sexually suggestive title.⁸⁸ In this chapter, Bathsheba meets Troy in order that he may show her some of his sword work, and he accordingly flashes his sword all around her body, only inches from her skin. Troy's movements and comments, such as, "That outer loose lock of hair wants tidying [...] Wait: I'll do it for you," come across as physical assault or even a metaphorical rape, especially since Troy does manage to cut off a lock of Bathsheba's hair.⁸⁹ The similarity to rape references disturbing lines from Demetrius in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*:

You [Helena] do impeach your modesty too much
To leave the city and commit yourself
Into the hands of one [Demetrius] who loves you not.
To trust the opportunity of night
And the ill counsel of a desert place
With the rich worth of your virginity.⁹⁰

Helena is quick to trust Demetrius, just as Bathsheba is Troy, but there is no guarantee that either man will act honourably. The infatuation that develops within Bathsheba after this evening interlude is clearly unhealthy and inadvisable; her growing love for such a man is "doubly weak," for "when a strong woman recklessly throws away her strength she is worse than a weak woman who has never had any strength to throw away."⁹¹

⁸⁷ Ibid. 173.

⁸⁸ Ibid. 194; Rosemarie Morgan, *Women and Sexuality in the Novels of Thomas Hardy* (New York: Routledge, 1988) 33.

⁸⁹ Ibid. 197.

⁹⁰ *A Midsummer Night's Dream* 2.1.221-226.

⁹¹ *Far From the Madding Crowd* 200.

Despite the many qualities that discount Troy as a suitable match for any woman, Bathsheba decides to marry him in secret.

Bathsheba, like Titania, is married to a man who is her match in confidence and will, and likewise confronts him about his romantic dalliances elsewhere. Bathsheba knows her husband is unfaithful before he himself confirms it; she has the sense that Troy

[...] hast stolen away from Fairyland
And in the shape of Corin sat all day
Playing on pipes of corn and versing love
To amorous Phillida⁹²

as Titania states Oberon has. Troy approaches the open coffin containing Fanny Robin and her child, and leans down to kiss Fanny, prompting a strong response from Bathsheba: “Don’t—don’t kiss them! O, Frank, I can’t bear it—I can’t! I love you better than she did: kiss me too, Frank—kiss me! *You will, Frank, kiss me too!*”⁹³ Her method of dealing with her husband’s infidelity stems from utter desperation and confusion rather than the emotionless assurance expressed by Titania. Unlike Titania, however, Bathsheba is not herself guilty of infidelity to her spouse. Perhaps a closer tie from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is Hippolyta, whose husband, Theseus, is likewise unfaithful to her, and who herself represents a captured, victimized party. The marriage between Theseus and Hippolyta is portrayed as a great occasion for celebration, but the potential for an unhappy marriage due to adultery lends a somber note to the event. Hippolyta is essentially a spoil of war, much like Bathsheba or Fanny Robin to Troy, and the reader is led to sympathize with the women he seduces and promises to marry.

Bathsheba’s actions in love do not precisely mirror those of Rosalind or any other Shakespearean heroine, but what remains an essential similarity is how Bathsheba is

⁹² *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* 2.1.67-70.

⁹³ *Far From the Madding Crowd* 311-312.

fairly consistently active in romantic pursuits, rather than passive. Her interactions with Troy do cause her to adopt some passivity in her manner—it is Troy’s spur that catches on Bathsheba’s dress, and the rape-like scene of “The Hollow Amid the Ferns” portrays her as a victim of masculine strength and her own feminine weakness—but Bathsheba is only briefly entranced. Bathsheba remains a relatively capable landowner and, in a moment of great emotional turmoil, actively chooses to open Fanny Robin’s coffin. Bathsheba continues to show her ability to manipulate the hearts of the men who love her, most especially Boldwood. What does occur is the humanizing of Bathsheba through the hardships she undergoes over the course of the novel; the harsh reality of her husband’s infidelity, the deaths of Fanny and Troy, and the day-to-day work of handling the estate carve away some of the cold, proud façade she puts forth at the start. Even as Bathsheba’s heart softens with time, a transformation she regards as succumbing to weakness—“Bathsheba, in spite of her mettle, began to feel unmistakable signs that she was inherently the weaker vessel. She strove miserably against this femininity which would insist upon supplying unbidden emotions in stronger and stronger current”—she does not allow others to make decisions for her.⁹⁴ For example, she refuses to give Boldwood a definite answer to his marriage proposal until she is ready, and only then does he place the engagement ring on her finger himself.⁹⁵

A second strong female character of Hardy’s early fiction is Eustacia Vye of *The Return of the Native*. She is first shown as nothing more than a shadow upon the heath, giving “a perfect, delicate, and necessary finish [...] to the dark pile of hills that it seemed to be the only justification of their outline [...] The form was so much like an organic

⁹⁴ Ibid. 216.

⁹⁵ Ibid. 387.

part of the entire motionless structure that to see it move would have impressed the mind as a strange phenomenon.”⁹⁶ However much she claims to despise the heath, she is a strong enough character that her very form fits perfectly within the Wessex landscape. This strange way in which Eustacia enters the story also indicates the importance of her presence to the rest of the novel, for she already seems to possess a unique connection to the landscape that the entire first chapter describes. When she next appears, Eustacia stands as a powerful figure on the heath beside her bonfire; she is “queen of the night,” as Hardy later labels her, with a young boy assisting her.⁹⁷ Truly, Eustacia is the dark-haired queen of the novel, an apparent mythical figure or deity incarnate, much as Titania, Queen of the Fairies in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, is meant to be the reigning queen of the forest on the titular night. The boy beside Eustacia, who tends the bonfire, parallels the boy who causes the quarrel between Titania and Oberon that catalyzes the rest of the play.

The first book of *The Return of the Native* is aptly entitled “The Three Women,” referring to Thomasin Yeobright, Mrs. Yeobright, and Eustacia. This title further emphasizes the importance of women to the novel. Similarly, the concept of ‘three women’ parallels the three women at the center of the action of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*: Titania, Hermia, and Helena. Hippolyta is also an important figure, and is an ideal example of the strong female archetype that Hardy himself adopts, but she does not take part in the central action of the play. Both sets of women, from novel and play, somehow participate in, or contribute to, the complicated love-plots of their respective

⁹⁶ *The Return of the Native* 17.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* 66.

texts, often with the help of deceit, cunning, or even outside forces such as fairy magic and voodoo.

In addition, connections to Shakespearean comedies such as *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night* appear later in the novel with the episode of the mummers' play. No such play appears in Shakespeare, but plays-within-plays, such as those from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Winter's Tale* (a satyr dance, but still a form of performance), and *Hamlet*, usually represent some sort of comedic or celebratory interlude. Even in *Hamlet*, in which the play is used as a prompt for murder, the occasion for performance is placed within the context of genre; Polonius mentions "tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene individable, or poem unlimited."⁹⁸ Furthermore, the plot of the mummers' play usually involves resurrection, redemption, or the victory of good over evil, all of which are characteristic of comedy rather than tragedy. The placing of the mummers' play in *The Return of the Native* is therefore symbolic of the complicated nature of genre, to be discussed later. What makes the mummers' play all the more relevant to the analysis of the influence of Shakespearean comedy on Hardy's writing is Eustacia's participation in it: in order to see and potentially meet Clym Yeobright, she secretly takes on the role of the Turkish Knight. This is a nearly direct parallel to Rosalind's decision to 'woo' Orlando under the persona of Ganymede. Cross-dressing women also appear in *Jude the Obscure*, but in that instance, Sue Bridehead changes into

⁹⁸ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine (New York: Washington Square Press [Folger Shakespeare Library], 1992) 2.2.421-424.

Jude's clothes out of necessity (her own are soaking wet), whereas Eustacia actively decides to dress as a man and perform for Clym in the mummers' play.⁹⁹

Eustacia becomes involved in literal playacting, but also toys with the romantic lives of Clym, Thomasin, and Wildeve through thoughtless flirtations and the overwhelming desire "to be loved to madness," a concept that calls to mind such plays as *Hamlet*, *As You Like It* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.¹⁰⁰ In additional connection to the latter, Eustacia remains in a dreamlike state for the beginning portion of the novel, deluded by the exoticism of Clym Yeobright and her conviction that they are destined for one another. The arrival of Clym to Egdon Heath at last is like "the end of the dream" for Eustacia, but she does not become wholly disillusioned with him until after they are married and the possibility of leaving Egdon disappears.¹⁰¹ It takes most of the novel for Eustacia to realize that her escape from Egdon Heath is impossible, as her destiny seems to require that she stay there. This relationship between Eustacia and Egdon Heath is only one example of the connection between characters and their natural surroundings that Hardy stresses in many of his novels. As I will discuss in the following section, what makes Eustacia's tie to Egdon Heath unique is the darkness and mystery of it, a darkness that Shakespeare himself adopts in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

⁹⁹ Gail Marshall, "Shakespeare and fiction," *Shakespeare in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Gail Marshall (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012) 96-99.

¹⁰⁰ *The Return of the Native* 69.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* 101; Morgan 79-80.

III. Fate, Magic, and the Otherworldly

ROBIN GOODFELLOW: *Damnèd spirits all,
That in crossways and floods have burial,
Already to their wormy beds are gone. [...]
They willfully themselves exile from light
And must for aye consort with black-browed night.*

OBERON: *But we are spirits of another sort.*
 -A Midsummer Night's Dream, 3.2.404-406, 408-410

*Hang there, my verse, in witness of my love.
And thou, thrice-crownèd queen of night, survey
With thy chaste eye, from thy pale sphere above,
Thy huntress' name that my full life doth sway.*
 -As You Like It, 3.2.1-4

No moment in Hardy's novels is distinctly paranormal, and the reader must suspend her belief only so far as to accept the reality of Wessex and the lives of those within it. There are no fairies, no Puck, no love-potions made from mysterious flowers. However, as Hardy's portrayal of Wessex evolves from *Far From the Madding Crowd* to *The Return of the Native*, the landscape adopts a darker, mystical aspect. It is no longer the supposed "golden world" found in *Far From the Madding Crowd*. Instead, like the forest found *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the world of *The Return of Native* preys upon its inhabitants. Egdon Heath is the place where a midsummer night's dream assumes shades of nightmare.¹⁰² It is described as "the home of strange phantoms; and it was found to be the hitherto unrecognised original of those wild regions of obscurity which are vaguely felt to be compassing us about in midnight dreams of flight and disaster."¹⁰³ Through discussions of magic, fate or fortune, and the paranormal, Hardy illustrates the relationship between character and setting and the potential conflicts that arise between

¹⁰² Michael Taylor, "The Darker Purpose of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 9.2 (1969): 262; Springer 99.

¹⁰³ *The Return of the Native* 11.

them. Hardy placed both *Far From the Madding Crowd* and *The Return of the Native* under the category of “Novels of Character and Environment,” and the psychological, physical, and emotional connections between characters and their environments are evident in both works. Moreover, this relationship is central to the appearance of genre conventions in his novels, for Wessex is present in all of them, and many of the occurrences that take place are tied to, or caused by, the natural world.

The most apparent example of this relationship in regards to the otherworldly or magical is the connection between Eustacia Vye and Egdon Heath. In Egdon Heath, the everyday becomes heightened: the “merely quaint became grotesque, the grotesque became preternatural; for all was in extremity.”¹⁰⁴ The atmosphere of Egdon Heath is thick with something mystical, a heady place where dreams of bad omens are common and everyday existence seems masked in a dreamlike haze.¹⁰⁵ The Heath’s mythic, otherworldly qualities pervade the novel, looming especially over Eustacia, who seeks desperately to escape from it.¹⁰⁶ She marries Clym in the hopes that she will move abroad, ruins the marriage between Thomasin Yeobright and Damon Wildeve, and inadvertently causes the death of her mother-in-law. Her efforts at flight are futile, eventually leading to her own death. She is destined to remain on Egdon Heath; Wildeve tells Eustacia, “Fate has treated you cruelly,”¹⁰⁷ and later, “The fates have not been kind to you, Eustacia Yeobright.”¹⁰⁸ This knowledge of her fate suggests clairvoyance, and although there is no evidence to indicate that Eustacia or any other character possesses

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. 21.

¹⁰⁵ See *The Return of the Native* 34.

¹⁰⁶ Marshall 96.

¹⁰⁷ *The Return of the Native* 254.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. 271.

the ability to know or see the future, her surety about what is to come is suspiciously eerie.

Eustacia may be connected to Egdon Heath more than any other character in *The Return of the Native*, but it is Diggory Venn, the reddleman, who makes manifest the sinister, Fate-like presence of the Heath. His initial description is almost satanic: “He was not temporarily overlaid with the colour [red]: it permeated him [...] He is a curious, interesting, and nearly perished link between obsolete forms of life and those which generally prevail.”¹⁰⁹ Diggory’s threatening appearance and tendency to appear at random cast him as an evil presence in the novel, one whom is not to be trusted quickly. But like Puck and the other fairies of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*,¹¹⁰ Diggory Venn is not an innately evil character; in fact, he emerges at the end of the novel as one of the most trustworthy and dependable characters, deserving of Thomasin’s hand. In *As You Like It*, Amiens references the “stubbornness of fortune,” a phrase that accurately describes the persistence of Diggory in enforcing the power of Egdon Heath and promoting the happiness of Thomasin Yeobright at whatever cost.¹¹¹ In a gambling match against Wildeve, Diggory wins back all the money belonging to Thomasin and Clym with an endless string of lucky rolls. He acts simultaneously as a demonic representative of Fate for Wildeve and Eustacia and a loyal guardian angel to Thomasin. Furthermore, the gambling is presided over by the heath-croppers, who stare at Wildeve like “a plague,”¹¹² and the glow-worms, whose “pale phosphorescent shine”¹¹³ lends a distinctly eerie tone to the scene. These creatures serve as metaphors for the entire heath;

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. 13.

¹¹⁰ See Bertrand Evans, *Shakespeare’s Comedies* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1960) 34-35.

¹¹¹ *As You Like It* 2.1.19; Morgan 67-70.

¹¹² *The Return of the Native* 228.

¹¹³ Ibid. 227.

they observe the men, their presence as haunting as to Wildeve as all of Egdon Heath is to Eustacia. Diggory Venn, in contrast to Wildeve, is not disturbed by the unearthly heath-croppers and glow-worms, but is instead empowered by his own Fate-like character and his connection to the landscape.

Similarly, Sergeant Troy of *Far From the Madding Crowd*, though not a symbol of Fate, acts towards Bathsheba in a way that suggests magical capabilities, though he possesses none in reality. In the first moment that Bathsheba beholds Troy, she experiences emotions akin to a “fairy transformation,” as if she were placed under the spell of the flower from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.¹¹⁴ In the same way, the encounter in “The Hollow Amid the Ferns” that is disturbing and rape-like for the reader is purely sensual and entrancing for Bathsheba. The movements of Sergeant Troy’s broadsword are depicted as “beams of light caught from the low sun’s rays, above, around, in front of her,” “marvellous evolutions [...] which seemed everywhere at once, and yet nowhere specially,” and “a firmament of light, and of sharp hisses, resembling a sky-full of meteors.”¹¹⁵ It is no surprise that Bathsheba exclaims “Why, it is magic!” in response, for the description of the experience implies the mystical or unearthly.¹¹⁶

In a way wholly unique to *The Return of the Native*, Hardy devotes the entirety of the novel’s seventh chapter to a description of its heroine’s beauty, entitling it “Queen of Night.”¹¹⁷ Referring to Eustacia as such immediately connotes tragic, dark, or sinister qualities, but such a reading is incomplete. As mentioned in the previous section, the title of “queen of night” could be applied to Titania, though she is never referred to as such

¹¹⁴ *Far From the Madding Crowd* 172.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* 196.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.* 198.

¹¹⁷ *The Return of the Native* 66.

(she is usually just called the “fairy queen”), but the appellation also fits the goddess Diana, manifested in the moon. Orlando invokes the blessing of Diana, whom he refers to as the “thrice crownèd queen of night,” upon his love for Rosalind.¹¹⁸ As Diana is the goddess of chastity, and Rosalind is assumed to be a virgin, the title of “queen of night” applies indirectly to Rosalind, which, in turn, parallels her with Eustacia.

The chapter begins with the simple statement, “Eustacia Vye was the raw material of a divinity.”¹¹⁹ She is superhuman, outwardly seeming destined for great things, but as she is only the “raw material” of a goddess, it is evident that she will never achieve them.¹²⁰ The subsequent comparisons Hardy makes in his description of Eustacia—

Her presence brought memories of Bourbon roses, rubies, tropical midnights, and eclipses of the sun; her moods recalled lotus-eaters, the march in *Athalie*, her motions, the ebb and flow of the sea; her voice, the viola. [...] 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, with as close an approximation to the antique as that which passes muster on many respected canvases.¹²¹

—call to mind the contents of Orlando’s love-poem for Rosalind:

Therefore heaven nature charged
That one body should be filled
With all graces wide-enlarged.
Nature presently distilled
Helen’s cheek, but not her heart,
Cleopatra’s majesty,
Atalanta’s better part,
Sad Lucretia’s modesty.¹²²

Both women are perceived as paragons of beauty and virtue, and while that may be true of Rosalind, Eustacia is less virtuous, engaging in an adulterous relationship with

¹¹⁸ *As You Like It* 3.2.2.

¹¹⁹ *The Return of the Native* 66.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.* 67.

¹²² *As You Like It* 3.2.143-150.

Wildeve, and less warm-hearted. Rosalind, as Ganymede, tells Phebe, “’Tis not your inky brows, your black silk hair, / Your bugle eyeballs, nor your cheek of cream / That can entame my spirits to your worship.”¹²³ Ironically enough, it is precisely such qualities that lead men to fall in love with Eustacia. Her entrancing, almost supernatural beauty causes others to consider her possessed of dark magic, and even in death, her appearance nears that of divinity. Timothy Fairway tells his companions at the bonfire, “The lonesome dark eyed creature up there,” referring to Eustacia, “that some say is a witch—ever I should call a fine young woman such a name—is always up to some odd conceit or other.”¹²⁴ Before the reader is even introduced to Eustacia by name, she is cast as an evil being, a Siren luring men to their destruction. Bathsheba receives similar, though gentler, treatment; her beauty is characterized as “belonging rather to the demonian than to the angelic school, she never looked so well as when she was angry—and particularly when the effect was heightened by a rather dashing velvet dress, carefully put on before a glass.”¹²⁵ She is a fierce creature for her intelligence, independence (financially, mentally, and emotionally), and strength of will, and combined with her attractive features, she appears all the more dangerously alluring. But Bathsheba is no enchantress, and any supernatural characteristics she has pale in comparison to the qualities of Eustacia.

A Midsummer Night’s Dream contains obvious aspects of magic and the supernatural, but *As You Like It* is not devoid of unusual elements. The final scene of *As You Like It* embodies the quintessential comedic ending, with all pairs of lovers married and all conflict mended. What marks this marriage scene as unique is the presence of

¹²³ Ibid. 3.5.51-53.

¹²⁴ *The Return of the Native* 52.

¹²⁵ *Far From the Madding Crowd* 146.

Hymen, the Greek god of marriage, as the presiding entity over the ceremony. The entrance of Hymen alongside Rosalind and Celia is both jarring and potentially unnoticed, depending on a particular production's choice of costume for the deity. The closest parallel to such an occasion is the marriage celebration between Diggory Venn and Thomasin, as it is followed by pagan May Day festivities. This last example is made all the more interesting for its connections to comedy, for by juxtaposing the darker moments in the rest of *The Return of the Native* with the relative lightheartedness of the final book, the ending complicates the description of the novel as a tragedy.

IV. Negotiating Genre: Tragedy, Comedy, And the Importance of an Ending

Hardy's early novels ascribe to a motley arrangement of genres. In *Desperate Remedies* (1871), Hardy attempted to write in the sensation novel genre made popular by author Wilkie Collins; in *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, he utilized the plots of Shakespearean tragedies to create his own; *The Hand of Ethelberta* displays moments of societal or domestic melodrama and realism; and Hardy considered *Under the Greenwood Tree*, *The Trumpet-Major*, and *Far From the Madding Crowd* all forms of pastoral.¹²⁶ Although specific genre criteria do not exist, by looking at some of the traditionally associated qualities for comedy and tragedy, especially those dealing with how texts of each genre are supposed to end, it will be easier to place Hardy's novels in context.

Romantic writers of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries perceived Shakespeare as a writer who dexterously mingled tragedy and comedy in specific moments throughout his plays, but there still existed general rules or views on what

¹²⁶ Millgate 125, 140, 196.

constituted a tragedy or comedy.¹²⁷ Lord Byron wrote in the third canto to “Don Juan,” “All tragedies are finished by a death, all comedies are ended by a marriage.”¹²⁸ George Bernard Shaw made a similar comment: “The popular definition of tragedy is heavy drama in which everyone is killed in the last act, comedy being light drama in which everyone is married in the last act.”¹²⁹ When thinking of Shakespeare’s tragedies, the ending usually brings to mind an image of a stage strewn with bodies, as in *Hamlet*. The tragedies do tend to adhere to this trend, almost always killing off the title characters (all Shakespeare plays denoted as tragedies by the First Folio are titled using character names), and they usually end soon after an important death, or with the grief associated with a death still looming over any remaining characters. Tragedy is also infused with a certain degree of inevitability, that the tragic end is fated from the start, just as death itself is inescapable for all humans.¹³⁰

The concept of comedies ‘ending in marriage’ becomes murky in Shakespeare. Many of the First Folio comedies do end in marriage or a promise of marriage, but some, like *Measure for Measure*, are considered ‘problem comedies’ for the questionable state of romantic couples at the end of the play. Nevertheless, the function of the ending in all Shakespearean comedy remains the same, regardless of the presence of a definite marriage contract: to establish a hope for the future that is innately positive. Shakespeare’s romances, which I will discuss in greater length in the next chapter, also end with this spirit of renewal, hope, and redemption. This sort of ending accords with

¹²⁷ Karl S. Guthke, *Modern Tragicomedy: An Investigation into the Nature of the Genre* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1966) 102.

¹²⁸ George Gordon Byron (Lord Byron), “Don Juan,” (Project Gutenberg: 3 August 2012) ll. 65-66.

¹²⁹ Cited in Guthke 7.

¹³⁰ Helen Gardner, “As You Like It,” *More Talking of Shakespeare*, ed. John Garrett (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1959) 21.

“the rhythm of the life of mankind, which goes on and renews itself as the life of nature does”; but in reality, a part of the rhythm of life and nature is death, so Hardy’s incorporation of death into novels that are also partly comedic is less strange.¹³¹

Salinger’s commentary on the comedic ending also references qualities of comedy that apply to Hardy’s own writing:

What is strongly or distinctively Shakespearean is the accompanying suggestion of harmonization with the natural order. In this sense, his comedies are celebrations; and their hilarity and horseplay and music and dancing and hints of ritual or magic, which seem to interfere with their function as straightforward reflections of common life, contribute to their quality as celebrations. They usually end with a promise of fresh happiness. But usually, as well, they bring about a return in some form to the original state of affairs.¹³²

Of course, not all of these qualities apply to every Hardy text; far from it. However, there are instances of celebration, and Hardy certainly seems to use his writing to reflect on “common life.”¹³³ The final sentence of the above quotation is also important to Hardy’s writing. In *Far From the Madding Crowd* and *The Return of the Native*, the lives of the remaining characters in each novel are drastically different at the end of the novel than in the beginning, but there is a sense that the world returns to a state of calm, however brief. This does not always lead to a ‘happy ending’ for characters, but Wessex continues to exist, and society moves on from the tragedies of individuals.

These conventions for comedy are presented in *As You Like It* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in a way that relates directly to the endings of *Far From the Madding Crowd* and *The Return of the Native*: all four texts have epilogues, afterwards, or final chapters that complicate, undercut, or question aspects of the rest of each text. The final

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Salinger, Leo, *Shakespeare and the Traditions of Comedy* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974) 13-14.

¹³³ Salinger 14.

scene of *As You Like It* is quintessentially comedic in the portrayal of multiple happy marriages, but the play does not end there. The epilogue that follows, spoken by the actor who plays Rosalind, is strangely metatheatrical, breaking down any presence of the ‘fourth wall’ separating the actors from audience members. By addressing the audience directly, Rosalind underscores her place of power in the play. Rosalind has married Orlando, so she is—technically—subordinate to her husband, yet Orlando disappears and Rosalind has the last word. This is not surprising, as Rosalind successfully manages to manipulate Orlando for much of the play. However, Rosalind’s continued power past the end of the action becomes a double defiance of convention, both of gender roles and theatrical rules. She specifically addresses this, saying, “It is not the fashion to see the lady the epilogue, but it is no more unhandsome than to see the lord the prologue [...] Good plays prove the better by the help of good epilogues.”¹³⁴ Something about the epilogue is essential to the play; it is made “better” by it, which insinuates that the play is insufficient without it.¹³⁵ The marriages mark the ends of the ‘stories,’ but they are not the ends of the plays. The traditional comedic ending cannot function properly in this case without the epilogue to enhance it.

There is no epilogue at the end of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, but Puck’s final soliloquy performs the same function. Like Rosalind, Puck addresses the audience, first apologizing for any offense taken at the content of the play, and then, more interestingly, questioning the reality of the play. He refers to the play as a “vision” and a “dream” in a way that forces the audience to fleetingly consider whether they, too, were susceptible to the powers of the fairies, and were placed under their spell during the course of the

¹³⁴ *As You Like It* epilogue ll.1-3, 6-7.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.* ll. 6.

play.¹³⁶ Before this soliloquy, we see the celebration of the marriages between three couples and the performance of “Pyramus and Thisbe” by the Rude Mechanicals.¹³⁷ The former is, of course, an expected ending to the comedy, but the latter, while humourous, is not wholly comedic. First referred to as “The most lamentable comedy and most cruel death of Pyramus and Thisbe,” the play has a similar, though simplified, plotline to *Romeo and Juliet*, making it a play that is more tragic than comic.¹³⁸ Put in the hands of Bottom and his comrades, the play quickly loses its tragic elements and becomes a farcical attempt at serious theatre.¹³⁹ The marriages and the play restore a sense of order and happiness to the world of the play, but the magical inhabitants of the forest have the final say. This does not undercut the comedic ending, but it does question whether any of it actually happened. Puck’s soliloquy also illustrates how an otherworldly landscape can continue to exist past the exit of all other characters, which also occurs after the deaths of Eustacia and Wildeve in *The Return of the Native*. Egdon Heath exists even when Eustacia, the character most affected by the Heath, is subsumed into the landscape through her death.

In *Far From the Madding Crowd*, Hardy makes overt references to genre that emphasize how the novel cannot be quickly distinguished as tragedy or comedy. After Gabriel and Bathsheba’s first conversation, Gabriel goes back to work “with an air between that of Tragedy and Comedy,” perhaps symbolizing the beginnings of his love

¹³⁶ *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* 5.1.443, 445.

¹³⁷ In his chapter on *The Return of the Native*, Leonard W. Deen compares the rustic chorus of Hardy’s novel to such figures as the Rude Mechanicals: they “provide a Shakespearean [...] comic change-of-pace as well as a contrast of styles and levels of seriousness.” From Leonard W. Deen, “Heroism and Pathos in *The Return of the Native*, (1960” *Hardy: The Tragic Novels*, ed. R. P. Draper (New York: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1975) 119.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.* 1.2.11-13.

¹³⁹ Virgil Hutton, “*A Midsummer Night’s Dream*: Tragedy in Comic Disguise,” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 25.2 (1985): 295.

for Bathsheba, as the genre between tragedy and comedy is romance.¹⁴⁰ Later, Bathsheba is referred to as a “tragic woman,”¹⁴¹ and she believes “her life was becoming a desolation.”¹⁴² Sergeant Troy says to Bathsheba as their relationship begins to worsen, “All romances end at marriage”; the comment is meant to be bitter, telling her that any golden, blissful time in their relationship is long past, but he also unwittingly relates the ending of the entire novel to romantic tradition.¹⁴³ Hardy additionally connects the novel to the pastoral mode, not only through the rural landscape of Wessex, but also through such phrases as “pastoral tragedy,”¹⁴⁴ which is used to describe the death of Gabriel’s sheep, and his subsequent consideration of himself as having “sunk from his modest elevation as pastoral king into the very slime-pits of Siddim.”¹⁴⁵ As mentioned previously, elements of the pastoral mode can exist in comedy, tragedy, or romance, but in its idyllic descriptions of the rural and natural, it is more commonly associated with the comic. Through tragedy, Gabriel’s place within a pastoral comedy such as *As You Like It* is denied, but not all traces of pastoral and comedy are wiped away. He is left with a “dignified calm” and “indifference to fate” that allow him to survive hardship, where other Hardy characters, like Eustacia, deal far less well with tragedy and the call of fate.¹⁴⁶

The ending of *Far From the Madding Crowd* is explicit in its depiction of how comedy and tragedy can exist together. The death of Sergeant Troy and the imprisonment of Boldwood are juxtaposed with the marriage of Gabriel and Bathsheba;

¹⁴⁰ *Far From the Madding Crowd* 28.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.* 218.

¹⁴² *Ibid.* 406.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.* 283.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 42.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 47.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

the apparent shambles of Bathsheba's life are redeemed for a happier future, a comedic ending that signifies hope and prosperity even in the face of suffering. The narrator calls their mutual love the type "which arises (if any arises at all) when the two who are thrown together begin first by knowing the rougher sides of each other's character, and not the best till further on, the romance growing up in the interstices of a mass of hard prosaic reality."¹⁴⁷ The comedic ending (marriage) and any aspects of romance that appear in *Far From the Madding Crowd* are, according to Hardy, a product of the tragedies experienced by Gabriel and Bathsheba. Following this, faced with the prospect of a positive future in her marriage to Gabriel, peace and repose "incarnadined her [Bathsheba's] cheeks"; the conflict and tumult of the novel has subsided at last.¹⁴⁸ All may not remain well, but with the union of Gabriel and Bathsheba, Wessex achieves relative stability and the more tragic moments from earlier in the novel are redeemed through the hope associated with marriage.¹⁴⁹

Clifford Leech refers to tragedy as "reconciling the sense of human vitality with the sense of a prepared disaster"; in other words, characters possess free will, but the weight of impending events often gives the sense of predestination.¹⁵⁰ In Shakespeare's plays, tragic characters often seem innately free in a way that leads the reader or audience member to hope they will make different choices, but it is clear to both the characters and

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. 409.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. 413.

¹⁴⁹ Dale Kramer, *Thomas Hardy: The Forms of Tragedy* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1975) 44-47. Contrasting this view, Rosemarie Morgan argues that Bathsheba is "nullified" by the end of the novel, that her energy and sexual identity are destroyed by her toxic first marriage and her inability to resist her second marriage to Gabriel Oak. However, a similar argument against marriage as an institution that eradicates women's autonomy could also be made of Shakespearean heroines, including Rosalind, who, although she speaks the final words of the play, is still somewhat subdued by love (see Morgan 56-57).

¹⁵⁰ Clifford Leech, *Tragedy*, ed. John D. Jump (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1969) 39.

the audience that the unhappy ending is bound to happen.¹⁵¹ Eustacia Vye reiterates this feeling in *The Return of the Native*, believing that Egdon Heath is her fate, and Diggory Venn's threatening presence in the novel underscores that concept. The reader may assume that Eustacia has free will, for the phrase is actually used in reference to her in the "Queen of Night" chapter, but her repetition of the notion that remaining in Egdon Heath is her fate, a "bad bargain with life" she has unintentionally made, undermines the idea that she possesses free will.¹⁵² Egdon itself is describe as having "a lonely face, suggesting tragical possibilities,"¹⁵³ an almost identical description to a later one of Eustacia, who appears with a "pale tragical face."¹⁵⁴ Eustacia is not granted a happy ending; she is sacrificed— or sacrifices herself— to the Heath that she considers her destiny. However tragic the life of its heroine, *The Return of the Native* moves on from her death as if her story were not central to the novel. Her death becomes the first step in a renewal of the Wessex landscape, and the sixth book of the novel, "Aftercourses," completes that process.

Hardy did not originally intend for the novel to end with the marriage of Thomasin Yeobright and Diggory Venn—his editors encouraged him to make it so— but Hardy also did not decide to excise that ending in later editions of the novel, which, given his dislike of censorship and editing, would have been an unsurprising thing for him to do. The demise of Eustacia and Wildeve is unfortunate, however unsympathetic the couple may be, yet the action of the plot moves away from their deaths soon afterward toward a happier future. The first chapter of the sixth book, "The Inevitable Movement

¹⁵¹ Ibid. 42.

¹⁵² *The Return of the Native* 66, 323.

¹⁵³ Ibid. 11.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. 303.

Onward,” signals the end of the preceding tragedy. Clym finds solace in religion, and Thomasin is emotionally prepared to marry. Diggory Venn no longer inhabits the role of the reddleman, thus wiping away the sinister presence of Fate that so haunts Eustacia. The May Day festivities and wedding at the end of the novel symbolize the fertility and promise that are characteristic of comedy, and undo the pain, suffering, and fatalism of the preceding books. Margaret R. Higonnet writes of *The Return of the Native*, “The five-act tragic structure is extended and reframed by the pastoral ‘Aftercourses’ of Book Sixth. As in the mummers’ play of *Saint George*, death leads to renewal [...] Repetition breaks the frame of tragedy and forces us to take a longer view.”¹⁵⁵ Eustacia’s character in the mummers’ play perishes and the play ends in the resurrection of Saint George, just as Eustacia’s actual death is succeeded by the celebration and hope that come with marriage.

If *Far From the Madding Crowd* and *The Return of the Native* adhered to the view of Hardy as a tragic writer, then no optimism or hope would exist at the end of the novels, but that is not the case. When comparing the heroines of the two novels, Eustacia’s story appears much more tragic: her dreams are dashed, none of her fellow characters fully sympathize with her, and she does not live to see the end of the novel. However, as Hardy’s view of tragedy stresses the importance of human action and choice, Eustacia’s is actually the less tragic story, for she and the reader are constantly reminded of the presence of fate acting upon her future. In contrast, Bathsheba’s story aligns more with Hardy’s view of tragedy, for the tragic events of the novel occur independently of fate or destiny, and are dependent upon her actions and those of the other characters. Bathsheba is associated with tragedy at several points in the novel, but

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. xxii.

her story is not as tragic as Eustacia's; she undergoes a great deal of hardship and heartbreak, but eventually marries Gabriel Oak, the most loving man in the novel, and a happy future awaits them. Tragedy in *Far From the Madding Crowd* belongs to Fanny Robin, who is abandoned by Troy and dies from hunger, cold, and childbirth, and Boldwood, whose all-consuming infatuation for Bathsheba is based upon a foolish action with no true feeling behind it. Nevertheless, the forms of 'tragedy' that are expressed in the stories of Eustacia and Bathsheba are ultimately contradictory, neither one putting forth a comprehensive idea of the genre. It is necessary to look further than tragedy to gain a full perspective on the novels.

Conclusion

Hardy's early novels are not perfect parallels to Shakespeare's comedies, and there are instances of very obvious influence from Shakespearean tragedies and histories. The otherworldly aspects of *The Return of the Native* could be tied to the Weird Sisters from *Macbeth* or even portions of *The Tempest*; likewise, there are strong female characters in many Shakespeare plays apart from *As You Like It* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. What is clear, however, is that Hardy used the earliest texts of his career to experiment, to find his authorial voice and the genres in which that voice would be at its greatest strength, and he drew influence from varied Shakespearean sources to aid in that process.

What resulted after the publication of *Two on a Tower* (1882) was a writer experienced in composing something akin to tragicomedy or romance, influenced by multiple genres and styles. As the next chapter will explore, Hardy's next novel, *The*

Mayor of Casterbridge (1886), solidifies not only the world of Wessex, but also Hardy's place as a writer of romance rather than tragedy. His novels become case studies of the interplay between characters' inner conflicts, the Wessex landscape, and the encroaching society beyond. Hardy infuses his writing with an awareness that the world is not stable or kind, that happiness can exist alongside tragedy. All these factors contribute to the gradually increasing presence of pessimism in his novels, culminating in *The Woodlanders*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, and *Jude the Obscure*.

Chapter Two:

Reimagining Tragedy: *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and *The Winter's Tale*

*Whilst I remember
Her and her virtues, I cannot forget
My blemishes in them, and so still think of
The wrong I did myself; which was so much,
That heirless it hath made my kingdom and
Destroy'd the sweet'st companion that e'er man
Bred his hopes out of.
-The Winter's Tale, 5.1.6-12*

In June 1883, Thomas Hardy and his wife, Emma Lavinia Gifford, moved from Wimborne to Dorchester, where Hardy would maintain his residence, Max Gate, for the rest of his life. The return to the area in which he spent his childhood, though not for nostalgic reasons, was nonetheless a return to his roots and a turning point in his writing career.¹⁵⁶ In *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), Hardy establishes very clear parallels between Casterbridge and Dorchester, made all the more potent by his living there while writing the novel. Wessex becomes less fictional and dream-like and more “comprehensively articulated”; locations are distinctive, recognizable, and fully grounded in reality.¹⁵⁷ Even though Hardy initially believed that the artistic elements of the novel had been compromised for the sake of serialization (he later changed his mind), his readers did not share his opinion, even at the start; Robert Louis Stevenson wrote to Hardy, “Henchard is a great fellow, and Dorchester is touched in with the hand of a master.”¹⁵⁸ Just as Wessex became more real in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, it also

¹⁵⁶ Pike 264.

¹⁵⁷ Millgate 232.

¹⁵⁸ Florence Emily Hardy, *The Life of Thomas Hardy: 1840-1928* (London: Macmillan & Co Ltd, 1962) 179.

became more Shakespearean, since the foundation of Wessex, as previously discussed, designates Wessex as the kingdom of Shakespeare's Lear.¹⁵⁹

The Mayor of Casterbridge is one of the most overtly Shakespearean of Hardy's works. The story of *King Lear* remains a prominent parallel to the story of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, and the character arc of Lear himself parallels that of Michael Henchard, the novel's main character. Many scholarly works link Henchard and Lear; showing, for instance, that, "like Lear, Henchard by an act of folly gets rid of his family at the beginning of the story and, in his desperate loneliness and need for love, spends the rest of it trying to regain family ties."¹⁶⁰ Following the tradition of tragic heroes, Henchard brings about his own suffering and downfall through the faults that plague him. He wants desperately throughout the novel to maintain his power and status within Casterbridge, but is unable to do so, as Donald Farfrae, whom Henchard convinced to stay in Casterbridge in the first place, rises in status through the love of the people and his incredible good luck. Henchard's situation declines rapidly, fueled by "his own actions, and even more his own nature,"¹⁶¹ to the point where he "feared circumstances he would formerly have scorned"¹⁶² and eventually determines to die unnoticed, unremembered, and unforgiven.

Despite the clear connections between *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and *King Lear*, the novel resonates even more strongly with Shakespeare's late romance, *The Winter's Tale*. That Hardy read *The Winter's Tale* is fact; for one, in a letter to J.H. Morgan on 12

¹⁵⁹ Orel 13.

¹⁶⁰ *Oxford Reader's Companion to Hardy*, ed. Norman Page (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 267. See also Kramer 69-91.

¹⁶¹ F. R. Southernington, *Hardy's Vision of Man* (New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1971) 97.

¹⁶² Thomas Hardy, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, ed. Norman Page (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 1997) 359.

January 1926, Hardy writes, “The question of the Polish ‘corridor’ has always been interesting to me—I fear rather from its ingenious appearance on the map, as a means of making an inland country a sea-board one, than from any real understanding of the means & practicability of the scheme. We might save Shakespeare’s reputation, for making Bohemia a country with a coast, in the same manner.”¹⁶³ This quotation refers to a common criticism of *The Winter’s Tale*; namely, that several characters sail to and from the land of Bohemia, which historically did not have a coastline. Furthermore, there are documented notes that Hardy made within his copy of *The Winter’s Tale*, proving that he was, in fact, quite familiar with the play.¹⁶⁴ Pinion mentions this in relation to Henchard himself: “The influences which coalesced in the creation of Henchard were probably more literary than actual [...] In rash impulsiveness, tragic blunders, suffering, and self-redemption, he recalls *King Lear* at frequent points; his initial folly and his volcanic temperament are in some ways more closely paralleled in *The Winter’s Tale*.”¹⁶⁵

The goal of this chapter, therefore, is to expound upon the parallels between *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and *The Winter’s Tale*, focusing not only on close explication of the text itself, but also looking at the functions, roles, and development of characters, and the structure and genre of both works. Rather than devote an entire section to Michael Henchard, his ties to *The Winter’s Tale* are revealed through his relationships with other characters—Donald Farfrae, Susan Henchard, Elizabeth-Jane (both of them), and Lucetta Le Sueur. The full realization of these resemblances between *The Winter’s Tale* and *The Mayor of Casterbridge* redefines the way in which we look at the novel, going so far as to see it through the lens of the romance genre, rather than that of tragedy.

¹⁶³ Hardy, *Collected Letters*, vol. 7, 3.

¹⁶⁴ Dennis Taylor 148.

¹⁶⁵ Pinion 41.

I. Donald Farfrae: Lost Brotherhood and the Restoration of Casterbridge

Thomas Hardy presents Michael Henchard more frequently in relation to the female characters of the novel than the male, but Henchard's association with Donald Farfrae is essential to the ties between *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and *The Winter's Tale*. Donald Farfrae is Michael Henchard's primary character foil; even though Newson, like Henchard, assumes the same roles as husband to Susan and father to both Elizabeth-Janes, he is not present long enough in the story to provide as great a contrast to Henchard as Farfrae does. Farfrae reluctantly becomes Henchard's business manager and a confidante for Henchard's deepest secrets, but Henchard soon perceives Farfrae as a threat to his own way of life.¹⁶⁶ Despite any negative aspects of their relationship, Farfrae represents parts of Henchard's life that are missing. He is the son, or at least the male 'heir,' Henchard potentially desires, a reminder of the brother Henchard lost, and the closest friend he has, albeit for a short time. As son, brother, and companion to Henchard, Donald becomes a combination of Florizel, Mamillius, and briefly Polixenes from *The Winter's Tale*. In addition, Donald Farfrae's unusually good luck, shrewd eye for business, and overall charisma and good-heartedness parallel him with everything that Mamillius and, even more strongly, Florizel, symbolize.

During Henchard and Farfrae's first conversation at the Three Mariners, Henchard's thoughts interrupt his words, and he muses aloud, "Your forehead, Farfrae, is something like my poor brother's—now dead and gone; and the nose, too, isn't unlike his."¹⁶⁷ This peculiar comment seems throwaway, and yet Henchard says it all the same. He never mentions his brother again, nor do any other characters, but something about

¹⁶⁶ Douglas Brown, *Thomas Hardy: The Mayor of Casterbridge* (Woodbury, NY: Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 1962) 39.

¹⁶⁷ *The Mayor of Casterbridge* 80.

Farfrae drives him to say it at this moment. Leontes, Shakespeare's king of Sicily, makes similar remarks about his son Mamillius and future son-in-law Florizel. He says to young Mamillius, "What, hast smutched thy nose? / They say it is a copy out of mine."¹⁶⁸ Leontes is trying desperately to assure himself that Mamillius is his biological son, since he already believes that his wife Hermione is pregnant by Polixenes. The fact that Henchard makes such a similar observation regarding Farfrae's appearance displays Henchard's desire to find a person to whom he may pass his legacy, for he is unaware that his own child may still be alive. Henchard is testing the waters with Farfrae; he is not yet sure of the young Scotchman, but soon determines that he would make a dependable business partner and potential close friend. Farfrae becomes Mamillius, next in line for both Henchard's business and his place as mayor. When Henchard severs his friendship and business partnership with Farfrae, he violates the bonds of both paternity and "friendship between man and man," killing the figurative Mamillius within Farfrae much as Leontes inadvertently kills his son.¹⁶⁹

Not only does the comment about Farfrae's appearance tie him to Mamillius, but it also connects him to Florizel. Leontes once considered Polixenes his brother, calling their boyhood selves "twinn'd lambs that did frisk i' th' sun, / And bleat the one at th' other."¹⁷⁰ And, when Leontes first sees the grown Florizel, he exclaims,

¹⁶⁸ William Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, ed. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks [Folger Shakespeare Library], 1998) 1.2.154-156.

¹⁶⁹ *The Mayor of Casterbridge* 130. See also Bernard J. Paris, *A General Drama of Pain: Character and Fate in Hardy's Major Novels* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2012) 60.

¹⁷⁰ *The Winter's Tale* 1.2.85-86.

Your mother was most true to wedlock, prince,
 For she did print your royal father off
 Conceiving you. Were I but twenty-one,
 Your father's image is so hit in you,
 His very air, that I should call you brother,
 As I did him.¹⁷¹

Just as Florizel looks like the man Leontes sees as the fraternal figure in his life, so, too, does Donald Farfrae resemble Henchard's otherwise unmentioned late brother. Florizel also reminds Leontes of his lost children, Mamillius and Perdita:

I lost a couple, that 'twixt heaven and earth
 Might thus have stood, begetting wonder, as
 You, gracious couple, do [...]
 What might I have been,
 Might I a son and daughter now have look'd on,
 Such goodly things as you?¹⁷²

Farfrae represents the children Henchard no longer has. The fact that Henchard "heaped the Scotchman's plate to a prodigal fullness" when Farfrae comes to his home for breakfast, alluding to the parable of the Prodigal Son from the Bible, relates the excitement Henchard feels upon filling the emptiness in his life with Farfrae's presence.¹⁷³

Henchard's protégé becomes like a son to him, going so far as to offer Farfrae "a third share in the business," but differences in character and thinking complicate their partnership.¹⁷⁴ Such an offer calls to mind Lear's division of his kingdom, casting Farfrae as Goneril, Regan, or Cordelia, though most likely the third, given Henchard's later 'disinheritance' of Farfrae. The inheritance of a throne or title also appears in *The Winter's Tale*; the term "moiety," a word originally used in feudal society that signified

¹⁷¹ Ibid. 5.1.157-162.

¹⁷² Ibid. 5.1.165-167, 216-218.

¹⁷³ *The Mayor of Casterbridge* 97.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. 89.

the division of ownership of a title or property, is used three times throughout the play, more than in any other Shakespearean work.¹⁷⁵ A moiety of land would often be bequeathed to a property-owner's sons and sons-in-law. The prevalence of this legal term in *The Winter's Tale* conveys the importance of inheritance to the plot and conflicts within the play.

The problem of inheritance is also essential to *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, even though the word "moiety" does not occur in the novel. Henchard labels Farfrae as his heir in making him his manager, providing him with his moiety of the company, but later disinherits Farfrae by telling Mr. Tubber at the town celebration, "Mr. Farfrae's time as my manager is drawing to a close."¹⁷⁶ Michael Henchard is glad of Farfrae's assistance in business affairs, and admires Farfrae as a man and potential beneficiary for Henchard's business and estate, but he does not want Farfrae to overthrow him in status, success, or popularity. Like Florizel, who, in his father's eyes, taints his royal status by engaging in a romantic relationship with Perdita, Farfrae begins to assume more power in Henchard's business than makes Henchard comfortable. Even the workers recognize Farfrae as their true master: "'He's better tempered, and Henchard's a fool to him,' they say [...] And they said, 'He's the most understanding man o' them two by long chalks. I wish he was the master instead of Henchard,' they said."¹⁷⁷ At the town celebration, when Henchard sees Donald and Elizabeth-Jane dancing, he realizes that Farfrae has managed to win the affection of the people, including his daughter, and that he poses a threat to Henchard's status. Henchard, in this moment, is Polixenes, not approving of the potential love interest of his child (or foster children, in Henchard's case) and recognizing that the male

¹⁷⁵ *The Winter's Tale* 2.3.8, 3.2.40, 4.4.944.

¹⁷⁶ *The Mayor of Casterbridge* 141.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 134.

half of that relationship is abusing his position and endangering the purity of his reign. Charles Frey writes that Leontes' tragedy in *The Winter's Tale*, like those of such characters as Claudius and Iago, is one that "portrays a tremendous struggle to hold onto the self in the face of attacking forces," which is precisely the struggle Henchard faces when confronted with Donald Farfrae.¹⁷⁸ If Farfrae did, in fact, marry Elizabeth-Jane, he would be even closer to overthrowing Henchard as both mayor and head of the company, and would take Elizabeth-Jane away in the process. Henchard therefore removes Farfrae from his employ just as Polixenes threatens to "bar thee [Florizel] from succession, / Not hold thee of our blood, no, not our kin" if Florizel does not break with Perdita.¹⁷⁹ Henchard distances himself from Farfrae in hopes of protecting his place in society, denying Farfrae the moiety of the legacy he deserves.

Donald Farfrae takes on the role of Florizel in other ways as well, becoming the pseudo-son-in-law of Henchard at the end of the novel and adopting many of Florizel's attributes. Florizel compares himself to "the fire-rob'd god, / Golden Apollo" in an almost joking manner, but Perdita perceives him as almost godlike, due to his royal status and her love for him.¹⁸⁰ In the same way, the people of Casterbridge see Farfrae "through a golden haze which the tone of his mind seemed to raise around him. Casterbridge had sentiment—Casterbridge had romance; but this stranger's sentiment was of differing quality."¹⁸¹ The association with the color gold suggests fertility, light, and wealth; the fact that Florizel brings up Apollo, the god whose oracle proclaims Hermione to be chaste, and which Leontes denounces to the detriment of the kingdom, indicates that

¹⁷⁸ Charles Frey, *Shakespeare's Vast Romance: A Study of The Winter's Tale* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1980) 82.

¹⁷⁹ *The Winter's Tale* 4.4.505-506.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 4.4.33-34.

¹⁸¹ *The Mayor of Casterbridge* 85.

Florizel is a key to the restoration of the Sicilian monarchy. Florizel and Farfrae symbolize all that is light, prosperous, hopeful, and positive.

The narrator continues to mention Farfrae in conjunction with the color gold, the god Apollo, or success of some kind. When Henchard decides to confide in Farfrae about his past with Susan, a moment that strengthens the bond between the two men and establishes a hope that Farfrae will fully assume his place as Henchard's heir, Farfrae notices the mantel of Henchard's fireplace, which is "flanked by heads of Apollo and Diana in low relief."¹⁸² No other allusions to Apollo appear in the novel, so that Farfrae is the one to notice the relief indicates a greater connection between Apollo, Farfrae, and Henchard. Henchard must be reminded of the "evil"¹⁸³ he committed against his wife by breaking his marriage vows, just as Leontes must perform "a saintlike sorrow"¹⁸⁴ for the profane action against Apollo's oracle and his wife Hermione. The mantelpiece thus suggests the connection between Farfrae and Florizel, and Leontes and Henchard, but also conveys the inevitable tie between Henchard and Farfrae. Henchard figuratively commits sacrilege against Apollo and loses his heirs in the process, and Farfrae's association with Apollo represents the potential for Farfrae fulfilling the oracle and restoring the 'monarchy' of Casterbridge with Elizabeth-Jane.

The connection between Farfrae and Florizel also appears in relation to the color gold and all it represents. As a symbol of wealth and good fortune, gold—both the color and the tangible material—becomes a marker of status for both characters. As Henchard's financial success wanes, "Donald Farfrae prospered. He had purchased in so depressed a market that the present moderate stiffness of prices was sufficient to pile for

¹⁸² Ibid. 110.

¹⁸³ *The Winter's Tale* 5.1.5.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. 5.1.2.

him a large heap of gold where a little one had been.”¹⁸⁵ Furthermore, during the visit from the “Royal Personage,”¹⁸⁶ Farfrae dons “the official gold chain with great square links, like that round the Royal unicorn.”¹⁸⁷ In the cases of both these quotations, gold establishes Farfrae as a member of the highest echelons of Casterbridge society, especially after he becomes mayor. Florizel, as crown prince of Bohemia, possesses wealth beyond any that the rustics at the sheep shearing could even imagine, setting him above them despite his “swain’s wearing.”¹⁸⁸ Farfrae’s accrument of gold sets him apart not only in Henchard’s eyes as an enemy for the mayoral position, but also marks him as one blessed by Fortune. Even with his charismatic, warm nature and keen eye for business, Farfrae’s consistent gains are almost uncanny. Similarly, Florizel conveniently manages to find ways out of particularly bad situations; twice he promises Perdita that their relationship will end in marriage, and twice their plans are thwarted. Despite all of this, however, the end of the play implies a marriage between them with no further obstacles to prevent it. The lovers invoke Fortune at multiple points in discussion of their hopeful nuptials; Perdita exclaims, “O lady Fortune, / Stand you auspicious!”¹⁸⁹ when Florizel first mentions their intention to marry, and later, after Polixenes intervenes, Florizel tells Camillo, to “let myself and fortune / Tug for the time to come,”¹⁹⁰ and declares, “Fortune speed us!”¹⁹¹ in his final moments on stage during act four. Even when things go awry yet again for Florizel and Perdita, and Florizel deems Fortune “visible an enemy,” he remains constant in his faith in their future, and, surely enough,

¹⁸⁵ *The Mayor of Casterbridge* 226.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.* 298.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.* 301.

¹⁸⁸ *The Winter’s Tale* 4.4.10.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.* 4.4.59-60.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.* 4.4.587-588.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.* 4.4.790.

Fortune smiles down on them again.¹⁹² The luck shared by Florizel and Farfrae, like their mutual connection to gold, separates them from the rest of the society that visibly surrounds them.

Aided by Lady Fortune, both Florizel and Farfrae leave their homes—in Florizel’s case, for somewhere less outwardly prosperous—and infuse their new homes with the spirit of their native lands. Farfrae arrives in Casterbridge as the obvious foreigner, coming from what the locals consider “the land of perpetual snow...where wolves and wild boars and other dangerous animalcules be as common as blackbirds.”¹⁹³ Donald makes it clear that his native land is no such place, and his good nature asserts this. Scotland is not in a state of prosperity and comfort, hence Farfrae’s decision to leave, but something about his nature transcends the difficulties of his past in Scotland and brings a new hope to Casterbridge. Despite the “agricultural and pastoral character”¹⁹⁴ of Casterbridge, the patrons of the Three Mariners call the town “a old, hoary place o’ wickedness, by all accounts”;¹⁹⁵ the town faces the problem of “grown wheat,”¹⁹⁶ which Henchard cannot fix. But Farfrae, the man “straight from the mountains of Scotland,” possesses the knowledge of how to restore the grain and with it a stronger sense of comfort and security in the future of Casterbridge.¹⁹⁷ By coming to Sicily, a kingdom with a monarchy in peril, and with little happiness or prosperity, Florizel likewise brings with him the pastoral fecundity of Bohemia and the hope for “royalty’s repair,” the return of Leontes’ heirs to the kingdom.¹⁹⁸ Farfrae carries not only his golden personality into

¹⁹² Ibid. 5.1.266.

¹⁹³ *The Mayor of Casterbridge* 86.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. 60.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. 84.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. 68.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. 84.

¹⁹⁸ *The Winter’s Tale* 5.1.38.

Casterbridge, but also the possibility of “royalty’s repair”: the chance of solving the problem with the grain, healing Henchard’s reputation in the process, and supplying a prosperous future for Henchard’s line.

Farfrae first indicates his bringing of a figurative Bohemia to Casterbridge by singing at the Three Mariners. Elizabeth-Jane notes that “she had never heard any singing like this and it was evident that the majority of the audience had not heard such frequently, for they were attentive to a much greater degree than usual. They neither whispered, nor drank, nor dipped their pipe-stems in their ale to moisten them, nor pushed the mug to their neighbors.”¹⁹⁹ Such singing and music represents something positive, even though Farfrae becomes very emotional while performing. Because the people of Casterbridge had never heard singing like that before, its nature opposes the tone of life in Casterbridge, which the locals describe as far less than optimal. His voice pervades the atmosphere of the town, reaching the ears of everyone in the vicinity and striking them with an indescribable desire to have him remain in Casterbridge and not continue on to Bristol, as is his plan. The second half of *The Winter’s Tale*, beginning in the fourth act, differs strongly from the first three acts in the inclusion of both music and dances. There is no music in Sicily until the final scene of the play, when Hermione is brought back to life and the royal family is reunited; Bohemia, in contrast, is a land where music is common, and although Florizel does not directly engage in musical performance, his place as crown prince of Bohemia associates him with the music played by the rustics.²⁰⁰ Thus, the presence of music during the resurrection of Hermione acts as

¹⁹⁹ *The Mayor of Casterbridge* 83.

²⁰⁰ Frey 117.

the final visible manifestation of Florizel bringing Bohemia to Sicily, just as Farfrae brings music and good fortune to Casterbridge.²⁰¹

As much as Donald Farfrae becomes an amalgamation of Mamillius and Florizel in his relationship with Michael Henchard, Henchard further perceives him as a Polixenes figure that presents a direct threat to his relations with women, particularly Elizabeth-Jane and Lucetta. Henchard is inherently controlling, so that even after he realizes Elizabeth-Jane is not his daughter, and his love for her fades, he does not want to forgo his claim on her completely. When a mutual attraction appears between Elizabeth-Jane and Donald Farfrae, Henchard intervenes in order to prevent any possibility of a marriage. Leontes, too, exercises a desire to claim the child he does not believe belongs to him. In his eyes, Polixenes is the father of Hermione's unborn child, and while Leontes wants no part of raising the infant, he likewise desperately wishes the child were biologically his (which, ironically, she is). In this way, Henchard sees Farfrae as the Polixenes that has violated the sacredness of his family unit, depriving Henchard of the child to whom he wants to lay claim.

Henchard equates Farfrae with Polixenes even more strongly with respect to Lucetta. Any romance between Hermione and Polixenes is entirely a distortion of reality by Leontes, but the love between Lucetta and Farfrae is no delusion. Henchard, realizing Lucetta's growing coldness towards him but not immediately noticing her fondness for Farfrae, responds with an almost violent affection that "had been fanned into higher and higher inflammation by the circumstances of the case."²⁰² Lucetta's emotional distance from Henchard provides the spark for jealousy not unlike Leontes', and his anger and

²⁰¹ Ibid. 85.

²⁰² Ibid. 209.

envy grow with the recognition of Farfrae's involvement. Farfrae, like Polixenes, is unaware of any wrongdoing on his part, but Henchard sees all and cannot stand by quietly. Their relationship, at least from Henchard's perspective, becomes an "occult rivalry"²⁰³ that culminates in Henchard's intense desire to see Farfrae dead, much as Leontes commissions Camillo to "be the poisoner / Of good Polixenes."²⁰⁴

Following Henchard's "crowning degradation" during the festivities for the royal visitor, Henchard determines violent action to be necessary, and attempts to kill Farfrae in the shed.²⁰⁵ However, what actually occurs is a surprise to even Henchard himself:

"Now," said Henchard between his gasps, "this is the end of what you began this morning. Your life is in my hands."

"Then take it, take it!" said Farfrae. "Ye've wished to long enough!"

Henchard looked down upon him in silence, and their eyes met. "O Farfrae!—that's not true!" he said bitterly. "God is my witness that no man ever loved another as I did thee at one time. [...] And now—though I came here to kill 'ee, I cannot hurt thee! Go and give me in charge—do what you will—I care nothing for what comes of me!"

[...] Farfrae regarded him in silence; then went to the hatch and descended through it. Henchard would fain have recalled him; but his tongue failed in its task, and the young man's steps died on his ear. Henchard took his full measure of shame and self-reproach. The scenes of his first acquaintance with Farfrae rushed back upon him—that time when the curious mixture of romance and thrift in the young man's composition so commanded his heart that Farfrae could play upon him as on an instrument [...] "He thought highly of me once," he murmured. "Now he'll hate me and despise me for ever!" He became possessed by an overpowering wish to see Farfrae again that night, and by some desperate pleading to attempt the well-nigh impossible task of winning pardon for his late mad attack.²⁰⁶

Henchard begins to realize that Farfrae meant no ill in marrying Lucetta, and that his aggression towards Farfrae from the novel's beginning has led to the loss of his friend and potential heir. Leontes, too, realizes his grave error in suspecting Polixenes:

²⁰³ Ibid. 216.

²⁰⁴ *The Winter's Tale* 1.2.424-425.

²⁰⁵ *The Mayor of Casterbridge* 306.

²⁰⁶ Ibid. 309-310.

terms of the eventual redemption of Henchard's actions within the last two pages of the novel. In this contradiction of her usual appearance as a Cordelia figure, Elizabeth-Jane becomes more closely aligned with Perdita, Leontes' abandoned daughter in *The Winter's Tale*. This new connection to Perdita grows stronger as the novel progresses, eventually overpowering any parallel to Cordelia through Elizabeth-Jane's survival.

Michael Henchard first places Elizabeth-Jane in a role analogous to Perdita's through the selling of his wife Susan at the novel's opening, which indirectly disinherits his daughter. This scene parallels not only Leontes' initial open accusation of his wife Hermione's infidelity and her imprisonment in *The Winter's Tale*, but also the trial scene during which Hermione is persecuted before all the lords of the court. Henchard's apparent dismissal of his fatherly role appears in an almost identical manner in *The Winter's Tale*, when Leontes makes a spontaneous mental jump from jealousy at Hermione's interaction with Polixenes to the question of his paternal claim to Hermione's unborn baby. Leontes' statement, "Let her sport herself / With that she's big with; for 'tis Polixenes / Has made thee swell thus," denies any chance of being his baby's father; the continuation of this argument later, when Leontes decides to abandon baby Perdita to the elements, strengthens the concept of Perdita's disinheritance.²¹¹ His last word on the matter—"No! I'll not rear / Another's issue"—finalizes the separation between father and daughter, much as Henchard's sale of Susan to Newson creates a permanent rift between himself and Elizabeth-Jane.²¹²

This scene's connection to *King Lear*, specifically act one, scene one, in which Lear disowns Cordelia, is obvious; however, two notable differences between the scenes

²¹¹ Ibid. 2.1.75-78.

²¹² Ibid. 2.3.234-235.

from *King Lear* and *Mayor* strengthen the parallels to *The Winter's Tale* and those between Elizabeth-Jane and Perdita. Firstly, Henchard is not just distancing himself from his progeny, as Lear is; he is also ending his marriage, and thus eliminating any chance of having more children, much as Leontes' conviction of Hermione and abandonment of Perdita destroy the future of his kingdom. Secondly, Henchard does not simply give up Elizabeth-Jane to another man, as Lear dismissively hands Cordelia over to the King of France in marriage. Instead, Henchard completely revokes his paternal position by effectively giving his daughter another father, as Leontes unwittingly does in his command to Antigonus to take the infant Perdita away. The Shepherd adopts the deserted Perdita out of pity, just as Newson takes up Elizabeth-Jane, saying, "The little one too—the more the merrier!"²¹³

Though a fairly insignificant character at this point, Elizabeth-Jane soon emerges as a stronger presence and her connection to Perdita grows more pronounced. The drastic shift in eighteen years from chapter two to chapter three of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* signifies the beginning of Elizabeth-Jane's story, much as the monologue spoken by Time in *The Winter's Tale* suggests the passing of sixteen years and the beginning of Perdita's place as a more dynamic character. Despite the fact that Elizabeth-Jane's status relative to other characters improves—she is no longer a passive infant, but a grown woman capable of action and feeling—the ambiguous nature of Elizabeth-Jane's past and her later treatment from Henchard complicate her status within Casterbridge. Elizabeth-Jane, like Perdita, is ignorant of her background when she arrives in Weydon-Priors with her mother. She acts the part of her lower status, since she is unaware of the connection between Michael Henchard, now mayor of Casterbridge, and herself.

²¹³ *The Mayor of Casterbridge* 43.

Similarly, Perdita maintains her place as a lowly shepherd's daughter until she becomes more aware of a possible relationship with Leontes.

In addition, the description of Elizabeth-Jane's physical appearance and the outward portrayal of her status connect her to the Shakespearean shepherdess:

Her face, though somewhat wan and incomplete, possessed the raw materials of beauty in a promising degree. There was an under-handsomeness in it, struggling to reveal itself through the provisional curves of immaturity, and the casual disfigurements that resulted from the straitened circumstances of their lives. She was handsome in the bone, hardly as yet handsome in the flesh. She possibly might never be fully handsome, unless the carking accidents of her daily existence could be evaded before the mobile parts of her countenance had settled to their final mould.²¹⁴

While several characters perceive Perdita's beauty, her status as the daughter of the Shepherd impedes the fullness of that beauty. Polixenes comments at the sheep-shearing feast that Perdita is

[...] the prettiest lowborn lass that ever
Ran on the greensward. Nothing she does or seems
But smacks of something greater than herself,
Too noble for this place,²¹⁵

suggesting that her place in society is the primary unattractive feature of her character and appearance. Her beauty does not shine through until Florizel and Perdita arrive in Sicily dressed as royals. The gentleman who announces their coming calls Perdita "the rarest of all women."²¹⁶ The removal of the status barrier from her outward appearance eliminates any qualities that are less than perfect. Elizabeth-Jane, like her dramatic counterpart, possesses the potential for beauty, but her lower-class way of life hinders this potential, a fact that Henchard strongly stresses. After Susan's death, Henchard attempts to rid Elizabeth-Jane of all her lower-class mannerisms—"those terrible marks

²¹⁴ Ibid. 56.

²¹⁵ *The Winter's Tale* 4.4.185-188.

²¹⁶ Ibid. 5.1.141.

of the beast to the truly genteel”—in his desperation to validate their relationship.²¹⁷ However, his endeavours are futile; Elizabeth-Jane does her best to accommodate his wishes, but as she is not truly Henchard’s daughter, she cannot comfortably assume that status.²¹⁸ It is not until the end of the novel, when Elizabeth-Jane is reunited with her biological father, married to her lover, and established in her proper social status (as Perdita is by the end of act five) that she assumes a “complexion somewhat richer than formerly, and an incipient matronly dignity, which the serene Minerva-eyes of one ‘whose gestures beamed with mind’ made becoming.”²¹⁹ She now possesses the wisdom that her lowborn tendencies hid, and her beauty equates her with Minerva, just as Leontes likens Perdita to a “goddess.”²²⁰

The conflict over Elizabeth-Jane’s paternity is essential to her parallel with Perdita and an important departure from her relation to Cordelia. Leontes grows paranoid about whether his children are truly his, eventually becoming so overwhelmed by his jealous delusions that he denies the truth of the oracle from Apollo’s temple, which claims the innocence of Hermione and the fact that Perdita is Leontes’ daughter. His deliberate rejection of the word of Apollo in his statement, “There is no truth at all i’ th’ oracle. / The sessions shall proceed. This is mere falsehood” leads to the immediate destruction of his family: his son and heir Mamillius is declared dead, Hermione collapses and soon dies, and baby Perdita remains lost at Leontes’ previous command.²²¹ The paternity of Elizabeth-Jane appears unquestioned by both Michael Henchard and the

²¹⁷ *The Mayor of Casterbridge* 163.

²¹⁸ Paris provides an interesting interpretation of Elizabeth-Jane and her self-effacing attitude; see Paris 68-79.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.* 364.

²²⁰ *The Winter’s Tale* 5.1.164.

²²¹ *Ibid.* 3.2.151-152.

reader at first, but Susan Henchard's death and her mysterious letter to her husband soon reveal otherwise. Michael goes against the wish of his late wife and opens the letter, an action that parallels Leontes' "great profaneness" against the oracle.²²² What Henchard believes will be little more than a "trifling fancy or other of poor Susan's" becomes the fact that haunts him for the remainder of the novel: that the Elizabeth-Jane residing in his home, to whom he just confessed paternity, is not his daughter.²²³ Elizabeth-Jane herself remains unsure of who her father truly is; believing it first to be Newson, the reader remains convinced it is Henchard; when the letter reveals that Newson is her father, Henchard has just told Elizabeth-Jane the opposite. Elizabeth-Jane never truly establishes a strong father-daughter bond with Henchard, still feeling connected to the man who raised her, and Henchard's rough treatment of Elizabeth-Jane after he opens the letter encourages this rift between them. When Elizabeth-Jane is told the truth near the end of the novel,

the difficulty of restoring her to her old belief in Newson was not so great as might have seemed likely, for Henchard's conduct itself was a proof that those facts were true. Moreover, she had grown up under Newson's paternal care; and even had Henchard been her father in this nature, this father in early domiciliation might almost have carried the point against him, when the incidents of her parting with Henchard had a little worn off.²²⁴

Elizabeth-Jane is emotionally tossed from father to father, forever unsure of her true place. This contrasts with Cordelia, who, though estranged from her father, is certain of her paternity. Perdita's situation comes much nearer to Elizabeth-Jane's; she, too, is passed between three father figures: Leontes, her actual father, Polixenes, her accused

²²² Ibid. 3.2.171.

²²³ *The Mayor of Casterbridge* 158.

²²⁴ Ibid. 349.

father and eventual father-in-law, and the Shepherd, the man Perdita recognizes as her father.

The death of the first Elizabeth-Jane deepens the connection between the second Elizabeth-Jane and Perdita. At first, Henchard naturally assumes the young woman living in his house is his biological daughter; he has no reason to suppose otherwise, and the present Elizabeth-Jane's shared name with his daughter prevents any suspicion. Following the opening of Susan's letter, Henchard stops his loving treatment of the living Elizabeth-Jane and views her through a lens of jealousy and disgust. Her existence proves the consummation of the relationship between Susan and Newson, much as Leontes believes that the unborn Perdita is the product of an affair between Polixenes and Hermione. The living Elizabeth-Jane assumes the status of an illegitimate child, which, in fact, she is. Newson and Susan were not lawfully married, and Susan and Henchard were never divorced, making Elizabeth-Jane a child born outside of wedlock. Nevertheless, the death of Henchard's true daughter suggests that his lineage is somehow fated for destruction. By first casting off both Susan and the infant Elizabeth-Jane, Henchard performs yet another "great profaneness," this time against his marriage vows, and marks his daughter for death.²²⁵ The oracle from Delphos reads, "'The King shall live without an heir, if that which is lost be not found.'"²²⁶ Leontes, having sent the baby Perdita—"that which is lost"—away with Antigonus, is already at risk of losing his son Mamillius and placing Sicily in peril. His belittling of the oracle's words finalizes this, and a servant arrives moments later to announce Mamillius' death. Like Leontes' denial of the oracle, Henchard denies the sanctity of marriage vows by selling Susan, and

²²⁵ *The Winter's Tale* 3.2.171.

²²⁶ *Ibid.* 3.2.144-146.

Elizabeth-Jane, his only heir, dies not long afterwards. Henchard could restore his figurative royal line by treating the second Elizabeth-Jane—a reincarnation of “that which is lost”—as his daughter despite their lack of biological ties, but he does not, effectively hastening his own degradation within Casterbridge society. The second Elizabeth-Jane truly becomes like the grown Perdita, whose biological father does not realize their innate connection at first. Leontes does not see his daughter when she arrives with Florizel at his court; he sees nothing more than the fiancée of his best friend’s son. Similarly, after the incident with the letter, Henchard does not see a young woman who could become his adoptive daughter, let alone his salvation. Elizabeth-Jane is the illegitimate child of his wife and her lover, and he later regrets not nurturing his relationship with her.

Despite the stigmas against her status as an illegitimate child and lower-class individual, Elizabeth-Jane, like Perdita, transcends her social class by finding love. Elizabeth-Jane first treats Donald Farfrae as someone above her station, serving him dinner at the Three Mariners and admiring him with innocent interest:

She looked at him quite coolly, and saw how his forehead shone where the light caught it, and how nicely his hair was cut, and the sort of velvet-pile or down that was on the skin at the back of his neck, and how his cheek was so truly curved as to be part of a globe, and how clearly drawn were the lids and lashes which hid his bent eyes.²²⁷

Farfrae does not pay attention to her at first, but a second encounter between them on the staircase provokes greater emotion in both of them. Elizabeth-Jane “must have appeared interesting in some way—notwithstanding her plain dress—or rather, possibly, in consequence of it, for she was a girl characterized by earnestness and soberness of mein,

²²⁷ *The Mayor of Casterbridge* 77.

with which simple drapery accorded well” when she meets Farfrae this second time.²²⁸ Like Perdita, Elizabeth-Jane possesses attractions in spite of (or, as the narrator comments, because of) her station and simplicity, even to a man whom she assumes is above her in status. The initial meetings between Florizel and Perdita are not shown to the reader, the couple is mentioned first during the monologue by Time, and does not appear on stage until the sheep-shearing feast in act four, scene four. Their past is alluded to by Florizel—“I bless the time / When my good falcon made her flight across / Thy father’s ground”²²⁹—and there is the suggestion by Perdita that their meeting was brought about by chance: “Even now I tremble / To think your father by some accident / Should pass this way as you did.”²³⁰ Therefore, the exchange between Elizabeth-Jane and Farfrae on the stairs shows promise for the future of their relationship, but Henchard, like Polixenes, thwarts it. Henchard only briefly encourages their romance.

As Henchard complicates his ties to Elizabeth-Jane, denying her the fatherly affection she deserves, he simultaneously manipulates the romance between Elizabeth-Jane and Donald Farfrae. Once Henchard perceives Farfrae as “an enemy to [their] house,” he asks Elizabeth-Jane to stay away from Farfrae and not to “[make] him any foolish promises.”²³¹ The Shepherd, Perdita’s adoptive father, who is ignorant of Florizel’s true identity, encourages the relationship between the young lovers. Polixenes, on the other hand, considers the courtship dangerous from the start. When it becomes very evident that Florizel intends to marry Perdita even without his father’s blessing, Polixenes promptly and forcefully intervenes. It appears for some time in both *The*

²²⁸ Ibid. 87.

²²⁹ *The Winter’s Tale* 4.4.16-18.

²³⁰ Ibid. 4.4.21-23.

²³¹ *The Mayor of Casterbridge* 147.

Mayor of Casterbridge and *The Winter's Tale* that their respective romances will not be fulfilled.

Despite the hardships of both couples, they each, by the end of their stories, are either happily married or soon will be. The marriage scene in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, the failed marriage in act four, scene four of *The Winter's Tale*, and the assumed marriage between Florizel and Perdita at the end of the play become connected through the presence or absence of paternal figures. The Shepherd presides over the spontaneous marriage of Florizel and Perdita during the sheep-shearing feast, but his ignorance of Florizel's status (and Perdita's, for that matter) prevents him from being truly present at the occasion. Leontes, the man who should actually be giving Perdita away, does not know his daughter is alive, let alone that she is prepared to marry. Polixenes is also unaware of Perdita's royal lineage and, while present at the sheep shearing, he remains disguised during the attempted nuptials and does not bless the marriage. This disguise and unfavourable opinion on the match prohibits him, like the Shepherd, from being a fully present witness to the marriage. A distortion of this occurs in Farfrae and Elizabeth-Jane's wedding, which Newson attends but to which Henchard is not invited. Henchard regrets the distance between himself and Elizabeth-Jane, recognizes the strong relationship that could have existed if he had been honest and loving, and considers her more his daughter than the first Elizabeth-Jane. He is more the Shepherd than Leontes, the foster father rather than the biological. However, because he did not raise Elizabeth-Jane as Newson did or the Shepherd does Perdita, he is neither truly the Shepherd nor Leontes, but a drifting paternal figure with no definable identity. Newson, in contrast, is both Shepherd and Leontes; he is Elizabeth-Jane's blood relation

and the man who brought her up. Still, he is fully aware of the statuses of both bride and groom, unlike all three fathers involved in the marriage of Florizel and Perdita.

Furthermore, the final marriage ceremonies of both Florizel and Perdita, and Elizabeth-Jane and Farfrae, are invisible to the reader or audience member. The reader does not need to see them, though, for the success of both is clear. Elizabeth-Jane has found her true father, as Perdita has hers, and there are no further objections to either marriage. Even Henchard does not oppose the match, but only wishes that he could see Elizabeth-Jane once more. The party celebrating the marriage of Farfrae and Elizabeth-Jane parallels the sheep shearing, and the only interruption comes from Henchard, who attempts to make amends rather than prevent the marriage as Polixenes does. Things are as they should be, so no further obstacles will stand in the way of Elizabeth-Jane's happy ending. By comparison, Cordelia has no love story; her marriage to the King of France is sudden and fully precipitated by Lear.

Elizabeth-Jane's presence throughout the novel is as more than just the daughter of Henchard; her perspective becomes the lens through which the reader sees a good portion of the plot. The reason for this remains unclear unless viewed in terms of the novel's ending and paralleled with Perdita's function in *The Winter's Tale*. The ending, though made tragic by the death of Michael Henchard and the discovery of his pathetic will by the newly-wedded Elizabeth-Jane and Donald Farfrae, is undercut by comedy in the final pages of the text. The hope for the future made evident through Elizabeth-Jane and Farfrae's marriage and Elizabeth-Jane's forgiveness of Henchard redeems all of his past actions. Henchard's appearance at the wedding festivities of Elizabeth-Jane and Farfrae causes her less-than-forgiving emotions to break through: she cries, "I could have

loved you always—I would have, gladly [...] But how can I when I know you have deceived me so—so bitterly deceived me! [...] O how can I love as I once did a man who has served us like this!”²³² Her subsequent realization of his good intentions in coming removes such negative feelings; the narrator notes, “from that hour her heart softened towards the self-alienated man,” a comment which prefaces the complete redemption of Henchard at the end of that chapter.²³³ The fact that Elizabeth-Jane “regrets for having misunderstood him on his last visit” after learning of Henchard’s death conveys simultaneously her complete forgiveness of him and his resultant absolution.²³⁴

Elizabeth-Jane’s redemptive function at the novel’s end relates directly to Perdita’s: the return of Perdita to Sicily fulfills the oracle, permitting Leontes to have an heir once again and catalyzing the resurrection of Hermione, which absolves Leontes of his past wrongs. Furthermore, the assumed marriage between Perdita and Florizel suggests a prosperous future for both Bohemia and Sicily. This final connection between Perdita and Elizabeth-Jane elucidates the reason for the Elizabeth-Jane’s omnipresent perspective in the novel. Without the reader’s connection to Elizabeth-Jane, forged through her place at the forefront of the novel, the eventual redemption of Henchard would be less effective. By creating a strong relationship between the reader and Elizabeth-Jane, Hardy makes her a more sympathetic character whose actions and opinions are pivotal to the novel’s progress. The reader is more likely to accept Henchard’s redemption through Elizabeth-Jane because of this bond.

The last moments of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* display how Elizabeth-Jane’s character arc and overall purpose in the novel link Hardy’s text more closely to *The*

²³² Ibid. 361.

²³³ Ibid. 363.

²³⁴ Ibid. 368.

Winter's Tale than to *King Lear*. Ultimately, Elizabeth-Jane's survival is the final act that distances her from Cordelia; Cordelia dies in the process of restoring her father's good name, but Elizabeth-Jane is not Henchard's daughter, so she lives. In contrast, the relationship between Elizabeth-Jane and Perdita does not dissolve. At the end of their respective stories, Elizabeth-Jane and Perdita have both redeemed their father figures of past misdeeds and are, despite all odds, on the paths to happy lives with the men they love. Both women represent the hope for the future that allows for more comic endings to stories that, without their presence, would be entirely tragic.

III. The Hermione Problem

"A white apron is a suspicious vesture in situations where spotlessness is difficult."
*-The Mayor of Casterbridge*²³⁵

*I have said
 She's an adult'ress, I have said with whom.
 More, she's a traitor [...]
 She's
 A bed-swerver, even as bad as those
 That vulgars give bold'st titles.
 -The Winter's Tale, 2.1.108-110, 113-115*

While the parallels between Elizabeth-Jane and Perdita are clear, the character of Hermione is not so easily placed within the confines of Casterbridge. At first glance, Susan Henchard is the obvious parallel to the queen of Sicily in the novel, especially when looking at Michael's treatment of her at the start of the novel and her early death, but Michael Henchard complicates matters by renewing his affections for Lucetta Le Sueur. Henchard thrusts Lucetta into the role of Hermione despite the fact that the two women differ widely. Rather than learning from his mistakes with Susan, Henchard

²³⁵ p. 291.

commits similar wrongs in his relationship with Lucetta, renewing the tragic destruction of the marriage between Leontes and Hermione, and thus distorting the story of *The Winter's Tale*. If Henchard fully atoned for his sins after losing Susan, as Leontes does after Hermione's death, then perhaps the novel would end very differently; instead, Henchard allows a woman quite unlike Hermione to enter the scene and deconstruct the framework of *The Winter's Tale* that is present in the novel.

As mentioned in the previous section, Henchard casts Susan in the role of Hermione from the beginning of the novel, casting her off much as Leontes does to his wife through an accusation of infidelity. Both men realize only after the fact that their treatment of their wives was unwarranted, and each vows to repent. Leontes, filled with grief at the knowledge of Hermione's death, tells Paulina,

Once a day I'll visit
The chapel where they lie, and tears shed there
Shall be my recreation. So long as nature
Will bear up with this exercise, so long
I daily vow to use it.²³⁶

In a similar manner, Michael Henchard swears with his head upon the Bible,

I, Michael Henchard, on this morning of the sixteenth of September, do take an oath before God here in this solemn place that I will avoid all strong liquors for the space of twenty-one years to come, being a year for every year that I have lived. And this I swear upon the book before me; and may I be strook dumb, blind, and helpless, if I break this my oath!²³⁷

Leontes and Henchard both appear repentant for their actions, and Leontes remains true to his oath for the entirety of the play, thus allowing for Hermione's resurrection.

Yet in spite of Henchard's oath, shadows of the prior tension between himself and Susan appear even after their reunion in Casterbridge. The scene between Susan and

²³⁶ *The Winter's Tale* 3.2.264-268.

²³⁷ *The Mayor of Casterbridge* 49.

Michael in the Roman amphitheatre recalls the trial of Hermione in the cold atmosphere of a courtroom:

Melancholy, impressive, lonely, yet accessible from every part of the town, the historic circle was the frequent spot for appointments of a furtive kind. Intrigues were arranged there; tentative meetings were there experimented after divisions and feuds. But one kind of appointment—in itself the most common of any—seldom had place in the Amphitheatre: that of lovers. [...] Perhaps it was because its associations had about them something sinister.²³⁸

That no lovers' meetings take place in the arena bodes ill for the future of Susan and Henchard's relationship, as does a reference only sentences later to the execution of Mary Channing, whose "heart burst and leapt out of her body" as she burned in the amphitheatre.²³⁹ The horror of Channing's burning casts an even darker shadow over the space in which Michael and Susan reunite, suggesting that despite Henchard's oath of penitence for his actions, their relationship will never entirely heal. Henchard's emotions at seeing his wife again are nowhere near those of Leontes upon seeing the resurrected Hermione; he is glad to see her, but does not rejoice at her appearance in Casterbridge as Leontes does in beholding even the statue of Hermione. Susan, deep down, perceives that Henchard has not fully atoned for his sins against her. Henchard inquires, "Do you forgive me, Susan?" to which "she murmured something; but seemed to find it difficult to frame her answer."²⁴⁰ The ambiguity of this exchange illustrates the tenuous nature of their renewed romance. Henchard, unlike Leontes, denies his wife the agency of expressing her forgiveness, or lack thereof, of him by outwardly asking for her pardon. In contrast, Paulina forbids Leontes from touching or wooing Hermione from the moment her statue appears, and instead permits Hermione to "become the suitor" and initiate

²³⁸ Ibid. 103-104.

²³⁹ Ibid. 104.

²⁴⁰ Ibid. 108.

contact with Leontes through her own actions.²⁴¹ This permission of Hermione's agency allows Hermione to forgive Leontes fully for his actions, and their relationship is reestablished with both of them on equal footing.²⁴² Henchard's lack of consideration for Susan's agency in this final moment in the amphitheatre denies the possibility of a truly happy remarriage and parallels too greatly the imbalance of power between Henchard and Susan during the wife-selling scene. Henchard's temperance oath becomes insignificant, since he continues to exercise control over his wife and violate the respect owed to Susan by way of their marriage vows. Susan remains the Hermione of the first three acts, whose husband treats her with groundless cruelty, rather than the empowered Hermione of the play's final scene.

Susan Henchard adopts further parallels to the pre-resurrected Hermione throughout her short existence within the novel, beginning with her physical appearance. The passage of time rightfully brings with it drastic changes in Susan's appearance from being sold to her arrival in Casterbridge. The narrator notes, "Change was only to be observed in the details; but here it was obvious that a long procession of years had passed by [...] Her face had lost much of its rotundity; her skin had undergone a textural change and though her hair had not lost colour it was considerably thinner than heretofore."²⁴³ Susan is marked by the "middle summer"²⁴⁴ of life, a phrase also used by Perdita during the sheep-shearing feast, whereas Susan's "former spring-like specialities were

²⁴¹ *The Winter's Tale* 5.3.135.

²⁴² Robert Henke describes Hermione as "a tragicomic figure of pathos, eliciting pity without terror"; the scene of her 'resurrection' is the almost cathartic climax of her tragicomedy. See Robert Henke, *Pastoral Transformations: Italian Tragicomedy and Shakespeare's Late Plays* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press [Associated University Presses, Inc.], 1997) 136.

²⁴³ *The Mayor of Casterbridge* 50.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*; *The Winter's Tale* 4.4.127.

transferred so dexterously by Time to the second figure, her child.”²⁴⁵ Time, the character that introduces the comic half of *The Winter’s Tale* by discussing how Perdita has grown, here transfers the previous beauty of Susan to Elizabeth-Jane, whose character strongly parallels Perdita’s for the rest of the novel. The influence of Time on appearance also occurs with Hermione; when Paulina reveals the statue—the first time Hermione appears since her death, just as Susan’s journey into Weydon-Priors is the first time we see her after her separation from Henchard—Leontes states, “Thou art Hermione [...] But yet, Paulina, / Hermione was not so much wrinkled, nothing / So aged as this seems.”²⁴⁶ Hermione and Susan reappear after a “wide gap of time,” showing the obvious effects of middle age, while their daughters embody the youth and beauty that the mothers left behind.²⁴⁷

Susan’s early death parallels the premature demise of Hermione, even though it is traditionally thought that Hermione does not actually die during her trial. The writing of the letter to Henchard acts as a vindication of her sexual purity as well as a confession of Elizabeth-Jane’s identity, much as Hermione’s impassioned speeches during her trial serve to defend her honour and assert Perdita’s paternity to Leontes. Though the origins of the second Elizabeth-Jane prove Susan’s sexual relationship with Newson, she remains “spotless / I’ th’ eyes of heaven” due to the fact that Henchard nullifies their marriage by selling Susan to Newson.²⁴⁸ Hardy, known for his liberal views on marriage, would see Susan as the rightful wife of Newson, not Henchard, so the consummation of their relationship does not violate Susan’s purity. Susan’s letter to Michael reads, “For the

²⁴⁵ *The Mayor of Casterbridge* 50.

²⁴⁶ *The Winter’s Tale* 5.3.29, 31-33.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 5.3.191.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 2.1.158-159.

Leontes is unable to see past his jealousy and defies the oracle, causing the deaths of both Mamillius and Hermione. Henchard cannot totally forgive his wife, but he does not say so explicitly; rather, he takes out his anger on Elizabeth-Jane, whose identity is revealed by Susan's letter. The proximity of this denial of complete forgiveness to Susan's death places guilt upon Henchard, especially because Lucetta writes to Henchard about her plan to come to Casterbridge not long before Susan dies. Henchard's correspondence with Lucetta and the resumption of their relationship after Susan dies lend an adulterous tone to their relationship; Henchard has once again violated his marriage vows as Leontes does in accusing Hermione, and Susan dies as a result. Susan's death also ties her to Hermione through the secret of Elizabeth-Jane's paternity. Although Perdita's true paternity is well known, the idea of Susan keeping a secret of that magnitude can be equated with the secret of Hermione's 'death.' Though it is debatable whether Hermione's death is faked, the possibility of such a secret existence throughout the second half of the play relates to Susan's hiding the truth of Elizabeth-Jane's existence.

Within the framework of *The Winter's Tale*, the death of Susan/Hermione would catalyze Leontes' intense feeling of grief and guilt that drives him to atone for his sins, as well as the comic portion of the novel. Not so in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. Henchard outwardly mourns the loss of his wife as decorum requires, but his mind and heart turn to the arrival of Lucetta le Sueur, who becomes a distortion of Hermione, and Leontes and Hermione's story begins all over again. Henchard, unlike Leontes, does not have a Paulina to prevent him from remarrying after his wife's death; Paulina tells Leontes that she shall not permit him to marry again until "your first queen's again in breath; / Never

till then.”²⁵¹ As a result, Henchard is less inclined to mourn his loss as Leontes does, and instead renews his affection for Lucetta. Lucetta’s letter, arriving during Susan’s illness, prompts Henchard to think, “If ever I should be left in a position to carry out that marriage with thee, I *ought* to do it—I ought to do it, indeed!”²⁵² Immediately following this thought is a sentence that reveals Henchard’s true feelings: “The contingency that he had in his mind was, of course, the death of Mrs. Henchard.”²⁵³ Even though Henchard does not explicitly wish for Susan’s death, he does not feel romantic love for her as he does for Lucetta, and thus considers the possibility of her death a convenient solution.

Lucetta abruptly enters the scene through her letter to Henchard—paralleling Susan’s letter—and with such action profanely infiltrates the sacredness of Hermione’s deathbed, Elizabeth-Jane’s grieving, and the remains of the Henchard family. Analogously, when Elizabeth-Jane visits her mother’s grave, Lucetta interrupts her mourning and imposes herself upon Elizabeth-Jane in her moment of vulnerability. Whether wittingly or not, Lucetta becomes an almost maternal figure to Elizabeth-Jane in this moment, perverting the poignant reunion between Hermione and Perdita after Hermione’s resurrection. Elizabeth-Jane, lonely and without any female companions, latches onto Lucetta as if she were a younger Susan. Yet again, Lucetta has forced herself into the lives of Michael and Elizabeth-Jane and, unexpectedly, is equated with Hermione.

Lucetta completely invades the novel as she fills Henchard’s thoughts, becoming a Hermione figure who does not resemble Hermione for the majority of the novel. When Henchard first mentions Lucetta to Farfrae, he describes her as a “young creature,” with

²⁵¹ Ibid. 5.1.105-106.

²⁵² *The Mayor of Casterbridge* 151.

²⁵³ Ibid.

whom he was “naturally intimate [...] It was enough to say that we honestly meant to marry. There arose a scandal, which did me no harm, but was of course ruin to her [...] She was terribly careless of appearances, and I was perhaps more, because o’ my dreary state; and it was through this that the scandal arose.”²⁵⁴ This first impression of Lucetta depicts her as immodest, imprudent, and even flighty; she possesses none of Hermione’s or Susan’s sensibleness, propriety, and sexual purity. Furthermore, Lucetta is not well-born as Hermione, but rather receives her wealth and position from her late aunt; at heart, Lucetta is the girl from Jersey. However, this accruiement of wealth makes her vain in a way neither Hermione nor Susan are. For example, Lucetta takes great care in choosing the dress she will wear for the upcoming season, eventually deciding on the garish cherry-coloured frock that “was pronounced to be a fit” for Lucetta’s person and character.²⁵⁵ In the same way, Lucetta remains concerned with how Time has affected her looks, asking Elizabeth-Jane how long it will be before she becomes “hopelessly plain.”²⁵⁶ In resisting the framework of *The Winter’s Tale*, Henchard’s romance with Lucetta leads to the distortion of the characters themselves. With Lucetta as the second Hermione figure of the novel, Hermione becomes a less sympathetic character.

Michael Henchard’s repeating of his past mistakes with Lucetta, which thus casts both Susan and Lucetta in the role of Hermione, grows even more real through the relationship between Lucetta and Farfrae. Henchard sold Susan to Newson, an action that paralleled both the initial accusation and the trial of Hermione, and now Lucetta has fallen in love with Donald Farfrae, who becomes Polixenes. However, the eventual marriage between Lucetta and Farfrae is inherently problematic. In the same way that

²⁵⁴ Ibid. 112.

²⁵⁵ Ibid. 201.

²⁵⁶ Ibid. 207.

Lucetta distorts the character of Hermione, she also temporarily ruins the chance of a romance between the characters who parallel Florizel and Perdita, the characters who should be the ones to marry. To some extent, Lucetta's marriage, especially because it is an elopement, connects her to Perdita, but the unbridled jealousy Henchard harbours towards the couple ties Lucetta more strongly to a Hermione believed to be having a love affair with Polixenes. Any parallels between Lucetta and Farfrae, and Perdita and Florizel are voided by the later deaths of both Lucetta and her unborn child with Farfrae; it is apparent that their love was not meant to survive as Perdita's and Florizel's does against all odds. Nevertheless, Elizabeth-Jane feels the sting of heartbreak as she watches her Florizel marry another:

Susan Henchard's daughter bore up against the frosty ache of the treatment, as she had borne up under worse things, and contrived as soon as possible to get out of the inharmonious room without being missed. The Scotchman seemed hardly the same Farfrae who had danced with her and walked with her in a delicate poise between love and friendship—that period in the history of a love when alone it can be said to be unalloyed with pain.²⁵⁷

That Elizabeth-Jane thinks Farfrae “seemed hardly the same,” along with the honourable intentions behind his actions, somehow exempt him from guilt; if, instead, he were acting like the same man Elizabeth-Jane knew, then his treatment of her would appear truly contemptible.²⁵⁸ After Lucetta's death, therefore, Farfrae is able to court Elizabeth-Jane without the reader completely despising him. Furthermore, this quotation asserts that Elizabeth-Jane is still Susan's daughter, that Lucetta has not completely assumed a maternal role for the young woman. Nevertheless, the marriage between Farfrae and Lucetta conveys how the novel transforms into a deconstructed version of *The Winter's*

²⁵⁷ Ibid. 209.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

Tale, since Hermione would never actually have an affair with Polixenes, and Florizel would never leave Perdita.

As her story progresses, Lucetta's circumstances begin to echo Hermione's, and rather than continuing as a petty, vain version of Hermione, she becomes more pitiable and grounded within herself. Henchard starts to treat Lucetta poorly once he realizes her affections are not what he believed them to be, resembling Leontes' own cruel treatment of his wife. He forcefully persuades Lucetta to accept his proposal, threatening to "reveal our intimacy—in common fairness to other men" just as Leontes attempts to ruin his wife's reputation by accusing her of adultery.²⁵⁹ His proposal, resisting any romantic display, denies the sacredness of marriage yet again, and imprisons Lucetta in her promise and need to protect her good name. After she agrees to the marriage, she "fell back in a fainting state" reminiscent of Hermione's collapse during her trial.²⁶⁰ When Lucetta reveals to Michael her elopement with Farfrae, he responds much like Leontes does to the idea of an affair between Hermione and Polixenes, only his feelings are much more justified than Leontes'.²⁶¹ Henchard continues to nurse his envy, going so far to approach Farfrae and almost reveal Lucetta's past, saying, "By not giving her name I make it an example of all womankind, and not a scandal to one."²⁶² Lucetta, unable to withstand his callousness much longer, appeals to him,

²⁵⁹ Ibid. 232.

²⁶⁰ Ibid. 232.

²⁶¹ Frey 75.

²⁶² *The Mayor of Casterbridge* 283.

“It is all your doing [...] I have no other grief. My happiness would be secure enough but for your threats. O Michael! don’t wreck me like this! You might think that you have done enough! When I came here I was a young woman; now I am rapidly becoming an old one. Neither my husband nor any other man will regard me with interest long.”

Henchard was disarmed. His old feeling of supercilious pity for womankind in general was intensified by this suppliant appearing here as the double of the first. Moreover, that thoughtless want of foresight which had led her to all her trouble remained with poor Lucetta still; she had come to meet him here in this compromising way without perceiving the risk. Such a woman was very small deer to hunt; he felt ashamed, lost all zest and desire to humiliate Lucetta there and then, and no longer envied Farfrae his bargain.²⁶³

Though Lucetta has maintained the same basic qualities of her character, she is, in this moment of weakness, more like Susan and Hermione than ever before, so much so that she appears to Henchard as Susan’s “double.”²⁶⁴ Her plight and the knowledge that she is completely at Henchard’s mercy align her with the mistreated Hermione. And although, unlike Hermione, her past is not completely clear of fault, the reader can overlook that fact to see that the unfavourable aspects of her situation and her twisted resemblance to Hermione are completely due to Henchard’s feelings and actions.

This reality ultimately results in Lucetta’s death. The skimmington-ride symbolizes all of the hurt that Henchard imposed on Lucetta, and the knowledge that it could ruin her marriage and cause a scandal is too much for her to bear, and she falls to the ground, “convulsed on the carpet in the paroxysms of an epileptic seizure.”²⁶⁵ The effigy of her and Henchard becomes a perverted statue of Hermione, especially since it is directly related to Lucetta’s death. Leontes’ accusations of Hermione are ultimately the cause of Hermione’s demise, and, in the same way, Michael Henchard’s unjustified

²⁶³ Ibid. 286.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ Ibid. 315.

conduct towards Lucetta becomes manifest in the skimmington-ride, and thus leads to her death.

The particulars of Lucetta's death are the final ties that bind her to Hermione, making their connections clear despite their differences. Lucetta, petrified by the approach of the skimmington-ride, holes herself up in her house with Elizabeth-Jane, much as Hermione is imprisoned by Leontes and tended to by Paulina and her ladies-in-waiting while in jail. At this point, both Lucetta and Hermione are pregnant, and the stress under which they are placed through their imprisonments places both their lives and the lives of their unborn children in danger. Lucetta, overcome with anxiety at the thought of the mummers proclaiming her scandalous past, falls ill and miscarries, remaining the whole time within the confines of her house. Hermione, too, experiences a miscarriage of her own. As a queen, the birth of her child would normally take place in sumptuous, safe quarters; however, given her situation, she gives birth to Perdita in a jail cell, and Perdita is soon after sacrificed to the elements and presumed dead. In the cases of both women, their heirs are presumed dead, but because Lucetta does not fully embody Hermione, and is carrying the child of the man who would otherwise have assumed the role of Florizel, the child does not miraculously survive as Perdita does. There is no hope for the future of Lucetta's biological line with Farfrae. She dies not long after, weakened by the stress of her imprisonment, her illness in regards to the scandalous skimmington-ride, and her grief at the loss of her child. Hermione dies, or "dies," from almost identical causes.

At the end of the novel, unlike the resolution of *The Winter's Tale*, there is no resurrection of Hermione. Susan is truly dead; Henchard's complete severing of all vows

to her by renewing his feelings for Lucetta, reading her letter prematurely, not actually grieving for his loss of her, and virtually casting off Elizabeth-Jane prevent any possibility of resurrection. Likewise, Lucetta, having not been Henchard's lawful wife, deserves no resurrection. Henchard's redemption at the novel's end comes purely from Elizabeth-Jane and Farfrae, and both Hermiones remain deceased.

IV. Finding Bohemia in Wessex: The Question of Genre

The Mayor of Casterbridge has long been considered a tragedy. John Paterson writes, "*The Mayor of Casterbridge* approximates, as perhaps no novel before or since has approximated, the experience of tragedy in its olden, in its Sophoclean or Shakespearean, sense."²⁶⁶ Michael Henchard is, to a great extent, a tragic hero. He rises from being nothing more than a hay-trusser to being the mayor and a businessman, he remarries his estranged wife, he solves the wheat problem by hiring Farfrae, and, for a while, all seems to be well. Henchard outwardly appears to have redeemed himself of his past wrongs. But once Susan dies, Henchard's downfall truly begins; he is "disabled [...] by *his* crime and guilt."²⁶⁷ Henchard reaches his breaking point when the furmity-woman from the Weydon Fair reveals the truth of Henchard's past before the court, humiliating and degrading him. She states, "It proves that he's no better than I, and has no right to sit there in judgment of me."²⁶⁸ The woman is, in many ways, a Paulina figure who openly states Leontes' faults. After this public denunciation, Henchard's situation only declines. Like classical and Shakespearean tragic heroes, Henchard catalyzes his own destruction,

²⁶⁶ John Paterson, "*The Mayor of Casterbridge* as Tragedy," *Hardy: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Albert J. Guerard (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963) 112.

²⁶⁷ Paterson 109.

²⁶⁸ *The Mayor of Casterbridge* 237.

going so far as to request to die without recognition and be buried on unsanctified ground. His death reveals the full extent to which Michael Henchard has sunk; he cannot degrade himself any further, and his numerous losses only make such ignominy more painful. Henchard is truly Hardy's tragic hero:

This accords with Hardy's last definition of tragedy: 'The best tragedy—highest tragedy in short—is that of the WORTHY encompassed by the INEVITABLE. The tragedies of immoral and worthless people are not of the best.' An example of the worthy, until crime and power have thoroughly corrupted him, is Macbeth; another—and his worthiness, like Lear's, increases with experience and suffering—is Michael Henchard.²⁶⁹

His character arc recalls *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Oedipus Rex*, and other famous tragedies, but with all of Henchard's and the novel's connections to *The Winter's Tale*, an accurate genre categorization of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* cannot be tragedy. Henchard's individual story is tragic, but the novel is not; the 'mayor of Casterbridge' is not just Henchard, and therefore the novel must be examined as a whole, and not focusing solely on its protagonist.²⁷⁰

Rather than a tragedy, *The Mayor of Casterbridge* becomes what Peter Holbrook refers to as "the Elizabethan 'mongrel tragic-comedy'" or Shakespearean romance.²⁷¹ Traditionally, Shakespearean tragedy ends unhappily, with only occasionally a faint glimpse of hope for the future. We see this in Michael Henchard, as we see it in Lear; his individual story ends in death, in the destruction of hope. However, there *is* hope at the end of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. Elizabeth-Jane and Farfrae marry, and there is a glaring suggestion of children resulting from their union—a 'happily ever after' that exists only in comedy, despite the death of Henchard only pages before the novel's end.

²⁶⁹ Pinion 145.

²⁷⁰ Lawrence J. Starzyk, "Hardy's *Mayor*: The Antitraditional Basis of Tragedy," *Studies in the Novel* 4.4 (1972): 596.

²⁷¹ Holbrook 174.

Furthermore, as previously discussed, Elizabeth-Jane provides Henchard with a posthumous redemption that mirrors Perdita's redemption of Leontes. Holbrook states,

My point is that in Hardy, as in Shakespeare, *the world wants to be happy*—there is no giving up on the dream of 'self-delight,' no lazy settling for a heavenly compensation; and however naïve or unrealistic or trivial this dream might be shown to be in the light of reason it is nevertheless respected by both authors. This is perhaps the deep, radical meaning of the mongrel tragicomedy of Hardy and Shakespeare: deprivation does not have the last word.²⁷²

In other words, romance on Shakespeare's, and therefore Hardy's, terms requires the presence of some sort of comedic, redemptive action or sense of hope that finishes the play.

Howard Felperin notes, "That Shakespeare's romances are imaginatively continuous as well as chronologically contiguous with his tragedies, although it remains to be adequately demonstrated, is now widely accepted."²⁷³ This supports both the normative interpretation of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* as a tragedy and the less-widely accepted perspective of the novel as a tragicomedy or romance. The nuances that separate the two genres are hazy, and slight enough that, particularly in the case of *Mayor*, they can be confused. Felperin goes on to say that, because of the relationship between tragedy and romance, some of the later tragedies should possess romantic elements.²⁷⁴ *King Lear*, the play most closely associated with *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Felperin claims continually undercuts the romantic: "Shakespeare in *King Lear* repeatedly [...] raises romantic expectations only to defeat them with tragic actualities. The play is full of false dawns. [...] The elements of romance which are so abundant in *King Lear* [...] are all finally in the service of tragic effect. [...] *King Lear*

²⁷² Ibid. 181.

²⁷³ Howard Felperin, *Shakespearean Romance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972) 98.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

becomes a kind of definition in action of Shakespearean tragedy.”²⁷⁵ So, while *Lear* includes aspects of romance, it is ultimately a tragedy, and no redemption occurs. *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, then, can almost be seen in the reverse—its tragic qualities serve to fuel the overall romance, and Elizabeth-Jane and Farfrae, like Perdita and Florizel, vindicate the ‘tragic heroes’ of their respective texts.

Even with the connection between tragedy and romance distinguished, though it is an ambiguous one, it still leaves romance itself undefined. An accurate definition of romance is nearly impossible to locate, given the fact that the word “romance” has been applied to different types of literature through the centuries, including Arthurian and chivalric romances, French and Italian plays and operas, poems, and, of course, Shakespeare’s plays. Felperin claims that romance simultaneously manages to be “the most fundamental, universal, and heterogeneous”²⁷⁶ of genres, and “somehow illegitimate—owing perhaps to its very popularity in every age and culture.”²⁷⁷ It is therefore essential to describe “romance,” which I will use interchangeably with “tragicomedy,” through example.

The Winter’s Tale possesses aspects of both tragedy and comedy, but with divisions so clear between the two that the play is almost split halfway. The first half is entirely tragic: Leontes has ruined his friendship with Polixenes, committed sacrilege against Apollo’s oracle, effectively killed his wife and son, and sacrificed the kingdom’s only hope—his infant daughter, Perdita—to the elements. Antigonus’s soliloquy upon his arrival in a stormy Bohemia indicates his desperate wish for Perdita’s survival, but

²⁷⁵ Ibid. 117-118.

²⁷⁶ Ibid. 7.

²⁷⁷ Ibid. 6.

“the skies look grimly.”²⁷⁸ And yet, with a single stage direction, the most famous in all of theatre—*exit, pursued by a bear*—Shakespeare transforms the irreparable, tragic circumstances of the first three acts into a lighthearted, pastoral comedy. The sky clears; the Shepherd enters and immediately speaks flippantly of the sexual dalliances of young men, a subject that would be taboo in the now-sterile halls of the Sicilian court. Every aspect of the latter half of the show counters, undercuts, and redeems the actions of the former, allowing for the ultimate fulfillment of the oracle’s words and the promise of a rosy future. Thus romance in its most basic form involves a merging of tragedy and comedy—hence “tragicomedy”—in a way that maintains the identities of both genres separately within the broader identity of the romance.²⁷⁹

Similarly, *The Mayor of Casterbridge* presents distinct tragic and comedic elements that are rounded off with the eventual redemption of its protagonist. Michael Henchard’s cyclical engagement with tragedy, first with Susan and then with Lucetta, forms the majority of the tragic aspects of the novel. Even Elizabeth-Jane notes the prevalence of tragedy throughout the novel, noting how Farfrae, “seemed to feel exactly how she felt about life and its surroundings—that they were a tragical rather than a comical thing; that though one could be gay on occasion, moments of gaiety were interludes, and no part of the actual drama.”²⁸⁰ Though Elizabeth-Jane’s thoughts seemingly deny the importance of comedic elements to the novel, she does not recognize that the comedy within *The Mayor of Casterbridge* is subtle but very present.

²⁷⁸ *The Winter’s Tale* 3.3.4.

²⁷⁹ R.S. White, ‘Let Wonder Seem Familiar’: *Endings in Shakespeare’s Romance Vision* (London: Athlone Press, 1985) 3-4.

²⁸⁰ *The Mayor of Casterbridge* 87.

For example, when Elizabeth-Jane goes to visit Lucetta at High-Place Hall for the first time, the narrator describes the architecture of the house's back door:

Looking round at the door which had given her egress, by the light of the solitary lamp fixed in the alley, she saw that it was arched and old—older than even the house itself. The door was studded, and the keystone of the arch was a mask. Originally the mask had exhibited a comic leer, as could still be discerned; but generations of Casterbridge boys had thrown stones at the mask, aiming at its open mouth; and the blows thereon had chipped off the lips and jaws as if they had been eaten away by disease. The appearance was so ghastly by the weakly lamp-glimmer that she could not bear to look at it—the first unpleasant feature of her visit.²⁸¹

The door and its comedic keystone, and the fact that they come from a time in the distant past, symbolize the ancient traditions of tragedy and comedy, and the presence of comedy at the core of Hardy's text. The sinister presence of the deformed comic mask indicates the haunting of the tragic by some sort of comic force that remains at the fringes of most of the novel. However, the mask is not a true representation of comedy, since it has been vandalized by residents of Casterbridge, and has instead become an amalgamation of tragedy and comedy, much like the novel itself. In addition, Elizabeth-Jane's negative reaction to the presence of the misshapen mask relates to her earlier comment about the absence of comedy, and her desire for a more serious view of life. The mask rejects her perspective, showing that, despite her opinion, both comedy and tragedy will exist in tandem throughout her story.

The novel's end becomes the ultimate manifestation of this. The juxtaposition of Elizabeth-Jane and Farfrae's marriage with the degradation of Henchard, and of Henchard's death with the hope for the future that the newlyweds represent, become like the mask—amalgams of tragedy and comedy that, combined with Henchard's final

²⁸¹ Ibid. 174-175.

redemption, reveal the novel's true nature as a tragicomedy or romance. Michael Henchard gives his crumpled will to Abel Whittle just before he dies, and

On it there was penciled as follows:—

“MICHAEL HENCHARD’S WILL

“That Elizabeth-Jane Farfrae be not told of my death, or made to grieve on account of me,

“& that I not be bury'd in consecrated ground.

“& that no sexton be asked to toll the bell.

“& that nobody is wished to see my dead body.

“& that no mourners walk behind me at my funeral.

“& that no flours be planted on my grave,

“& that no man remember me.

“To this I put my name.

MICHAEL HENCHARD.”²⁸²

This will represents the culmination of Henchard's tragic downfall, but his tragedy is undercut. Firstly, the fact that he writes his will in pencil, in itself such a transient medium, and on “a crumpled scrap of paper” simultaneously makes the will more pathetic—and therefore more tragic—as well as less weighty.²⁸³ If Henchard had composed his will in a more permanent way, such as in ink, then his words would seem final, and his tragic end would weigh upon the rest of the novel. But he does not, and his words become less powerful as a result. In the same way, Henchard leaves the will for Abel Whittle to find, but Whittle is not “a man o' letters,” and gives the will for Elizabeth-Jane and Farfrae to read since he himself is illiterate.²⁸⁴ Henchard's first stipulation on his will is denied, and Elizabeth-Jane's reading the will alleviates its tragic nature. Elizabeth-Jane, not wishing to dismiss her foster father's wishes fully, and realizing that the will was “written in the anguish of his dying,” was willing to follow his will “as far as practicable [...] though less from a sense of the sacredness of last words, as such, than

²⁸² Ibid. 367.

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

from her independent knowledge that the man who wrote them meant what he said. She knew the directions to be a piece of the same stuff that his whole life was made of.”²⁸⁵ Elizabeth-Jane inadvertently acknowledges the tragedy of Henchard’s life, and obeys his wishes as much as possible. This differs from Henchard’s earlier opening of Susan’s letter, as Henchard deliberately went against Susan’s requests, whereas Elizabeth-Jane’s breach of Henchard’s will was unintentional.

Elizabeth-Jane’s act of recognizing her father’s wishes and the subsequent burying of Henchard symbolize the transition from the tragic into the romantic. Henchard’s life is over, and Elizabeth-Jane pays tribute to him, but her life with Farfrae, which embodies hope, love, and redemption, awaits her.²⁸⁶ Elizabeth-Jane’s final thoughts summarize the romantic nature of the ending and the novel as a whole; while there are some who “received less who had deserved more” than herself, and though her past taught her “that happiness was but the occasional episode in a general drama of pain,” she recognizes that she is now “among the fortunate” and can embrace her golden future with her new husband.²⁸⁷

Conclusion

The Mayor of Casterbridge, as with any Thomas Hardy novel, contains similarities to many Shakespeare plays, in addition to other, non-Shakespearean works, allowing for a multitude of interpretations of the novel. *Mayor* resonates not only with *The Winter’s Tale*, but also with *King Lear*, *Othello*, and, at times, *Hamlet*. In spite of the many parallels between Hardy’s novel and Shakespeare’s romance, *The Mayor of*

²⁸⁵ Ibid. 368.

²⁸⁶ Frey 73.

²⁸⁷ *The Mayor of Casterbridge* 369.

Casterbridge does not fit perfectly within the frame of *The Winter's Tale*. Florizel states that his love for Perdita "cannot fail, but by / The violation of my faith," and he remains steadfast in his loyalty to her despite the sundry obstacles that stand in their way.²⁸⁸ Yet Farfrae leaves Elizabeth-Jane; bound by honour to Henchard and not completely in love with Elizabeth-Jane, he ceases any courtship with her and only much later realizes what he gave up and woos her again. Similarly, even though I believe that *The Mayor of Casterbridge* is neither inherently tragic nor comic, the novel does possess undeniable tragic tendencies. The novel also deviates from *The Winter's Tale* through Henchard's cyclical journey; unlike Leontes, who learns from his first terrible mistake, Henchard repeats his offenses, which ultimately leads to his death. Leontes, having fully atoned for his sin the first time, is permitted to live; if Henchard had not attempted to renew his relationship with Lucetta, perhaps he, too, would have survived the novel.

²⁸⁸ *The Winter's Tale* 4.4.565-566; Frey 73.

Chapter Three:

Discovering Hope in the Final Novels: *The Woodlanders* and

Tess of the D'Urbervilles

“The gold of the summer picture was now gray, the colours mean, the rich soil mud, and the river cold.”

-Tess of the D'Urbervilles (264)

*But this rough magic
I here abjure, and when I have required
Some heavenly music, which even now I do,
To work mine end upon their senses that
This airy charm is for, I'll break my staff,
Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
And deeper than did ever plummet sound
I'll drown my book.*

-The Tempest 5.1.59-66

The two novels published after *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *The Woodlanders* (1887) and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891), show a distinct shift in tone from his earlier works. The more lighthearted elements of his plots begin to fall away, and the conflicts focus on the interactions between characters and the societal conventions that challenge them. In *The Woodlanders*, conflict arises as a result of the divide between the woodlanders and the more metropolitan characters—Felice Charmond, Edred Fitzpiers, and even Grace Melbury, the last of whom has “fallen from the good old Hintock ways.”²⁸⁹ The progressive, modern world outside of rural Wessex deprives the natives of Little Hintock and Blackmoor Vale of their homes, their livelihoods, and their loved ones. In *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, the heroine is pitted against conventions for womanly virtue and sexual morality, and the dichotomy between how she is perceived by Hardy—

²⁸⁹ Thomas Hardy, *The Woodlanders*, ed. Dale Kramer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) 40.

as a pure being—and by the other characters—as inherently impure—ultimately leads to her demise.

These descriptions alone convey the drastic change in Hardy's perspective that appears in his final novels. The state of the world is growing bleak, the promise of the future is no longer so promising, and "the ache of modernism" threatens to annihilate nostalgia for the simplicity of the past.²⁹⁰ Wessex is no longer idyllic, like the Forest of Arden or Bohemia, but has become an unconventional alternative to the Shakespearean 'green world,' similar to the world Shakespeare himself creates in *The Tempest*.²⁹¹ Despite the presence of harshness, sadness, death, and even horror in *The Woodlanders* and *Tess*, the novels still challenge their outwardly tragic characteristics. The endings of all three novels present circumstances that contradict tragic norms, and parallels to Shakespearean comedies and romances still appear in all three novels. Hardy channels some of his increasingly pessimistic view of society into these final novels, yet he continues to draw influence from non-tragic Shakespearean works. The descent into pessimism that occurs in these final novels supports the common perspective on Hardy as predominately a writer of tragedy. However, in his general preface to the Wessex edition of his verse, Hardy comments, "That these impressions have been condemned as 'pessimistic'—as if that were a very wicked adjective—shows a curious muddle-mindedness [...] It was my hope to add to these volumes of verse as many more as would make a fairly comprehensive cycle of the whole."²⁹² Not only does Hardy criticize the label of 'pessimistic' in relation to his writings, but also asserts his ability to write literature of various types, despite the fact that his volume of poetry may not portray that.

²⁹⁰ *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* 150.

²⁹¹ Henke 58.

²⁹² Orel 49.

If Hardy sought to argue that he was not simply a writer of tragedy or pessimistic writing, albeit in the context of poetry, then such an argument could be extrapolated to apply to his novels. Pessimism does bleed into *The Woodlanders* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, masking some of the comedic and romantic influences that are also at work in each of the novels. To uncover some of these influences, it is first important to note that Shakespeare's comedies and romances, especially the latter, often have moments of pessimism and the tragic woven into their plots. One such example of this is *The Tempest*.

According to the First Folio, *The Tempest* is categorized as a comedy, though more recent research considers it to be a romance. In its comparatively happy ending, the presence of a marriage contract, and the lack of deaths, the play does align with comedic tradition. However, elements such as the torment and behaviour of Caliban, the questionable nature of Ariel's servitude, and Prospero's power and his later abandonment of his passion for knowledge collectively lend a more pessimistic tone to the plot. Prospero feels little joy at the prospect of returning to Milan and his reinstatement as duke. The peace and relative safety of the island on which he built a home with Miranda is not something he is eager to replace with the decadence and corruption of court life—"the worsening world."²⁹³ Unlike the apparent optimism expressed by characters at the end of Shakespeare's earlier comedies, in *The Tempest*, both characters and viewers are hesitant for the action to end; "sometimes because the play fading into a golden past makes us yearn after it; sometimes because the action is protracted [...] by characters

²⁹³ Harry Berger, Jr., "Miraculous Harp: A Reading of Shakespeare's *Tempest*," *William Shakespeare's The Tempest*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1988) 9.

who seem reluctant to leave the play world and return to actuality.”²⁹⁴ Like *The Woodlanders* and *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, *The Tempest* ventures into the pessimistic, rendering it neither comic nor tragic, but rather poignant and disenchanting. The play occurs at the command of Prospero, and thus centers around him and his perspective on the world. Unlike Miranda or Ferdinand, who are awed by Prospero’s magical abilities and the newness of their love, or even Ariel and Caliban, who are driven by their desire for freedom or power, Prospero possesses no deceptive views of the world. He is the anti-Lear, the aging man watching his children grow and his life fade, but willing to accept that all cannot be golden.²⁹⁵ Prospero recognizes “life’s tragic potential” in a way that, like Hardy himself, prevents him from perceiving the world as a place where all characters are rewarded with happy endings.²⁹⁶

The Tempest is widely believed to be Shakespeare’s swan song to playwriting, the final play he wrote alone. Prospero’s mention of “the great globe itself” is often noted as a potential reference to the Globe Theatre, though the truth behind that assumption is questionable; nevertheless, the connection lends some pathos to the speech.²⁹⁷ Prospero assumes the role of the playwright through his manipulation of events in the play, and is aligned even more closely with Shakespeare through this speech; both Prospero and Shakespeare are reaching the ends of their respective careers. *The Woodlanders* and *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* similarly mark the approaching end of Hardy’s career as a novelist (with *Jude the Obscure* and *The Well-Beloved* still to be published). Just as the bleakness

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ James P. Driscoll, “The Shakespearean ‘Metastance,’” *William Shakespeare’s The Tempest* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1988) 85.

²⁹⁶ Ibid. 87.

²⁹⁷ William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks [Folger Shakespeare Library], 1994) 4.1.163-180.

that exists in Hardy's last novels naturally descends from the relative happiness of his earlier works, so, too, does the poignancy present in *The Tempest* follow the straightforward comedy common in Shakespeare's earlier plays.

In 1877, before any of his final novels were published, Hardy purchased a new copy of *The Tempest*, marking passages involving magic, as well as Prospero's speech,

Thou hadst, and more, Miranda. But how is it
That this lives in thy mind? What seest thou else
In the dark backward and abysm of time?
If though remember'st aught ere thou camest here,
How thou camest here thou mayst.²⁹⁸

and his line in the final scene, "Let us not burden our remembrances with / A heaviness that's gone."²⁹⁹ The notation of these passages is particularly interesting when examined in conjunction with Hardy's final trio of novels. Interest in Prospero's magic abilities and the presence of Ariel connects directly to *The Woodlanders*, for although there is nothing supernatural in the novel, the connections between the woodlanders and Norse mythology, in addition to the power of Fitzpiers's scientific abilities, create an underlying presence of the otherworldly that pervades the text. Prospero's speech in act two is equally relevant to *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, and less so to *Jude the Obscure*, in its discussion of family history. The "dark backward and abysm of time" thus simultaneously parallels the d'Urberville family curse and unfortunate past marriages in the Fawley family. The final note, marking Prospero's line in act five, illustrates Hardy's interest in hopefulness descended from tragedy and despair. Prospero's statement encourages his fellow characters to let the past lie, to move forward without letting past wrongs infect the potential happiness of the present and the future. Hardy molds this idea

²⁹⁸ Ibid. 2.1.60-64.

²⁹⁹ Ibid. 5.1.237-238; Dennis Taylor 154.

in his own way in the plots of his final novels, examining what may happen if past “heaviness” is not forgotten. This is especially pertinent in *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, for Angel cannot bring himself to forget the darkness in Tess’s past until the novel is almost over. In even these small instances where Hardy expresses interest in the text of *The Tempest*, it is apparent that parallels may be found between the play and Hardy’s own writings.

The Woodlanders: The Nature Gods of Wessex

“Nature does not carry on her government with a view to such feelings, and when advancing years render the opened hearts of those that possess them less dexterous than formerly in shutting against the blast, they must inevitably, like Little Celandines, suffer ‘buffeting at will by rain and storm.’”

-*The Woodlanders* (19)

“Human love is a subjective thing—the essence of man [...] It is joy accompanied by an idea which we project against any suitable object in the line of our vision, just as the rainbow iris is projected against an oak, ash, or elm tree indifferently.”

-*The Woodlanders* (106)

Following the publication of *Far From the Madding Crowd* in 1874, Hardy intended to write a “woodland story,” but it was not until 1884 that he revisited the idea.³⁰⁰ The resulting novel, *The Woodlanders*, reexamines the connection between mankind and the natural world that serves as a theme for some of his earlier novels, but at a more intense and intimate level. The inhabitants of the woodlands are tied to the trees as if they contained their life forces, and the landscape is variously symbolic of fertility and hopelessness. Like Ariel or Caliban, the woodlanders’ identities are tethered to the land, casting them as godlike (or demonic) figures reigning over the natural world. The area of Wessex presented in *The Woodlanders* is one that can kill with a storm, as it

³⁰⁰ *The Woodlanders* xxxi.

effectively does to Giles Winterborne, just as easily as it provides a plentiful supply of apples. Shakespeare devises a parallel landscape to Blackmoor Vale and Little Hintock in *The Tempest*: an island serving as haven and prison, sanctuary and exile. This contrast is further exemplified by the relationship between Miranda and Ferdinand, for while their courtship embodies fertility and promise, Ferdinand's shipmates spend almost all of the play fruitlessly searching the island for food and shelter. The similarities in characterization, the qualities of the natural world, the role of the supernatural, and the endings between *The Woodlanders* and *The Tempest* indicate possible influence from the play on Hardy's writing of the novel.

As in *The Return of the Native*, the opening pages of the novel are devoted to description of the landscape, which, as in *Return*, reveals the importance of the natural world to the plot. The first things we see of Little Hintock and Blackmoor Vale are "the forsaken coach-road" and the "extensive woodlands, interspersed with apple orchards" that appear around it.³⁰¹ The subsequent description of the woodlands similarly presents the contradictory qualities of fecundity—"the trees, timber or fruit-bearing as the case may be, make the wayside hedges ragged by their drip and shade"—and "a tomb-like stillness."³⁰² Apples, the fruits of these woodlands, symbolize the forbidden fruit eaten by Adam and Eve in both the Book of Genesis and *Paradise Lost*, and are therefore indicative of decadence, temptation, and the possibility of good and evil existing concomitantly. The last of these is the most relevant to *The Woodlanders* as a whole; the sinister connotations associated with apples are undercut by the fact that they provide both employment and sustenance for the people of Little Hintock, and the presence of

³⁰¹ Ibid. 5.

³⁰² Ibid.

apple-orchards along the bleak, lonely highway displays how hope, promise, and life may persist amidst dark and outwardly hopeless circumstance. That glimmer of life is critical to the novel, for it drives the main characters forward and prevents the story from becoming wholly tragic, most especially at the end. The association of the apples with the Fall of Man is equally important, for although some of the characters in the novel ‘fall,’ such as Fitzpiers and Felice Charmond, and, to a lesser degree, Grace Melbury, not all characters suffer that fall. Giles Winterborne and Marty South, for example, are comparatively pure beings that exist alongside the fallen, making it all the more significant that Marty is granted the final words of the novel.

On his way to collect Marty South’s hair for Felice Charmond, Barber Percomb maneuvers this lonely road, unable to find the easiest route to Little Hintock. His destination is “one of those sequestered spots outside the gates of the world,” and the roads are covered in dead leaves.³⁰³ Within Marty South’s home, however, is a far more welcoming image. The house is heated by a “cheerful blaze,” and Marty herself appears in Pre-Raphaelite splendour, her hair—symbolic both of sexuality and the wildness and lushness of nature—strewn about her as she works.³⁰⁴ The interior of the South home exemplifies the persistence of the positive and hopeful in the novel. *The Tempest* begins in a similar manner. A ship full of men tosses in a storm, unable to locate dry land. Amidst the terrors of the tempest, Gonzalo wishes for “an acre of barren ground: long heath, brown furze, anything” in exchange for safety, and he is granted just that.³⁰⁵ Trinculo states that there is “neither bush nor shrub to bear off any weather at all”³⁰⁶ on

³⁰³ Ibid. 7.

³⁰⁴ Ibid. 9.

³⁰⁵ *The Tempest* 1.1.69-70.

³⁰⁶ Ibid. 2.2.18-19.

the island, though Caliban assures him that he “will show thee every fertile inch o’ th’ island,”³⁰⁷ which suggests that the island is not an utter wasteland. The Wessex Hardy portrays in *The Woodlanders* and Prospero’s island and its surrounding waters are immediately characterized as harsh yet generous, willing to provide for their inhabitants but often bleak and unforgiving. Wessex is no longer the pastoral land of *Far From the Madding Crowd*, and has grown even more hostile than that of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. Once again it evolves, this time to something not unlike Prospero’s island.

The Tempest, like *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, presents characters who are distinctly mythological, godlike, or otherwise magical. These characters all possess strong ties to the natural landscape of their homes: Ariel is a spirit of the island, trapped in a tree by the witch Sycorax; Caliban—son of Sycorax—continually associates himself with the land, which he believes to be his rightful inheritance; and two of the three goddesses summoned by Prospero for the ‘marriage’ of Ferdinand and Miranda preside over aspects of the natural world (Ceres and Iris). These characters function as chthonic deities within the scope of the play (though Caliban is certainly a more bestial figure, hardly someone to be worshipped), gods and goddesses of the nameless island over which Prospero rules.

The Woodlanders possesses similar characters. Marty South gradually transforms into a Hardyian chthonic goddess as the plot unfolds around her; she accumulates qualities of the divine or transcendent and her ties to the woodlands become more apparent. The first physical description of Marty likens her to “an impression-picture of extremest type, wherein the girl’s hair alone, as the focus of observation, was depicted with intensity and distinctness, while her face, shoulders, hands and figure in general were a blurred mass of

³⁰⁷ Ibid. 2.2.154-155.

unimportant detail lost in haze and obscurity,” bestowing on Marty an otherworldly aura.³⁰⁸ Though the subsequent loss of her hair diminishes the power of this image, she maintains her divine essence in her plainness, retreating into the woodlands for comfort. Unlike any of the other women in the novel, Marty is fully aware of the natural world; she can hear the “vocalized sorrows of the trees”³⁰⁹ and their “soft musical breathing,”³¹⁰ and confidently maneuver the woodlands, even at night. The woodlands of Blackmoor Vale are her home, her religion, while she simultaneously becomes a deified manifestation of them. The text rarely shows Marty indoors, especially after her father’s death. Instead, she appears working in the woodlands, tending to the trees that are her closest companions apart from Giles, or partaking in events occurring outdoors, such as the Midsummer Eve festivities. Even when Marty does not factor into the plot, she does not disappear entirely; rather, she haunts the fringes of the novel, and remains a nymph-like figure perpetually wandering Blackmoor Vale even when unseen by the reader.

Giles Winterborne’s place as a chthonic god within *The Woodlanders* is much more overtly stated than Marty South’s. He possesses “a gentle conjuror’s touch”³¹¹ in caring for the trees and “a marvelous power of making trees grow”³¹² which no other man could successfully imitate. Giles becomes a human manifestation of the natural world in which he lives:

³⁰⁸ *The Woodlanders* 10-11.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.* 15.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.* 59.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*

³¹² *Ibid.* 58.

He looked and smelt like Autumn's very brother, his face being sunburnt to wheat-colour, his eyes blue as corn-flowers, his sleeves and leggings dyed with fruit stains, his hands clammy with the sweet juice of apples, his hat sprinkled with pips, and everywhere about him that atmosphere of cider which at its first return each season has such an indescribable fashion for those who have been born and bred among the orchards [...] Nature was bountiful, [Grace] thought. No sooner had she been cast aside by Edred Fitzpiers than another being, impersonating chivalrous and undiluted manliness, had arisen out of the earth, ready to her hand.³¹³

Grace realizes at this point that Giles is more than the man she originally intended to marry; there is a deeper, more organic, and yet divine part of him that appears here in its raw form. He is a "being," not a man; he is an entity who exists only in its natural habitat, a transcendent, pagan Adam.³¹⁴ Grace pinpoints his chthonic god-like status within the world of Blackmoor Vale, even if Giles is somewhat unaware of it himself. Giles has always lived in the woodlands, works within them, and knows little of other ways of life; nevertheless, he remains unknowing of the full extent to which he is bound to the woodlands and presides over them with a divine ability.

Hardy's creation of characters that resemble chthonic deities is made more significant by the nature of the connection between the characters and the landscape: it occurs through the trees.³¹⁵ The trees not only provide shelter, fuel, furniture, and employment, but they also act as natural representations of individual characters. John South, Marty's father, makes this clear on his deathbed, when he insists that the tree outside his window is the cause of his failing health. He tells Giles, "I could bear up, I know I could, if it were not for the tree—yes, the tree 'tis that's killing me. There he

³¹³ Ibid. 185-186.

³¹⁴ Ibid. 186.

³¹⁵ Peter J. Casagrande, "The Shifted 'Center of Altruism' in *The Woodlanders*: Thomas Hardy's Third 'Return of a Native,'" *ELH* 38.1 (March 1971): 116-117.

stands, threatening my life every minute that the wind do blow.”³¹⁶ Having postponed cutting down the tree, John South grows anxious about it falling as he watches it sway outside his window. Giles agrees to chop down the tree to ease the sick man’s worry, but the well-meant deed backfires. The branches are removed first, leaving behind a bare trunk that aggravates South’s concern, and Fitzpiers instructs Giles to cut down the entire tree. When John South first notices “the vacant patch of sky in place of the branched column so familiar to his gaze he sprang up, speechless; his eyes rose from their hollows till the whites showed all round; he fell back, and a bluish whiteness overspread him.”³¹⁷ This episode and the subsequent event of South’s death constitute the most obvious connection between the characters and the trees, for the elm is the same age as John South himself, and both man and tree perish on the same day. The tree haunts John South, and yet he cannot survive without it; it is an external symbol of his own existence. Fitzpiers, who orders the tree to be cut down, cannot comprehend this, as he is modern man and not a native of the woodlands.

Paralleling this intimate relationship between characters and trees is Ariel’s state upon the arrival of Prospero to the island prior to the beginning of *The Tempest*. Ariel is confined “by help of her [Sycorax’s] more potent ministers, and in her most immitigable rage, into a cloven pine, within which rift imprisoned thou didst painfully remain a dozen years,”³¹⁸ and it is only Prospero’s “art”³¹⁹ that can “[make] gape the pine and let thee out.”³²⁰ This is a kindness on Prospero’s part, and the relationship between Prospero and Ariel seems to be amicable, but it is still a form of contracted servitude. Giles is likewise

³¹⁶ *The Woodlanders* 83.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.* 94.

³¹⁸ *The Tempest* 1.2.328-332.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.* 1.2.345.

³²⁰ *Ibid.* 1.2.346-347.

‘confined’ within the metaphorical pine that is his job as a woodsman, a profession he neither dislikes nor resents, but enjoys; and, like Ariel, Giles is ‘freed’ from this condition by a higher power—Felice Charmond—who denies him his home. This freedom is in itself a form of enslavement, for Giles is at the mercy of his homelessness and his lowered position. Chopping and fetching wood, Giles acts as Caliban and Ferdinand do for Prospero. Other instances of this are Felice Charmond’s taking of Marty’s hair and the woodlanders’ homes and land; in doing so, Felice, like Sycorax or Prospero, effectively colonizes and enslaves everything associated with the natural world.

Hardy also establishes similarities between *The Woodlanders* and *The Tempest* through the characterization of other figures in the novel and in the romantic plot between Grace, Giles, Fitzpiers, and Marty. For example, the arrangement between Mr. Melbury and Giles’s father regarding the marriage of Grace and Giles is as convenient a match as that between Miranda and Ferdinand. Mr. Melbury, Prospero, and even Alonso exhibit an understandable degree of hesitation regarding the marriages of their daughters, for all three men are watching their only children move forward and become the property of other men. In addition, Prospero and Melbury are paralleled in this respect through their desire and actions to manipulate the romantic lives of their daughters. The match between Giles and Grace serves a more significant function, for Melbury informs Marty—and, with her, the reader—that “his first wife, his daughter’s other, was first the promised of Winterborne’s father, who loved her tenderly; till he, the speaker, won her away from him by a trick, because he wanted to marry her herself.”³²¹ If Giles and Grace were to marry, past wrongs would be redeemed, just as Prospero hopes to do with the marriage of his daughter to Ferdinand, or as inadvertently occurs between Perdita and

³²¹ *The Woodlanders* 17.

Florizel in *The Winter's Tale*. That this redemption does not occur is detrimental to the view of *The Woodlanders* as a romance or tragicomedy, even more so because Melbury's later aversion to the marriage partially precipitates Grace's marriage to Fitzpiers.

Nevertheless, without that marriage to Fitzpiers, the ending of the novel would be far bleaker, for Grace, Marty, and Fitzpiers would all be alone. It is likely that Giles would have died of his illness even without sleeping outside the cottage; had Grace and Giles wed, their marriage may have been short-lived. Redemption does occur at the end of *The Woodlanders* in spite of the absent marriage between Giles and Grace, though it is not the sort of redemption the reader expects or desires.

Melbury's roles as father and matchmaker parallel him with Prospero, but an equally appropriate Hardyian counterpart to Prospero is Edred Fitzpiers. The association of Fitzpiers with medicine, witchcraft, and science equates him with the mystical Shakespearean character, and Fitzpiers's ability to seduce women, such as Suke Damson, Felice Charmond, and Grace Melbury, lends him a bewitching quality. In the first chapter, Mrs. Dollery refers to Fitzpiers as "a very clever and learned young Doctor [...]" they say he is in league with the Devil,"³²² and later, Mr. Cawtree similarly calls him a "strange, deep, perusing gentleman; and there's good reason for supposing he has sold his soul to the wicked-one"; in contrast, Mr. Melbury insists "he's only a gentleman fond of science, and philosophy, and poetry, and, in fact, every kind of knowledge."³²³ Fitzpiers uses his knowledge to penetrate the society of the woodlanders as a medical professional, but also does so through his romantic liaisons with women in each social stratum. Grace is predominantly attracted to Fitzpiers because he is the man closest to being her

³²² Ibid. 8.

³²³ Ibid. 28.

intellectual equal. While she does regret her educated status because it causes her to desire Fitzpiers over Giles, she also sees that Fitzpiers “acted upon her like a dram, exciting her, throwing her into a novel atmosphere which biassed [sic] her doings until the influence was over,” even though she “never regarded him in the light of a destined husband.”³²⁴ His familiarity with science, medicine, philosophy, and other disciplines does not provide any grounds for sorcery or magic; however, in the eyes of the less-educated residents of Little Hintock and Blackmoor Vale, it does. A similar view is expressed by Caliban in regards to Prospero; he cries, “I say by sorcery he got this isle; / From me he got it.”³²⁵ Fitzpiers, like Prospero, utilizes his intelligence as power over the natives of the land he comes to inhabit.

Within the structure of *The Tempest*, Prospero functions as both character—embodying the roles of father, ruler, and possessor of mystical knowledge—and metatheatrical figure who mediates between the audience and the play. He is the overseer of the action and often the manipulator or instigator of events, given the magical abilities and characters under his control. This also causes Prospero to be associated with playwriting and directing. Fitzpiers is similarly associated with the theatrical (though he does not serve a metatheatrical function), and not only because he hides his extramarital affairs. When Grace visits Fitzpiers’s house, she notices that “at moments there was something theatrical in the delivery of Fitzpiers’s effusions; yet it would have been inexact to say that it was intrinsically theatrical.”³²⁶ Fitzpiers weaves words in a way that entrances those around him, particularly women, but it is important to note that Grace, however tempted by Fitzpiers, recognizes the apparent artificiality of his manner. Grace,

³²⁴ Ibid. 143.

³²⁵ *The Tempest* 3.2.59-60.

³²⁶ *The Woodlanders* 118.

like the audience in a theatre, willingly suspends her disbelief in order to trust Fitzpiers; she perceives the theatricality of his speech as an accepted and natural aspect of his character, rather than something that could become suspicious or endanger their relationship.

The ‘tempests’ that occur in *The Woodlanders* are less literal than the titular storm of Shakespeare’s play. The romantic conflicts between Grace, Fitzpiers, and Felice Charmond all contribute to a stormy plotline—at one point, Felice feels “overshadowed with sudden night, as if a tornado had passed”—but the most obvious tempest of the novel is that which precipitates the death of Giles.³²⁷ In seeing the tempest devised by her father, and the destruction it causes, Miranda’s “dream of human life” is “shattered,” and the ‘tempest’ in *The Woodlanders* similarly shatters Grace’s happiness.³²⁸ D. H. Lawrence calls Giles’s death “the tragedy of Hardy, always the same: the tragedy of those who, more or less pioneers, have died in the wilderness.”³²⁹ Giles remains sympathetic, chivalrous, self-sacrificing, and loving until he dies, which makes the loss all the more grievous both for the reader and the other characters. However, what Giles symbolizes for his fellow characters and the entire novel challenges the immediate conclusion that the death of so good-hearted a man must be considered tragic. Before his death, Grace comes to recognize that her romantic interest in Giles “had become revitalized into growth by her widening perceptions of what was great and little in life.”³³⁰ Grace’s change of heart occurs at both the worst and most ideal moment, for although she is already married to Fitzpiers and thus cannot be with Giles, her renewed

³²⁷ Ibid. 211.

³²⁸ James, D.G., *The Dream of Prospero* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967) 36.

³²⁹ D. H. Lawrence, “The Real Tragedy (1914),” *Hardy: The Tragic Novels*, ed. R. P. Draper (New York: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1975) 64.

³³⁰ *The Woodlanders* 198.

love for the woodsman injects hope and happiness into her unfortunate marriage. Giles acts as Grace's anchor and confidante during difficult times. Soon after, Giles is likened to "Hamlet's friend," referring to Horatio, the only prominent character in *Hamlet* to survive.³³¹ Horatio in himself becomes a symbol of life in death and hope for the future, for he is entrusted with the responsibility of telling Hamlet's story. However, Horatio's survival does not make the play any less tragic, for nearly all the characters perish as a result of their own folly or at the hands of others. Therefore, Giles's death seems like the death of hope, for if he is similar to Horatio and any positive future he may signify, then the end of *The Woodlanders* must surely be bleak. Yet that is not the case. Giles continues to imbue hopefulness into the book after his death, for after such a tragedy, the plot moves to slightly more optimistic ground.

Miranda's perspective may be altered by seeing the tempest, but that shaking of her previous worldview leaves her vulnerable enough to find solace and truth in Prospero's recollections of their past and her courtship with Ferdinand. The tempest purifies, redeems, and exorcises; it catalyzes the return of the old order and the just punishment (or admonishment) of wrongdoers, and nourishes the seeds of new life and potential happiness. Once the primary conflict is resolved with Giles's death, the rest of the story faces "calm seas."³³² In the same way, the tempests of *The Woodlanders* must pass, their devastation a form of cleaning, absolution, and redemption. Giles Winterborne must die in order for Grace to move forward and devote herself to Fitzpiers. Of course, Grace does not forgive Fitzpiers or her father for some time after Giles dies, but such grief is natural. She does manage, however, to forgive Felice Charmond with a

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² *The Tempest* 5.1.374.

certain degree of womanly solidarity and sympathy.³³³ That Grace grows ill soon afterwards, but does not die from it, is the next stage in the purification initiated by Giles's death. Grace must be physically and emotionally shaken enough to become vulnerable and open to change. The sickness exorcises Grace's emotional tension; it allows her to grieve completely and genuinely, but with the healthy possibility that such grief will reach an end.

The last five chapters of *The Woodlanders* signify a departure from the tragedy of Giles's death. Both Grace and Marty South encounter the sense that Giles could never have properly belonged to either of them: in Marty's case, because of his affection for Grace, and for Grace, because of Giles's close mental connection with Marty and her extant marriage to Fitzpiers. The despair expressed by the two women in conversation exacerbates the pathos lingering from Giles's death, and therefore provides the illusion that the novel will remain tragic. However, Hardy provides careful juxtapositions of hopelessness and promise in chapter forty-four that begin to suggest otherwise. Grace is consumed with "mournful fancies" wherein she blames herself wholly for Giles's death, yet mere sentences later, she recognizes that "there was only one man whose opinion on the circumstances she would be at all disposed to trust. Her husband was that man."³³⁴ Grace is simultaneously facing the loss of Giles and any hope for her future happiness, as well as the recognition that she still trusts her husband. Trust, even in regards to medical knowledge, is a promising connection between Grace and Fitzpiers at this point in the novel. The hope associated with such trust is made more evident by the fact that it is so obviously juxtaposed with Grace's grief. In a similar manner, Fitzpiers's emotional state

³³³ *The Woodlanders* 294.

³³⁴ *Ibid.* 298.

changes from “nervous misery” to “sudden hope” within the space of a paragraph.³³⁵ The emotional and physical distance between his wife and himself—and how it is his fault—rightfully torments Fitzpiers, but he is also excited by the possibility of Grace falling in love with him once again.

By placing these juxtapositions so soon after the novel’s tragic climax—the death of Giles and all that accompanies it—Hardy forces the reader to move past the tragic elements of the plot. In fact, Hardy prompts his audience to withstand the unhappy moments in order to reach the end of the novel: the final sentences of the chapter read, “To wait was imperative. ‘A little time might melt her frozen thoughts’; and lead her to look on him with toleration, if not with love.”³³⁶ Hardy references *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* in this passage, when the Duke prays his daughter Silvia will forget her love for Valentine (act three, scene two). When analyzed in conjunction with Grace’s assertion of her “trust” in Fitzpiers, it is clear that positive, hopeful emotions can still exist amongst despair and loss. Two sentences later, at the beginning of chapter forty-five, Grace and Marty are likened to “the two mourners in *Cymbeline*”—Aviragus and Guiderius—one of Shakespeare’s romances.³³⁷ This allusion is particularly telling, as the grief felt by those characters in *Cymbeline* for the seemingly dead Fidele, especially by Aviragus, is neither long-lasting nor without hope. Even in her despair, Grace has the possibility of a happy or contented future. Felice Charmond, the parasite feeding upon any joy between Grace and Fitzpiers, is dead, and Grace is still lawfully married. These two Shakespeare references are vital to the novel’s denouement, connecting the ending of Grace, Fitzpiers, and Marty’s character arcs to both Shakespearean comedy (*Two Gentlemen*) and romance

³³⁵ Ibid. 299.

³³⁶ Ibid. 300.

³³⁷ Ibid. 301.

(*Cymbeline*). Although neither of these refers to *The Tempest*, their function remains the same: to inject levity, hope, and promise into an apparently hopeless landscape.

Yet another example of a hopeful future for Grace takes the shape of a love letter from Fitzpiers. It is “the first occasion, or nearly the first” that he sends her a letter, as if their courtship were beginning anew, and in a more promising manner than the first time.³³⁸ She agrees to meet with him, which sparks “a delight as of the bursting of Spring” in Fitzpiers, “one of the few pleasures that he had experienced of late years at all resembling those of his early youth.”³³⁹ These references to spring and youthfulness signify fertility and rebirth, both of which are essential to comic and romantic endings. Fitzpiers later quotes *Measure for Measure* to Grace in description of his love for her, a profession that Grace quickly quashes out of disgust and despair, for “[her] heart is in the grave with Giles.”³⁴⁰ Nevertheless, Grace agrees to see her husband occasionally, but focuses her time on becoming more educated through Fitzpiers’s books. When they do meet again, she asks him to “give up those strange studies that used to distract you so much,” which refers to his interest in philosophy, but can also be interpreted as a plea for fidelity, for giving up his flirtations and romantic affairs.³⁴¹ Furthermore, during this meeting, Grace admits to perusing some of Fitzpiers’s French romances; though she asserts she does not like them, her choice to look through them, and Hardy’s choice to mention that she does, tie this part of the novel to romantic tradition. Grace’s dislike of the romantic novels is irrelevant to the argument that *The Woodlanders* draws from romance, because her primary issue with the French romances is their archaic language

³³⁸ Ibid. 302.

³³⁹ Ibid. 303.

³⁴⁰ Ibid. 306.

³⁴¹ Ibid. 310.

and spelling, rather than their plots. Hardy draws not from French romance so much as Shakespearean, and creates a new, hybridized form of romance in his own novels, making Grace's comment less pertinent to the text in which she exists.

The final turning point of the novel that leads to its romantic ending is Grace's encounter with the man-trap. The incident is a product of failing marriages in several respects: Tim Tangs, owner of the trap, sets it out because he suspects Suke is unfaithful, and Grace gets caught in the trap after reading the marriage service in a prayer-book and contemplating whether or not her marriage to Fitzpiers is in as helpless a state as she believes.³⁴² She departs from her house conflicted but more open to the idea of reunion with Fitzpiers. If Hardy were attempting to construct a tragedy, then Grace would not have escaped the man-trap at such a crucial turning-point in Grace's emotional and mental state. Instead, her life is spared, and the incident serves to rekindle some of the romantic emotions between Grace and Fitzpiers. Grace overcomes the "ghastliness of the possibility" that she could have died, and willingly accompanies her husband to their home:³⁴³

They went on together. The adventure, and the emotions consequent upon the reunion which that event had forced on, combined to render Grace oblivious of the direction of their desultory ramble, till she noticed they were in an encircled glade in the densest part of the wood. The moon, that had imperceptibly added her rays to the scene, shone almost vertically. It was an exceptionally soft balmy evening for the time of the year, which was just that transient period in the May month when beech trees have suddenly unfolded large limp young leaves of the softness of butterflies' wings. Boughs bearing such leaves hung low around and completely enclosed them, so that it was as if they were in a great green vase, which had moss for its bottom and leaf sides [...] The hour had seemed much earlier than it was. But suddenly the question of time occurred to her.³⁴⁴

³⁴² Ibid. 319.

³⁴³ Ibid. 322.

³⁴⁴ Ibid. 323.

This portrayal of the environment is the opposite of the literally tempestuous scene with Giles at the cottage; nature surrounds them in a beautiful, ethereal cocoon, as mystical as the ‘marriage’ scene in *The Tempest*, in which Ferdinand and Miranda are blessed by nature goddesses. The dreary landscape seen in the first moments of the novel has been cast away, and nature is blessing this relationship. In addition, the fact that this scene occurs by moonlight further romanticizes the exchange between Grace and Fitzpiers and suggests that their romance may still be rekindled. The mention of time at the end of this passage is both positive and problematic: problematic because time can be a harbinger of tragedy through aging and death, as we see quite clearly and literally in the character of Little Father Time in *Jude the Obscure*, but positive because it can also heal. In the case of this passage, time serves both functions, for it reminds Grace of what she has lost, but also permits her to move forward in her relationship with Fitzpiers. In *The Winter’s Tale*, Time itself speaks, and it is evident that only time can reverse the wrongs that Leontes brings upon his wife and kingdom, allowing Perdita to grow, fall in love with Florizel, and return to Sicilia. In *The Tempest*, time serves the purpose of healer once again, for the many years of Prospero’s exile have allowed him to forgive those who have acted against him. Little Father Time in *Jude the Obscure* is a much darker figure, a corporeal manifestation of the diseased relationship between Jude and Arabella and a portent of the brief time that Sue and Jude’s relationship will survive.

Grace’s return to Fitzpiers is nonetheless unsettling; it appears as a betrayal of Giles’s love and Christ-like sacrifice. The act should not be as surprising as it is, for it is established much earlier that Grace has “fallen from the good old Hintock ways,” and although she does regain some of her woodland sensibilities, it is impossible to overcome

such a fall fully.³⁴⁵ And, as stated previously, Fitzpiers's intellect, foreignness, and his association with the upper classes are made more attractive because of that fall. The reader does not want Grace to be with Fitzpiers, given the knowledge of Giles's love for her and Fitzpiers's past actions, but in the final scene, the beneficial consequences that arise from the couple's reunion become clear. Both Grace and Marty suffer the loss of a lover when Giles dies, but it signifies something greater for Marty. In his death, Giles is subsumed into the woodlands, the space he shared with Marty, and the only place where she can still reach him without the influence of the modern world. Directly following his death, Grace remains dedicated to Giles, which prevents Marty from finding any solace in Giles' death into the natural world. However, by the novel's final page, Grace has returned to the bed of Edred Fitzpiers and left Marty to perform their weekly ritual at Giles' grave alone. Marty approaches the grave, appearing "almost like a being who had rejected with indifference the attribute of sex for the loftier quality of abstract humanism": once again, her identity as a chthonic deity shines through, transcending qualities of mortality.³⁴⁶ She begins her eulogy to Giles by claiming him as "my own own love," reflecting their continued bonds of friendship, shared divinity, siblings, and potential lovers, even in death.³⁴⁷ Grace has left Giles for Edred, leaving Marty free to be with Giles in his death; her life in the woodlands will continue, and she will remember him in every tree, in every apple, as she takes up his profession and maintains her sublime inner connection to the natural world. Grace realizes too late that she would have been happier with Giles, and in death, Marty manages to be closer to the man she loves than she ever could be when he lived.

³⁴⁵ Ibid. 40.

³⁴⁶ Ibid. 331.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

Hardy does not only allude to Shakespearean romance and comedy over the course of *The Woodlanders*; he references tragedies such as *Hamlet*, *Othello*, Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, and Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. Furthermore, Hardy's narration calls events 'tragic' at multiple points in the story; Grace thinks that "a husband's neglect"³⁴⁸ is "a far more tragical matter to her than it would be to one who had a large circle of friends to fall back on,"³⁴⁹ the murder of Felice Charmond is a "tragedy [...] of passion and crime," and Grace's flight into the woods with the sick Giles has a "tragic colour"³⁵⁰ to Fitzpiers. Dale Kramer argues that *The Woodlanders* "is the most pessimistic of the Wessex novels. Two modes of society...conspire to frustrate and overthrow human efforts aimed at happiness"; however, if that were true, there would be far less possibility of happiness, or of characters moving on from their grief.³⁵¹ It is true that both the woodlanders and the non-native characters in the novel collectively prevent the romance between Giles and Grace from reaching marriage, but it is arguable whether *The Woodlanders* is the most pessimistic Hardy novel. After all, Grace willingly decides to be with Fitzpiers, and is last seen "in the arms of another man than Giles"; she re-consummates the relationship that was severed by her husband's infidelity and her broken heart.³⁵² Hardy proposes a much more pessimistic view in *Jude the Obscure*, in which Sue returns to the man she married (much as Grace does), but does so out of the deepest feelings of wrongdoing, desperation, and trauma. She is still disgusted by Phillotson, and there is little to no possibility of her bearing his children, as she did with Jude.

³⁴⁸ Ibid. 195.

³⁴⁹ Ibid. 295.

³⁵⁰ Ibid. 286.

³⁵¹ Kramer 109.

³⁵² *The Woodlanders* 331.

Kramer insists that Hardy was not trying to make *The Woodlanders* a “conventional tragedy,” measurable against “conventional tragic theories,” but that the novel is a tragedy nonetheless.³⁵³ Ignoring similarities between *The Woodlanders* and genres other than tragedy presents its own issues, and casts aside interpretations of the novel that are both valuable and complex. Romances such as *The Tempest* hardly adhere to concrete rules for the genre, as the genre itself is so variable, so perhaps *The Woodlanders* is not so much an ‘unconventional tragedy’ as an ‘unconventional romance.’

The novel ends with the words “good things” ringing from Marty’s lips.³⁵⁴ The “good things” done by Giles are past, but Marty refuses to forget them. The memory of Giles and all his goodness lives on in the figure of Marty South, the only character remaining who possesses as intimate a tie to nature as Giles himself experienced. If Giles’s death catalyzed a wholly tragic trajectory for the rest of the novel, then no one would remain by his grave at its close. Even if Grace has forgotten him momentarily, choosing Fitzpiers instead, Marty has not, nor will she. Offstage, Grace and Fitzpiers begin their life together anew, just as Miranda and Ferdinand embark upon a journey to a new life while Prospero speaks his final words to the audience. And Marty, like Prospero, speaks her final soliloquy to an audience that does not reply, but simply listens.

³⁵³ Ibid. 105.

³⁵⁴ Ibid. 331.

'Pure' Women: Miranda and Tess of the D'Urbervilles

“Though to be well-favoured might be the gift of fortune, a family name came by nature.”³⁵⁵
-*Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (70)

Good wombs have borne bad sons.
-*The Tempest* 1.2.143

An unsigned review of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* from December 1891 called the novel “peculiarly the Woman’s Tragedy,” referring to the story of its heroine and suggesting that its ideal audience is female.³⁵⁶ It is debatable whether *Tess* is best understood or received by women readers, or whether it is a tragedy, but what is true about this critic’s statement is the fact that the novel focuses its energies on the life and the sufferings of a woman. Any comparison of Hardy’s novel and Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* must therefore begin with their respective heroines. Miranda’s story—her hidden past, Caliban’s disturbing romantic interest in her, her courtship with Ferdinand, and their symbolic, almost theatrical wedding ceremony—possesses strong parallels to the general arc of Tess’s life. The difference arises when looking at the characters of the men with whom they interact, for Miranda has a caring and cautious father and loving fiancé, whereas Tess’s father is less aware of his daughter’s situation, and Angel abandons her. As a result of this difference, Miranda is granted a happy ending and a future with a good man, but Tess’s tale ends in her death. Although the novel ends in the death of the protagonist, other aspects of the story and its unfortunate close undercut such details that, at first glance, hearken back to tragic tradition.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁵ This quotation from *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* is additionally interesting because it is drawn from Shakespeare’s comedy *Much Ado About Nothing*; see Springer 131.

³⁵⁶ *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* 431.

³⁵⁷ Mobray Morris, one of the publishers who originally refused the manuscript of *Tess*, commented in his 1892 review of the novel in *The Quarterly Review*, “Mr. Hardy must have read the dramatists of the

In fact, Hardy references Shakespearean comedy before the novel even begins. The novel's epigraph comes from Shakespeare's *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, from Julia's monologue in which she thinks upon her love for Proteus and how she ripped up his letter: "Poor wounded name, my bosom as a bed / Shall lodge thee."³⁵⁸ Julia's sentiments are hardly cheerful, but as they are taken from a comedy, and Julia does receive her 'happy ending,' Hardy's use of these lines as the epigraph for the novel contrast the accepted view of *Tess* as tragic. The fact that this quotation refers to Julia's love for Proteus is additionally significant because Proteus's actions do not cast him in a favourable light, most apparent in his threat to rape Silvia. The subject of rape ties the comedy to *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and parallels Julia's sentiments towards Proteus with Tess's love for Angel and her initial trust in Alec.

The first scene in which Miranda appears is act one, scene two, and in that scene both she and the audience are provided with exposition regarding her noble background. Prospero asks his daughter, "Canst thou remember / A time before we came unto this cell? [...] What seest thou else / In the dark backward and absym of time?"³⁵⁹ Prospero had previously refused to reveal the truth of Miranda's birth to her—that she is, in fact, the daughter of an exiled duke—but by doing so at the start of the play, he allows her to establish connections to courtly life and to the people associated with that life, including

Periclean and Elizabethan ages very carelessly, or have strangely forgotten them, if he conceives that there is any analogy between their great handling of great tragedy motives and this clumsy sordid tale"; Hardy boldly replied, "If the motives in *Tess* are not at all those of the Periclean & Elizabethan tragic dramatists—however weakly developed in the novel—I should like to know what they are" (*Tess of the D'Urbervilles* 439, footnote pp. 438). This admission on Hardy's part confirms the importance of allusions and literary influences on his own writing, but does not assert that *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* is dependent entirely upon such "tragic dramatists."

³⁵⁸ William Shakespeare, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, ed. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks [Folger Shakespeare Library], 1999) 1.2.121-122; Springer 123.

³⁵⁹ *The Tempest* 1.2.48-49, 61-62.

Ferdinand. Nearly the same method of exposition occurs in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*; Parson Tringham informs Tess's father that he is descended from the d'Urbervilles, and "if knighthood were hereditary, like a baronetcy, as it practically was in old times, when men were knighted from father to son, you would be Sir John now."³⁶⁰ John Durbeyfield, in turn, is first to tell his daughter of their noble origins; Tess is participating in the May-Day dance when her father embarrasses her by riding past and shouting the news. This discovery is the catalyst for the rest of the novel; it is the fact that brings Tess and Alec together, leads to Tess's sexual 'fall,' and causes Tess to find a job at Talbothays Dairy, where she becomes properly acquainted with Angel Clare. An additional similarity between the ancestry of the Durbeyfields and Prospero and Miranda is the fact that neither hold claim to their respective titles any longer. Parson Tringham warns John Durbeyfield, "Chasten yourself with the thought of 'how are the mighty fallen,'" citing a verse from II Samuel that later appears on Durbeyfield's gravestone.³⁶¹ Moreover, the pasts of both the duchy of Milan and the d'Urbervilles are tainted; the former for the betrayal of Prospero by Antonio, and the latter by the d'Urberville 'curse.' That both families attempt to raise their statuses to their former glory, purged of the negative influences of their pasts, infuses both works with a sense of hope, though for Tess, that hope is not actualized in the way that she or her family desires.

The knowledge granted to Miranda and Tess regarding their noble backgrounds is just one form of education that initiates their respective plotlines, but other forms also contribute to their stories and their parallels to one another. Miranda is intelligent, having received what may be assumed to be an intensive education from her father during their

³⁶⁰ *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* 41.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.* 42, 374.

time on the island. This education, Garber writes, “will prove to be a literal leading out—out of childhood, and out of the protected venue of the island”; education is a social tie to courtly life (as mentioned in the previous paragraph), and it will presumably allow her to acclimate to life as a future duchess without succumbing to corruption or decadence.³⁶² Tess is also educated to the point where her schooling is evident in her dialect and she is occasionally frustrated by her parents’ common attitudes and speech. She is described as “a mere vessel of emotions untinged by experience. The dialect was on her tongue to some extent, despite the village school [...] Phases of her childhood lurked in her aspect still.”³⁶³ Tess is set apart for her intelligence and her beauty, but like Miranda, is “untinged by experience”; she has had no practical application of the knowledge she has, and is not given the education she needs to avoid the situations that change her life. She knows nothing of sex or the intentions of men, and combined with her attractiveness, this only serves her ill. Miranda has never seen a man apart from her father or Caliban before she lays eyes on Ferdinand, but because Ferdinand is honourable and Miranda lives in such a protective environment, she is not endangered by her naïveté.

In the end, it is ‘knowledge’ in the sexual sense that leads to Tess’s undoing. *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* is famously subtitled, “A Pure Woman, Faithfully Presented,” and the matter of Tess’s purity is central to the novel. Readers today may identify that Tess remains ‘pure’ through the novel despite her rape and subsequent pregnancy, but for Hardy’s contemporaries, the subject matter of the novel was nothing short of scandalous at moments, and to make the claim that Tess was still ‘pure’ was both radical and

³⁶² Marjorie Garber, “The Eye of the Storm: Structure and Myth in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*,” *William Shakespeare’s The Tempest*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1988) 55.

³⁶³ *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* 48.

incorrect.³⁶⁴ For censorship reasons, the rape was replaced with a mock marriage between Tess and Alec, and their child, Sorrow, was removed altogether in the serialized version of the novel (published in the *Graphic* in 1891).³⁶⁵ The novel's subtitle remained, however, and a restored edition of the novel was published by Osgood, McIlvaine & Co. later that same year, including all bowdlerized passages and the two separately published stories, "Saturday Night in Arcady" and "The Midnight Baptism."³⁶⁶ Despite the suffering she endures, the social and moral battles she fights, Tess is still "a pure woman"; she is at the center of the novel's conflict, but the conflict usually arises because of things done *to* her, rather than by her own action. Tess first appears in a white gown at the May Day dance, symbolizing the newness and restorative effects of springtime and identifying the dancing women as pure and virginal. Even after she loses her virginity, though, Tess is still associated with images of purity. During the baptism of Sorrow, her younger siblings perceive that her attitude renders "a transfiguring effect upon the face which had been her doing, showing it as a thing of immaculate beauty, with a touch of dignity which was almost regal"; she is likened to the immaculate, virginal mother of Christ.³⁶⁷ Despite the "immeasurable social chasm" caused by the rape, a chasm she must continually attempt to breach, the narrator still recognizes that Tess is pure (as does Angel, until he is told the truth of her past).³⁶⁸

The matter of female purity is also a concern in *The Tempest*. Prospero dwells on Miranda's sexual purity throughout the play, mentioning how Caliban attempted to sexually assault her, and later, Prospero tells Ferdinand,

³⁶⁴ Morgan 84.

³⁶⁵ *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* 12, 402.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 11-12.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 123; Morgan 101.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 104.

If thou dost break her virgin-knot before
 All sanctimonious ceremonies may
 With full and holy rite be ministered
 No sweet aspersion shall the heavens let fall
 To make this contract grow; but barren hate,
 Sour-eyed disdain, and discord shall bestrew
 The union of your bed with weeds so loathly
 That you shall hate it both. Therefore take heed.³⁶⁹

Although Prospero provides Ferdinand with this injunction, later events in the play suggest that the young lovers do not heed his words or, at the very least, have considered disobeying them. In the play's final scene but for the epilogue, Prospero draws back the curtains upstage to discover "Ferdinand and Miranda, playing at chess."³⁷⁰ The game of chess symbolizes not only the conquering of lands or peoples (paralleled by the peaceful merging of powers through Ferdinand and Miranda's marriage), but also serves as a metaphor for sex, a metaphor Shakespeare's audiences would have recognized and acknowledged. While playing chess, Miranda says, "Sweet lord, you play me false," to which Ferdinand replies, "No, my dearest love, / I would not for the world."³⁷¹ This pledge of fidelity on Ferdinand's part may also be interpreted as a promise to protect Miranda's virtue, or an assurance that he would not abandon her after consummating their relationship. What further obfuscates these lines and the entire chess episode is the question of whether Miranda and Ferdinand are legitimately married during the play. The spectacle orchestrated by Prospero in act four is at least a blessing upon the couple, a statement of the intention to marry—a formal engagement. However, it is less clear whether the event marks the couple as husband and wife; if so, then any sexual relations subsequently occurring between them—represented by the playing of chess—would be

³⁶⁹ *The Tempest* 4.1.16-23.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.* stage directions following 5.1.199.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.* 5.1.200-202.

nothing more than a consummation of their relationship, and would not mar Miranda's feminine purity. If not, then the question of whether conventional notions of feminine purity can be applied to Miranda, such as those applied to Tess by some of the novel's early readers, becomes more pertinent.

Miranda is not a weak character so much as a passive one, and she is only that as a result of her father's unusual amount of power. Prospero goes so far to control his daughter's life that she has almost no opportunity to make choices for herself. Tess's parents place her in a similar situation early in the novel by forcing her to visit the d'Urbervilles. In the cases of both women, the influence of their parents inadvertently places them in situations that compromise their sexual purity: Miranda is sexually harassed by Caliban, and Tess is raped by Alec d'Urberville. Early in the play, Prospero reveals Caliban's bestial nature, prompting him by saying, "Thou didst seek to violate / The honour of my child," to which Caliban replies, "O ho, O ho! Would't had been done! / Thou didst prevent me. I had peopled else / This isle with Calibans."³⁷² Caliban does not succeed in raping or seducing Miranda, but the existence of such an intention throughout the play casts a pall over Miranda's virginal state. To know that she is desired in such a sinister way taints her, though in reality she remains sexually pure. In the same way, the rape of Tess in *The Chase* is characterized by contrasting images of darkness (or shadow) and light. Tess is variously described as "a pale nebulousness," "the white muslin figure," and "this beautiful feminine tissue, sensitive as gossamer, and practically blank as snow as yet"; even after the event, when the narrator specifically states that Tess will never be the same as "that previous self of hers," she is not described

³⁷² Ibid. 1.2.417-421.

as impure or compared to darkness or dirtiness.³⁷³ In contrast, everything around Tess “was blackness alike”; “darkness and silence ruled everywhere around” and “the possibility of a retribution [lurked] in the present catastrophe.”³⁷⁴ The rape stains Tess’s reputation just as Miranda is negatively impacted by the cruel desires of Caliban, but both women are still considered to be pure. Alec is a figure of darkness and evil throughout the novel, paralleled directly with Caliban, who is described by Prospero as a “poisonous slave”³⁷⁵ and by Stephano and Trinculo as a “monster.”³⁷⁶ Alec is a Stoke-d’Urberville, not actually related to Tess’s ancestral family, and thus, like Caliban, claims a birthright that he does not possess (or in Caliban’s case, no longer possesses). Both are likened to devils or demons: Caliban outright, and Alec indirectly, for by abandoning his calling as a preacher later in the novel, he likewise abandons religion and falls from grace.³⁷⁷ Tess is rightfully terrified to see Alec again after all she suffers, for not only does he represent all the pain and suffering of her life, but also the dark and animalistic impulses that appear in the character of Caliban.

Placed in stark contrast to Alec is Angel Clare, whose name alone signifies that he should be a far better man than Alec, an assumption that is later tested and found wanting. What is evident from Angel’s first appearance in the novel, however, is that he and Tess are fated to cross paths again, just as Miranda and Ferdinand’s first meeting suggests that they are destined to be together. Angel becomes the Ferdinand to Tess’s Miranda. Upon first sight of Ferdinand, Miranda asks, “What is ’t? A spirit? [...] I

³⁷³ *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* 103-104.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁵ *The Tempest* 1.2.383.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 2.2.66.

³⁷⁷ Dorothy Van Ghent refers to Alec as “the villain of melodrama” and “the Evil One”; see Dorothy Van Ghent, *The English Novel: Form and Function* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961) 208.

might call him / A thing divine, for nothing natural / I ever saw so noble.”³⁷⁸ Calling Ferdinand “a thing divine” is almost as ironic as Angel’s own name, for it is clear that he is just as human as Miranda. Miranda says of Ferdinand, “There’s nothing ill can dwell in such a temple,” something that Tess also thinks of Angel.³⁷⁹ Ferdinand and Angel also have idealized first impressions of their future wives. Angel, noticing Tess standing alone as he leaves the May-Day dance, muses, “He wished that he had asked her [to dance]; he wished that he had inquired her name. She was so modest, so expressive, she had looked so soft in her thin white gown that he felt he had acted stupidly.”³⁸⁰ Angel is struck by Tess’s appearance, and although they are not reunited until they work at Talbothays Dairy, Angel still regards her as “a fresh and virginal daughter of Nature.”³⁸¹ Angel is also paralleled with Ferdinand in regards to his own sexual knowledge. Ferdinand admits to Miranda, “For several virtues / Have I liked several women,” and although there is no indication of the extent to which such ‘liking’ was taken, it nonetheless remains that Miranda is not the first woman for which he has experienced romantic feelings.³⁸² Angel similarly struggles with this, though he explains it in more specific terms, telling Tess on their wedding night how he once visited a brothel.

Tess’s past is blackened by the d’Urberville family curse and her lost virginity, the latter of which haunts her during Angel’s pursuit of her affections. The tragic hangs about her like a cloud, preventing her from expressing her feelings to him, while the atmosphere of Talbothays and the positive nature of Angel’s love for her are contrastingly aligned with comedy or pastoral. Talbothays is a place where “nymphs and

³⁷⁸ Ibid. 1.2.488, 498-500.

³⁷⁹ Ibid. 1.2.552.

³⁸⁰ *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* 51.

³⁸¹ Ibid. 147.

³⁸² *The Tempest* 3.1.52-53.

swains” abide, where the natural landscape is fertile and prosperous, similar to Miranda’s own experience of the island (to others, the island is not always so favourable).³⁸³ Tess’s fate persists even within this setting, however. The climax of Tess’s anxiety over her romance with Angel occurs on their wedding night, when Tess reveals the truth of her relationship with Alec to her newly-wedded husband, despite her mother’s attempts to dissuade her in doing so. Miranda also divulges information she is told she should not: she tells Ferdinand her name, and afterwards exclaims, “O my father, / I have broke your hest to say so!”³⁸⁴ Ferdinand, a much better man than Angel, and faced with a far less serious confession than Tess’s, accepts Miranda’s identity and past without a thought against her; Tess, unfortunately, is granted no such blessing.

Throughout the novel, Tess takes every action she can to avoid tragedy, to escape the dark future she feels pressing down upon her; even the final drastic act of killing Alec is out of desperation. Her ‘fall,’ both in terms of the loss of her virginity and the gradual degradation of her situation, is brought about by no fault of her own. Yet it is her active choice to commit murder that brings about her demise; she suffers extensively at the hands of others, with both social and personal consequences, but she does not die from that suffering or its consequences. There is no parallel to this murderous act in Miranda’s story, but Prospero’s use of the tempest to give the appearance that characters have died, and his desire to punish Antonio for his past actions, both convey similar instincts to those that Tess exhibits. Tess’s action leads to her execution, but she calmly approaches death after the night spent with Angel at Stonehenge. Her decision to kill Alec, however

³⁸³ *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* 181.

³⁸⁴ *The Tempest* 3.1.45-46. Tess also makes another confession to Angel of a similar nature to Miranda’s, when she tells him of her noble ancestry and hopes she will still accept her.

morally wrong or correct, is a choice between living in misery with Alec or in relative happiness with Angel, whom she still loves. She would rather live with Angel for a brief period of time, and have to die, than continue in her tormented life with Alec. Her almost delirious attitude after the murder—“she was so pale, so breathless, so quivering in every muscle”—is a product of the blissful high she gets from being reunited with Angel; for at the core, the murder is an action stimulated by the hope that Angel will take her back.³⁸⁵ She tells Angel, “I thought as I ran along that you would be sure to forgive me now I have done that [killed Alec]. It came to me as a shining light that I should get you back that way.”³⁸⁶ Tess may be emotionally unstable at this moment, but that does not discount the validity of her perspective: that murder may be used as a conduit to a better future for herself. So, although the act appears to be indicative of Tess reaching her lowest point, to her, it is the most hopeful act of her life.³⁸⁷ She is finally free of Alec and, with him, all associations with her tarnished past.

Despite the importance of Alec’s murder to the plot of the novel, various moments throughout the novel suggest that Tess’s downfall is a product of fate or destiny, as seen in earlier Hardy novels such as *The Return of the Native*. Mrs. Durbeyfield mentions how she “tried her [Tess’s] fate in the *Fortune-Teller*,”³⁸⁸ a volume that caters to the woman’s “fast-perishing lumber of superstitions, folk-lore, dialect, and orally transmitted ballads.”³⁸⁹ As it is Mrs. Durbeyfield’s poor advice that guides Tess towards her future by forcing her to go to the d’Urberville estate, it is as if ‘fate’ is acting directly to control Tess, albeit through a fortune-telling book of

³⁸⁵ *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* 384.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.* 384-385.

³⁸⁷ Van Ghent 209.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.* 59.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.* 55.

questionable reliability. Not long after, Tess tells her younger brother, Abraham, that humanity inhabits a “blighted” star for which there is little hope.³⁹⁰ Her words are depressing but are an all-too accurate prediction of the sort of future she will have. And, in mere pages, the first of many devastating incidents in Tess’s life comes to pass: the death of the family horse, Prince, due to her own irresponsibility. The horse, stabbed to death by an oncoming mail-cart, represents a loss of financial stability as well as the rape in Tess’s future, though both her family’s financial instability and her relationship with Alec are both directly caused by the actions and suggestions of her parents. Tess is consistently surrounded by circumstances that are unusually and often inconveniently coincidental from the beginning of the novel, but it is not until Prince’s death that such occurrences assume a portentous aura. Fate also plays a part in *The Tempest*; Ariel, appearing in the guise of a harpy before Antonio, Alonso, and Sebastian, asserts, “You fools, I and my fellows are ministers of Fate.”³⁹¹ Ariel, acting on the orders of Prospero, becomes the physical form of a fatalistic force much like that which haunts Tess’s life. Fate is just as present in *The Tempest* as in *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, only in *The Tempest*, the protagonist is the manipulator of fate, rather than only the subject of it, as Tess is.

As the novel draws to its close, Tess’s ultimate demise becomes more apparent, but instead of allowing her death to be tragic, her actions and words undercut the tragic facets of her downfall in a way that inculcates the ending of the novel with hopefulness and redemption. For example, Tess and Angel have the following conversation whilst staying the night at the abandoned Bramhurst Court:

³⁹⁰ Ibid. 63.

³⁹¹ *The Tempest* 3.3.78-79.

By tacit consent they hardly once spoke of any incident of the past subsequent to their wedding-day. The gloomy intervening time seemed to sink into chaos, over which the present and prior times closed as if it never had been. [...]
 “Why should we put an end to all that’s sweet and lovely!” she deprecated.
 “What must come will come.” And, looking through the shutter-chink: “All is trouble outside there; inside here content.” He peeped out also. It was quite true; within was affection, union, error forgiven; outside was the inexorable. “And—and,” she said, pressing her cheek against his, “I fear that what you think of me now may not last. I do not wish to outlive your present feeling for me. I would rather not. I would rather be dead and buried when the time comes for you to despise me, so that it may never be known to me that you despised me.”
 “I cannot ever despise you.”
 “I also hope that.”³⁹²

Tess and Angel do not speak of their dark past because each has forgiven the other; this redeems Angel completely, for it is apparent that Tess has fully absolved her husband of his past wrongs whether or not the reader agrees.³⁹³ Tess needs no redemption in the eyes of the reader, and Angel’s forgiveness of her contributes more to his own redemption than to hers. Any memory of their time apart and the negative emotions they felt are erased; the memories “sink into chaos [...] as if it never had been.”³⁹⁴ On the whole, this scene between husband and wife is characterized more by its association with positive, hopeful feelings than with pessimistic ones. Words such as “sweet,” “lovely,” “content,” “hope,” “affection,” “union,” “forgiven” are more prevalent than the words with a more negative connotation in the passage, such as “gloomy,” “inexorable,” “trouble,” and “despise.” Tess and Angel want to avoid the darkness and inevitability that lies outside, and actively choose to allow the positive to overpower the negative, and romance to overpower tragedy.

Tess also undercuts the tragic in the final chapters of the novel by preparing others for a better future, a future without her. While still at Stonehenge with Angel,

³⁹² *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* 389.

³⁹³ Paris 8.

³⁹⁴ *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* 389.

Tess recalls her younger sister, Liza-Lu, and says to Angel, “She is so good and simple and pure. O, Angel—I wish you would marry her if you lose me, as you will do shortly. O, if you would!”³⁹⁵ Tess is aware that she cannot escape her fate of execution, and does not attempt to run farther. Facing death, she makes a final attempt at securing a promising future for those she loves. She is a character to be pitied, with whom the reader should sympathize, for she undoubtedly experiences horrible things in her life with no apparent end. But at this moment Tess is a figure of hope. When her child dies, she provides what she can for him by attempting to baptize him in hopes that he will go to heaven; after the ruin associated with her rape and pregnancy, she still moves forward, finding solace and relative happiness in the pastoral setting of Talbothays Dairy; she accepts Angel’s proposal of marriage in hopes that she will finally be granted a fulfilling, loving relationship; and when everything has gone wrong, and she faces the choice between death and misery, she chooses death because it will grant her more time with the man she loves. Unlike Michael Henchard’s will, which is written in pencil and disobeyed, Tess’s ‘will,’ that Angel will look after Liza-Lu and perhaps marry her, is heeded. Liza-Lu is Tess undefiled according to societal standards, precisely the sort of woman that Angel needs and who could live happily in the world that destroyed Tess. Liza-Lu is granted Miranda’s happy ending, and because of the similarities between the two sisters, Tess experiences that happiness vicariously through her, even posthumously. Yes, the outlook is bleak: Hardy presents a world that devours all the happiness in woman’s life, leaving her with death as the only option of escape. Tanner argues, “The vision [in *Tess*] is tragic because he shows an ordering of existence in which nature turns against itself, in which the sun blasts what it blesses, in which all the hopeful explorations

³⁹⁵ Ibid. 393.

of life turn out to have been a circuitous peregrination towards death.”³⁹⁶ And for Tess, that is true. But it is not true for Angel, who survives disease and loss, or Liza-Lu, who has the rest of her life before her.

The novel ends with Tess’s execution, but the reader is not standing before her as she is hanged, or hearing her thoughts in her final moments. Hardy completely removes the reader from the scene of the primary action, instead placing him alongside Angel and Liza-Lu. The final paragraph of the novel reads,

“Justice” was done, and the President of the Immortals, in Aeschylean phrase, had ended his sport with Tess. And the d’Urberville knights and dames slept on in their tombs unknowing. The two speechless gazers bent themselves down to the earth, as if in prayer, and remained thus a long time, absolutely motionless: the flag continued to wave silently. As soon as they had strength they arose, joined hands again, and went on.³⁹⁷

The “President of the Immortals” is God, or perhaps Fate, and the fact that such a presence “had ended his sport,” suggests that any tragedy that can be associated with Tess has ended before the novel has finished.³⁹⁸ The flag marking Tess’s hanging remains “[continues] to wave silently,” which symbolizes Angel and Liza-Lu’s own remembrance of Tess; the flag’s silence, attributable to its distance from the pair, implies that Tess’s death will not remain at the forefront of their lives, but as a constant presence in the background.³⁹⁹ Tess’s hanging may also be interpreted as Christ-like, leaving Liza-Lu behind as her resurrected self. The reader is provided with a closing image of

³⁹⁶ Tony Tanner, “Colour and Movement in *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (1968),” *Hardy: The Tragic Novels*, ed. R. P. Draper (New York: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1975) 205. See also Douglas Brown, “A Novel of Character and Environment (1954),” *Hardy: The Tragic Novels*, ed. R. P. Draper (New York: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1975) 158; and Southerington 133.

³⁹⁷ *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* 396.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

Angel and Liza-Lu, not praying or mourning as might be expected, but of continuing on with their lives, of regaining strength and moving forward together.⁴⁰⁰

In the epilogue to *The Tempest*, Prospero “is still tentative and still experimental; still unresolved and still on the verge of a new phase of life”; in the same way, the reader of *Tess* is caught between pity for the unfortunate death of a woman wronged by the world and questionable emotions towards a potential future marriage between Angel and Liza-Lu.⁴⁰¹ It is not the desired resolution, because after all of Tess’s strife, she seems to receive no reward; but to interpret the novel’s ending in such a way is insufficient, for it fails to account for the role Tess plays in preserving the potential of the future. She walks towards her death with the words, “I am ready.”⁴⁰² There is no resentment or regret, but only peace and perhaps fear, yet another similarity to Christ’s attitude towards death. Her acceptance of death is pitiful rather than tragic, and through her death removes any stain from her family, thus allowing Liza-Lu to live a wholly untarnished life. Tess’s death redeems the darkness of her past by becoming “their [her siblings’] Providence,” and such a redemptive act is not tragic.⁴⁰³

Conclusion

In act three, scene three of *The Tempest*, when Ariel appears before the shipwrecked travelers under the guise of a harpy, both the frightened men and the audience are confronted with the unpleasant possibility of a bleak, even hellish future. Ariel accuses the three men of their past wrongdoings, namely, their removal of Prospero

⁴⁰⁰ Van Ghent 197.

⁴⁰¹ Berger, Jr. 41.

⁴⁰² *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* 395.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.* 360.

from Milan, and sentences them to “ling’ring perdition, worse than any death” if they do not repent and amend their ways.⁴⁰⁴ Tragic possibilities hang more heavily in the air for the accused. However, despite the fatalistic view presented in this scene, the play does not end as darkly as Ariel predicts.

In the cases of *The Woodlanders* and *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, both fate and tragedy are present and contribute to the endings of the novels. The reader may hope that Tess will survive the novel, that her situation will improve, but there are too many omens suggesting otherwise. Marty South, too, is unlikely to have a quintessential happy ending; pages into the novel, she must sacrifice a physical quality— her hair— that would aid her in winning the heart of the man she loves. Tragedy and fate exist even though aspects of comedy and romance do seep into both novels. What is so important, then, about promoting the presence of comedy and romance is not that they are overshadowed by tragedy, but that, even for characters such as Tess and Marty, hope persists even once tragedy has passed. Like Alonso and his companions, the novels are spared “ling’ring perdition, worse than any death” through the inclusion of non-tragic characteristics.

⁴⁰⁴ *The Tempest* 3.3.95.

Conclusion

*“It is Thomas Hardy, a name to be written in gold, to be placed next to Shakespeare’s, and to be honoured as the greatest writer of the time.”*⁴⁰⁵
-Jane Panton, *Leaves From a Life* (1908)

The works of Thomas Hardy, as with those of any other writer, cannot be diminished to a single interpretation. My goal in this thesis was to examine a previously unexplored possibility for Hardy’s novels: that, through an examination of some of the ways in which Hardy is influenced by non-tragic Shakespearean works, it is evident that the view of Hardy as a tragic novelist is insufficient. Through these chapters, I sought simultaneously to challenge the traditionally held perspective of Hardy’s novels and to encourage a wider range of interpretations of those works. Nevertheless, what I have discussed just begins to explore the possibilities of interpreting Hardy’s novels through the lens of Shakespearean comedy and romance. Hardy wrote much more than I have focused on here, and even within the novels I did analyze, there are many more topics that I did not cover. There is still more scholarship to be done.

By looking at Hardy’s novels as tragedies and nothing else, or by approaching Hardy’s canon of works with the view that he is a predominantly tragic writer, scholarship is not only restricting the lens through which we view his works, but also discounting the value of particular qualities of, or moments in, his novels. For example, scenes that would normally be considered as tragic, or overlooked for their less tragic qualities—such as the final scenes between Tess and Angel, the death of Michael Henchard, and the marriage of Thomasin Yeobright and Diggory Venn, to name a few—are granted greater weight through a more generous and inclusive view of genre. Seeing

⁴⁰⁵ As quoted in James Gibson, *Thomas Hardy: Interviews and Recollections* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, Inc., 1999) 10-11.

Hardy's works as amalgamations of various genres, and not confined to tragedy, brings to light the complexities and subtleties of Hardy's writing. His literary flexibility and artistry are made more apparent through this approach to his fiction.

As with literary perspectives that utilize feminist or religious contexts, this new approach to Hardy's writing is equally applicable to other writers. Hardy is not the only Victorian novelist who was greatly impacted by the works of Shakespeare, and the extent of Shakespeare's influence on Hardy, as I have discussed in this thesis, illustrates the importance of examining the external influences on an author and the content, themes, and genres of his or her works. A discussion of the influence of other genres on Hardy's writing is significant because it permits us to explore new perspectives on Hardy's other novels, his short stories, or his verse works, and normative views on his writing style may be tested. Hardy does more than write novels involving a string of unfortunate or hopeless events; he imbues them with a greater sense of realism through inclusion of comedic, romantic, and tragic conventions. The "romantic and sweet vision, scarcely incarnate"⁴⁰⁶ that exists beneath the veil of tragedy in Hardy's novels reveals his skill as more than a tragedian: he is "the Shakespeare of his generation," molding, melding, and transforming genres as masterfully as his primary influence, the Bard himself.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁶ *The Return of the Native* 320.

⁴⁰⁷ *Oxford* 391.

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