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"*Shadows in Strange Places*: Paganism, Folklore and Fairy-tale Elements to the Madonna/Whore Dichotomy in Thomas Hardy"

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Abstract

In Hardy's eyes, the familiar countryside transmutes into a strange place, bathed in moonlight. The shadows cast by this ethereal glow represent the mystical elements of a pagan past, now lingering only as faint echoes. The phrase 'shadows in strange places' appears in his novel *Far From the Madding Crowd*, in a scene where a forty-year-old bachelor Boldwood is reading a love-letter. It is used in this article to illustrate how Hardy's peerless vision brings the ancient shadows of a bygone past to life, blending folklore with the stark realities of rural England. Rather than conjuring dragons or royal lineages embroiled in power struggles, Hardy chose to keep alive remnants of pagan cultures—a choice that still resonates in our post-postmodern times. This article delves into Hardy's novels to (a) uncover how he resurrects ancient and magical motifs within the often sombre and allegedly oppressive settings of his works, and (b) diversify existing interpretations by drawing intertextual analogies across genres. It examines a range of mystical elements, such as veiled recreations of Samhain and witchcraft, fairy-tale metaphors of fire, frost, and wells, and allusions to Greek myths. By juxtaposing Hardy's depictions of pagan customs with modern concepts like the Madonna-Whore Complex and contemporary manifestations of fantasy, we may unwind the layers of meaning that Hardy interweaves into his stories. These layers reveal a world where the mystical coexists with the mundane, and where the past continually informs the present.

Keywords: paganism, folklore, fantasy, Madonna/Whore

Introduction

Simon Gatrell observes in his book, *Hardy the Creator: Myth, History, and Narrative*, "Hardy's narrative techniques blend historical and mythical elements to profound effect."[1] (102) Similarly, Paterson opines that, "In its central action in the suffering and death of Eustacia Vye, in other words, *The Return of the Native* dramatizes the tragic humiliation, in the diminished world of the modern consciousness, of an heroic, pre-Christian understanding of life." (113) Jacqueline Dillion notes how the bonfires lit on Guy Fawkes Night in *The Return of the Native* are depicted as having origins that extend well beyond the historical event which they are meant to commemorate; and that these fires are the successors of ancient Druidical rites and Saxon ceremonies, connecting the present to a distant, pagan past. In the novel, fire symbolizes human passion, rebellion, and the primal urge to resist the encroaching darkness of winter.[2] Emphasizing on a political dialectic, Dillion observes that the bonfires are not merely celebrations but acts of defiance against the cold and chaos of the season— embodying a Promethean spirit.

To begin with, the oft-studied anthropomorphic depiction of Egdon Heath may be cited. It suggests a demonic metamorphosis that defines its very nature. However, it is also ascribed to its revitalization by the tumultuous forces of nature, breaking away from its dormancy and apparent lethargy. Uniquely, Hardy begins a chapter by portraying the setting as if it were one of the novel's protagonists. The heath is most active "during winter darkness, tempests, and mists. Then Egdon was aroused to reciprocity. The storm was its lover; and the wind was its friend" (*The Return of the Native,* 13) Egdon brings to mind a picture of Shakespeare's Prospero raising magical storms in the sea. It dances to the will of the wizard's wand. Like a fairy-tale protagonist, it befriends nature. In associating with the storm and the wind (not breeze), it appears to be animated by the spirit of a demon. A certain sense of violence and power is conveyed. Its anthropomorphic qualities give it a distinct existence, separate from the mainstream. Egdon's desire seems to be to remain true to itself, retaining

[1] Norman Page establishes a similar association of Hardy's experimenting with mysticism with what he calls a Pagan Revival in the 19th century: "The Victorian Pagan Revival significantly influenced Hardy's thematic and stylistic choices" (p. 350) whereas, Dennis Taylor locates it in the domain of philology: "Hardy's linguistic innovations are deeply rooted in Victorian philological traditions" (p. 88).

[2] "Folklore in Hardy's novels serves as a form of cultural resistance against modernity" (Dillion, p. 78)

all its unique characteristics, as evidenced by the prodigal return of its native son. Likewise, a fairy-tale setting is conjured up with nature having bestowed upon with anthropomorphic or zoomorphic qualities in *Under the Greenwood Tree*:

> "To dwellers in a wood almost every species of tree has its voice as well as its feature. At the passing of the breeze the fir-trees sob and moan no less distinctly than they rock; the holly whistles as it battles with itself; the ash hisses amid its quiverings; the beech rustles while its flat boughs rise and fall. And winter, which modifies the note of such trees as shed their leaves, does not destroy its individuality…On a cold and starry Christmas-eve within living memory a man was passing up a lane towards Mellstock Cross in the darkness of a plantation that whispered thus distinctively to his intelligence." (11)

The synaesthetic description of the Tranter's home in *Under the Greenwood Tree*, as cited in the excerpt below, similarly captures the pastoral and nature elements, creating a fairy tale-like setting:

> "Light streamed through the cracks and joints of outbuildings a little way from the cottage, a sight which nourished a fancy that the purpose of the erection must be rather to veil bright attractions than to shelter unsightly necessaries. The noise of a beetle and wedges and the splintering of wood was periodically heard from this direction; and at some little distance further a steady regular munching and the occasional scurr of a rope betokened a stable, and horses feeding within it." (14)

The imagery of light streaming through the cracks and joints of the outbuildings evokes a sense of natural beauty and tranquility. This interplay of light and shadow enhances the rustic charm of the farm. The periodic noise of a beetle and wedges, the splintering of wood, and the steady munching of horses contribute to the vivid soundscape of the countryside. These sounds are typical of a working farm and add to the authenticity of the setting while the imagery too arrests the everyday activities of farm life. The idea that the outbuildings might be veiling "bright attractions" rather than sheltering "unsightly necessaries" adds a layer of mystery and enchantment. It suggests hidden beauty and secrets, much like the settings in fairy tales where ordinary places often conceal magical elements. The description invites the reader to see the farm through a lens of wonder and imagination. Hardy's use of detailed, sensory-rich descriptions not only brings the pastoral landscape to life but also infuses it with

a Romantic sense of magic and possibility, making the Tranter's home a place where the mundane and the marvellous coexist.

Notably, Hardy expresses his belief on an Immanent Will in his play *The Dynasts*. It is a force that "works unconsciously" with a "listless aim" and "clock-like laws": "… like a knitter drowsed, /Whose fingers play in skilled unmindfulness, /The Will has woven with an absent heed/ Since life first was; and ever will so weave." (Ebbatson, 105) The reference of the Knitter alludes to the Greek Moirae, who exhibit the same mechanical indifference and nonchalance as the Immanent Will. According to Hein, this Will exists "prior to the separation between all binary pairs (e.g., subject/object, genesis/structure, sign/referent)" (Hein, 25). Put simply, Hein's observation positions the Will as primordial, predating the biblical pronouncement, "Let there be light" (Gen. 1:3), and the creation of heaven and earth or light and darkness. Just as the Moirae predate individual human experiences, so does the Immanent Will. That "Hardy invokes a sort of Greek destiny for this empiricist experimental world"[3] reconciles the mythical world with that of a practically lived reality.

Gabriel Oak: Resonances with Orpheus and the Pied Piper of Hamelin

"Suddenly, an unexpected series of sounds began to be heard in this place up against the sky. They had a clarity unmatched by the wind and a sequence not found in nature. They were the notes of Farmer Oak's flute." These lines appear in *Far From the Madding Crowd.* (9) That Gabriel is deliberately shown as someone who can play the flute reveals the potential of reading him analogously with Orpheus. Hardy's selection of the flute (not a modern guitar/drum-set) above all other musical instruments, may be seen as underscoring its historical significance in the evolution of human culture and expression. The flute's ethereal

[3] Deleuze writes in *Dialogues II*, of Hardy's experimentation with characters and events as 'unique chances' thus, opening up the possibility of reading Hardy further along interdisciplinary lines. The reference to the 'Greek destiny' alludes to the Moirae, the three sisters: Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos who are personifications of Fate, measuring, weaving the course of life and cutting the thread loose in the time of death. Their workings are considered arbitrary, as 'unique chances'. According to the *Republic* of Plato, translated by Sorrey, the three Moirae sing in unison: Lachesis sings the things that were, Clotho the things that are, and Atropos the things that are to be. (617)

sound, described as having a clarity and sequence not found in nature, enriches the scene with a sense of mystical beauty and otherworldliness.

Nomenclature also plays a vital role in semantic terms, as with Dickens or even as in J.K. Rowling, to cite a more contemporary example. The name 'Gabriel' bestows the role and characteristics of an angel upon our farmer. Indeed, his influence in the narrative aligns with this interpretation, as will be seen in the subsequent paragraphs.

Gabriel Oak's arrival in Weatherbury can be linked to the mystical leanings found in the story of the Pied Piper created by Browning. In the story, a mysterious musician arrives in a town plagued by rats and uses his magical pipe to lead the rats away, cleansing the town of its infestation. The Piper's music, which had the power to enchant and lead, parallels Gabriel's quiet yet powerful impact on Bathsheba's life. Like the Piper, he too owns a flute. His actions, though not overtly magical, have a transformative effect, guiding Bathsheba away from chaos and towards a more stable and fulfilling life. Gabriel arrives in Weatherbury at a time when Bathsheba's life is complicated by the presence of disruptive figures like Sergeant Troy and William Boldwood.

Troy's presence in Bathsheba's life is marked by chaos and heartbreak. His reckless behaviour and deceitful nature cause significant turmoil. Gabriel's unwavering support and practical assistance help Bathsheba navigate the difficulties brought on by Troy. Ultimately, Troy's dramatic return and subsequent death at Boldwood's party connote the end of his disruptive influence. Gabriel's steady influence contrasts sharply with Troy's volatility, highlighting Gabriel's role in restoring order and stability, much as the Piper's music brought peace to Hamelin.

Boldwood's obsessive love for Bathsheba also brings tension and instability. His intense and unrequited feelings lead to a tragic climax when he kills Troy in a fit of desperation. Gabriel's calm and rational demeanour provides a counterbalance to Boldwood's obsession. After Boldwood's incarceration, Gabriel's presence becomes even more crucial, as he helps Bathsheba rebuild her life and regain a sense of balance.

Gabriel's flute-playing, described as, to quote again, "having a clarity and sequence not found in nature", adds to his mystical aura. So, we associate him with the myth of Orpheus, whose music could charm all living things and even inanimate objects. Gabriel's

music symbolizes harmony and order, contrasting with the discord brought by Troy and Boldwood. In the farm too, when Bathsheba's sheep fall sick, he comes to help as the Good Samaritan, essentially in the role of a miracle-worker. This reinforces the trope of mystical qualities built into his character.

At another instance, Hardy draws a parallel between Gabriel and Elymas the sorcerer:

> "Oak's hand skimmed the surface of the door with fingers extended in an Elymas-the-Sorcerer pattern, until he found a leather strap, which he pulled. This lifted a wooden latch, and the door swung open" (*Far from the Madding Crowd*, 46).

Oak's determination to open the door despite the darkness is evident. The reference to Elymas, a Biblical sorcerer who was temporarily blinded, deepens the impression of the mystical. The superimposition imbues Oak's actions with a sense of ritualistic precision and otherworldly knowledge, enhancing the scene's mystical atmosphere.

Of Frost and Fire

"Twas a hard frosty night, and the keys of all the clar'nets froze—ah, they did freeze!" (*Under the Greenwood Tree*, 27). This line captures the intensity of winter's effect on inanimate objects. The frost and its chilling impact are felt by the musicians through touch, demonstrating the transfer of energy and the impression of nature's forces. The freezing of the clarinet keys symbolizes the harsh, unyielding grip of winter, a force that can interrupt or render stagnant even the most vibrant of activities. The imagery herein may be affiliated to the 'frost pattern' found in fantasy narratives and fairy tales, where winter often epitomizes a time of stasis, danger, a period of dormancy or impending doom. For an example, in *Game of Thrones*, the phrase "Winter is coming" serves as a forewarning of the harsh and malignant winter that brings with it the Night King and his army of the dead. The Night King, with his icy touch and ability to freeze everything in his path, embodies the ultimate winter-threat. The frost pattern and the chilling presence of the Night King create an atmosphere of dread and anticipation, much like the frozen clarinet-keys in Hardy's quote.

Hardy's use of the frosty night and the frozen clarinet keys can thus, be seen as a presentiment of future events. The affect experienced in the present— the intense cold and the freezing of the instruments—foreshadows the challenges and hardships that lie ahead for the Mellstock Quire. Thus, we may see how Hardy's depiction of winter's impact resonates

with the symbolic use of frost and winter in fantasy and fairy tales, creating meaning that extends beyond the immediate scene.

Similarly, fire is a central metaphor in most fantastical settings, from hearth-portals to Samhain bonfires. The motif of fire and furnaces (or hearths) is deeply rooted in paganism, folklore, and fantasy. It is often seen as a purifying and transformative force in pagan traditions. For example, the Celtic festival of Beltane involves lighting bonfires to celebrate the return of life and fertility to the world. Evidently, Hardy draws on this metaphor to revive the tradition of lighting fires, as in the Bonfire Night in *The Return of the Native*. The metaphor may also exist in the form of a character's temperament, as in that of Michael Henchard in *the Mayor of Casterbridge* or in Eustacia Vye. Tess's repeated pronouncement of her love for Angel Clare and her murdering Alec debunks her position as victim as much as it projects her in the role of an assertive woman making choices in her own right. Her story emerges like a fiery phoenix rising from its ashes to question social codes, her death challenging the justice of the gods.

"In the glow, he seemed to see Phillotson promenading at ease, like one of the forms in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace" (*Jude the Obscure, 21*). The reference to Nebuchadnezzar's furnace not only reflects Hardy's admiration for art, as seen in his allusion to Rembrandt's painting 'Belshazzar's Feast' in *The Return of the Native*, but also sustains the powerful metaphor of fire. The 'glow' intimates the fire burning in Jude's heart, representing his fervent desire to be at Christminster. At the same time, it foreshadows the destructive force of Christminster, akin to Pandemonium, that will ultimately ruin his life. In the biblical story, Nebuchadnezzar is humbled by the gods after his failed attempt to burn the three young Jews who refused to bow before his image. This tale of retribution and redemption parallels Jude's perception of Phillotson as one of the figures in the furnace. Phillotson, like Nebuchadnezzar, seeks redemption and re-establishes himself within the Church.

Moonshine: Casting "Shadows in Strange Places"

References to the moon abound in Hardy's writing. For instance, in *Far from the Madding Crowd*, Hardy describes Boldwood's reaction to Bathsheba's letter thus:

> "The moon shone to-night, and its light was not of a customary kind. His window only admitted a reflection of its rays, and the pale sheen had that reversed direction which snow gives, coming upward and lighting up his ceiling in a phenomenal way, casting shadows in strange places, and putting lights where shadows had used to be." (88)

Here, the unusual moonlight mirrors the imminent changes in Boldwood's life, creating a reversal of light and shadow that suggests the shadows of doubt in his mind and the illumination of previously dark spaces, symbolizing the lightening of his heavy heart. The phrase 'shadows in strange places' focalizes not only the reflective power of the moon in scientific terms but also, its ability to defamiliarize the familiar or familiarize the unfamiliar. At night, the moon exercises its autonomy in places where there is no light otherwise. Thereby, conniving with other elements of nature such as the wind, it sheds light on matter at its own discretion. It may cast shadows upon familiar matter, creating the sense of eeriness and unease which comes from not knowing things, *anymore.* In other words, it highlights the doubtful and untrustworthy nature of certain things like mirrors or people. Conversely, it also embodies the possibility of revealing facts and/or truths; or entities such as spirits or fairies, unseen hitherto. This complements the mysticism embedded in moonshine, which is best made use of in fantasies, visual or written.

Deviating from the conventional association of the moon with femininity, Hardy describes the moon as having the physiology of a 'skeleton', battling death and metaphorizing its waning phase:

> "By the outer margin of the pit was an oval pond, and over it hung the attenuated skeleton of a chrome-yellow moon which had only a few days to last—the morning star dogging her on the left hand. The pool glittered like a dead man's eye, and as the world awoke a breeze blew, shaking and elongating the reflection of the moon without breaking it, and turning the image of the star to a phosphoric streak upon the water." (ibid, 33)

In Greek mythology, the moon is personified by the goddess Selene, who drives her chariot across the night sky, illuminating the world with her silver light. Selene's presence is often associated with mystery, transformation, and the passage of time. The phases of the moon—waxing, full, and waning—symbolize the cycles of life, death, and rebirth. This

mythological context enriches Hardy's use of moon imagery, connecting his literary landscapes to ancient traditions of lunar symbolism. Venus is the 'morning-star' that is believed to contain Phosphine gas, hence, the 'star turned Phosphoric streak' may be considered as a direct allusion to the mythical goddess. The phrase 'dead man's eye' intensifies the metaphor of death, with the pool glittering in an eerie, almost supernatural way. This challenges the conventional idea of an aesthetically pleasing reflection of moonlight upon water, instead delivering an intense, mystical energy. The moonlight is working in tandem with the 'breeze' to ensure that the simple pool of water 'glitters' in the dark of the night. The flimsy and malleable nature of the moon's reflection signifies half-truths or deceptions. Also, by virtue of its uncertain shape, it resonates with the theme of mystery encapsulated in the phrase '*shadows cast in strange places'*.

As exemplified above, the moon has the power to show the unseen or the unfamiliar. This motif of the moon also appears in contemporary fantasy, such as in the *Pirates of the Caribbean* series in a similar context. In this, the moonlight plays a crucial role in revealing the true nature of the cursed pirates. Under the moon's glow, they transform into skeletal figures, much like Hardy's description of the moon with the physiology of a skeleton. This metamorphosis under moonlight echoes the themes of hidden truths and supernatural forces, fulfilling our comparison of the fantastical elements of the films with the mystical qualities of the moon in Hardy's writing. Again, the phrase "dead man's eye" in Hardy's work can be connected to the "dead man's chest" in *Pirates of the Caribbean*. The dead man's chest, a legendary treasure chest, is central to the plot and symbolizes the allure and danger of hidden riches. Similarly, the "dead man's eye" in Hardy's description evokes a sense of eerie foreboding and the presence of death, much like the cursed treasure that brings doom to those who seek it. Hardy's use of the moon and moonshine thus, not only enhances the mystical atmosphere of his works but also aligns with broader mythological and contemporary fantasy traditions, beyond the nineteenth century.

Wells of Water: Mirrors, Portals and Premonitions

Wells of water often symbolize mystery, transformation, or a connection to another world. In *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy revives this classic fairy tale motif through Jude's contemplation of an ancient well. This scene is reminiscent of the enchanted wells often found in folklore and fairy tales:

> "The well into which he was looking was as ancient as the village itself, and from his present position appeared as a long circular perspective ending in a shining disk of quivering water at a distance of a hundred feet down. There was a lining of green moss near the top, and nearer still the hart's-tongue fern" (11)

Hardy's use of the ancient well as a symbol serves as a presentiment of Jude's future experiences at Christminster. The affect experienced in the present—Jude's gazing into the well—foreshadows the emotional and existential depths he will encounter. It mirrors his future as much as it symbolizes the consequences of one's choices and actions[4].

The 'shining disk of quivering water' at the bottom of the well symbolizes Jude's aspirations and desires. The quivering water demonstrates in particular, his longing for Sue and the instability that accompanies their relationship. In other words, the well represents his relationship with Sue that would only lead him in the direction of a downward spiral. It evokes the magical and often perilous nature of wells in fairy tales, where they serve as portals to other realms or as sources of potentially irreversible transformation. Needless to say, the location for Snow White meeting her Prince is by the Wishing Well.

The botanical imagery of 'green moss' and 'hart's-tongue fern' around the well is premonitory for Jude. Their lining the well substantiates the presence of Phillotson on his way to be with Sue. "Nature in Hardy's works is a powerful symbol of human emotion and fate" (Chifane, p. 184). Moss, being rootless plants, also symbolize Phillotson's shallow redemption and his rigid adherence to Christian values, which lack true depth and roots, but conceal his desire to reintegrate into mainstream society.

The Mysterious Women in Hardy: Demons, Witches, Madonna/Whore

"Bathsheba's beauty", writes Hardy in *Far from the Madding Crowd*, "belonged rather to the redeemed-demonian than to the blemished-angelic school, she never looked so well as when she was angry." (120) Her physiological description collocates with her stubborn impulses. Suggesting that her aesthetic features are not of the conventional, angelic kind but rather possesses a darker, more complex charm, Hardy's demarcation of 'redeemed-

[4] In this context, it is worth noting that in many of Hardy's novels, a character's destiny is shaped by their own conduct, as Mark Asquith highlights the interdependence of man's character and his fate (50).

demonian' and 'blemished-angelic' in oxymoronic terms not only paints her character with a sense of mystical duality, but also evokes the image of a being who has transcended their demonic nature, hinting at a past filled with struggle and transformation.

Hardy's observation that Bathsheba "never looked so well as when she was angry" reiterates the fire metaphor. Anger, often associated with intense emotion and inner fire, brings out her true beauty, suggesting a connection to elemental forces. This aligns with the archetype of the fiery, passionate woman found in folklore and mythology, whose beauty is intertwined with her powerful emotions. Her description can serve as allusions to mythological figures such as the Greek goddesses Hera and Medusa. Hera, known for her beauty and fierce temper, embodies the duality of nurturing and wrath. Medusa, with her captivating yet dangerous allure, represents the darker aspects of feminine beauty. Bathsheba's "redeemed-demonian" beauty places her within this tradition of complex, multifaceted female figures whose attractiveness is heightened by their emotional intensity. In contemporary fantasy, characters with a similar duality often possess a mystical charm. For example, in *Game of Thrones*, Daenerys Targaryen's beauty is most striking when she is in the throes of passion or anger, reflecting her inner strength and fiery nature. This analogy underscores the timeless appeal of characters whose beauty is linked to their powerful emotions and transformative journeys.

By portraying Bathsheba as a figure whose allure is enhanced by her anger, Hardy taps into the motif of the passionate, elemental woman. This adds depth to Bathsheba's character, making her not just a romantic heroine but a symbol of the untamed[5], natural forces that drive human emotion and beauty. Another such example is Eustacia Vye in *The Return of the Native*. She is an outsider, the other within the Heath. She is Bertha Mason. She is described as "the lonesome dark-eyed creature up there that some say is a witch" (64). Eustacia is different, foreign, perceived as pagan or witchlike, and alienated. Some critics

[5] Highlighting how the persecution of women as witches was deeply embedded in the power structures of the time, Dennis and Reis explore the social and spiritual roles assigned to women, which were often oppressive but cannot be reduced to mere misogyny. 'Taming' them through spirituality would ensure perpetuation of the patriarchal hegemony.

interpret this exoticization as Hardy's reconstruction of Hellenic characters and paganism. It also demonizes her, casting her to a peripheral existence. Her exotic appearance, inherited from her non-English father, along with her desire to go to Paris and her disdain for the Natives, marks her as an untameable entity. She faces persecution from Susan Nunsuch for allegedly "bewitching" her children (217) and is denounced by Clym for having, "like a devil," destroyed his happiness: "'don't look at me with those eyes,'" he exclaims, "'as if you would bewitch me again!'" (389) The emphasis on 'those eyes' and their destructive consequences highlights the differentiation of her gaze, as if she were a reincarnation of Medusa. Furthermore, when she summons Damon Wildeve to her bonfire, she embodies the wicked enchantress, presiding over unholy fires and conjuring shapes and images from darkness or nothingness, as Paterson describes (114). This carries forth the allegations of 'bewitching' levelled against her, alluding to practices of witchcraft (reviving a pagan culture) as well as witch-hunting (a criminal phenomenon from the bygone past.) Her desire 'to be loved to madness' far exceeds her minimal interaction with the Natives, as much as it hints at the propensity for a Bacchic or Dionysian frenzy. Nevertheless, her demonic transformation in the face of hostility also heralds a degree of empowerment.

Similarly, of Fancy Day in Hardy's *In Under the Greenwood Tree,* we stumble upon this description*:* "She'll wind him round her finger, and twist the poor young fellow about like the figure of 8—that she will so, my sonnies." (35) Reuben's description of Fancy's ability to manipulate Dick evokes the image of a witch casting a spell. This metaphor suggests that Fancy possesses a bewitching power over Dick, capable of bending him to her will. As Reuben delivers this prophetic message, her first act of deception right after their wedding further cements this witch-like quality, as she breaks a solemn promise, hinting at her unpredictable and potentially malevolent nature. Hardy leaves the book's ending cryptically open-ended as she breaks the promise of never keeping secrets from each other, mere moments after making it.[6].

In folklore and fairy tales, witches are often characterized by their ability to deceive and manipulate, traits that Fancy exhibits. Her actions create an aura of mystery and

[6] Mark Rollins explores the theme of 'indeterminacy' in his essay, examining how some critics view Fancy Day as a morally flawed character and questioning whether she can maintain a successful marriage with Dick. The lack of transparency in her character is highlighted through several examples cited in the essay.

suspicion, much like the enigmatic and morally ambiguous figures of witches in traditional stories. This portrayal aligns with the theme of indeterminacy, as Fancy's true nature and intentions remain elusive, open to multiple interpretations.

> "An indescribable lightness of heel served to lift him along; and Jude, the incipient scholar, prospective D.D., professor, bishop, or what not, felt himself honoured and glorified by the condescension of this handsome country wench in agreeing to take a walk with him in her Sunday frock and ribbons" (40).

In the excerpt cited above from *Jude the Obscure*, the sight of Arabella in her Sunday frock and ribbons serves multiple symbolic purposes. Firstly, it represents a mocking subversion of Jude's grandiose dreams. Jude, who aspires to be a scholar, professor, or bishop, finds himself captivated by the simple charm of Arabella's attire. The Sunday frock and ribbons, typically worn for church or special occasions, symbolize a temporary escape from his serious academic ambitions. They highlight the contrast between his lofty aspirations and the immediate, tangible pleasures of life.

The outfit further suggests a sense of innocence and traditional fairy-like femininity, which stands in stark contrast to Jude's intellectual pursuits. This attire, while seemingly modest, carries an undercurrent of seduction and enticement, drawing Jude away from his scholarly path. Arabella's ability to captivate Jude with her appearance can be linked to the witchcraft pattern. Just as witches in folklore use charms and spells to enchant and manipulate, Arabella uses her physical appearance and charm to influence Jude. The Sunday frock and ribbon become her tools of enchantment. The attire symbolizes the seductive power of the everyday, which can derail even the most determined of aspirations. It highlights the tension between Jude's intellectual dreams and the immediate, sensory experiences that Arabella represents.

Jude's entanglement with Sue and Arabella leads to his ambitions being constantly challenged by the temptation and power of these female figures, each embodying different aspects of the Madonna-Whore complex and the witch archetype. Freud's Madonna-Whore complex may be discovered through the contrasting characters of Sue Bridehead and Arabella Donn. This psychological dichotomy, rooted in biblical and mythological representations of women, categorizes them as either pure/virtuous (Madonna) or sexually promiscuous and morally corrupt (Whore). "Hardy's revisions to the scene between Jude and Arabella reveal

his deep-seated anxieties about feminine sexuality and its impact on masculine identity"[7] (Harding, 90)

Penny Boumelha states that "Hardy's portrayal of women challenges contemporary sexual ideologies" (95). Sue appears to embody the Madonna figure, with her intellectual and spiritual purity. She is often idealized by Jude, who sees her as an ethereal, almost saintly presence. This is reminiscent of the Virgin Mary, who represents purity and maternal virtue in Christian theology. Conversely, Arabella represents the Whore, with her overt sexuality and manipulative nature. Her character aligns with the biblical figure of Jezebel, who is often associated with seduction and moral corruption.

The possession of knowledge and power stemming therefrom, are often associated with witchcraft. Sue's enigmatic and elusive nature can be likened to the archetype of the witch, who possesses 'knowledge and power' that sets her apart from societal norms. Her intellectual independence and non-conformity evoke the image of a woman who defies traditional roles, much like the witches in folklore who were often persecuted for their perceived threat to patriarchal structures. Arabella, on the other hand, uses her sexuality as a form of power, manipulating Jude to achieve her desires. This aligns with the historical portrayal of witches as seductresses who use their charms to control men. The duality of Sue and Arabella reflects the broader theme of indeterminacy and the fluidity of identity, as Jude navigates a world where the lines between purity and corruption, love and manipulation, are constantly blurred.

Conclusion:

Hardy envisioned a world where ancient myths and mystical elements dance effortlessly with the pastoral life of the British countryside. After an analysis of the elements of paganism and fantasy discovered in Hardy's novels, the question that remains is: Why does Hardy incorporate fragments of the mystical into his writing? This article began with a study of Hardy's evocative portrayal of Egdon Heath in one of his Wessex novels. Upon revisiting it,

[7] Harding examines the revisions Thomas Hardy made to *Jude the Obscure*, focusing on the scene involving 'Arabella's missile'. Harding explores how these revisions reflect Hardy's anxieties about feminine sexuality and masculine identity. The study provides insights into Hardy's narrative techniques and the broader implications of gender dynamics in his work.

we may duly acknowledge the remarkable imprint left by the Wessex landscape on Hardy as an inspiration for his timeless writing.

Millgate aptly notes that "Hardy's novels reflect his deep engagement with the cultural and historical landscape of Wessex" (120). The timelessness is also largely attributable to the universal relatability of his narratives. Whether it is with pagan, modern or post-postmodern, his works reverberate through each era, primarily because of the emphasis it places on Nature's role over anthropocentric vantage points. The pastoral landscape of Wessex, with its cyclical dependence on the seasons and the land, mirrors the pagan reverence for nature and its rhythms, the revival of which is of essence particularly in our crises-laden anthropocene era. Furthermore, the mystical escapes assuage the mechanicalness of our hectic lives.

Undoubtedly, Nature and its manifestations play a central role in myth-making and the creation of folklore narratives, and these occupy a prominent space in Hardy's novels. Hardy's depiction of nature as a living, almost sentient force often aligns with pagan beliefs, emphasizing the sacredness of the natural world. His representations of nature carry a subtle urge to return to the ways of the natural order. The acceptance of modernity often compromises the innate human connection to the elemental, the primordial, and the natural. To counterbalance this, Hardy creates his iconoclastic version of Wessex "where myth and reality intertwine seamlessly" (Bullen, 32). By juxtaposing the mystical elements further with modern ideas such as the Madonna/Whore Complex and contemporary renditions of fantasy, folklore, myths, and fairy tales, we discover the timeless appeal of his narratives.

By casting *'shadows in strange places*,' thus, Hardy invites his readers to reconsider the mystical and the mythical that transmute into remnants of ancient traditions in literature. This exploration delves into the symbolic significance of— elements like the moon, fire and frost, or witchcraft: the zeitgeist of the bygone pagan eras— in Hardy's works. The study reveals the manner in which they serve as conduits for deeper, sometimes unsettling truths about human existence and the unexpected forces that shape it. These elements evince Hardy's fascination with the mystical and primal aspects of human existence while simultaneously unearthing his critique of modernity's disconnection from these roots. However, Hardy attempts to contextualize these tropes in the 19th century by placing them within his realist settings. By examining thus, his efforts to revive and retain these traditions

and their nuanced implications, we gain a deeper understanding of Hardy's unique ability to blend folklore with realism, capturing the complexities of human existence and the enduring power of myth over a bland reality.

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