

Gothic Representation in the Work of Thomas Hardy

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

There has been no significant study published within the past twenty years that analyses Thomas Hardy's (1840-1928) literary exploration of the Gothic. The discrete period of the 'Victorian Gothic,' as defined within recent studies of the Gothic and delineated within this thesis, has been applied retrospectively by critics. Despite comprehensive studies concerning the 'Victorian Gothic,' Hardy's work is largely absent. This thesis addresses such an oversight by utilising Hardy's exegesis of contemporary theory and philosophy, that influenced his own exploration of the Gothic, to assert his place within this field of literary criticism. This thesis traces the development of Hardy's fiction within its historical context by analysing Gothic representation in a selection of his novels, whilst also considering the recently established critical framework of the 'Victorian Gothic.'

To inform close readings of Hardy's novels, the three major modes of the Victorian historical period of the Gothic are outlined and analysed chronologically, each within their own chapter. Chapter One presents compelling evidence that Hardy was engaging with sensationalism within four of his novels published in the 1870s: *Desperate Remedies* (1871), *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873), *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874), and *The Hand of Ethelberta* (1876). Chapter Two analyses the influence of the Scientific mode of the Gothic, via the lens of post-Darwinian theory, on two of Hardy's novels published within the 1880s: *Two on a Tower* (1882) and *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886). Chapter Three identifies a hybrid mode of the Gothic that considers the intersection of the two aesthetics of Decadence and the Gothic revival within Hardy's prominent *fin de siècle* novels: *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891) and *Jude the Obscure* (1895). This thesis concludes that Hardy was consistently exploring and developing the Gothic aesthetic within his work, therefore, his novels should be considered within future critical studies of the Gothic.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	8
<i>The Victorian Gothic</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Thomas Hardy and the Gothic</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Methodology</i>	<i>38</i>
Hardy and the Modes of the Victorian Gothic: An Introduction	42
<i>Hardy and Gothic Sensationalism</i>	<i>42</i>
<i>Hardy and the Scientific Gothic</i>	<i>53</i>
<i>Hardy and the Decadent Gothic</i>	<i>64</i>
CHAPTER 1	80
Victorian Sensationalism: Thomas Hardy’s Early Gothic Style	
<i>The Development of Hardy’s Sensationalism</i>	<i>80</i>
<i>Perceptions of the Body and Sensationalism</i>	<i>92</i>
Hardy’s Sensationalism and the Body	101
<i>The Sexualised Body</i>	<i>104</i>
<i>Representations of the Dead Body</i>	<i>113</i>
<i>The Symbolic Body: Detection and Surveillance</i>	<i>123</i>
<i>Conclusion</i>	<i>133</i>
CHAPTER 2	135
Thomas Hardy’s Scientific Gothic in a Post-Darwinian Universe	
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>135</i>
<i>Hardy’s Post-Darwinian Sublime</i>	<i>140</i>
<i>Hardy and Anthropologic Observation in a Post-Darwinian Universe</i>	<i>167</i>
<i>Conclusion</i>	<i>191</i>
CHAPTER 3	193
Restyling the Gothic: Thomas Hardy, the Gothic and Decadence at the <i>fin de siècle</i>	
<i>Hardy and the Decadent Movement</i>	<i>193</i>
<i>Thomas Hardy and the Decadent Gothic</i>	<i>202</i>

<i>Hardy, Gothic Architecture and Decay</i>	205
<i>Hardy, History and Temporal Decay</i>	225
Conclusion	238
CONCLUSION	240
BIBLIOGRAPHY	250

Introduction

This thesis examines Gothic representation within the work of Thomas Hardy by positioning his novels within its Victorian historical context, whilst simultaneously considering how Hardy's own criticism, literary notes, non-fiction writing, and correspondence both contribute to and emphasise his exploration of the Gothic aesthetic.¹ Readings of Hardy's work are still shaped by the supposition of contemporary reviewers that his early anonymously published novels were the work of George Eliot, a conclusion determined in part by their supposed realism.² However, this thesis is not seeking to argue *against* the realist elements of Hardy's work, but rather it endeavours to open up a critical analysis of Gothic representation within his work that to some extent fits with, not works against, the realism of his writing. The research presented within this thesis will shift the focus away from Realism by arguing that Hardy's mid- to late-Victorian Gothic was a contemporary historical construction less concerned with medievalism and the eighteenth-century novel, and more centred on the modern philosophical and theoretical debates that the following chapters shall go on to discuss.

In a recent essay concerning the Victorian Gothic and Realism, Martin Willis acknowledges that 'genres of literature such as realism are now readily accepted as continually evolving and open to inter-penetration from other forms and modes.'³ This, he suggests, is due to the

¹ In addition to Hardy's annotated book collection, which for the most part is located at the Dorset County Museum, there are several published copies of his notebooks, correspondence and essays that include excerpts taken from influential texts and his interpretation of them. These published materials include, but are not limited to: *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy: Volume One and Two*, ed. by R. L. Purdy and M. Millgate (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978); *The Personal Notebooks of Thomas Hardy*, ed. by Richard H. Taylor (London: Macmillan, 1978); *The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy: Volume I and 2*, ed. by Lennart A. Björk (London: Macmillan, 1985); and *Thomas Hardy's Public Voice: The Essays, Speeches, and Miscellaneous Prose*, ed. by Michael Millgate (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001).

² Several reviews written in the 1870s contain comparisons of Hardy's work with Eliot's. See Unsigned Review, *Athenæum*, 1 April 1871, pp. 398-9, in *Thomas Hardy: The Critical Heritage* (1970), p. 2, for an early example found in a review of *Desperate Remedies* (1871).

³ Martin Willis, 'Victorian Realism and the Gothic: Objects of Terror Transformed', in *The Victorian Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion*, ed. by Andrew Smith and William Hughes (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), p. 17.

‘significance and success of interdisciplinary study,’⁴ which has provided more opportunities for analysing texts using more recent critical approaches. Similarly, Fred Botting argues that ‘in the mid-nineteenth century there [was] a significant diffusion of Gothic traces throughout literary and popular fiction, within realism, sensation novels and ghost stories especially.’⁵ In the mid- to late-Victorian period, Realism was both disseminated and identified within popular works by writers such as Charles Dickens, William Thackeray and George Eliot.⁶ Conversely, Gothic writing was often dismissed because, as Botting states, it was ‘discerned as an idle waste of time.’⁷ Consequently, it is no surprise to discover that contemporary criticism was unreceptive to the Gothicism of Hardy’s work in his own time because it was reticent about the Gothic literary style more generally. Similarly, within the Victorian period, the concept of a literary Gothic was more readily aligned with the eighteenth-century novel and not a term used to define literature published within the mid- to late-nineteenth century. Applied retrospectively within the past twenty years, the term Victorian Gothic has become an established critical concept that has facilitated the exploration of the Gothic aesthetic in works not previously perceived as Gothic or as containing Gothic elements, such as key novels by Dickens and George Eliot.⁸ Willis goes on to argue that ‘the hole torn in the realist text by the discovery of the Gothic allows Gothic meanings to pour in, and the critic to make exclusive use of them in analysis.’⁹ The reference to ‘discovery of the Gothic’ is an

⁴ Ibid., p. 17.

⁵ Fred Botting, *Gothic* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 113.

⁶ Francis O’Gorman attributes the success of Victorian Realism to the rise of the novel as the ‘dominant literary form in British culture.’ Realism, as ‘the imaginative counter of romance,’ distanced the work of Victorian writers from the eighteenth-century romance novel (that is more readily associated with the Gothic). See ‘Hardy and Realism’, in *Thomas Hardy in Context*, ed. by Phillip Mallett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 113.

⁷ Ibid., p. 9.

⁸ Within their collection of essays concerning the Victorian Gothic, Andrew Smith and William Hughes note that ‘in Dickens’ writings [...] the real becomes unreal as the Gothic makes its claims on reality,’ which suggest that the Gothic should not be viewed in isolation because it is indebted to other genres such as Realism. See ‘Introduction: Locating the Victorian Gothic’, in *The Victorian Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion*, ed. by Andrew Smith and William Hughes (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), p. 6.

⁹ Martin Willis, *Op. Cit.*, p. 17.

interesting one because it is less about the Gothic as a genre - which was established within the eighteenth century and is, therefore, not a ‘discovery’ in this sense – and more of a statement about the Gothic’s critical position. Furthermore, new modes of analysing and locating the Gothic have led to reassessments of texts commonly analysed in relation to realism. Yet despite this shift in perceptions and interpretations of the nineteenth century literary Gothic, Hardy’s work has still been overlooked.

The Gothic, as it pertains to literature, is traditionally associated with fear. However, terror for the Victorian reading public was derived from the fear of what science and contemporary philosophy could reveal, rather than relying on supernatural elements to create mystery, as was the case in the eighteenth-century Gothic novel. Thus, this thesis aims to draw boundaries around what constitutes the Victorian Gothic, utilising the research currently being conducted within this field, whilst simultaneously interpreting Hardy’s work in relation to its contemporary historical context. Botting notes that ‘in the nineteenth century, the security of social, political and aesthetic formations [were] much more uncertain.’¹⁰ This statement emphasises that fear in the Victorian period was often associated with political, social and scientific shifts and discoveries and that such anxieties fed into the Gothic novel. In a more explicit statement, Botting also argues that such ‘anxieties,’ as expressed within Gothic fiction, ‘varied according to diverse changes: political revolution, industrialisation, urbanisation, shifts in sexual and domestic organisation, and scientific discovery.’¹¹ Such ‘diverse changes’ are woven into the cultural fabric of the historical period within which they appear, therefore, the literary Gothic should be analysed within its distinctive cultural context. With this in mind, the Victorian Gothic is distinctively linked to the mid- to late-

¹⁰ Fred Botting, *Gothic*, Op. Cit., p. 10.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

nineteenth century novel because it is influenced by laws, movements, reforms, scientific advances, and societal shifts that are specific to this period. Hardy himself was often, both directly and indirectly, responding to contemporary concerns within his work, and the fear generated by this stark view of society (and even the wider universe) fed into his literary representation of the Gothic.

The discrete period of the Victorian Gothic emerged some hundred years *after* the publication of Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), and therefore dealt with different cultural anxieties and embraced scientific, theoretical and philosophical studies not yet available to writers of its eighteenth-century predecessor.¹² This is not to dismiss the early nineteenth-century Gothic novel, that may be read as an important transitional period from the earlier eighteenth-century Gothic romance to the Victorian Gothic novel. In fact, according to some critics, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818); Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820); and even Thomas DeQuincey's *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (1821) are arguably the last remnants of the classic Gothic novel style.¹³ Significantly, an early essay by Carl J. Weber discusses the influence of another early Victorian writer on Hardy – William Harrison Ainsworth. Weber states that Ainsworth's 1841 novel '*Old St Paul's* became Hardy's favourite romance [because] it was the first book he ever read.'¹⁴ However, despite the location of Ainsworth's work within the Victorian period, Weber acknowledges that he 'belonged to an earlier generation of writers,' because he 'began his

¹² Walpole's 1764 text is viewed by most critics as the founding Gothic novel, with its publication marking the beginning of a Gothic literary genre that would arguably continue until the publication of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* in 1818. For example, David Punter and Glennis Byron write that Walpole is 'best known as the author of what is usually considered the first Gothic novel, *The Castle of Otranto*.' See, *The Gothic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), p. 169.

¹³ For instance, Fred Botting states that the 'key Gothic texts' were published with the period 'extending from Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1864) to Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820).' See Fred Botting, *Gothic* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 15.

¹⁴ Carl J. Weber, 'Ainsworth and Thomas Hardy', *The Review of English Studies*, XVII, 66, 193-200 (April 1941), p. 194.

career with the idea of reviving for a nineteenth century public the terrors which had thrilled the readers of Mrs Radcliffe.¹⁵ Ainsworth's novels, then, create a potential critical disagreement as to when the classical Gothic style ended and the revised version of the mid-to late-nineteenth century emerged. This is because Ainsworth is both striving to appeal to a contemporary audience *and* utilising old techniques as a means to ensure literary success. With their focus on 'terrors' generated by curses, ancestry and the supernatural, novels such as *The Tower of London* (1840) and *Windsor Castle* (1843)¹⁶ may also be perceived as transitional because they portend the sensation genre that was to emerge in the 1860s.¹⁷ Therefore, the influence of Ainsworth on Hardy, though an important observation, does not fully illuminate the Gothicism of Hardy's work.¹⁸

Concerning the literary Gothic, Catherine Spooner and Emma McEvoy argue that its 'dominant tropes' have consistently been identified as 'imperilled heroines, dastardly villains, ineffectual heroes, supernatural events, dilapidated buildings and atmospheric weather.'¹⁹ However, they caution that this critical model is 'inadequate to describe texts produced after 1820,' because there are notable examples of Victorian Gothic texts that surpassed, undermined or even 'exceeded these generic presumptions.'²⁰ For this reason, the Gothic is difficult to classify using such fixed tropes. This is due to the fact that it often defies

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 193.

¹⁶ Significantly, at the age of fifteen or sixteen Hardy described how he had 'lost his heart for a few days to a young girl who had come from Windsor just after he had been reading Ainsworth's *Windsor Castle*,' which confirms his early association with the writer. See Florence Emily Hardy, *The Life of Thomas Hardy*, Op. Cit., p. 33.

¹⁷ The same may be said of novels such as Charlotte and Emily Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and *Wuthering Heights* (1847) respectively, due to their development of supernaturalism and early sensationalism, which demonstrates an affinity with the eighteenth-century Gothic style.

¹⁸ It is important to note that Weber does convincingly align the work of both writers, particularly in 'The Storm' scenes from Ainsworth's *Rookwood* (1834) and Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874). Yet Weber does concede that Hardy 'soon outdistanced his teacher, but it was Ainsworth who taught him how to describe a storm' Op. Cit., p. 196.

¹⁹ Catherine Spooner and Emma McEvoy, 'Introduction', in *The Routledge Companion to Gothic*, ed. by Catherine Spooner and Emma McEvoy (Oxon: Routledge, 2007), p. 1.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 1.

traditional definitions, originated by analyses of the eighteenth-century Gothic novel that is commonly bookended by Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* and Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*. Instead, it is useful to observe more recent scholarship on the Gothic, particularly the Victorian Gothic, that has sought to expand and develop models for defining periods of Gothic literature that view it more as an aesthetic form than as a series of 'tropes.' As Julian Wolfreys notes, the Gothic mode 'leaves its mark, in the nineteenth century, in the most conventional of narratives,'²¹ which validates the reassessment of Hardy's work within this thesis that responds to more recent studies of the Gothic. It is also useful to acknowledge that discrete historical periods of the literary Gothic are tied to cultural presumptions, literary influences beyond the novel, and aspects of society that generated public fear, which are all unique to a particular era.

For instance, in the Introduction to *Victorian Gothic*, Wolfreys argues that

While writers from the 1830s onward retain features in their writing [...] recognizable as belonging to the gothic in its first literary manifestations, more often than not those features are transformed, disfigured, brought back to life, or conjured from some unspeakable place in ways which are wholly unpredictable, and all the more haunting for that.²²

Wolfreys's reference to 'first literary manifestation' is a signpost to Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* and the eighteenth-century origin of the Gothic novel. Whilst the largely undisputed era of the classic Gothic novel has been defined as beginning with Walpole's text and ending with DeQuincey's *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* within criticism from as early as the nineteenth century, it was not defined as an historic period of the Gothic in its own time.

²¹ Julian Wolfreys, 'Preface: 'I could a tale unfold' or, the Promise of Gothic', in *Victorian Gothic: Literary and Cultural Manifestations in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Ruth Robbins and Julian Wolfreys (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2000), p. xv.

²² *Ibid.*, p. xiv.

Similarly, the Victorian Gothic was not delineated in these terms during the Victorian period itself. The Victorian reimagining of the Gothic aesthetic within literature has instead been explored within more recent Gothic criticism. Furthermore, this ‘transformed’ and ‘disfigured’ form has been assessed within the context of the period it was written, rather than relying on the eighteenth-century origination of the Gothic as a basis for analyses. The ‘unpredictable’ nature of the Gothic means that the Victorian Gothic should be considered as an aesthetic form because Gothic texts from the mid- to late-nineteenth century have a less obvious Gothic representation than their eighteenth-century counterparts. As such, there cannot be too heavy a reliance on the ‘dominant tropes’ of the eighteenth-century Gothic because these texts were responding to different cultural stimuli.. An alternative approach, posited by Spooner and McEvoy, is that more emphasis should be placed on the Gothic’s continuous ‘commitment to exploring the aesthetics of fear,’²³ which again establishes the need to conduct analyses of Gothic texts alongside the contemporary cultural fears that shaped them. For instance, what may have been terrifying in the eighteenth century Gothic novel had often become commonplace by the period of the Victorian Gothic.

By analysing Hardy’s work as incorporating a Victorian Gothic aesthetic, this thesis will contribute to both Hardy studies and the critical field of the Gothic more broadly. For example, Hardy’s work is absent in more recent studies of the Victorian Gothic, including comprehensive texts by Andrew Smith, William Hughes, Ruth Robbins and Julian Wolfreys.²⁴ Equally, the research presented here will enhance Hardy scholarship by shifting the focus away from familiar critical readings of his work to instead encompass more recent

²³ Ibid., p. 1.

²⁴ The work of Hardy is also largely absent in more recent studies of the nineteenth-century Gothic, such as *The Cambridge History of the Gothic*, Vol. 2, ed. by Dale Townshend and Angela Wright (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

theories of the Gothic. As this thesis will demonstrate, it has been nearly twenty years since an analysis of Hardy's writing within the context of the Gothic has been conducted. To successfully align Hardy's work with the Victorian Gothic, the following three chapters aim to clearly identify the forms of the Gothic that Hardy was exploring. For this purpose, it will be necessary to define the three major modes of the Gothic by analysing each separately within its own chapter, before proceeding to provide close readings of the core texts identified as representative of the mode in question. Within this thesis, the three major modes of the Victorian Gothic that Hardy explored within his fiction will be delineated and analysed. Sensation fiction is widely accepted by critics as a form of the Gothic,²⁵ yet the 'Post-Darwinian Sublime' and 'Decadent Gothic' are both terms introduced by this thesis.²⁶

The Victorian Gothic

The term Victorian Gothic, as a modern critical construct that pertains specifically to literature published during the mid- to late-nineteenth century, has only been explored and developed within the past twenty years. As Dale Townshend notes, the term "Gothic" as a specifically literary concept remained for much of the Victorian period restricted primarily to works of the previous century.²⁷ Townshend also draws attention to the fact that even works that are commonly recognised as explicitly Gothic, such as Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897),

²⁵ Within the introduction to their edited collection of essays, Andrew Smith and William Hughes write that 'it has been widely noted that sensation fiction from the 1850s onwards reworked a number of issues which were to be found in the earlier Gothic tradition.' See 'Introduction: Locating the Victorian Gothic', Op. Cit., p. 2.

²⁶ In particular, the 'post-Darwinian sublime' was the focus of an essay published by the present author within the peer-reviewed *Thomas Hardy Journal* (2018). See, Rachel Louise Mace, 'Hardy's Gothic Lens: *Two on a Tower* and the Post-Darwinian Sublime', *The Thomas Hardy Journal*, 34, 52–66 (Autumn, 2018).

²⁷ Dale Townshend, 'Introduction: Gothic in the Nineteenth Century, 1800-1900', in *The Cambridge History of the Gothic, Vol. 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), p. 15. Townshend also pointedly notes that 'the great irony of Gothic in the nineteenth century, of course, is that [...] it was not a term that was generally applied to any of the later fictions of the period 1800-1900 that we now readily describe as 'Gothic' or 'Gothic-inflected,' p. 14.

were not termed thus in contemporary reviews.²⁸ Therefore, within literary criticism the term Gothic was, and still is, commonly ascribed to texts retrospectively. Since the invention of the Victorian Gothic as a concept, theories concerning this historical period of Gothic literature have been applied to a range of novels published during the mid-to late-nineteenth century that engage with contemporary debates surrounding class and gender, evolutionary theory, the sublime, Decadence, history and heredity, and modernity that may not have previously been associated with the Gothic. As such, the Victorian Gothic is far removed from the traditional ‘Radcliffian Gothic’ of the eighteenth century, that relied on exotic locations, orthodox religion, and medievalism to create terror for the reader.²⁹ Furthermore, in an age when texts as diverse as Charles Lyell’s *Principles of Geology* (1830), Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871), Herbert Spencer’s *First Principles* (1860) and *The Principles of Biology Vol. 1* (1864); Edward Clodd’s *The Story of Creation: A Plain Account of Evolution* (1888), and Max Nordau’s *Degeneration* (1892) presented discoveries and suppositions that challenged traditional beliefs and doctrines held by the Victorian public, the plausibility of the supernatural and the relevance of strict religious practices (synonymous with the eighteenth-century Gothic style) came into question. Inevitably, such discoveries became imbedded within the collective consciousness of the reading public and subsequently helped to shape the Victorian Gothic.

Prior to the publication of Ruth Robbins’s and Julian Wolfrey’s edited collection of essays *Victorian Gothic: Literary and Cultural Manifestations in the Nineteenth Century* (2002), the

²⁸ Ibid., p. 15.

²⁹ The term ‘Radcliffian Gothic’ is used by a number of critics, including Robert Mighall in *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction: Mapping History’s Nightmares* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), by using the Gothic novels of the eighteenth-century writer Ann Radcliffe as an archetype of the genre. Mighall defines the ‘Radcliffian Gothic’ as a novel whose ‘modern hero or heroine [...] is located in the Gothic past, forced to contend with the supposed delusions and iniquities of its political and religious regime,’ p. 9. This formula is usually associated with novels written during the period 1760 – 1820, although Mighall does argue that many novels published during the Victorian period also deal with the Gothic past.

term ‘Victorian Gothic’ was often used loosely by critics as a way to describe Gothic literature published within the Victorian period. Instead, more recent criticism uses the term to define a distinct historical period of the Gothic that responded to Victorian cultural concerns, rather than placing *every* Gothic text published within the Victorian period within this context. This is because some Victorian writers, including Ainsworth and the Bronte sisters, instead utilised the classic eighteenth-century Gothic as a model for their novels. As such, before an in-depth analysis of Hardy’s work in relation to the Gothic is possible, the term ‘Victorian Gothic’ should be more precisely defined. Criticism that deals exclusively with the Victorian Gothic novel has been steadily gaining momentum within the last twenty years. For instance, critics including John Paul Riquelme, Alison Milbank, Robert Mighall, Fred Botting, Kelly Hurley, Andrew Smith, William Hughes, Jerrold E. Hogle, Ruth Robbins, Julian Wolfreys, Glennis Byron and David Punter have more actively engaged with new approaches to the interpretation of the Gothic text. For example, Smith and Hughes, in *The Victorian Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion* (2012), propose that Charles Dickens’s ghost story *A Christmas Carol* (1843) and Arthur Machen’s psychological horror *The Great God Pan* (1894) are ‘close to bookending the Victorian Gothic,’ which provides at least some speculative parameters around the literary period of the Victorian Gothic.³⁰

Concerning Gothic narratives, Fred Botting relates that they ‘never escaped the concerns of their own times, despite the heavy historical trappings,’³¹ which implies that analyses of Gothic texts should be mindful of their contemporary cultural contexts. What became apparent is that the Victorian Gothic, instead of being located in the medieval aesthetic of the eighteenth century, should be viewed as responding exclusively to Victorian ‘concerns.’ As

³⁰ Andrew Smith and William Hughes, ‘Introduction: Locating the Victorian Gothic’, Op. Cit., p. 1.

³¹ Fred Botting, *Gothic*, Op. Cit., p. 3.

already stated, the primary feature of the Gothic novel is the way in which it generates fear for the reader and where Botting argues that anxieties expressed within Gothic fiction ‘varied according to diverse changes,’ he also notes that writers of Gothic fiction that post-date the ‘Radcliffian Gothic’ were ‘under pressure from different historical circumstances.’³² The Victorian Gothic, as a discrete historical period of the Gothic genre, was permeated with cultural, philosophical, scientific and political discourses which sought to disturb and enthrall the reader. It should be acknowledged again that the critical term ‘Victorian Gothic’ has been applied retrospectively by recent critics working within the field of Gothic studies. Furthermore, the Victorian Gothic should be viewed as an aesthetic form that can be observed within a range of mid- to late-nineteenth-century texts that have previously been absent from analyses of the Gothic novel. The following three chapters will explore in detail Hardy’s own Gothic aesthetic alongside the cultural anxieties that shaped his work.

Attention should here be given to the two relatively recent publications specifically concerning the Victorian Gothic already cited, because both texts provide a comprehensive selection of essays that enhance and expand interpretations of Gothic texts published during the Victorian period.³³ In the first instance, the fact that each collection of essays actively foregrounds the term ‘Victorian Gothic’ emphasises that a clearer distinction is being made between forms or periods of the Gothic. Equally, these studies also analyse this historical period of the Gothic from diverse perspectives including, but not limited to, realism, sensationalism, Gothic drama, the Gothic body, science and the Gothic, Victorian medicine and the Gothic, trance-Gothic, Gothic at the *fin de siècle*, pre-Raphaelite medievalism, and

³² Ibid., p. 45.

³³ Another key study in this developing field of Victorian Gothic criticism, which also warrants some consideration, is Alison Milbank’s ‘Victorian Gothic in English Novels and Stories, 1830-1880,’ which forms a part of *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction* (2002), edited by Jerrold E. Hogle. Milbank’s essay attempts to delineate Victorian Gothic literature as a genre that responded to aristocracy and sovereignty by reading Queen Victoria’s accession to the throne as an allegory for the tropes of the Radcliffian Gothic.

supernaturalism.³⁴ Significantly, the three major forms of the Victorian Gothic proposed by this thesis: Sensationalism, the Scientific Gothic, and the ‘Decadent Gothic,’ both corroborate and align chronologically with the modes of the Victorian Gothic proposed by the two recent studies of the Gothic already discussed. Yet, despite the scope and comprehensive survey presented within these studies, Hardy’s work is almost entirely absent. For example, there is no mention of Hardy within *Victorian Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion* and in *Victorian Gothic: Literary and Cultural Manifestations in the Nineteenth Century* he is discussed only fleetingly. The attention he does receive in the latter text is within an essay by R. J. Watt entitled ‘Hopkins and the Gothic Body,’ in which Watt links ‘Hardy’s love of the Gothic’ with his ‘training as an architect.’³⁵ This point is a valid one, particularly because Watt goes on to argue that Hardy ‘extends a concept of the gothic well beyond the sphere of architecture, enabling its application to the aesthetics of language, the values of poetry, and moral values in general.’³⁶ Although Watt does not elaborate on this point further, the suggestion that Hardy’s exploration of the Gothic encompasses more than merely architectural style is a useful introduction to Hardy’s representation of the Gothic.

The move towards a reclassification of the Gothic supports Botting’s argument for a re-evaluation of the Gothic and a separation from more familiar modes of criticism.³⁷ He

³⁴ Other sub-genres referred to in these texts include eighteenth-century horror and comedy; technologies of the uncanny; archaeology and desire; comic-gothic; pulp fiction; imperial Gothic; the Victorian ghost story; Gothic poetry; and queer Gothic. Significantly, these sub-genres are each attached to a certain period within the Victorian era, further suggesting that the Victorian Gothic continually evolved in-line with emerging technologies, theories, and philosophies.

³⁵ R. J. Watt, ‘Hopkins and the Gothic Body’ in *Victorian Gothic: Literary and Cultural Manifestations in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Ruth Robbins and Julian Wolfreys (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2000), p. 64.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 64. Watt is here referring to a passage taken from *The Life of Thomas Hardy* (1928), in which Hardy discusses ‘Gothic-art principles.’

³⁷ See ‘Preface: The Gothic’, in *The Gothic: Essays and Studies 2001*, ed. by Fred Botting (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001). In the preface to this collection of writings on the Gothic, Fred Botting argues that ‘if Gothic works tend to repeat a number of stock formulas, so does its criticism’, p. 5 and these he identifies as ‘Marxist, feminist and psychoanalytical approaches’, p. 4.

suggests that the Gothic aesthetic, as well as the novel, has false origins in the eighteenth century. This, he argues, is due to its literary reinvention of the medieval period that vastly predates the period in which it was written.³⁸ With this in mind, all Gothic fiction may be deemed a reconstruction or reinvention, and the eighteenth-century invention of the Gothic novel an inauthentic and unreliable basis for the examination of subsequent Gothic texts. Although Botting does not exclusively analyse the Victorian Gothic, he does express the need to identify an appropriate adjective to define a particular form of the Gothic that does not rely on comparisons with its ‘traditional’ eighteenth-century origins.³⁹ However, Botting cautions against ‘attempting to establish an originary frame’ when defining and evaluating the Gothic novel as it delimits the possibility of a critical approach.⁴⁰ In *Gothic Romanced: Consumption, Gender and Technology in Contemporary Fictions* (2008), Botting argues that ‘the first gothic fictions look back to romanticised feudal times, distinguished from their Enlightenment here and now.’⁴¹ Motifs of the Gothic, then, allowed writers to harness the desires of the reading public, whilst offering them an ‘escape’ from the present by romanticising the feudal past. To an extent, this was true in the Victorian period, except that the Gothic was less focused on romantic escapism and more concerned with creating a ‘safe’ space within the Gothic novel in which readers could process anxieties about the present. With this in mind, this thesis will argue that there is room for both an analysis of Hardy’s work within a distinct Gothic period *and* a conceptual approach that emphasises his critical and aesthetic engagement with the body, science, nature, the sublime, heredity, degeneracy and history.

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 1-2.

³⁹ It should be noted that Botting provides a list of adjectives that he believes define the Gothic, which includes the Victorian Gothic. These are: ‘Victorian, modern, eighteenth-century and post-modern,’ Ibid., p.1

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 1-2.

⁴¹ Fred Botting, *Gothic Romanced: Consumption, Gender and Technology in Contemporary Fictions* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), pp. 9-10.

Botting also claims that ‘by challenging the hierarchies of literary value and widening the horizons of critical study [...] recent critical practices have moved Gothic texts from previously marginalized sites designated as popular fiction or literary eccentricity.’⁴² The concept of boundaries in relation to literary genres is problematic because the Gothic aesthetic is repeatedly viewed as permeating a range of texts, not previously considered within this context, in more recent critical studies of the Victorian Gothic. Gothic texts were not respected intellectually during the nineteenth century because of their association with cheap editions and questionable literary quality, as will become evident within the chapter concerning sensation fiction (the earliest mode of the Victorian Gothic). Botting’s argument also lends itself to the more recent critical reception of the Gothic text, which is no longer ‘marginalized’ due to the boundaries of the Gothic being challenged and re-drawn. Hardy’s novels can offer a prime example of how more recent studies of the Gothic may open new channels of analysis, the like of which has already been attempted with the work of Dickens and Eliot in the two major studies of the Victorian Gothic already cited. This thesis aims to offer new perspectives on Hardy’s novels by examining the Gothic aesthetic of his work in the same way that critics have previously assessed the Gothicism of writers such as Dickens, who Hardy sought to emulate in his own time. On Dickens’s writing in particular, Smith and Hughes suggest that ‘the real becomes unreal as the Gothic makes its claims on reality.’⁴³ Here, there is no question mark placed against the realism of Dickens’s work, rather Smith and Hughes are positing that the Gothic cannot be viewed in isolation because it simultaneously feeds into and is fed by other literary genres.

⁴² Fred Botting, *Gothic*. Op. Cit., p. 17.

⁴³ Andrew Smith and William Hughes, ‘Introduction: Locating the Victorian Gothic’, Op. Cit., p. 6. In ‘Preface: ‘I could a tale unfold’ or, the Promise of Gothic’, Wolfreys also suggests that studies of the Gothic should be more interdisciplinary due to the fact that the Gothic mode ‘leaves its mark, in the nineteenth century, in the most conventional of narratives,’ Op. Cit., p. xv.

Similar to Botting, Robert Mighall provides a reassessment of the nineteenth-century novel within the Gothic context that does not rely on previous psychological and sexual readings.⁴⁴ Instead, he suggests that an historical reading of the Gothic mode identifies ‘pastness’ by reinforcing the ‘distance between the enlightened now and the repressive or misguided then.’⁴⁵ This introduces the possibility of new readings of novels not previously considered Gothic, such as Charles Dickens’s *A Tale of Two Cities*,⁴⁶ as well as the Hardy novels that are the focus of this thesis. Yet, in spite of Mighall’s broad analysis of ‘non-traditional’ Gothic texts, Hardy’s work is again absent. Furthermore, his innovative approach to the Gothic, though extremely useful to contemporary studies of the Gothic, still relies on the eighteenth-century novel as an historical ‘originary’ form. For instance, Mighall’s geographical and historicised reading of the Victorian Gothic suggests that the nineteenth-century Gothic mode was a reimagined or reconstructed version of the traditional ‘Radcliffian Gothic.’ He argues that novelists such as George W. M. Reynolds transported the ‘Gothic scenario [...] into the modern urban context’ and succumbed to ‘many of the trappings and sublime effects associated with the genre.’⁴⁷ Like Ainsworth, who was writing within the same period, Reynolds utilised the Radcliffian Gothic style in novels such as *The Mysteries of London* (1844-1848). That is to say, writers of this early Victorian period (also including the Bronte sisters, Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton and other Newgate novelists of the 1830s and 1840s) still relied on the supernatural, hauntings, terror of the unknown and the

⁴⁴ See Robert Mighall, *Op. Cit.*, pp. xiii-xv.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. xviii

⁴⁶ Interestingly, Mighall suggests that Dickens’s novel has more in common with the traditional Gothic tale than Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. This, he argues, is because an ‘historical dimension is central to the Gothic mode,’ which he believes is lacking in Shelley’s novel, *Ibid.*, p. xx. Therefore, her novel is at odds with Mighall’s ‘more precise’ definition of the Gothic, whereas Dickens’s novel subscribes to the principles Mighall sets out, *Ibid.*, p. xx,

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 29. Here, Mighall is discussing Reynold’s novel *The Mysteries of London* (1844-8) which is set in London in 1831. He argues that from this period onwards London becomes a substitute for the exotic location and is indicative of what he terms the ‘urban Gothic,’ pp. 31-2.

monstrous to entice their audience.⁴⁸ Yet, as Mighall demonstrates, what sets the novels of Reynolds and his contemporaries apart from the medieval, remote, and often exotic setting of the eighteenth-century Gothic novel was that the action took place within a ‘modern’ cityscape. Nevertheless, like their eighteenth-century predecessors, Newgate novels also endeavoured to promote strict morality by acting as cautionary tales that outlined the consequences of immoral behaviour. For this reason, these early-Victorian Gothic novels serve as transitional texts that at once reimagined the classic Gothic style *and* helped to forge a path towards the Victorian Gothic era.

On the Gothic genre more broadly, Mighall argues that it is ‘a process, not an essence; a rhetoric rather than a store of universal symbols; an attitude to the past and present, not a free-floating fantasy world.’⁴⁹ The dichotomies of the Gothic described by Mighall legitimise more recent critical analyses of the Gothic, which attempt to both emphasise what the Gothic literary style *is not* and what it *was* whilst simultaneously asserting what it *is* or *could be*. This is asserted in Mighall’s reference to the Gothic as a ‘process’ that hints at progressivism and supports the concept that the literary Gothic should be perceived as a chronological series of modes that develop alongside wider societal discourses. As such, when Mighall posits that the Gothic is not a ‘free-floating fantasy world,’ he appears to be signifying that the Gothic genre should not be viewed as a set of tropes or modes that can be borrowed from a singular historical period, such as the medieval era. Instead, the Gothic is simultaneously a product and a ‘rhetoric’ of contemporary tastes, culture, and belief systems. Furthermore, medievalism in eighteenth-century Gothic texts was a device used by writers such as

⁴⁸ The Newgate novelists, Bulwer-Lytton and Ainsworth being two of the most prolific, sought to disturb and thrill the reading public with their shocking portrayals of the criminal persona. Effectively, they hoped to provide the reader with a terrifying insight into the monstrous, heinous, and depraved world of the Newgate prison community (despite London’s Newgate prison being destroyed by fire in 1780).

⁴⁹ Robert Mighall, *Op. Cit.*, p. xxv.

Radcliffe and Walpole to cultivate a safe distance between the enlightened present and the feudal past. By contrast, the writers of the Victorian Gothic were bolder in their attempt to deal with the present and anticipated future by setting their action within a contemporary historical context. Within Hardy's work, it is possible to trace the evolution of his Gothic style that was shaped by contemporary attitudes to the present. Yet, unlike Mighall's supposition, Victorian Gothic fiction was less concerned with the past than it was about the unknown future.

Thomas Hardy and the Gothic

There exists a wealth of criticism that engages with Hardy's essays, novels, poetry, and short stories from a cultural perspective, examining subjects as diverse as sexuality and desire, gender, language, and psychology.⁵⁰ Yet despite this wide-ranging criticism on Hardy's entire body of literary work, surprisingly little consideration has been given to Gothic representation within his writing. Similarly, there is even scarcer reference to Hardy's work within the context of Victorian Gothicism. Much like the Gothic of Dickens, whose work has been widely analysed in the two major studies of the Victorian Gothic already identified, Hardy's Gothic does not subscribe to the 'dominant tropes' that are often attached to his work. One of the most recent studies of Hardy and the Gothic is Jane Louise Liljedahl's unpublished PhD thesis 'The Explicable and the Inexplicable: Gothic Manifestations in Four Thomas Hardy Novels,' (2002)⁵¹ in which she addresses the Gothic in four of Hardy's novels. Liljedahl asserts that her thesis attempts to 'go beyond the mere identification of

⁵⁰ For example, see Margaret R. Higonnet's edited collection of essays, *The Sense of Sex: Feminist Perspectives on Hardy* (1993); Jane Thomas, *Thomas Hardy and Desire: Conceptions of the Self* (2013); Geoffrey Thurley, *The Psychology of Hardy's Novels: The Nervous and the Statuesque* (1975) and; Dennis Taylor, *Hardy's Literary Language and Victorian Philology* (1993).

⁵¹ The four texts that Liljedahl discusses are: *Desperate Remedies* (1871); *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873); *The Woodlanders* (1887); and *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891).

Gothic elements in Hardy's writing' by instead discussing his 'employment of Gothic plots, characters, images, and representations,' whilst observing how these motifs altered and transformed 'during the course of his career.'⁵² Although not outwardly stated, Liljedahl's comments allude to the familiar topoi of the Gothic that earlier definitions and readings of the genre relied on, such as: heroes/villains; scandals/virtues; castles/ruins; and deception/innocence.⁵³ Significantly, Liljedahl does proceed to reinforce that Hardy was 'not a Gothic writer in the tradition of the eighteenth and early nineteenth-century writers such as Radcliffe or Maturin, nor does he work exclusively in the genre,'⁵⁴ which again supports the development of this limited critical field. The idea that Hardy did not work 'exclusively in the genre' is also an important statement that appears to build on more recent scholarship which posits that the Victorian Gothic was an aesthetic form situated *within* the context of realism and naturalism. Liljedahl furthers this supposition by stating that the 'Victorians lived in an age where old traditional beliefs, institutions, and ideals were disappearing and the new emerging values were often confusing or incomplete.'⁵⁵ Hardy was himself informed enough to be aware of the fact that the world, or even the universe, could be read as a terrifying place, particularly when gazing back into the past to locate solutions.⁵⁶ Similarly, it is possible to read in Liljedahl's testimony that, for Victorians like Hardy, fear of an unknown future was more threatening than the fear of familiar systems of belief synonymous with the past.

⁵² Jane Louise Liljedahl, 'The Explicable and the Inexplicable: Gothic Manifestations in Four Thomas Hardy Novels' (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis: University of Leicester, 2002), p. 10.

⁵³ This is neither an exhaustive list, nor are these binaries defined explicitly by Liljedahl herself; however, this list does represent some of the common binaries often associated with the eighteenth-century Gothic style that Liljedahl references in her study.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

⁵⁶ As this thesis will demonstrate, Hardy expressed, documented, and responded to social anxieties within his vast notebooks, letters, biographies, and essays which attest to his engagement with contemporary criticism. For example, Hardy became increasingly disillusioned with modern Christianity and demonstrated an awareness of contemporary scientific theory through his readings of Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer, as well as his acquaintance with Edward Clodd.

Liljedahl proceeds to speculate where these ‘new emerging values’ originated from during the Victorian period by stating that,

The discoveries of Lyell and Darwin were destructive to the social fabric, not only because of the fear of total chaos and degeneration, but because it destroyed all moral, religious, and historical absolutes, and took much of the mystery and poetry out of life.⁵⁷

Previous religious, social and philosophical ‘certainties’ were being thrown into question by new scientific and geological theories. Liljedahl aligns this with the cultivation of fear in the reading public, that remains at the centre of Gothic literary style, by suggesting that the seams holding together the ‘social fabric’ were being unpicked by more modern thought. Whilst such scientific discoveries may have emphasised human mortality and disrupted accepted belief systems, what Liljedahl does not account for is that these shifts in public perception also undermined humankind’s privileged place within the universe. What becomes increasingly apparent when investigating the Victorian Gothic is that the Victorians themselves were torn between establishing their own legacy and reviving the medieval aesthetic. This is further indicated by the terms ‘chaos and degeneration’ which create an image of uncertainty and anxiety that Liljedahl supposes influenced the nineteenth-century Gothic style. For Liljedahl, then, Hardy’s exploration of the binaries of past and present within his work, that responded to contemporary theories and philosophies, was the primary factor contributing to the formulation of his multi-faceted Gothic style. Liljedahl’s conclusions begin to consider styles of the Gothic beyond the eighteenth-century framework, whilst simultaneously identifying points of reference that ground the Victorian Gothic. However, Liljedahl’s thesis does not provide a tangible definition of the varying Gothic

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 61.

styles within the nineteenth century, nor does it go as far as to establish a convincing distinction between the eighteenth-century Gothic mode and the Victorian Gothic aesthetic.

The most recent extended analysis of Hardy and the Gothic is another unpublished PhD thesis by Najwas Yousif El Inglizi entitled ‘Negotiating the Gothic in the Fiction of Thomas Hardy,’ (2003).⁵⁸ In his thesis, Inglizi analyses four of Hardy’s novels, which he interprets as direct archetypes of the eighteenth-century Gothic novel.⁵⁹ The major premise of his research is to ‘study Hardy’s engagement with the classic Gothic texts of the period 1760s-1820s.’ However, the potential problem with this approach is that there is little evidence in any of Hardy’s literary notebooks, autobiographies, or essays that he read any significant Gothic texts by authors who published work during this earlier period. This is not to say that Hardy was completely unaware of classic Gothic texts. For example, there is evidence in *The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy, Vol 1*, and *Vol.2* that he read all six volumes of *The Letters of Horace Walpole* (1857). However, as F. B. Pinion notes, despite the fact that the influence of the Gothic ‘survived in many popular Victorian novels [...] to what extent Hardy was familiar with this literature is largely conjectural.’⁶⁰ In fact, Hardy’s early literary influences more credibly signify that he was aiming for a realist style in-line with the novels of George Eliot and William Makepeace Thackeray.⁶¹ Therefore, any convincing analysis of

⁵⁸ Attention should here be given to a short essay, published within the last twenty years, that also addresses Hardy and the Gothic more generally. See, Brigitte Hervoche-Bertho, ‘Seminal Gothic Dissemination in Hardy’s Writings’, *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 29.2, 451-67 (2001). Similar to the scholars already discussed, Hervoche-Bertho emphasises that ‘critics have too often dismissed the Gothic elements in Thomas Hardy’s writings as superficial trappings to be found mostly in his minor fictions,’ p. 451.

⁵⁹ The four novels discussed by Inglizi are: *Two on a Tower*; *The Mayor of Casterbridge*; *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*.

⁶⁰ F. B. Pinion, *A Hardy Companion: A Guide to the Works of Thomas Hardy and their Background* (1968; London: Macmillan, 1976), p. 153.

⁶¹ In an article for *Book Monthly*, Vol. 1, 524-5 (May 1904), reprinted in *Thomas Hardy’s Public Voice: The Essays, Speeches, and Miscellaneous Prose*, Op. Cit., pp. 207-8, there is an account of Jemima Hardy’s reading habits. Her preferred novels include Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair* (1848), that ‘she seemed to rate above all other novels by deceased writers,’ and Eliot’s *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) which she believed to be ‘the best of

Hardy's Gothicism would have to account for the complex influences on his work that do not necessarily rely on immediate comparisons with the eighteenth-century Gothic style.

Inglizi goes on to write that 'Hardy's involvement with the Gothic [became] more extensive and expert in his later novels,'⁶² because he believes that Hardy engaged with writers such as Horace Walpole, Ann Radcliffe, William Godwin, Matthew Lewis, Mary Shelley and Charles Maturin in a more obvious way at the *fin de siècle*.⁶³ According to Inglizi, these eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century writers represent the 'classic corpus of Gothic fiction,'⁶⁴ which is well-founded. Again, however, there is insufficient evidence to suggest that such a direct influence existed, or that this influence was specific to Hardy's novels published within the late-Victorian period. Although writers such as Bram Stoker, Oscar Wilde, and H. G. Wells *did* appear to replicate the supernaturalism, mysticism, and exoticism of the classic Gothic novel during the *fin de siècle*, this comparison is difficult to establish in relation to Hardy's novels of the same period. Hardy did quote from Shelley's *Frankenstein* in *A Laodicean* (1881) and from De Quincey in *Desperate Remedies*, which is perhaps sufficient evidence to suggest that Hardy did indeed read some earlier Gothic fiction.

George Eliot's novels,' p. 208. Michael Millgate conjectures that Hardy was 'largely the author' of this and similar articles concerning Jemima Hardy, published following her death on 3rd April 1904, thus indicating that Hardy was both aware of such novels at an early age and was deeply influenced by her reading, p. 207. Jemima Hardy's literary influence on her son is further supported by an earlier 'Obituary for Jemima Hardy' published in *The Times*, 4 (6 April 1904), and again reprinted in *Thomas Hardy's Public Voice: The Essays, Speeches, and Miscellaneous Prose*, Op. Cit., p. 204, that states Mrs Hardy had the 'keenest love for literature; and much of her son's work in prose and verse was based upon her memories and opinions,' p. 204.

⁶² Najwas Yousif El Inglizi, 'Negotiating the Gothic in the Fiction of Thomas Hardy' (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis: Birmingham University, 2003), p. 2.

⁶³ For example, Inglizi states that he shall 'offer a reading of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* in juxtaposition with a series of classic Gothic novels, particularly those of Ann Radcliffe, [Matthew] Lewis and Charles Maturin,' p. 2.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

However, there is certainly not a diverse enough range of such eighteenth-century Gothic intertextuality in Hardy's work to argue for a consistent influence.⁶⁵

There are, however, several observations made by Inglizi concerning the Gothic that deserve particular attention here. For example, he states that 'when we come to the literary Gothic itself, we see a more complex series of eclectic transformations, which make it a polymorphous entity.'⁶⁶ Like Liljedahl, Inglizi acknowledges that it is possible to trace the evolution of Gothic literature by identifying its diverse and shifting characteristics. Inglizi's statement encourages the hypothesis that designating guises of the literary Gothic genre is a feasible and worthwhile endeavour, even though he does not sufficiently explore this perspective within his own study. He does, however, go on to argue that

What has been seen by some critics as Hardy's multi-faceted and often uneven genius is becoming recognised as an experimental and intentional amalgamation of a variety of genres not only throughout the novels but also within a single work.⁶⁷

What becomes apparent here is that Hardy's texts are 'experimental' and therefore contain unstable and unpredictable elements, which are often affected by Hardy's inception of broader ideas. The 'multi-faceted' and 'uneven genius' described by Inglizi can also be read as the critical attempt to integrate realism, naturalism, and the Gothic when analysing Hardy's work. Furthermore, Inglizi's claim that Hardy's literary experiments were 'intentional' is an important one because it suggests that he was deliberately exploring literary styles and developing his technique during the Victorian period. The 'variety of

⁶⁵ For a comprehensive survey of quotations used by Hardy within his novels, from such diverse sources as Shakespeare and Swinburne, see F. B. Pinion, *A Hardy Companion: A Guide to the Works of Thomas Hardy and their Background*, O. Cit., pp. 200-24.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

genres' that he references would perhaps more usefully be termed 'styles' or 'modes,' due to the fact that categorisations of Hardy's novels within designated genres, such as realism, has proved to be a limitation within previous scholarship.

Much earlier published critical analyses of Hardy's work, such as Samuel C. Chew's *Thomas Hardy: Poet and Novelist* (1921), more tentatively address his Gothic aesthetic compared to the later studies already discussed. In his text, which is the earliest work concerning Hardy and the Gothic, Chew specifically aligns Hardy's early writing with his supposed 'apprenticeship to the school of "sensational novelists,"' because he believes Hardy 'often follows his natural bent towards the mysterious and improbably to the point where he overreaches himself in the employment of coincidence.'⁶⁸ Yet Chew's point specifically locates one aspect of Hardy's style within the particular context of 'Hardy's employment of sensational devices and situations,' (p. 116) which does not sufficiently reconcile Hardy's use of the Gothic more broadly. Instead, he is linking a single plot device – sensational incident - to Hardy's 'use of coincidence,' (p. 116) In fact, Chew openly states that even though there are instances of sensationalism in Hardy's early texts, such as 'the use of capital letters to convey to the reader the excitement of the speaker' which 'betrays clearly the influence of Charles Reade,' (p. 116)⁶⁹ he cautions the reader that such a reading is 'hardly valid,' (p. 115). Equally, Chew clearly states that 'Hardy senses, and in the endeavour to bring home to the reader exaggerates, the factor of chance in life,' (p. 115). Simply put, Chew believes that

⁶⁸ Samuel C. Chew, *Thomas Hardy: Poet and Novelist* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1921), p 115. All further references are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the text.

⁶⁹ Chew is here referencing an instance in *Desperate Remedies* (1871), where Hardy is arguably replicating the style of a fellow sensation writer.

Hardy's identification of coincidence in his texts leads to isolated episodes 'in concentrated form,' (p. 116) of sensationalism, (p. 116).⁷⁰

Some two decades later, David Cecil published *Thomas Hardy Novelist: An Essay in Criticism* (1946) in which he proposes that Hardy's early life experience significantly affected his future writing style. He writes that

It was a disturbing age for a sensitive mind; for it was an age of transition. [...] Along with the disintegration of the old social and economic structures went a disintegration of ideas. Eighteenth-century rationalism had united with the new romantic spirit of rebellion against convention, to shake the fundamental basis of belief – religious, social, political – which the people of the old England had unquestionably accepted.⁷¹

To use a Gothic analogy, Cecil's reference to the 'disintegration' of 'old social and economic structures' suggests that many of the major foundations on which culture was built were beginning to crumble during the nineteenth century. The presumed knowledge, identity and belief systems that were once solidified in the consciousness of society during the eighteenth century - religious, philosophical, economical, or political - as Cecil acknowledges, were now a remnant of 'old England' and far-removed from Hardy's time. Cecil's argument also accounts for the broader influences on Hardy's writing, particularly in his formative years, that were both based on contemporary observations and the ancient folk tales familiar to him during his childhood.⁷² In Hardy's writing, then, Cecil believes that there are traces of the synthesis of historical conventions and contemporary progress, which shaped his Gothic

⁷⁰ Like many critics that were to follow, Chew places emphasis on Hardy's first published novel *Desperate Remedies* (1871) when identifying his sensationalism by reinforcing that 'the later books are never so dependent on sensationalism.' Furthermore, Chew aligns the sensationalism of *Desperate Remedies* with Hardy's inclusion of 'mystery with regard to birth, burning buildings, murder and walled-up corpses, midnight spies, mysterious sounds thrice foretelling important events, and much else,' p. 116.

⁷¹ David Cecil, *Thomas Hardy Novelist: An Essay in Criticism* (1942; Constable and Company Ltd.: London, 1943), pp. 20-1.

⁷² Cecil writes that 'Hardy's stories are full of English popular superstitions which played so large a role on the histories he listened to round the fire in the long winter evenings,' *Ibid.*, p. 17.

style. Such melding of ideas is further described by Cecil as a ‘blend of hard truth and wild Gothic poetry.’ This juxtaposition can be read as Hardy’s attempt to conform to the Victorian elitist perception of literary Realism in his writing whilst simultaneously striving to challenge the establishment.

The idea that Hardy’s work explores the tension between present truths and old superstitions is further expressed within Cecil’s statement that ‘the so-called realist painstakingly describes the body, generally emphasising its more unpleasing features. Hardy pierces beneath these to reveal the soul.’⁷³ Cecil appears to be questioning the ‘so-called’ labels attached to Hardy’s work, in the same way that subsequent critics have discussed Hardy’s ambivalence in relation to literary style, by cautioning against a purely realist critical approach to his work. Even as early as 1921, Chew argued that Hardy ‘never relies upon the supernatural, yet the remoteness and self-sufficiency of his setting remove him far from the realists.’⁷⁴ Due to the higher status attached to Realism when analysing Victorian novels, the concept of Hardy and the Gothic never quite established itself within earlier Hardy studies following Chew’s and Cecil’s work. This was largely a consequence of the perceived lower critical status of the genre. However, the renaissance in Gothic studies from the 1970s to the present has generated new possibilities of analysing the Gothicism of Hardy’s work, using more contemporary theories concerning the literary Gothic style. As if to reinforce this idea, Punter and Byron directly state that ‘since the late 1970s, the Gothic has become a highly popular field of academic study’ whilst drawing attention to the fact that, despite this influx of Gothic criticism, ‘the Gothic remains a notoriously difficult field to define.’⁷⁵ The publication of James F. Scott’s 1963 article ‘Thomas Hardy’s Use of the Gothic: An

⁷³ Ibid., p. 77.

⁷⁴ Samuel C. Chew, *Thomas Hardy: Poet and Novelist* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1921), p. 133.

⁷⁵ David Punter and Glennis Byron, *The Gothic*, Op. Cit., p. xviii.

examination of Five Representative Works,' arguably marks the moment when modern Gothic studies was slowly starting to gain some momentum and Hardy's work was beginning to be accepted into this field of critical study. It is not only the first extended examination of Hardy's writing in relation to the Gothic, but also expands the analysis beyond Hardy's first published novel *Desperate Remedies* by including close readings of four of his short stories.⁷⁶

In his article, Scott outlines what he deems to be the advantages of his study on Hardy criticism. He argues that the use of the term Gothic 'promises greater objectivity in the analysis of Hardy's fiction as well as greater insight into the historical forces which shaped it.' Here, Scott emphasises the critical 'objectivity' required when analysing Hardy's writing, which involves eliminating critical bias and stereotypes that even Hardy himself constructed by designating his novels into the three categories for the Wessex edition of his novels in 1912: Romances and Fantasies; Novels of Ingenuity; and Novels of Character and Environment. By analysing a small selection of Hardy's work in relation to Gothic motifs, Scott is able to counter-balance the heavy importance that Hardy scholars place on Realism, whilst simultaneously exploring the Gothic aesthetic in Hardy's work more broadly. The 'historical forces' Scott refers to are the remnants of the folklore and folktales that he concedes shaped Hardy's early creative mind.⁷⁷ Though this thesis is not specifically concerned with Hardy's early fascination with superstitions and traditions, Scott's comments acknowledge that there were other, more tangible, forces shaping Hardy's Gothic aesthetic beyond the eighteenth-century mode. Scott further proposes that a selection of Hardy's work,

⁷⁶ In addition to a close reading of *Desperate Remedies*, Scott also investigates: 'The Withered Arm' (1888); 'Barbara of the House of Grebe' (1891); 'The Doctor's Legend' (1891); and 'The Committee-Man of the Terror' (1896).

⁷⁷ For a more recent study that addresses Hardy and folklore, see Andrew Radford, 'Folklore and Anthropology', in *Thomas Hardy in Context*, ed. by Phillip Mallett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). Radford writes that Hardy was 'keenly alert to the dislocating complexities of a hectic modernity yet impelled by a historical responsibility to exhume, record, and reanimate forgotten traditions,' p. 210.

which he deems to have ‘negligible thematic import,’ utilised ‘Gothic conventions’ as a way for the writer to ‘devise strong adventures.’⁷⁸ Often defined as Hardy’s ‘minor’ novels, these seemingly inferior texts described by Scott are consistently dismissed by critics as crude literary forms within Hardy’s canon.⁷⁹ Although Scott at first appears to subscribe to the common critical perspective that Hardy’s novels are either ‘major’ or ‘minor,’ he does strive to balance this supposition by stating that when Hardy ‘chooses to write as a serious artist, his subordination of Gothic motifs [...] enables him to create meaningful symbols and to project into the literal action a dimension of myth and allegory.’⁸⁰ Within Scott’s argument, it is possible to trace the tension between Realism and the Gothic within Hardy’s work because of the dichotomy created by the terms ‘literal action’ and ‘myth and allegory.’ The latter term alludes to the mystery and symbolism associated with the classic Gothic style, whereas the former term suggests the immediacy associated with literary realism.

Some twenty five years after the publication of Scott’s article, Norma Walrath Goldstein took up the mantle of Hardy and the Gothic in her unpublished PhD thesis ‘Thomas Hardy’s Victorian Gothic: Reassessing Hardy’s Fiction and his Gothic Sensibility,’ (1989). Goldstein pointedly remarks that ‘the classification of a Victorian Gothic reassesses [Hardy’s] fiction in a way not done before’⁸¹ and, it may be added, in a way few critics have accomplished since. Instead, Goldstein proposes that analyses of Hardy fiction have

⁷⁸ James F. Scott, ‘Thomas Hardy’s Use of the Gothic: An Examination of Five Representative Works’, *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 17.4, 363-80 (March 1963), p. 379.

⁷⁹ Hardy himself seems to have upheld this distinction between his ‘major’ and ‘minor’ novels in the 1912 Wessex edition of his collected works. Here, he groups his novels into three categories and, significantly, the supposed ‘minor’ novels are listed under the categories “Romances and Fantasies” and “Novels of Ingenuity”, implying that they are of lesser literary quality than the remaining ‘major’ titles which form part of the category “Novels of Character and Environment.”

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 379.

⁸¹ Norma Walrath Goldstein, ‘Thomas Hardy’s Victorian Gothic: Reassessing Hardy’s Fiction and his Gothic Sensibility’ (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis: University of Rhode Island, 1989), p. 2.

previously favoured labels such as ‘realistic, romantic, sensational or naturalistic.’⁸² However, Goldstein challenges these labels by stating that the ‘realism and literary naturalism in [Hardy’s] work have been vastly overplayed at the expense of the more sensational, irrational, and melodramatic elements.’⁸³ Goldstein’s critical insight is an important one because it enhances interpretations of Hardy’s Gothic style through the assessment of his work within the context of the Victorian Gothic. The appraisal of Hardy’s novels as ‘realistic’ and ‘naturalistic’ by previous scholars has indeed been ‘over-played’ and, as Goldstein goes on to suggest, it is important to acknowledge that Hardy’s ‘Gothic strains’ often ‘cut into [the] realism and naturalism’ of his work.⁸⁴ This thesis is built on similar principles, particularly when read against Goldstein’s claim that Hardy ‘create[d] his own original form of Gothic fiction for his Victorian audience.’⁸⁵ However, Goldstein’s thesis relies on a broader definition of the term Victorian Gothic, that ascribes the style to writers such as William Harrison Ainsworth and Wilkie Collins,⁸⁶ without considering how the span of seventy-four years might impact this classification. This thesis, then, draws on what Goldstein defines as a ‘species of fiction’⁸⁷ yet seeks to determine a more defined classification of the Victorian Gothic and its modes that accounts for the evolution of such a ‘species.’ Goldstein goes on to relate that the Gothic novel as a ‘species of fiction’ spanned ‘several centuries and several countries,’⁸⁸ by acknowledging that as an archetype of fiction it

⁸² Ibid., p. 2.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 1.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 5. By designating and defining the key terms that relate to the critical interpretation of Hardy’s work, as well as assessing the validity of such terms, Goldstein is able to provide a more sophisticated reading of Hardy’s work than the melodramatic label or ‘stirring of adventures’ that Scott suggested in his earlier study.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 23.

⁸⁶ Goldstein makes an important observation when she claims that there were ‘two sensationalists popular in his day that we know that Hardy read: William Harrison Ainsworth and Wilkie Collins,’ Ibid. p. 32. This places Hardy more readily within a Victorian Gothic collective, yet Goldstein seemingly undermines this statement by suggesting that Hardy ‘extend[ed] this classic genre to create his own style of Victorian Gothic fiction,’ p. 9. Whilst it is clear that writers each have a unique style, whether Gothic or otherwise, it is perhaps limiting to suggest that Hardy’s style was completely distinct from that of his contemporaries.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 10.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 10.

is centuries old. However, it is important to reiterate that societal perceptions of political, economic, philosophical, and philological concerns would culminate in shifts in the Gothic style also. As such, the Victorian Gothic for Goldstein was a re-emergence or the ‘next phase of the gothic novel,’⁸⁹ whereas this present thesis explores the Gothic style as a more fluid and evolutionary process within the Victorian period.

One key point to note here is that there is not a consistent dialogue that is traceable between any of the texts discussed concerning Hardy and the Gothic. Whilst it is true that both Goldstein and Liljedahl reference Scott’s essay, and that Scott also cites Chew and Cecil, there is a lack of consistency in the critical field that needs to be addressed. Furthermore, there has been no significant study of Hardy and the Victorian Gothic within nearly twenty years, which means there has been a missed opportunity to apply more recent theories of the literary Gothic style to Hardy’s work. However, if this thesis were to exclusively cite only *published* work that deals with Hardy and the Victorian Gothic, then this critical field has scarcely been tackled at all. The two most recent studies that come closest to addressing Hardy’s Gothic aesthetic from an alternative perspective to the eighteenth-century mode are John Paul Riquelme’s *Gothic and Modernism: Essaying Dark Literary Modernity* (2008) and Richard Nemesvari’s *Thomas Hardy, Sensationalism, and the Melodramatic Mode* (2011). Riquelme’s text seeks to address the ‘comparatively dismissive attitude towards the Gothic in academic studies of canonical literature,’ which he believes is due to Gothic literature’s ‘close relationship’ with ‘some popular cultural forms.’⁹⁰ The ‘popular cultural forms’ described by Riquelme are often measured by a novel’s inclusion of contemporary public tastes and its wide-ranging popularity (with particular emphasis on

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 15.

⁹⁰ John Paul Riquelme, *Gothic and Modernism: Essaying Dark Literary Modernity* (Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), p. 6

lower-class readers). This was most pronounced within the sensation fiction period when writers such as M. E. Braddon and Collins received less favourable literary reviews of their work than Dickens, Thackeray, George Meredith and George Eliot (who connected with a higher class of readership) due to what Riquelme terms the ‘excess [...] typical of the Gothic, which regularly comes close to parody or self-parody.’⁹¹ Therefore, the Gothic mode that Braddon and Collins subscribed to has often been dealt with less earnestly by critics because of its long alliance with intellectual inferiority and crude style. Riquelme also makes the interesting point that ‘the excessive, overtly artificial quality of the Gothic [...] enables us to recognize a staging of cultural tendencies rather than a capitulation of them.’⁹²

Whilst it is true that critical judgments of the Gothic are shifting in more recent studies of the literary genre, they still only tentatively include more scholarly publications of the nineteenth century. These ‘canonical’ texts were (and often still are) more readily connected with Realism, including the work of Hardy, and discriminatively dissociated with the Gothic genre. An essay by Patrick R. O’Malley within Riquelme’s collection of essays on the Gothic (discussed in greater depth within chapter three) endeavours to address this critical imbalance by analysing *Jude the Obscure* (1895) within the context of the late-nineteenth-century Gothic architectural revival. However, there is still arguably some way to go before the discrepancy between canonical Victorian literature and the Gothic aesthetic is reconciled. One critic who does endeavour to address this critical imbalance, in direct relation to Hardy, is Nemesvari. In his text (examined more comprehensively in the section concerning Hardy’s sensationalism) Nemesvari posits that Hardy emulated melodramatic ‘dramaturgy’ within his novels and that the sensationalist style was ‘central to Hardy’s novelistic methods’

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 16.

⁹² Ibid., p. 16.

throughout his career.⁹³ On the disjuncture between sensationalism and more sophisticated forms of writing, Nemesvari argues that Hardy's work demonstrated a 'sophisticated negotiation (and at times denial) of the critically constructed boundary between mass culture and high art' which he claims was 'integral to his success as an author.'⁹⁴ Effectively, he is intimating that Hardy straddled the line between Gothicism and Realism, which is a significant statement for this thesis to consider going forward. Despite Nemesavri's work serving as a crucial starting point when analysing Hardy's early Gothic style, it does not provide a sufficiently compelling analysis of Hardy's later novels. Published in the decades following the decline of sensation fiction from the 1880s onwards, these novels cannot be satisfactorily aligned with a mode of the Gothic that had already begun to diminish at the point when only seven of Hardy's eventual fourteen novels had been published. As such, it is necessary to investigate, but then *beyond*, Hardy's sensationalism if a comprehensive analysis of his Gothicism is to be achieved.

Methodology

To efficiently reconcile any problems that may arise in relation to terminology, this thesis will have a conceptual structure that positions Hardy's work in relation to the three major modes of the Victorian Gothic: Sensationalism, the Scientific Gothic, and the Decadent Gothic. As this thesis shall demonstrate, previous Hardy criticism has interpreted his work in relation to Sensationalism, Darwinism, the sublime, and Decadence, but it has not sufficiently positioned it within the Victorian Gothic context. In fact, there are no existing publications that examine Hardy's work by establishing a link between his interpretation and inception of philosophical, scientific, and theoretical studies and the Victorian Gothic aesthetic. As such,

⁹³ Richard Nemesvari, *Thomas Hardy, Sensationalism, and the Melodramatic Mode* (New York: Palgrave, 2011), p. 2.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

each mode of the Victorian Gothic shall be theoretically underpinned by Hardy's own reading and notetaking, alongside contemporary discourses that he would have been familiar with. However, due to the amount of material produced by Hardy during his seventy-year writing career, it is necessary that this thesis primarily focuses on one major form of his writing. Even though Hardy's poetry and short stories also warrant consideration when discussing his Gothic aesthetic in the future, it would be impossible to thoroughly analyse these *as well as* the novels specifically chosen for this purpose. The novels to be analysed are: *Desperate Remedies* (1871); *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873); *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874); *The Hand of Ethelberta* (1876); *Two on a Tower* (1882); *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886); *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891); and *Jude the Obscure* (1895). These novels were selected because they most effectively embody the core principles of each mode of the Victorian Gothic style. By performing close readings of Hardy's work in chronological order, it will be possible to utilise an historicist approach, that simultaneously considers Hardy's evolving writing style and the development of the Victorian Gothic aesthetic, within the context of contemporary literature and culture.

There is insufficient space within this thesis to discuss the entirety of Hardy's literary canon, yet it is still important to acknowledge the absence of some of the novels that may be deemed to exemplify the Gothic conventions identified in particular chapters. For example, *A Laodicean* (1881) does appear to embody the Decadent Gothic style of the *fin de siècle*, which was a product of the Gothic literary and architectural revival of this period discussed in Chapter Three. The 'clash between ancient and modern'⁹⁵ epitomised in the novel reveals the tension between medievalism and modernity that Hardy explored in his later novels. For

⁹⁵ Thomas Hardy, *A Laodicean*, ed. by John Schad (1891; London: Penguin, 1997), p. 27. Within the novel, this statement refers to the modern railway that was 'diverted a little' (p. 27) because De Stancy castle stood in the way of its intended route.

instance, at the beginning of the novel De Stancy castle is described by the narrator as a ‘fossil of feudalism’ and the ‘hoary memorial of a stolid antagonism,’ yet it is also ‘the journey’s end’⁹⁶ to a modern telegraph wire. This juxtaposition of ancient and modern can be read as an early archetype of Hardy’s Decadent Gothic style, which is another instance of him continually cultivating his style from his early work to his later publications. Similarly, at the end of the novel, after the heroine Paula Power’s castle has been destroyed by her previous suitor William Dare in revenge for marrying the modest architect George Somerset, she declares “‘I wish my castle wasn’t burnt down and I wish you were a De Stancy.’”⁹⁷ There is a hint of Jude Fawley’s pessimism in this statement, and Power’s gaze backwards suggests that she is uncomfortable with progress and the destruction of the feudal past. Therefore, rather than completely dismissing the rich Gothic medievalism of *A Laodicean* it may be viewed as an early manifestation of the Decadent Gothic style that Hardy developed in the 1890s alongside the cultural inception of influential texts by writers such as William Morris and Max Nordau.

Equally, *The Woodlanders* (1887) is often critically interpreted as Darwinian in style; therefore, it may be considered to fit comfortably within Chapter Two concerning the Scientific Gothic. For example, George Levine - who dedicates a complete chapter to *The Woodlanders* in his text *Darwin the Writer* (2011) – writes that Hardy’s novel ‘provides strong evidence of the various ways that Darwin’s vision, beyond the “idea” of natural selection, infected the way later writers would imagine their world.’⁹⁸ Levine also relates that Hardy’s novel demonstrates the ‘pervasive presence of Darwin in Hardy’s imagination,’ due in part to the ‘splendid and memorable detailed images of the natural world’ that the writer

⁹⁶ Ibid. p. 18.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 379.

⁹⁸ George Levine, *Darwin the Writer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 190.

presents his readers with.⁹⁹ In a much earlier study, Levine characterises Hardy's novel as 'obsessively preoccupied with observation'¹⁰⁰ before then discussing his work more broadly within the context of scientific observation. Levine also states that Hardy's 'narrators observe life in such a way that the human center simply cannot hold, and the full implications of the Darwinian rejection of natural theology and teleology are dramatized.'¹⁰¹ Similarly, Roger Ebbatson states that *The Woodlanders* can be read as a work 'which translates Darwin into another medium,'¹⁰² because 'evolutionary theory acted as a creative stimulus to the novelistic imagination.'¹⁰³ What becomes apparent is that *The Woodlanders* has already been the subject of numerous enlightening and relatively recent inquiries into the influence of Darwin on Hardy. Therefore, to set this text aside is to allow a more comprehensive exploration of post-Darwinian theory within Hardy's *Two on a Tower* and *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, which have not been sufficiently analysed within this context.

When discussing Hardy's engagement with contemporary theory and philosophy, it is important to acknowledge the work already conducted within this field that this thesis builds upon. Work by Phillip Mallett and Mark Asquith, as well as Lennart A. Björk's scholarly edition of *The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy* (1985) is invaluable when ascertaining the direct influences on Hardy.¹⁰⁴ Asquith argues that 'Hardy's narratives can be seen as offering a virtuous acknowledgement of the complexity of the world without falsifying it

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 194.

¹⁰⁰ George Levine, *Darwin and the Novelists: Patterns of Science in Victorian Fiction* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), P.229.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 231.

¹⁰² Roger Ebbatson, *The Evolutionary Self: Hardy Forster, Lawrence* (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1982), p. x.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. ix.

¹⁰⁴ For example, Phillip Mallet writes that 'in the mid-1860s Hardy began a habit of reading and notetaking that was never to leave him,' which emphasises the prolific nature of Hardy's study that influenced his own writing. See, Phillip Mallet, *Thomas Hardy in Context*, ed. by Phillip Mallet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. xviii.

through simplification and systematisation.’¹⁰⁵ Such a complex system of ideas, as this thesis will go on to demonstrate, was absorbed by Hardy into his work and served to elucidate the Gothicism of his novels by reimagining (yet not over-simplifying) the potential terror associated with contemporary theory and philosophy. For example, Hardy was familiar with the work of anthropologists, scientists and philosophers including Burke, Kant, Darwin, Clodd, Ruskin, Morris, Tylor, Carlyle, and Spencer, and their publications often disrupted Victorian perceptions of their own evolving culture. Mallet writes that what Hardy ‘shares with the philosophers is not the desire for analytical consistency, but an urgent need to question the terms on which we hold our existence.’¹⁰⁶ Within the context of Hardy’s work, the ‘we’ referred to by Mallet is the Victorian public, who (as this thesis will demonstrate) were often thrilled and terrified by the cultural shifts related and documented within contemporary literature. By placing Hardy’s work within an historical and cultural context, and analysing his exegesis of contemporary theory and philosophy, these wider influences can be directly aligned with the modes of the Victorian Gothic that Hardy appeared to be exploring throughout his novel-writing career.

Hardy and the Modes of the Victorian Gothic: An Introduction

Hardy and Sensationalism

In the 1889 edition of *Desperate Remedies* (1871) Thomas Hardy added a short ‘Prefatory Note’ in which he tried to distance the novel from his other literary work by claiming:

The following novel, first published by the author, was written nineteen years ago, at a time when he was feeling his way to a method. The principles observed in its composition are, no doubt, too exclusively those in which mystery,

¹⁰⁵ Mark Asquith, ‘Hardy’s Philosophy’, Op. Cit., p. 285.

¹⁰⁶ Phillip Mallet, ‘Hardy and Philosophy’, in *A Companion to Thomas Hardy*, ed. by Keith Wilson (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), p. 34.

entanglement, surprise, and moral obliquity are depended on for exciting interest.¹⁰⁷

Later, in the 1912 edition of the same novel, Hardy was more explicit in acknowledging what he deemed to be the apparent shortcomings of his early work. He believed that it was underpinned by a ‘sensational and strictly conventional narrative,’ (p. 448) that undermined its literary worth. Hardy’s depreciation of this anomaly within his literary canon is not surprising given the bad reception that many sensation novels received from critics during the 1860s and 1870s, when the genre was at the height of its popularity. For instance, in 1864 the critic Frances Power-Cobbe published an article in *Fraser’s Magazine* entitled ‘The Morals of Literature’ in which she condemned the popularity of sensation fiction:

Reading certain classes of literature, very popular in England just now, it would seem as if nobody were offended at pictures of life which would make us all a set of crawling worms unfit to be suffered to exist, much less to be made subjects of a work of art. If men be all mean and interested and worldly-minded, then it is no more proper to make them subjects of fiction than wasps, toads, and maggots.¹⁰⁸

Cobbe’s disparaging comments suggest that the objection to sensation fiction was formed on the basis that it included morally corrupt characters who did not deserve any literary attention, and unsavoury plot-lines that may disturb the minds of the largely middle-class female readership.

A review of *Desperate Remedies* published in the *Athenæum* on April 1st, 1871 is equally critical of the sensational devices employed by Hardy. The reviewer describes the novel as an ‘unpleasant story’ that is ‘disagreeable, in as much as it is full of crimes’ before conceding that with improvement ‘we see no reason why he should not write novels only a

¹⁰⁷ Thomas Hardy, *Desperate Remedies*, ed. By Mary Rimmer (1871; London: Penguin, 1998), p. 448. All further references are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the text.

¹⁰⁸ Frances Power Cobbe, ‘The Morals of Literature’, in *Fraser’s Magazine*, 124-133 (July 1864), p. 129.

little, if at all, inferior to the best of the present generation.’¹⁰⁹ Another unfavourable review of Hardy’s novel published in the *Spectator* on April 22nd, 1971 states that there are

No fine characters, no original ones to extend one’s knowledge of human nature, no display of passion except of the brute kind, no pictures of Christian virtue [...]; even the intricacies of the plot show no transcendent talent for arrangement of complicated, apparently irreconcilable, but really nicely-fitting facts.¹¹⁰

Whilst the latter review is clearly a derisive one, it offers a unique insight into contemporary perceptions of Hardy’s first novel, as well as the wider genre of sensation fiction. For instance, the reviewer’s reference to a lack of ‘Christian virtue’ in Hardy’s novel is a signal that the fundamental tenets upheld by the eighteenth-century Gothic are absent within sensation fiction. As already discussed, the classic Gothic novel, which emerged within the age of enlightenment, was designed to morally educate its readers by cautioning them against a life without orthodox religion.¹¹¹ By contrast, writers of sensation fiction were less concerned with educating their readers and more focused on entertaining them. In relation to religion, Hardy (though not anti-religious in the extreme) was not a particular supporter of the Christian church. In 1908, for example, he wrote to his acquaintance Edward Clodd stating that

You will be amused to know that I, who believe only in the secular solution in Education, am actually advising Canon Hill, the rector here, on how to carry out his wish to act some scenes from *The Dynasts*, by which he may raise money for

¹⁰⁹ Maurice Rhyhart, ‘Novels of the Week’, *The Athenæum*, 398-399. (1 April 1871), p. 398. It should be noted that this review has been reprinted in *Thomas Hardy: The critical Heritage*, ed. by R. G. Cox (London: Routledge, 1978), pp. 1-2. However, it appears in Cox’s text as an Unsigned Review dated March 1871 (which differs to the date of the actual article in the *The Athenæum* yet consists of the same wording).

¹¹⁰ Unsigned Review, *Spectator*, 481-3 (22 April 1871), p. 481.

¹¹¹ An example of this is Matthew Lewis’s late-eighteenth-century Gothic novel *The Monk* (1796; London: Penguin, 1998). Within the novel, Ambrosio (the monk of the title) is seduced by the evil seductress Matilda. Following their sexual encounter, Ambrosio goes against his Catholic faith, as well as succumbing the ‘raging fire’ within himself and the ‘thousand wild wishes’ that ‘bewildered his imagination,’ (p. 60, to sexually assault his innocent parishioner Antonia. Due to his callous acts and his denouncement of the principles of Catholicism, he is left at the end of the novel ‘blind, maimed, helpless, and despairing, venting his rage in blasphemy and curses, execrating his existence,’ p. 377.

the local Church schools! [...] The idea of the acting, in fact, interests me [...] so I shut my eyes to what is to be done with the money received.¹¹²

Owing to Hardy's clear disillusionment with orthodox religion and specifically Church schools, the reviewer's comment concerning 'passions' of the 'brute kind' consolidates the claim that his characters lacked morality and/or religious focus. Moreover, the brutish character archetypes portrayed in sensation novels suggest a focus on marginalised members of society, rather than the grand aristocratic characters favoured by earlier Gothic writers, including more contemporary novelists such as Ainsworth.

Due to the far-reaching influence of periodicals such as the *Athenæum* and the *Spectator* on publishers and the reading public in particular, it is understandable that Hardy desired to disassociate himself from his early novel and put its creation down to 'feeling his way to a method.' However, the idea that *Desperate Remedies* is an example of Victorian sensation fiction is not in contention. In fact, the novel has been the subject of a range of analyses by critics such as Kevin Z. Moore, Richard Nemesvari and George Wing, who all acknowledge that Hardy's first published novel is sensationalist in style.¹¹³ Indeed, Hardy himself openly supported this hypothesis in his 1912 'Prefatory Notes' for the novel when he used the term 'sensational' to classify it, as already stated. The issue here is that criticism on Hardy's first published novel is often conducted in isolation, with little attempt made to establish a legitimate connection between Hardy's other early novels and the wider

¹¹² Thomas Hardy, 'Letters to Edward Clodd' (1900-1923), University of Leeds: Special Collections, BC MS 19c Clodd). The date of the letter is 8:4:'08 and it was sent from Hardy's primary residence Max Gate.

¹¹³ See Kevin Z Moore, "'The Poet within the Architect's Ring": *Desperate Remedies*, Hardy's Hybrid Detective-Gothic Narrative', in *Studies in the Novel*, 14.1, 31-42 (Spring 1982), Richard Nemesvari "'Judged by a Purely Literary Standard": Sensation Fiction, Horizons of Expectation, and the Generic Construction of Victorian Realism', in *Victorian Sensations: Essays on a Scandalous Genre*, ed. by Kimberly Harrison and Richard Fatina (Ohio: The Ohio State University Press, 2006), pp. 15 – 28, and George Wing 'Edwin Drood and *Desperate Remedies*: Prototypes of Detective Fiction in 1870', in *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 13.4 (Autumn 1973), 677-687.

sensationalist literary genre. For example, despite the wealth of material published on Victorian Sensation fiction within the last thirty years, including authoritative works by Winifred Hughes and Jenny Bourne Taylor, there is only passing reference to Hardy, and this is largely in relation to *Desperate Remedies*.¹¹⁴ The closest any scholar has come to providing an in-depth analysis of Hardy's sensationalism is Richard Nemesvari, whose book *Thomas Hardy, Sensationalism, and the Melodramatic Mode* (2011) does engage with Victorian sensationalism to provide a close reading of a selection of the writer's novels which span his literary career. A key point to consider here is that Nemesvari expands his analysis of Hardy beyond the scope of the literary sensation period to incorporate his later novels, which challenges the over-arching argument of many studies, including this thesis, that the sensational literary style was confined within a particular era. Instead, Nemesvari argues that sensationalism is progressive and should not, therefore, be perceived as defining a distinct literary canon. Rather, he suggests that sensationalism is a movement that transcends the narrow historical margins that are usually ascribed to this mode of the Gothic.¹¹⁵ However, Chapter One will confine the parameters of the sensation period to the 1860s and 1870s by exploring the sensationalist style of Hardy's *Desperate Remedies* alongside his other mid-1870s novels, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873), *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874), and *The Hand of Ethelberta* (1876), in the context of sensation fiction.

¹¹⁴ For example, Hughes writes 'In its crude and chaotic fashion, the sensation genre offered something essential that realism lacked. There is intriguing evidence of this in the fact that Thomas Hardy, in his first published attempt at fiction, chose to write a sensation novel', *Op. Cit.*, p. 70, but then does not attempt to offer any substantial analysis of Hardy's other early work within this context. Hughes does, however, offer a close reading of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891), yet she does not sufficiently align Hardy's later novel with those of other sensation novelists and instead focuses on the provocative plot and characterisation. Hardy only receives a passing mention in Jenny Bourne Taylor's work, *Ibid.*, p. 209, in which she acknowledges the writer's reliance on publishing cheap editions of his work which became synonymous with the low value placed on sensation fiction.

¹¹⁵ Richard Nemesvari, *Thomas Hardy, Sensationalism, and the Melodramatic Mode* (New York: Palgrave, 2011), pp. 12-13. It should be noted that Nemesvari does not employ the term 'Gothic' when discussing literary sensationalism and melodrama within Hardy's work, yet his analysis does lend itself to uncovering the Gothic representation in Hardy's work that will be discussed further in Chapter One.

Thomas Boyle places sensationalism firmly within a period far-removed from the earlier eighteenth-century Gothic novel when he reiterates that sensation fiction ‘differs from the Gothic novel [...] in that no supernatural elements are allowed.’¹¹⁶ The ‘Gothic novel’ referred to by Boyle is the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century archetype of this style, set out by Ann Radcliffe, Matthew Lewis, Horace Walpole, and Mary Shelley in particular. Horace Walpole’s, *The Castle of Otranto* is often referred to by critics as the founding text of the Gothic novel, whereas Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) is commonly understood to be the final example of the traditional Gothic novel.¹¹⁷ It is, therefore, possible to trace the development and transformation of the literary Gothic whilst simultaneously challenging assumptions that sensationalism should be analysed against the earlier Gothic novel style.

It is also necessary to identify the devices employed by Hardy that further subscribe to the conventions of Victorian sensation fiction. Sensation fiction shifted the focus from the Gothicism of earlier eighteenth-century texts, by writers such as Radcliffe and Lewis, and instead relied more heavily on Realism to establish a new kind of terror for the reader. The remote and ‘wildly exotic [...] ruined castle,’¹¹⁸ for example, was substituted for the ‘homely setting’¹¹⁹ of the family residence that in turn shifted the focus from eighteenth-century supernaturalism. Riquelme seemingly furthers this point by stating that ‘early in its history,

¹¹⁶ Thomas Boyle, *Black Swine in the Sewers of Hampstead: Beneath the Surface of Victorian Sensationalism* (London: Penguin, 1990), p. 120.

¹¹⁷ In the introduction to *The Castle of Otranto*, W. S. Lewis states that the text ‘owes its reputation now to its being the earliest of the ‘Gothic’ novels.’ See Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story*, ed. by W. S. Lewis (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. vii. On the other hand, Fred Botting claims that Shelley’s *Frankenstein* is an early example of the scientific Gothic because the novel anticipates the style of H. G. Wells. Although he is distancing the novel from the eighteenth-century Gothic, Botting’s supposition emphasises that Shelley’s text is, at the very least, a transitional one. See Fred Botting, *Gothic Romanced: Gender and Technology in Contemporary Fictions* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), p. 135.

¹¹⁸ Winifred Hughes, *The Maniac in the Cellar: Sensation Novels of the 1860s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 7.

¹¹⁹ Jenny Bourne Taylor, *In the Secret Theatre of Home: Wilkie Collins, Sensation Narrative, and Nineteenth-Century Psychology* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 1.

the Gothic [was] structurally and implicitly a negative version of pastoral because of its turn to foreign locales that [were] threatening and bizarre. It later relocates the anti-pastoral setting and its implications closer to home.¹²⁰ The opposition to an idealised version of country life portrayed in the eighteenth-century Gothic novel contrasts significantly with the Victorian Gothic which, although still anti-pastoral, sought to emphasise the imperfections of both modern rural and urban life. As such, the ‘bizarre’ became uncomfortably familiar because it was ‘much closer to home.’ Sensationalism, therefore, escalated the ‘anti-pastoral’ by also establishing an opposition to the ‘urban-pastoral.’ The urban-pastoral would later be revisited at the *fin de siècle* by writers such as William Morris in *News from Nowhere* (1890) in the form of a utopia, which will be discussed more comprehensively within chapter three. However, according to Mighall, the urban cityscape portrayed within Gothic fiction was a ‘labyrinth’ which provided a ‘model for organizing a dichotomous city’ and suggested that ‘secrets and mysteries may lurk in its darker recesses.’¹²¹ The anti-utopian vision of many sensation novels appears to confirm that terror was both a product of and a reaction to the uncomfortable realities of contemporary society, such as criminality, shifts in attitudes to orthodox religion, scientific advances, and movements/legislation pertaining to class and gender.

In his analysis, Nemesvari uses the familiar tropes of the Gothic, such as stage melodrama, character archetypes and plot devices, to define Hardy’s writing style. This list of topoi is commonly used as a measure of sensationalism within critical analyses of sensation fiction. For instance, Hughes argues that the ‘apparent respectability of the criminal, achieved through the preservation of a dark secret from the past, was later to become the hallmark of

¹²⁰ John Paul Riquelme, *Gothic and Modernism: Essaying Dark Literary Modernity*, Op. Cit., p. 5.

¹²¹ Robert Mighall, Op. Cit., p. 32. In his text, Mighall actively applies the term ‘urban Gothic’ to novels written within a contemporary city setting during the Victorian era and beyond.

the sensation novel,' which suggests that characterisation and plot are the main features of the style.¹²² Like Nemesvari, Hughes also often uses the terms sensationalism and melodrama interchangeably. She also argues that sensation fiction 'shares an affinity with the eighteenth-century gothicism of Ann Radcliffe and "Monk" Lewis.'¹²³ Again, Hughes's statement reinforces that there is still a reliance on the traditional Gothic novel as a model for analysing this literary style. There is, however, a missed opportunity to explore a more refined analysis of sensationalism, that observes the complex aesthetic that the conventional signposts omit.

As a starting point, Nemesvari *does* suggest that Hardy 'uses sensationalist devices focused on the body to represent the complex material ramifications of this growing cultural authority.'¹²⁴ This statement is indicative of the tension between male and female bodies and that the body is, in itself, an authority within the sensation novel. Similarly, the 'material ramifications' Nemesvari refers to begin to bridge the gap between physicality (the characters or setting of the novel, for instance) and sensory experience (the spectator's/reader's reaction to what they have witnessed/read). As a result, an investigation into Hardy's use of meta-physical experience within his early novels is necessary to understand the complexity of his sensationalism. Whilst Nemesvari identifies Hardy's fiction as examples of melodrama, that is indebted to both eighteenth-century Gothic fiction and the stage melodrama produced in theatres during the mid-nineteenth century, this chapter will go on to argue that Hardy's sensationalism was built on a more complex system of sensory perception. From a similar perspective, Nemesvari goes on to state that 'presenting the vulnerable human form becomes one of the novel's methods for decorously shocking the audience into ideological

¹²² Winifred Hughes, *Op. Cit.*, p. 8. Hughes goes on to write that 'the particular appeal of melodrama is in the clear-cut dichotomy between good and evil,' p. 12, which supposes that melodrama and sensationalism are inter-connected and almost indistinguishable. The reference to 'good' and 'evil' further reinforces the idea that for many critics, sensation fiction was heavily reliant on character archetypes.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹²⁴ Richard Nemesvari, *Thomas Hardy, Sensationalism, and the Melodramatic Mode*, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 14-15.

recognition.¹²⁵ The term ‘vulnerable’ is used rather ambiguously here as it poses the question: are bodies in sensation fiction morally vulnerable, mortally vulnerable, or perhaps both? It seems reasonable to assume that Nemesvari is discussing bodies in relation to morality because he also uses the term ‘indecorously’ to illustrate how exposed bodies affect the reader’s ‘ideological recognition,’ or in other words challenge their moral propriety by forcing them to confront inner sensations of guilt or arousal.

Again, Nemesvari’s reading begins to establish a correlation between the physical and emotional transaction that extends from text to reader. More specifically, the terror or horror created within the sensation novel has a direct impact on the reader who will subsequently experience a bodily reaction to what they have just read. It is precisely this transaction between that which is somatic and that which is intellectual, as well as the relationship between the text and reader, that Boyle discusses in his study of Victorian sensationalism. He writes of sensation fiction that ‘the physical urge and mental intent overlap, leaving open the possibility that there is no convenient way of separating the body and mind.’¹²⁶ Boyle’s term ‘mental intent’ is indicative of sensation fiction’s external influence beyond the page, in that the intention of the text was to excite or terrify the reader and the reader was complicit in this act because they chose to pursue the text. There is also a distinction to be made between the type of terror elicited by sensation fiction and that elicited by the eighteenth-century Gothic novel. In the latter case, fear was induced by supernaturalism and the *unheimlich*, which created both a comfortable distance between reader and text, and reader and subject. By contrast, sensation fiction destabilised the boundary between ‘fact’ and fiction by positioning itself firmly within contemporary culture. Richard D. Altick claims that cultural ‘fascination

¹²⁵ Ibid., pp. 85-6.

¹²⁶ Thomas Boyle, Op. Cit., p. 188.

with the extraordinary, the perilous, the violent, erupted, briefly, into a fever' because sensationalism and realism merged to become part of the fabric of society during this period.

The prominence of the body and its relationship to the mind is equally important when interpreting sensationalism. It is clear that the body moves and responds to stimuli as a result of the mind, but physical movements (especially spontaneous ones) interact with the brain in a way that strongly influences thoughts and perceptions. David J. Linden discusses physical sensations from a scientific perspective, explaining that 'by the time we are aware of sensory information, it's already been deeply intertwined with emotions and plans for action. Simply put: In the sensory world, our brains are messing with the data.'¹²⁷ Scientifically speaking, then, sensation fiction was setting-up the reading public for physical emanations of terror by manipulating their internal 'sensory world.' Sensationalism runs much deeper than the text itself because the 'data' it creates within the mind generates a subliminal response to outward stimuli *beyond* the scope of the text. The language of sensation fiction is built on familiar tropes of crime journalism, with cognisance in this context designed to alert the body in a predictable way. The 'real' is manifested in the reader's mind by an imagined threat, and imagined reality provides the 'real' threat. As such, the brain is effectively 'messing with the data' and filling-in the gaps. The 'sensory information' processed by the reader, therefore, has become conditioned by emotional traits or patterns that have been prompted by sensation writers "preaching to the nerves."¹²⁸ Sensation fiction itself may relay a shocking scandal that the reader subliminally recognises from the contemporary press. As a result, their body may respond rather subtly (such as a slight intake of breath) or it might suffer a more extreme reaction (such as shuddering or even fainting). The mind's response to this physical reaction

¹²⁷ David J. Linden, *The Accidental Mind: How Brain Evolution Has Given Us Love, Memory, Dreams and God* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 83.

¹²⁸ See Henry Mansel, 'Sensation Novels', *The Quarterly Review*, 113.226, 481-514 (April 1863), p.482.

is to recognise a legitimate and extremely ‘real’ external threat, which further amplifies the initial terror and generates an internal dialogue between mind and body, as Boyle argues.

The uncontrollable physical reaction or ‘urge’ of the reader is in direct response to the stimuli of literary sensationalism. Linden further outlines that ‘our sensory systems are generally built to give a stronger response to novel stimuli, than those which are ongoing, a process called adaption.’¹²⁹ This ‘novel stimuli’ (aside from the potential pun) suggests an instantaneous and spontaneous response to imminent threat, that is perpetuated by an urgency to compete/complete a text by the writer and reader respectively, which is deliberately contrived within sensation fiction. The system of read – react – write, that is symptomatic of the mode of serial publication and mass consumption, fits with the train journey novel and the more ‘frivolous’ middle-class female reader associated with sensation fiction. Furthermore, the immediacy connected to this early form of ‘flash fiction’ also perpetuates the concept of ‘adaption’ that Linden describes.¹³⁰ Such a scenario also generates a framework of stimuli – stimulated – stimulus, where first the text provides a source of sensory stimuli, then the reader becomes stimulated, and finally the reader and text instigate a wider discourse of shock and terror that was integral to the reputation (largely negative) of the mid-nineteenth-century sensation movement. Additionally, this final step is cyclical because sensationalism is in itself associated with far-reaching appeal, signifying that writers themselves responded to the stimulus of physical and intellectual public curiosity by writing and publishing more work. In Hardy’s early work, then, it is possible to trace the interplay

¹²⁹ David J. Linden, *Op. Cit.*, p. 93.

¹³⁰ Sensation fiction was commonly consumed by middle-class female readers whilst on railway journeys. For a more comprehensive discussion of this aspect of sensation fiction, see Nicholas Daly, ‘Railway Novels: Sensation Fiction and the Modernization of the Senses’, *ELH*, 66.2, 461-87 (1999) in which he writes that ‘the [railway] traveller is overloaded with sensory stimuli that he or she cannot accommodate properly [...] and the optical nerve is strained by the unassimilable succession of impressions,’ p. 470.

between the body and text by interpreting his sensationalism as both an attempt to align his work with a contemporary movement (thus ensuring sales) and a means of exploring cultural inceptions/perceptions of the physical human form designed to thrill and terrify the reader.

Hardy and the Scientific Gothic

Following the decline in popularity of sensation fiction from the late 1870s onwards,¹³¹ a new form of terror-inducing fiction began to surface in the form of early science fiction. Although the Scientific Gothic (as a form of the Victorian Gothic) appears to extend across several periods within the nineteenth century,¹³² unlike Sensationalism and the Decadent movement which are more clearly associated with particular decades, it is still possible to trace a shift towards more scientifically-focused literature that emerged in the late 1870s and continued throughout the 1880s. The publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1859) marked the transition to more 'literary' forms of scientific discourse that subsequently became embedded within culture and literature by the 1880s. For example, George Levine's claim that Darwin's text 'seems so poetic' and 'novelistic' and that certain passages even 'leap off its scientific page because it is built on a feeling for the textures of life,'¹³³ appears to elucidate this point.

¹³¹ For example, one of the lead sensation fiction publishers of the 1860s and 1870s Tinsley Brothers had all but disappeared from the market by the mid-1880s.

¹³² There are examples of science fiction scattered throughout the nineteenth-century, with prominent texts such as Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and *The Last Man* (1826), suggesting that scientific tropes were part of the fabric of culture and Gothic fiction even before the publication of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859). However, in the 1880s a distinctly post-Darwinian form of scientific Gothic literature began to emerge, which shall be the focus of chapter two.

¹³³ George Levine, 'Hardy and Darwin: An Enchanting Hardy', in *A Companion to Thomas Hardy*, ed. by Keith Wilson (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), p. 43.

During this period, Hardy also seemingly explored post-Darwinian theories in his novels, yet he also pushed the trope further by simultaneously reinterpreting the phenomena of Burkean terror by applying contemporary scientific theory.¹³⁴ Therefore, the purpose of chapter two will be to explore the complex relationship between the theories/philosophies behind the Victorian Gothic and the Post-Darwinian Sublime before then analysing Hardy's Gothic aesthetic through his engagement with Darwinian theory. A number of scholars have already discussed Hardy's indebtedness to Darwinian theory, including George Levine, Gillian Beer, Phillip Mallett, and Roger Ebbatson and this chapter will begin to build upon their foundations whilst also framing Hardy's Darwinism within the context of the Scientific Gothic.¹³⁵ During the 1880s, then, it is reasonable to suggest that Hardy adopted Darwinian theory into his literary language. However, there was also another prominent literary and personal influence that affected Hardy's work that has not been considered by the critics mentioned. Hardy's acquaintance with the writer and anthropologist Edward Clodd from the 1880s onwards deserves some attention. Despite the far-reaching and traceable influence that this writer had on Hardy from the 1880s onwards, their correspondence has been largely overlooked by Hardy scholars and shall therefore be discussed in greater depth within chapter two.

The novelisation of contemporary scientific theories is most prominently demonstrated in Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* which was published in 1886 (the same year as Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*), along with a

¹³⁴ During this period Hardy referenced several scientific texts within his *Literary Notebooks* that influenced his work including: J. H. Bridges 'Evolution and Positivism' (1877), p. 113; and Herbert Spencer, *Principles of Biology* (1864), p. 90-91. In *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy 1840-1891* (1928), he also states that 'as a young man he had been among the earliest acclaimers of *The Origin of Species*', p. 198.

¹³⁵ Although not a comprehensive list, the scholars identified represent more recent studies concerning the interrelation of Hardy's and Darwin's ideologies.

number of other articles and novels that addressed evolving scientific theories.¹³⁶ For instance, in her 1888 article ‘The Scientific Spirit of the Age,’ Frances Power Cobbe announces that ‘the present is pre-eminently the Age of Science’ and is ‘equally recognized by the majority, who hail it with triumph, and by the minority, who regard it with feelings wherein regret and apprehension have their place.’¹³⁷ The term ‘Age of Science,’ written by Cobbe as an official title of sorts, describes a distinct period or movement that was characterised by emerging scientific doctrines that were gradually becoming embedded within art and literature during the 1880s. For instance, Cobbe goes on to refer to novels as the ‘border-realm of Fiction,’¹³⁸ because they serve as a conduit between scientific texts and poetry. With some degree of disdain, however, Cobbe posits that science tarnishes the ‘otherwise artistic work of George Eliot,’ with ‘pedantic illustrations.’¹³⁹ Cobbe’s objection to scientific observation within literature appears to originate from the fact that it focuses on the minutiae of the image, rather than its overall, untarnished beauty, which she believes compromises the poeticism of literary works such as Eliot’s.¹⁴⁰ As if to illustrate this point further, Cobbe describes witnessing

Young men in public reading-rooms snatching at the *Lancet* and the *British Medical Journal* from layers of what ought to be more attractive literature, and pouring over hideous diagrams and revolting details of disease and monstrosity.¹⁴¹

¹³⁶ See Anthony Trollope, *The Fixed Period* (1882); Jules Verne, *The Green Ray* (1882); Edwin A. Abbott, *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions* (1884); and W.H. Hudson, *A Crystal Age* (1887), which engage with a diverse range of scientific perspectives, including dystopian futures (Trollope), alternative dimensions (Abbott), optical phenomena (Verne), and time travel (Hudson).

¹³⁷ Francis Power Cobbe, ‘The Scientific Spirit of the Age’, in *The Contemporary Review*, 54, 126-139 (July 1888), p. 126.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

¹⁴⁰ For example, Cobbe expresses this sentiment more explicitly at the end of her essay when she concludes that Science ‘has given us many precious things, but she takes away things more precious still,’ *Ibid.*, p. 139. Cobbe’s objection can also be aligned with the 1880s critical debate concerning the merits of Realism and Romanticism, with the former also being linked to the scientific scrutiny of an image that is the focus of the Scientific Gothic.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

By pitting science in direct opposition to art, Cobbe begins to validate how impactful scientific discourse was within literature during the 1880s, albeit from an extremely critical perspective not necessarily shared by other critics. The inclusion of ‘hideous diagrams’ and ‘revolting details,’ as well as ‘disease and monstrosity’ also provide an insight into the prevalence and embeddedness of scientific discourse within broader society during this period, whilst also emphasising the uncomfortable and unapologetic nature of what chapter two shall define as the Scientific Gothic aesthetic.

Hardy also made several notes in his *Literary Notebooks* concerning Thomas Henry Huxley, and his published lecture ‘The Coming of Age of “The Origin of Species,”’ (1880) is particularly significant here. During his lecture, later published in *Science and Culture and Other Essays* (1882), Huxley states:

It is hardly rash to anticipate that, in another twenty years, the new generation, educated under the influence of the present day, will be in danger of accepting the main doctrines of the origin of species, with as little reflection [...] as so many of our contemporaries, twenty years ago, rejected them.¹⁴²

Within his speech Huxley is proposing that the scrutiny of Darwin’s text is gradually diminishing and that his theories are developing into accepted truths, particularly within physical science education. In fact, he states this point more explicitly when he argues that ‘there is no field of biological inquiry in which the influence of the “Origin of Species” is not traceable.’¹⁴³ The broader implication of Huxley’s statement is that it took twenty years for Darwin’s doctrines to become rooted within scientific education, which suggests that the

¹⁴² Thomas Henry Huxley, ‘The Coming of Age of “The Origin of Species,”’ in *Science and Culture and Other Essays* (New York: Appleton and Company, 1882), p. 319.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 318.

1880s in particular could be deemed to be the post-Darwinian period. Huxley goes on to state that ‘so far as the animal world is concerned, evolution is no longer a speculation, but a statement of historical fact. It takes its place alongside of those accepted truths which must be reckoned with by philosophers of all schools.’¹⁴⁴ Again, there is a reference to Darwinian theory as an undisputed truth, but what is more significant is the implication that ‘philosophers of all schools’ have to reconcile Darwin’s scientific ‘facts.’ Here, Huxley is positioning Darwin’s doctrines in relation to broader fields of study *beyond* the physical sciences, that may be assumed to include art and literature. The reference to philosophy also corresponds with the idea that there was an emergence of the post-Darwinian sublime during the 1880s that shaped the representation of the Scientific Gothic within literature.

For example, in his 1985 essay ‘Gothic sublimity,’ David B. Morris establishes a correlation between literary manifestations of the sublime and the Gothic novel. Significantly, he challenges the critical perception that Edmund Burke’s *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1759) is a definitive framework for analysing Gothic texts. He argues that ‘the Gothic participates in a significant revision of the eighteenth-century sublime,’ therefore, Gothic sublimity ‘cannot be adequately explained on the basis of Burke’s theories, which is how all previous studies of the sublime have explained it.’¹⁴⁵ However, he does concede that ‘Burke’s account of the sublime is clearly relevant to the almost simultaneous Gothic explorations of terror.’¹⁴⁶ With

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 331. Huxley does however question if this ‘movement’ is a ‘mere eddy of fashion, or truly one with the irreversible current of intellectual progress,’ p. 320.

¹⁴⁵ David B. Morris ‘Gothic Sublimity’, in *New Literary History*, 16.2, 299-319 (Winter 1985), p. 300. Morris further states that a ‘critical approach which reduces Gothic sublimity to the familiar inventory of ghosts and dark passage ways cannot help us understand what was both profoundly innovative and yet also deeply inadequate in Burke’s account,’ p. 301, which cautions against using Burke’s philosophy as a definitive explanation of the sublime. Instead, Morris believes that Burke’s *Enquiry* should be taken as a mere starting point for critical investigations of Gothic sublimity.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 300.

Morris's statement in mind, Burke's philosophy cannot speak to late-nineteenth-century ideas and perceptions of the universe because the cultural response to sublimity it described in the eighteenth century was far-removed from the societal response to the sublime depicted in later Gothic novels of the nineteenth century and beyond. However, reading Burke's philosophy against the Gothic novel *does* emphasise the importance of sublimity for writers when striving to generate terror in their readers. Yet it is important to acknowledge the transition from supernatural and mysterious manifestations in the eighteenth-century novel to hyper-natural and realist interpretations in the late-nineteenth-century novel. Although Morris claims that the philosophy of the sublime was first developed as a distinct literary style in Walpole's Gothic novel *The Castle of Otranto*, his argument posits that the sublime, like the Gothic aesthetic, was consistently evolving and adapting alongside public sensitivities to the terrifying or awe-inspiring image. In particular, Morris suggests that 'the Gothic novel stands as an implicit critique of Burke – a testament to how much he and his age were unable to explain about the sublime.'¹⁴⁷ Here, Morris is confirming that the Gothic novel genre emphasised the equally changeable treatment of the sublime by disrupting the parameters of what might be deemed threatening or visually inspiring. As such, chapter two seeks to investigate how the post-Darwinian sublime was a product of emerging scientific discourses within the 1880s, whilst simultaneously considering the intersection between Darwinian theory and the sublime in Hardy's novels *Two on a Tower* and *The Mayor of Casterbridge*.

As a starting point, however, it is still necessary to acknowledge Hardy's indebtedness to Burke's text, whilst also demonstrating his awareness of other influential works that may have shaped his perceptions of the sublime within literature. In the introduction to the 1987

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 302.

edition of *Enquiry*, James T. Boulton writes that Hardy found Burke's text 'a source of imaginative stimulus,' as a way to validate his claim that Burke's theory of the sublime had a continuing influence on writers during the nineteenth century.¹⁴⁸ He goes on to state that this influence is most keenly felt in Hardy's *The Return of the Native*, specifically his descriptions of Egdon Heath, and even goes as far as the claim that Hardy quoted Burke 'almost verbatim.'¹⁴⁹ Though Boulton's latter remark is perhaps overstating the impact of Burkean theory on Hardy, by positing that it was a literal recount rather than a re-imagining, it does emphasise the need to observe Burke's text more closely to discover how Hardy may have interpreted the sublime within his novels of the 1880s. For example, Burke wrote that '*Self preservation [...] pain, sickness, and death fill the mind with strong emotions of horror,*'¹⁵⁰ which describes a form of Darwin's later 'survival of the fittest' hypothesis, albeit in a cruder form. The phrase '*self preservation*' can here be taken to signify the maintaining of life against individual extinction, at least when perceived within a pre-Darwinian universe. Yet in the post-Darwinian era, the horror connected to human mortality was amplified. This is due to Darwin's theory challenging humankind's assumption that they had a privileged place within the universe, which he later discussed more explicitly within *The Descent of Man* (1871). Therefore, it was gradually accepted that extinction could occur on a much grander scale, beyond the individual, and may even affect entire species. It is no surprise to find in Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, then, that the protagonist Michael Henchard battles with his own worthiness to exist within society. It is also no coincidence that Swithin St Cleeve in *Two on a Tower* becomes overwhelmed and gravely ill when forced to confront his own

¹⁴⁸ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. by James T. Boulton (1759; London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987), p. xxix.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. xlv. Boulton prefaces this statement by suggesting that Hardy's 'interest in Burke's aesthetic is self-confessed,' p. xlv, which hints at the numerous notes made by Hardy on this subject within his *Literary Notebooks*. He also reaffirms this statement by noting that Hardy was 'susceptible to the Burkean sublime,' p. xlv.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

mortality. Swithins's minuscule existence is pitted against the autonomous power of the universe he gazes into as an astronomer and Hardy's narrator describes the destructive effect this has on him.

As already stated, critics have previously examined Hardy's interpretation of Darwinian theory and the sublime within his writing, most notably Beer and S. F. Johnson respectively, but have not established a correlation between the two theories. Whilst offering useful comparisons between *The Return of the Native* (1878)¹⁵¹ and Burke's *Enquiry*,¹⁵² Johnson's study 'Hardy and Burke's "Sublime"' (1959) does not reconcile how a contemporary interpretation of terror was realised in the post-Darwinian age. Equally, he does not consider how perceptions of the sublime may have evolved during the century following the publication of Burke's text, which Morris cautions against in his essay. Within his close reading of *The Return of the Native* Johnson writes that 'civilisation is the enemy of the heath [...]; the few human remnants on and in it demonstrate the insignificance of man in Hardy's universe.'¹⁵³ In this context, the 'heath' represents the natural world in all its wildness and with minimal human intervention, which is further exemplified by the reference to the 'insignificance of man.' The term 'civilisation' establishes humans as collective beings, yet also ascribes a feudalistic sense of order to society. Paired with the suggestion that civilisation is the 'enemy of the heath,' humankind and nature become a dichotomy in this scenario, which culminates in the suggestion of a power-struggle. Such a battle for order and

¹⁵¹ Much of Johnson's analysis relies on his hypothesis that Burke's text 'had more definite effect on both the conception and execution of his next major work [following the publication of *Far from the Madding Crowd*], *The Return of the Native*.' See, S. F. Johnson, 'Hardy and Burke's "Sublime"', in *Style in Prose Fiction: English Institute Essays, 1958*, ed. by Harold C. Martin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 58. For this reason, Johnson dedicates much of his analysis to this text alone. Within the context of Hardy and the gothic, the latter novel may be regarded as a transitional text because it emerged from one mode of the Gothic, sensationalism, and evolved into another form, the scientific Gothic.

¹⁵² Johnson writes that 'whatever of Burke's *Works* he may have tasted, Hardy chewed and digested *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*,' *Ibid.*, p. 58.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

control speaks to Darwinian theory, which succeeded in disrupting the perceived balance of power between humankind and the natural world. As such, terror for readers of the scientific Gothic mode was derived from the realisation that humans did not have ultimate control within the universe because nature, represented in Hardy's novel by the heath, could survive or even thrive without humankind's presence.

Resembling the heath in *The Return of the Native*, the autonomy of nature can be identified in the opening chapter of William Henry Hudson's early utopian novel *A Crystal Age* (1887) when the narrator 'Smith' awakens after supposedly being knocked unconscious. In actuality, he has travelled to the future and has found himself laid on the ground with plants and other foliage laced around him, having overgrown over a period of years. Smith goes on to detail how he had,

A great mass of small fibrous rootlets tightly woven about my whole person, so that I was like a colossal basket-worm in its case, or a big man-shaped bottle covered with wicker-work. It appeared as if the roots had grown round me! Luckily they were quite sapless and brittle, and without bothering my brains too much about the matter, I set to work to rid myself of them.¹⁵⁴

In Hudson's scene, the passivity of humankind is carefully balanced against the activity of nature, placing particularly emphasis on the disjuncture between biological survival and the inconsequentiality of humankind. References to 'basket worm,' 'sapless and brittle,' as well as 'small, fibrous' indicate an unromantic vision of nature that is at odds with the eighteenth-century conception of the sublime and beautiful. The agency of nature, balanced against the passivity of Smith, serves to further reinforce that the natural world will continue to thrive regardless of human intervention.¹⁵⁵ Similar to what may be derived from the opening of

¹⁵⁴ William Henry Hudson, *The Collected Works of W. H. Hudson* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1923), p. 2.

¹⁵⁵ Interestingly, Smith states that he will remove his organic restraints 'without bothering his brains,' yet by doing so he is unravelling the key element that would unravel the mystery of his time travel at this stage in the novel. His ignorance towards the power of the natural world is again suggestive of a broader contemporary concern with survival and humankind's place within the universe.

Hudson's text, Beer identifies Hardy's inclusion of what she terms 'anthropomorphic disturbance'¹⁵⁶ in *The Return of the Native*. This, she argues, generated a fear of nature and 'natural selection' because it displaced humans and the individual self to become the dominant force. However, she does not analyse the implication of this on contemporary perceptions of terror which this chapter will explore. Beer does, however, go on to write that 'Lyell, and later Darwin, demonstrated in their major narratives of geological and natural history that it was possible to have plot without man – both plot previous to man and plot even now regardless of him.'¹⁵⁷ With this in mind, nature in the post-Darwinian novel displaces humans from the centre of the universe. In the case of Hardy's fiction, Beer is suggesting that it explores the evolving and often tumultuous relationship between humankind and the universe following Darwin's discoveries. Indeed, the reference to plot 'without man' or 'regardless of him' specifically suggests a narrative that includes, yet does not centrally-locate, humankind. This supposed 'absence' of man is traceable in Hardy's fiction of the 1880s, in which he responds to cultural inceptions of Darwinian theory.¹⁵⁸ Similarly, the idea that there is also plot 'previous to man' in both Lyell's and Darwin's influential texts also translates as individual human history not being a primary concern within texts published during this period more generally. Although Beer is justified in selecting *The Return of the Native* to demonstrate much of her theory, this chapter will argue that it is in fact *Two on a Tower* and *The Mayor of Casterbridge* that more vigorously explore the Post-Darwinian sublime.

¹⁵⁶ Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, Op. Cit., p.66.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 17. The texts that Beer is referring to are Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) and Charles Lyell's early nineteenth-century text *Principles of Geology* (1830).

¹⁵⁸ Although many critics foreground *The Woodlanders* (1887) when discussing Hardy and Darwin, this novel is more associated with Darwinian theory than post-Darwinian responses to scientific debates.

Like both Beer and Johnson, much of David Cecil's essay focuses its attention on the scientific discourses traceable in Hardy's work, particularly in *Two on a Tower* (1882). For example, Cecil claims that Hardy was inspired by the 'contrast between the cold inhuman stellar universe [...] and the hot human passions agitating the two chief characters.'¹⁵⁹ Yet he does not pay sufficient attention to the contemporary theories that Hardy was drawing inspiration from within the scientific field. For instance, Garret Peck observes that 'Hardy borrowed from popular accounts of astronomy, as well as positioned his own text to capitalise on the interest surrounding the 1882 transit of Venus'¹⁶⁰ when writing *Two on a Tower* (published in the same year). He even equates the poor sales of the novel to the 'failed 1874 transit of Venus expedition,'¹⁶¹ because the public interest in astronomy had begun to wane by the time Hardy eventually published his novel. In his examination of astronomy and *Two on a Tower*, Peck makes a strong case that Hardy was directly engaged with broader cultural discourses, in this case astronomy, that would both inspire his own writing and hopefully captivate his audience. Interestingly, Peck also states that 'Hardy was determined to illustrate to his readers that, despite its increasing cultural authority, scientific epistemology was not necessarily conducive to human contentment.'¹⁶² The inception and distribution of scientific theories, within the context of literary works, often heightened doubts and fears concerning mortality and survival in the reading public. The scientific Gothic mode, as exemplified by Hardy two key novels of the 1880s already cited, achieved this by capitalising on post-Darwinian manifestations of the sublime and perceptions of the wider universe.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 111-2.

¹⁶⁰ Garret Peck, 'Realism and Victorian Astronomy: The Character and Limits in Thomas Hardy's *Two on a Tower*', *Pacific Coast Philology*, *Pacific Coast Philology*, 46 (2011), p. 29.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 31-2. Peck also states that 'a British reader in 1882 would not have failed to see the disjunction between Swithin's naïve enthusiasm for astronomy and the unflattering realities of the recently failed expeditions,' p. 33.

¹⁶² Ibid., p. 31.

Hardy and the Decadent Gothic

Hardy was continually constructing and reconstructing his literary style, evidence of which can be found in his exploration of Sensationalism and Post-Darwinian theory within his earlier novels. Yet within Hardy studies there has been relatively little attention given to a sustained investigation that proposes Hardy's work could be defined as Gothic during the late nineteenth century. One key example of research that *does* pursue this field is Riquelme's study of the Gothic and Modernism. For example, Riquelme proposes that in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* Hardy 'merge[d] Gothic elements with realistic ones in a tale of madness and revenge,' which brought 'the Gothic into a modern embodiment' and demonstrated that Gothic is 'inseparable from the realistic.'¹⁶³ Riquelme's hypothesis that the assimilation of the Gothic aesthetic and realism necessitates a more modern interpretation of the Gothic shall be discussed further within Chapter Three. Given the limited work in this field, it should be no surprise to discover that the area of research that has been sparsely investigated is the Decadent influence on Hardy that fed into the mode of the Gothic he was exploring within his writing during the late 1880s and the 1890s.

When discussing the *fin de siècle*, David Weir states that 'the "end" of the century is not strictly chronological, but cultural and social as well. For some reason, "the end of the century" in English does not convey so strong a sense of cultural collapse or secular millennialism as "*fin de siècle*"'¹⁶⁴ This statement epitomises the significance of an ending, but one which surpasses the mere temporal finality of the nineteenth century. It marks, as

¹⁶³ Riquelme, Op. Cit., pp. 11-2.

¹⁶⁴ David Weir, *Decadence and the Making of Modernism* (Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), p. xvi.

Weir suggests, a shift in cultural philosophies. The Gothic, on the other hand, was viewed as ‘excessive, grotesque’ and as ‘over spilling its own boundaries and limits.’¹⁶⁵ Where the Decadent movement arguably designates a particular period in history, the 1880s and the 1890s, the Gothic continually transcends such sequential limitations. The fluidity or ‘over spilling’ associated with the Gothic means that, despite the common veil of separation placed between Decadence and the Gothic in critical studies,¹⁶⁶ there is also the possibility to analyse the two aesthetics together as one literary form of the Victorian Gothic. That is not to say that the Gothic and the Decadent movement do not appear alongside each other in studies concerning *fin e siècle* literature. However, such investigations tend to analyse the two aesthetics either in parallel or as cross-influencers of each other, rather than defining the Decadent Gothic as a distinct mode of the Gothic set within its own boundaries and possessing its own style. The alignment of these two aesthetic forms, which has been largely over-looked, shall hereafter be termed ‘Decadent Gothic.’

Before examining Hardy’s late-nineteenth-century work against aspects of the Decadent Gothic, which is the focus of Chapter Three, it is first necessary to define the parameters of this apparent hybrid style. It may be reasonable to suggest that the Gothic aesthetic conjures images of decay and ruin, and can therefore be interpreted as Decadent, but this is not a sufficient definition of the Decadent Gothic. Weir cites what he terms ‘the

¹⁶⁵ Julian Wolfreys, ‘Preface: ‘I Could a Tale Unfold’ or, the Promise of Gothic,’ in *Victorian Gothic: Literary and Cultural Manifestations in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Ruth Robbins and Julian Wolfreys (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2000), p. xi. Wolfreys’ reference indicates that the Gothic is permeable yet influential, passive yet aggressive, with the ability to take many forms and create numerous styles according to external influences generated by the historical period in which it has been revived.

¹⁶⁶ Texts such as Kelly Hurley, *The Gothic Body: Sexuality, Materialism and Degeneration at the fin de siècle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), Andrew Smith, *Victorian Demons: Medicine, Masculinity and the Gothic at the fin de siècle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004) and Stephan Karschay, *Degeneration, Normativity and the Gothic at the fin de siècle* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), amongst other works that also tackle this culturally and artistically rich period, are useful when striving to understand the interrelation of the Gothic, Decadence, Degeneration and cultural influences in literature published during the *fin de siècle*.

equivalent meanings of Decadence' which include 'social decay, historical pessimism, racial degeneration [and] cultural refinement.'¹⁶⁷ Despite the fact that analyses of the Decadent movement are restricted to literature published within the decade commonly referred to as the *fin de siècle*, and therefore isolated within an historical period, Weir's synonyms suggest that the external influences on literary Decadence stretch far beyond such boundaries. Linda Dowling also traces the philological transformation of literature across decades and even centuries, which she believes fed into and even instigated the late-nineteenth-century Decadent movement.¹⁶⁸ She writes, 'Decadence [...] emerged from a linguistic crisis, a crisis in Victorian attitudes towards language brought about by the new comparative philology earlier imported from the Continent.'¹⁶⁹ In-line with Weir's observation, Dowling is also acknowledging 'racial degeneration' and 'cultural refinement' by arguing that language in the Victorian period developed and metamorphosed into what critics now term Decadence.

The Decadent movement, here incorporating art, literature, aesthetics, and the *fin de siècle* period in history, was representative of sensuality, creative freedom, and the end of an era. The Decadent Gothic aesthetic, outlined for the first time within this thesis, can be drawn in two ways. Firstly, Weir observes that 'the romantic artist looked at nature from a distance and saw something sublime, something behind or beyond nature. The realist examines nature more closely and sees only surfaces, dead matter, or, at least, living matter in decay.'¹⁷⁰ The Decadent Gothic in literature, which is specific to the *fin de siècle* period, straddles the line between these two states of perception. On the one hand, the late-Victorian Gothic was

¹⁶⁷ David Weir, Op. Cit., p. 10.

¹⁶⁸ In her text, Dowling argues that humankind was reliant on language as a way of defining its 'civilisation' or civilized society in the case of England. Therefore, the 'emergence of literary Decadence' forced the Victorians into the view that the fall of language should be viewed in a 'peculiarly apocalyptic light,' Linda Dowling, *Language and Decadence at the Victorian Fin de Siècle* (Surrey: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 60.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. xi-ii.

¹⁷⁰ David Weir, Op. Cit., p. xiii.

concerned with the sublime, aided by scientific discovery (as already analysed in chapter two), which is a legacy inherited from earlier romance fiction. Indeed, Weir claims that ‘Decadence seems to emerge as both an extension of and a reaction to romanticism’ because he views it as both ‘languorous and rebellious.’¹⁷¹ Yet, similarities can also be drawn between Decadence and the ‘realist’ school of literature due to its fascination with ‘living matter in decay.’ This is not to say that Decadence should be condensed using such a limited characteristic. Nevertheless, Decadence *does* explore the minutiae of what Weir terms ‘a metaphor of organicism,’ which opens up the possibility that numerous ideas can be represented by the broader term ‘decay.’¹⁷² For example, Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) explores the decaying morals, or even mind, of its protagonist as he negotiates his Decadent and aesthetically-led existence. This is metaphorically represented by the decomposing painting, with its slowly emerging ‘hideous face,’¹⁷³ that Dorian has hidden in an obscure corner of his attic. The narrator describes that ‘through some strange quickening of inner life the leprosy of sin were slowly eating the thing away,’ before adding, for additional grotesque effect, ‘the rotting of a corpse in a watery grave was not so fearful.’¹⁷⁴ There is also a well-established link between Wilde’s novel and the work of French Decadent writer Joris-Karl Huysmans. In his 1895 *Queensberry Trial*, Wilde confirmed that the yellow-backed French novel that Lord Henry Wotton gifts to Dorian Gray is *À Rebours* (1884). In his novel, Huysmans’s narrator flaunts the decay of bourgeois society and the ‘puerile displays of eccentricity’¹⁷⁵ that Des Esseintes eventually comes to loathe.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p. 10.

¹⁷² Ibid., p. 12. For instance, Weir believes that ‘cultural decays’ are key to the definition of Decadence, which indicates that there is a direct correlation between cultural Decadence and literary manifestations of Decadence.

¹⁷³ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, ed. by Robert Mighall (1891; London: Penguin, 2003), p. 149.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 150.

¹⁷⁵ Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Against Nature*, Op. Cit., p. 27.

From a slightly different perspective, Neville Morley argues that an historical view of Decadence would deem ‘societies and cultures [...] as natural objects following the diurnal and seasonal rhythms of nature, or as higher-order biological entities subject to the same life courses as individual animals.’¹⁷⁶ The distancing from nature that Weir discusses can be read against Morley’s suggestion about societies and cultures as ‘natural objects’ and the cultural cycles that Morley references are applicable to the *fin de siècle* because the 1890s represented the ultimate ending of a complete temporal period (a century). The influence of Romanticism is manifest in the ‘distancing’ identified by Weir. This was realised through the anticipation of a ‘modern’ identity in the future during the late nineteenth century, viewed relatively from the somewhat disconnected perspective of the ‘past’. Yet from a realist standpoint, viewing humankind as ‘biological entities’ heightens the awareness of the surface matter of a subject and foregrounds the fragile nature of mortality. In other words, if one aspect of nature is described within literature as decaying, everything beyond the text must also be in some way undergoing the process of decay, whether organically, culturally, or historically. Arthur Symons wrote in his article ‘The Decadent Movement in Literature’ (1893) that late-nineteenth-century artists,

Are Impressionists because it is fashion, Symbolists because it is the vogue, Decadents because Decadence is in the very air of the cafés. And so, in their manner, they are mile-posts on the way of this movement, telling how far it has gone.¹⁷⁷

His comments emphasize the far-reaching aesthetic of Decadence, which permeated ‘the very air’ and gave rise to many investigations within literature of this period. Furthermore,

¹⁷⁶ Neville Morley, ‘Decadence as a Theory of History’, *New Literary History*, Op. Cit., p. 573.

¹⁷⁷ Arthur Symons, ‘The Decadent Movement in Literature’, *Harper’s Monthly Magazine*, 858-67 (November 1893), p. 864.

Symons's article also confirms that many movements were inadvertently colliding and merging during the *fin de siècle*.

It is significant that Weir's analysis has strong similarities with definitions of the *fin de siècle* Gothic. For instance, John Paul Riquelme argues that Gothic writing, with its origins in the eighteenth century, rose in popularity 'along with the English novel during the same decades that are the prelude to Romanticism' and engaged with 'issues of beauty, the character of the sublime and the grotesque.'¹⁷⁸ The possible overlaps between Decadence and the Gothic here are quite explicit. Again, the sublime is important to both aesthetics, and the grotesque can be read in terms of Decadence as well as the Gothic. In the literary form of the Gothic, the grotesque is often instigated by a distorted image or an unpalatable subject matter, presented by the writer as an anomaly of nature. Subsequently, this leads the narrative into the realm of Decadence because of its association with degeneration. Again, Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* serves as an illustrative example of 'living matter in decay' and also degeneration because the central plot-line concerns the decomposition of the human body (exemplified by Hallward's painting of Gray) and the depraved and degenerative mind. Yet such fear-inducing imagery also characterises a transition away from realism into a more modern version of sensationalism, based on the sublimation of realistic perspectives towards observing the minutiae of the distorted, grotesque image. In Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*, the melancholic and pessimistic Little Father Time (the son of the protagonist Jude Fawley) tragically questions, "'it would be better to be out o' the world than in it, wouldn't it?'" (p. 333) This tragic statement again reinforces the degenerative aesthetic of the Decadent Gothic by foregrounding the impermanence of human existence.

¹⁷⁸ John Paul Riquelme, 'Dark Modernity from Mary Shelley to Samuel Beckett: History, The Gothic Tradition and Modernism,' Op. Cit., p. 4.

To summarize thus far, the first aspect of the Decadent Gothic concerns the amalgamation of the aesthetics of Romanticism and Realism. The alignment of the Romantic-sublime image and the realist, often grotesque, image serves as a literary device that accentuates aspects of culture or the natural world that are decaying both within and beyond the *fin de siècle* text. Secondly, at the *fin de siècle* writers such as William Morris were again re-examining the Gothic, and this translated into discussions concerning architecture and the literary Gothic revival. In his 1892 study of Gothic architecture, Morris notes ‘to this living body of social, political, religious, scientific New Birth was bound the dead corpse of the past art.’¹⁷⁹ The reference to ‘dead corpse’ is not only indicative of the uneasy relationship between the past and present during this period, but also the decadent aesthetic which emanated from a societal fear of cultural and architectural decay that was being realised in the literature published during the *fin de siècle*. At a time when the seemingly ‘dead’ art of the Gothic was being resurrected, the decay that was synonymous with this art created a form of terror, arising from ‘feverish restlessness and blunted discouragement,’ which Max Nordau controversially attributed more generally to the ‘prevalent feeling [...] of imminent perdition and extinction.’¹⁸⁰ It has already been established that post-Darwinian philosophy had challenged the parameters of the sublime during the late nineteenth century. Subsequently, from the perspective of the educated middle-class (who had access to work such as Nordau’s), humankind was beginning to suffer a form of existential crisis at this time. This was heightened by writings such as Nordau’s *Degeneration* and later Edward B. Tylor’s *Primitive Culture* (1903) in which society was held up to scrutiny and portrayed as fragile and susceptible to external influences. Nordau believed that whilst the world and all its scientific

¹⁷⁹ William Morris, ‘Gothic Architecture’, *William Morris: Stories in Prose, Stories in Verse, Shorter Poems, Lectures and Essays*, ed. by G. D. H. Cole (1892; London: Nonesuch Press, 1946), p. 488.

¹⁸⁰ Max Nordau, *Op, Cit.*, p. 2.

and technological advances was progressing into a new century, culturally humans were degenerating. Nordau even went as far as to remark that the term *fin de siècle* ‘means the end of an established order, which for thousands of years has satisfied logic, fettered depravity, and in every art matured something of beauty.’¹⁸¹ Here, Nordau is arguing that an ‘established order’ - that could be interpreted more broadly to include feudalism, theology, philology or even aesthetics - is essential for the safeguarding of morality and evolution, as well as protecting humankind’s ability to evolve in the late nineteenth century.

In a rather arbitrary response to a question, posed to Hardy by the Parisian journal *L’Ermitage: Revue mensuelle et littéraire* in 1893 concerning ‘Contrainte et Liberté,’ Hardy wrote ‘I consider a social system based on individual spontaneity to promise better for happiness than a curbed and uniform one under which all temperaments are bound to shape themselves to a single pattern of living.’¹⁸² Hardy’s acute awareness of social systems is in itself insightful and links to his understanding of human interaction and differentiated living (as outlined in chapter two). Hardy appears to be concerned with the concept of humans flourishing under their own system, rather than merely existing under an imposed one. This is strikingly similar to the narrative of William Morris’s *fin de siècle* novel *News from Nowhere* (1890), in which the time-traveller protagonist William Guest encounters a utopian future where society has evolved into an idyllic and spontaneous collective. Hardy’s reference to ‘curbed’ and ‘uniform’ indicates that he was aware of how society can be controlled, as well as emphasizing that the presence of stereotypes can force humankind into expressing a lack of individuality. This idea is echoed in Hardy’s later novels *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* because neither protagonist can break away from hereditary behaviours or

¹⁸¹ Ibid. p. 5.

¹⁸² Thomas Hardy, ‘Contrainte et Liberté’, *L’Ermitage: Revue mensuelle et littéraire*, 4 (November 1893), p. 260. The draft version of this letter can be found in the Dorset County Museum archive.

social constraints. Furthermore, the term ‘spontaneity’ used by Hardy assumes that uncertainty and undefined progress are preferential to the ‘bound’ and stationary ones that disrupt such progress. Interestingly, the suggestion of a ‘pattern of living’ is similar to that witnessed in previous feudal periods. It is also subsequently critiqued in novels such as Morris’s, which seeks to uphold the medievalist style yet does not translate this into a uniform doctrine of living. For in his novel, Morris had already realised the social system that Hardy refers to in his letter, with the two publications appearing only three years apart.¹⁸³ In terms of this ‘individual spontaneity,’ there would have to be a significant shift in attitudes towards education, politics and science for this to be achieved, yet in Hardy’s later novels (as this chapter will go on to explore) such a cultural shift is portrayed as socially unviable.

Like Hardy and his view of a utopian future, Morris was also conscious of social and political uncertainty during this period, as articulated extensively in his series of articles published in *Commonweal* under the collective title *Socialism from the Root Up*. Morris discusses the origins of communism and socialism from Ancient Society – Socialism Triumphant.¹⁸⁴ Here, Morris imparts his familiarity with how power, knowledge and politics have been shaped over the previous centuries since ancient civilisation and the medieval period, leading to the present day (1886-8). Morris’s awareness of contemporary artistic ideologies and the key influences surrounding the adoption of the Gothic style are particularly useful for the analysis of the Decadent Gothic. Mays argues that the term ‘Victorian Gothic’ evoked ‘a peculiarly national form of gradualism that linked, even as it differentiated, present and past.’¹⁸⁵ The

¹⁸³ Morris’s novel was published in 1890 and Hardy’s letter appeared in *L’Ermitage: Revue mensuelle et littéraire* in late 1893. There is no evidence in Hardy’s *The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy, Vol. 2* to suggest that he read *News from Nowhere*, however, he does make notes on several articles either referring to or composed by Morris.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 497-622.

¹⁸⁵ Kelly J. Mays, *Op. Cit.*, p. 8.

imposing aesthetic of the Gothic revival again brings the Decadent movement into the realm of Decadent Gothic. The ‘gradualism’ that Mays references encapsulates the oblique and transient mood of *fin de siècle* literature by implying that time was slipping away, rather than progressing in a particular direction. This allusion to temporal decay translates into the Decadent Gothic in two ways. Firstly, as Mays seemingly acknowledges by including the broader term ‘Victorian Gothic,’ the period of the 1880s and the 1890s was secular yet connected to the past. Mays’ contradiction denotes the type of fleeting impressions that were characteristic of Decadent style. Where gradualism is a hypothesis that (broadly speaking) identifies variation as a measured process, transience is bound to the theory that states of matter do not extend beyond a limited temporal parameter.

Kevin Padian analyses temporality in Hardy’s work within his essay ‘Evolution and Deep Time in Selected Works of Hardy,’ (2010). The scientific process of evolution, which in the shorter term can be aligned with hereditary socialism,¹⁸⁶ emphasises the gradualism described by Mays. Yet the time-torn aspect of Hardy’s work also suggests that transience, or the ability of a single event or occurrence to undo or accelerate a process, is also relevant. Essentially, where gradualism speaks of connection and sequence, transience seeks to identify a finality. In relation to attitudes towards the *fin de siècle*, the former would imply that time will steadily progress and shift, and that the end of the nineteenth century would witness a minute social disturbance. The latter, however, would determine that there is a true ending (as Weir argues) at the *fin de siècle* that resolves the past and allows the future to commence. The amalgamation of these two states of perceiving time creates a spatial tension,

¹⁸⁶ The term ‘hereditary socialism’ is here taken to mean the implication of social status on individual progress, that is further influenced by inherited anatomical and social conditions.

in that time becomes both abstract yet quantifiable, progressive yet revolutionary. The passivity of gradualism was, therefore, balanced against the assertiveness of transience.

In a similar vein, Arthur Symons poignantly wrote that ‘to be a disembodied voice, and yet the voice of a human soul: that is the ideal of Decadence.’¹⁸⁷ Symons’s statement suggests that the writer should be both an advocate of the unattainable past, exemplified by his allusion to a distant voice, whilst maintaining a connection with the truthfulness found in the present period. Secondly, the concept of the ‘disembodied voice,’ read against Mays’s ‘gradualism,’ is reminiscent of the Gothic aesthetic. This is since both terms signal a discourse with the past, the like of which is also witnessed in the revival of the Gothic during the late-Victorian period. Mays also notes that even the term ‘Victorian’ ‘appears an exclusively anti-, as well as post-, Victorian formulation,’¹⁸⁸ and further remarks that it is difficult to date the first cultural inception of the term. There are many arguments concerning when the term began its usage in the sense of how contemporary history understands it, as an adjective encapsulating anything that was created, produced, understood or located in England during Queen Victoria’s reign. Though what is more relevant here is the fact that the Victorians were determined to establish themselves within a given period in history.

In terms of Hardy studies, the unique insight proposed within Chapter Three - by delving into Hardy and the Decadent Gothic - both enriches and extends the analysis of his later work. Where previous studies have largely focused on novels such as *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* (1895) in relation to Modernism and Romanticism, there

¹⁸⁷ Arthur Symons, ‘The Decadent Movement in Literature’, Op. Cit., p. 862.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 1.

has been little attention given to either aesthetics of the Gothic or Decadence evident within these prominent novels. Significantly, there has been even scarcer attention given to Hardy's non-fiction writing during the late nineteenth century, in relation to his attitudes towards style. For example, Hardy wrote several articles for popular British and French magazines and journals during and immediately prior to the *fin de siècle* that engaged with literary style, Gothic architecture and (though indirectly) Decadence. These articles included: 'Dialect in Novels' *Athenaeum* (1878); 'The Dorsetshire Labourer', *Longman's Magazine* (1883); 'Fine Passages in Verse and Prose,' *Fortnightly Review* (1887); 'Candour in English Fiction', *New Review* (1890); and 'Contrainte et Liberté', *L'Ermitage: Revue mensuelle et littéraire* (1893). This range of texts emphasises Hardy's conscious attempt to cultivate his own writing, whilst simultaneously offering a rich source of material that supplements the close readings of his later novels.

At the *fin de siècle* the architectural world was again debating the "battle of the styles" between gothic and modern design.¹⁸⁹ Kelly J. Mays explores the contemporary argument that the traditional gothic architectural style, famously promoted by John Ruskin,¹⁹⁰ had become somewhat inadequate as such buildings no longer fulfilled the requirements of society.¹⁹¹ The same can also be argued of the Gothic literary style, which also had to adapt to changing tastes within the Victorian period. Significantly, Hardy trained as an architect during his early life and favoured the Gothic style and this has often led to biographical, medievalist and psychological readings of his two later novels *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*. However, Chapter Three will argue that Hardy's later novels were

¹⁸⁹ The term "battle of the styles" is used by Kelly J. Mays in 'How the Victorians Un-Invented Themselves: Architecture, the Battle of the Styles, and the History of the Term Victorian' *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 19.1, 1-23 (April 2014), p. 4, and denotes both the specific debate surrounding plans for the Foreign Office that began in 1856, and the 'more general clash between defenders of Classic and Gothic architecture', p. 4.

¹⁹⁰ See John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice* (1853), and *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849).

¹⁹¹ See Kelly J. Mays, *Op. Cit.*, p. 6.

published within the ‘Decadent Gothic’ literary period and, therefore, engaged with the conflict posed by the emergence of Decadence and the approach of ‘Modernity.’ The aim of Chapter Three will be to shift the focus away from a strict analysis of Hardy’s Gothic architectural aesthetic, to instead examine his reconstruction of the literary Gothic style removed from the eighteenth-century re-imagined medieval aesthetic. This builds on Marjorie Garson’s innovative study concerning Hardy, architecture, the grotesque, and the sublime. She suggests that Hardy ‘depicts ancient buildings and monuments as a kind of writing that must be preserved’ because it serves as a ‘temporal record.’¹⁹² Garson’s linking of architecture and language is useful for the analysis of Hardy’s style at the *fin de siècle*, which was influenced by a number of Decadent writers/critics and his appreciation of Gothic buildings. For example, Hardy made several notes on studies concerning Oscar Wilde and Charles Baudelaire, specifically in relation to their handling of style,¹⁹³ as well as copying an excerpt from Joris-Karl Huysmans’s Decadent novel *The Cathedral* (1898).¹⁹⁴ Garson’s concept that buildings provide a ‘temporal record’ for Hardy will also be a consideration when discussing the dismantling of Gothic building and the disjuncture of ancient and modern architecture within Chapter Three.

Significantly, Hardy also made several notes on Walter Pater’s *Appreciations: With an Essay on Style* (1889) and an article published in *The Edinburgh Review* entitled ‘The

¹⁹² Marjorie Garson, ‘Written in stone: Hardy’s Grotesque Sublime,’ in *Thomas Hardy Reappraised: Essays in Honour of Michael Millgate*, ed. by Keith Wilson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), p. 96.

¹⁹³ See F. Brunetière, ‘Charles Baudelaire’, *RDM*, 81, 697-701 (June 1887), in *The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy, Vol. 2*, Op. Cit., p. 8, which Hardy made notes on. Although this text was dated June 1887, Hardy wrote his study date as 9th March and his location as the British Museum. Owing to the fact that nearby notes were dated 1889-90, it is reasonable to assume that Hardy was studying this text within this latter period.

¹⁹⁴ This excerpt shall be discussed in Chapter Three. See also *The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy.*, Op. Cit., pp. 255-7 for an unidentified article that discusses Wilde’s style in relation to other Decadent writers, including Baudelaire.

Æsthetic Outlook: Walter Pater' (1907).¹⁹⁵ Although this latter article post-dates the period in which Hardy was writing his later novels, it discusses Pater's earlier texts that were largely published during the *fin de siècle*. In his *Appreciations*, Pater wrote that the artist 'begets a vocabulary faithful to the colouring of his own spirit, and in the strictest original,' which is strikingly similar to Hardy's own view concerning style. Following a re-reading of Macaulay's work,¹⁹⁶ Hardy famously wrote: 'the whole secret of a living style and the difference between it and a dead style, lies in not having too much style [...]. Otherwise your style is like worn half-pence - all the fresh images rounded off by rubbing, and no crispness or movement at all.'¹⁹⁷ From this statement it can be inferred that Hardy was beginning to translate the concept of conflicting architectural styles into an exploration of 'pastness' and modernity in his *fin de siècle* novels. Hardy's juxtaposition of 'living' and 'dead' style can be read as an acknowledgement that certain literary methods may dissipate, evolve, or become redundant, and, therefore, a writer should continually seek new inspiration. Pater further argues that 'structure is all-important' and that the 'architectural conception of work, which foresees the end in the beginning and never loses sight of it,' is an important consideration for the writer (particularly the poet).¹⁹⁸ The reference to endings and beginnings has significance here because it implies that the text does not exist beyond its 'structure.' This is a considerable modification of earlier literary styles, such as sensationalism, where writers like Hardy relied upon the lasting physical effects of their novels on their readers to assure success. Conversely, the sense of an ending articulated by Pater aligns with the Decadent

¹⁹⁵ For the specific passages copied by Hardy, see *The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy, Vol. 2*, Op. Cit., pp. 407-8.

¹⁹⁶ See Florence Emily Hardy, *The Life of Thomas Hardy*, in which Hardy states, "'read again Addison, Macaulay, Newman, Sterne, De Foe, Lamb, Gibbon, Burke, Times Leaders, &c. in a study of style,'" Op. Cit., p. 138. Although this entry was written in 1875, it is reasonable to suggest that such literary influences continued to resonate with Hardy throughout his career.

¹⁹⁷ Florence Emily Hardy, *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy 1840-1891* (1928), p. 138.

¹⁹⁸ Walter Pater, *Appreciations: With an Essay on Style* (1889; London: Macmillan, 1889), p. 18.

Gothic style because it suggests more than a mere temporal ‘end,’ but rather a conceptual one that touches on history and heredity, as well as decay and degeneration.

Interestingly, Macaulay briefly touched upon architectural style, as a route into discussing the concept of degeneration and survival, as early as 1840. In a well-known article for the *Edinburgh Review*, he imagines an unidentified ‘New Zealander’ who ‘in the midst of a vast solitude’ will ‘take his stand on a broken arch of London Bridge to sketch the ruins of St. Paul’s.’¹⁹⁹ The destruction of St Paul’s Cathedral at first appears to be a commentary on the decline or displacement of religious power in an imagined/alternative future. Indeed, Macaulay was attempting to summarise and review Leopold Ranke’s *The Ecclesiastical and Political History of the Popes of Rome* (1840), which actively discusses ‘how it was that the Roman Catholic Church, having lost a large part of Europe, not only ceased to lose, but actually regained nearly half of what she had lost.’²⁰⁰ The enduring power of the Church, as articulated by Ranke and Macaulay respectively, does not take into account how the structural decay of such an iconic specimen of religious architecture may be read as a metaphor for shifts in societal attitudes. For instance, Mays draws attention to ‘what survives in the most-famous of post-apocalyptic Londons,’ as expressed in Macaulay’s article, by stressing that ‘the only building the New Zealander ponders is an iconic edifice already over two centuries old when Victoria was on the throne, his perch the remains of the work of ‘Victorian’ engineering, not architecture.’²⁰¹ St Paul’s may still be able to hold the gaze of the unknown traveller, yet it is the bridge that proves to be the most valuable and practical for their purpose. Macaulay’s narrative also has hints of Hardy’s later reference to the

¹⁹⁹ Thomas Babington Macaulay, ‘Revolutions of the Papacy: Ranke’s *History of the Popes of Rome*’, *Edinburgh Review*, pp. 227-58 (October 1840), p. 228.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 228.

²⁰¹ Kelly J. Mays, *Op. Cit.*, p. 22.

‘churchless churchyard’ within *Jude the Obscure*, that is a result of the dismantling of the old church to make way for the ‘new German-Gothic’ one that shall be discussed in greater depth within Chapter Three.²⁰² Such conflict of past and present will be analysed specifically through Hardy’s engagement with heredity, regression and degeneration, and late-Victorian perceptions of modernity, particularly in relation to Decadence. As such, Chapter Three will explore the interconnection of the Decadent movement and the Gothic revival at the *fin de siècle* that further exposes Hardy’s Decadent Gothic style.

²⁰² Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, ed. by Dennis Taylor (1895; London: Penguin, 1998), pp. 124-5. All further references are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the text.

Chapter One

Victorian Sensationalism: Thomas Hardy's Early Gothic Style

The Development of Hardy's Sensationalism

An early letter written by Hardy to his sister Mary on 19th December 1863 suggests that he was considering his approach to novel writing and the foundations on which he hoped to build a successful career. He relates:

About Thackeray. You must read something of his. He is considered to be the greatest novelist of the day – looking at novel writing of the highest kind as a perfect and truthful representation of actual life – which is no doubt the proper view to take. Hence, because his novels stand so high as works of Art or Truth, they often have anything but an elevating tendency, and on this account are particularly unfitted for young people – from that very truthfulness.²⁰³

From this letter it can be inferred that Hardy was particularly interested in literary realism and hoped to embrace Thackeray's satirical 'truthfulness' in his own prose. However, his first attempt at fiction *The Poor Man and the Lady* (written in 1868 but never published)²⁰⁴ was rejected by the publisher Alexander Macmillan on the grounds that it was too critical of the upper classes. Macmillan recognised Hardy's ability to present a 'picture of character among Londoners' that was 'sharp, clear, incisive, and in [many] respects true,' but believed that the writer only meant 'mischief'²⁰⁵ by interpreting Thackeray's 'high' art, built on 'truth', as the definitive model for the production of a successful novel. Macmillan further established the

²⁰³ Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy*, ed. by R. L. Purdy and M. Millgate (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), p. 5.

²⁰⁴ The whereabouts of the manuscript of *The Poor Man and the Lady* still remains unknown, and as a result it has never been published. Hardy himself believed that he may have sent it to another publisher where it was subsequently lost. See Thomas Hardy, *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*, ed. by Michael Millgate (London: Macmillan, 1984), p. 64.

²⁰⁵ Charles L. Graves, *Life and Letters of Alexander Macmillan* (London: Macmillan, 1910), p. 290.

connection between *The Poor Man and the Lady* and the work of Thackeray by acknowledging that although Thackeray presented a similarly unflattering ‘painting’ of London high society, he counteracted this with ‘many redeeming traits and characters’²⁰⁶ which would be more agreeable to an upper-class audience. Following this letter, Hardy visited the offices of Macmillan to gain some critical insights from the person who had proof-read his first attempt at prose fiction, and who had advised the publisher not to proceed with the publication of the novel. It was during this visit that Hardy discovered that the anonymous proof-reader was none other than the noted writer and critic George Meredith. No written correspondence between Hardy and Meredith exists regarding this meeting, but a summary of their conversation appears within *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy* (1928), in which Hardy notes Meredith’s suggestion that he should put *The Poor Man and the Lady* ‘away altogether, and attempt a novel with a purely artistic purpose, giving it a more complicated “plot.”’²⁰⁷ Critics often interpret this exchange as the founding step towards Hardy devising his sensation novel *Desperate Remedies* (1871). Indeed, the ‘complicated plot’ suggested by Meredith can also be applied to the sensationalist narrative technique described by Winifred Hughes (1980). In her study, Hughes posits that within sensation fiction there was a ‘melodramatic tendency towards abstraction,’ often combined with ‘suspense,’²⁰⁸ that served to distort the linear nature of the plot line. Hardy’s first published novel, then, appears to subscribe to the accepted conventions of sensation fiction, despite this not being Meredith’s direct intention.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 290.

²⁰⁷ Florence Emily Hardy, *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy 1840 – 1891* (London: Macmillan, 1928), p. 82.

²⁰⁸ Winifred Hughes, *The Maniac in the Cellar: Sensation Novels of the 1860s*, Op. Cit., p. 16.

²⁰⁹ Hardy reflects that Meredith ‘would have taken an interest in a book he had, or was supposed to have, instigated; and would have offered some suggestions on how to make a better use of the good material at the back of the book.’ See, *The Life of Thomas Hardy 1840 - 1891* (1933; London: Macmillan, 1994), p. 100. In this passage Hardy is referring to his regrettable decision to send the manuscript of *Desperate Remedies* to Tinsley Brothers instead of Chapman and Hall, where Meredith was reader, which he believed ultimately led to his

Interestingly, it was the publisher Tinsley Brothers who eventually accepted the manuscript of *Desperate Remedies* because it was a ‘blood-curdling story’²¹⁰ that would seemingly appeal to their intended audience. Founded in the 1850s, Tinsley Brothers (although a relatively modest publishing house founded by the brothers William and Edward Tinsley) swiftly achieved commercial success due to their heavy involvement with sensation fiction. For example, from publishing just seven editions throughout the entirety of 1862, they reached a peak of 27 editions for the year 1872, before their output steadily declined towards the conclusion of the 1870s.²¹¹ In fact, so invested were they in this prevalent yet fleeting genre that they had gone bankrupt by the end of 1880s when literary sensationalism had arguably outlived its popularity. However, during their peak publishing period of the 1860s and 1870s they released first editions of many influential sensation novels such as M. E. Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s Secret* (1862), Mrs Henry Wood’s *East Lynne* (1863), Sheridan La Fanu’s *The Tenants of Malory* (1867) and *Haunted Lives* (1868) and Wilkie Collins’s *The Moonstone* (1868). On April 5th 1870, Hardy wrote (in his characteristic third person style, under the name of his second wife Florence Emily Hardy) that ‘by this time it seemed to have dawned upon him that the Macmillan publishing-house was not in the way of issuing novels of a sensational kind: and accordingly he packed up the MS. again and posted it to Messrs. Tinsley, a firm which he was a stranger, but which did publish such novels.’²¹² The fact that Hardy was complicit in his first novel being placed within the Tinsley repertoire, clearly

novel being perceived by critics as deliberately sensational. For this reason, it seems reasonable to argue that Meredith was not recommending that Hardy write a sensation novel. Rather, Hardy appeared to believe that Meredith would have intervened and prevented *Desperate Remedies* from being received as sensational if he had been given early access to the manuscript.

²¹⁰ Florence Emily Hardy, *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy 1840 – 1891*, Op. Cit., p. 116. Tinsley also states that Hardy ‘wouldn’t have got another man in London to print it,’ p. 109.

²¹¹ For a comprehensive list of the novels published by Tinsley Brothers, as well as a graph demarcating their publishing output by year, see openlibrary.org/publishers/Tinsley_Brothers – Accessed 13.08.2020.

²¹² Florence Emily Hardy, *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy 1840 – 1891*, Op. Cit., p. 100.

knowing they had a reputation for publishing sensation fiction, suggests that he was willing to compromise the artistic merit of his work to gain commercial success.

It is worth mentioning here that Hardy's second novel *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872), also published by Tinsley Brothers, received a modest review from noted Cambridge academic Horace Moule.²¹³ Yet despite this praise, Hardy reverted back to his sensationalist writing style in his following three novels: *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873), *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874), and *The Hand of Ethelberta* (1876). Reviews of these novels indicate that Hardy was immersed in the sensationalist movement, both consciously and subconsciously. For instance, a scathing review of *Far from the Madding Crowd* can be found in the *Westminster Review*, in which the anonymous reviewer claims that 'the fault of [the novel] is undoubtedly its sensationalism.'²¹⁴ He then goes on to remark that 'if we analyse the story we shall find that it is nothing else but sensationalism, which, in the hands of a less skilful writer than Mr. Hardy, would simply sink the story to the level of one of Miss Braddon's earlier performances.'²¹⁵ Here the reviewer is both aligning Hardy's 1874 novel with the work of prolific sensation novelist M. E. Braddon, and commending him for his skill as a writer, that would perhaps place him more in the league of Collins and Dickens than Braddon or Wood. With this in mind, it seems reasonable to suggest that Hardy was continually constructing and reconstructing his literary Gothicism, not abandoning it following the limited success and generally unfavourable reception of *Desperate Remedies*. The link to

The novel was also favourably reviewed in the *Athenæum* by an anonymous critic and in the *Saturday Review* by Horace Moule, who was also both a friend and mentor to Hardy. Moule wrote that, 'the book is one of unusual merit in its own special line, full of humour and keen observation, and with the genuine air of the country breathing throughout it.'²¹³ Yet this country love story was perhaps too tame for a writer whose first attempts at fiction had succeeded in first challenging the fickleness of society, before then offering a portrayal of the scandalous 'wasps, toads and maggots' that represented the darker, more corrupt side of human nature.

²¹⁴ Unsigned Review, *The Westminster Review*, January 1875, ciii, xlvi, 265, *Ibid.*, p. 32.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

Braddon also replicates the cultural assumption that there was a distinction to be made between the cheap, low art of sensation fiction, as identified by critics such as Patrick Brantlinger, and the high art of the literary circle that Hardy endeavoured to enter.²¹⁶ According to the *Westminster Review*, he appears to be bridging this gap. Hardy was able to utilise his sensationalist style to investigate contemporary cultural concerns during the 1870s, such as gender divisions and class distinctions, which will inform the analysis of Hardy's work as the chapter progresses.

In relation to the popularity of the sensation literary style, Brantlinger outlines the impact of 'mass literacy' on the Victorian novel which instigated an increase in the publication of cheap editions, the penny-dreadful, sensation fiction and mass journalism. He identifies that from the 1830s onward,

There was a new, marked division of publishing labor, reflecting the social-class hierarchy, with the expensive, "three-decker" novel going upscale and the simultaneous emergence of a "cheap literature" industry, catering mainly to the burgeoning working-class readership in the major urban centres.²¹⁷

Brantlinger's statement suggests that throughout Hardy's time in London during the 1860s – a place he believed to be the 'London of Dickens and Thackeray'²¹⁸ where he hoped to forge a respectable literary career – the content of his prose was dictated by the popularity of this 'cheap literature,' deemed 'vulgar' by critics and seen to be 'rotting the minds' of the reading public.²¹⁹ The distribution of such 'cheap literature' also had a bearing on the perception of its quality. Many books offered in cheap second/third editions to circulating libraries and

²¹⁶ See Patrick Brantlinger, *The Reading Lesson: The Threat of Mass Literacy In Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1998).

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

²¹⁸ Thomas Hardy, *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*, Op. Cit., p. 43.

²¹⁹ Patrick Brantlinger, Op. Cit., p. 24.

discount catalogues were perceived, at least in part, to be encouraging the increasingly literate working class to immerse themselves in the sensation craze due to their accessibility and affordability. Therefore, circulating libraries like the one famously founded by ‘Mudie’ may have *appeared* to represent the tastes of the upper-class, with the distribution of their preferred ‘three-decker’ format, yet the mode of distribution of these texts had more in common with the ‘burgeoning working-class readership’ that Brantlinger references.

For instance, even in contemporary criticism such as Henry Mansel’s oft-cited 1863 essay ‘Sensational Novels’ for *The Quarterly Review*, there were references to the various modes of novel distribution and the influence that these had on the sensation genre’s popularity. Mansel wrote that ‘various causes have been at work to produce this phenomenon of our literature. Three principal ones may be named as having a large share in it – periodicals, circulating libraries, and railway bookstalls.’²²⁰ Although Mansel is not outwardly aligning these forms of distribution with class distinctions, his attack on the sensation novel more generally indicates that he viewed the genre as a lower form of art. For example, he states that the distribution of the novel served to ‘supply the cravings of a diseased appetite,’ with the ‘foster[ing]’ of ‘the disease’ seemingly represented by the supply and demand conducted between the publisher and the lower-class of readership that Mansel references. Hardy’s own cynicism towards such affordable editions, which were far-removed from the high-art he aspired to, is clear when he relates (again, vicariously through the writing of his second wife) that ‘in June [1871] he received a fresh buffet from circumstances in seeing at Exeter Station *Desperate Remedies* in Messrs. Smith and Son’s surplus catalogue for sale at 2s. 6d. the three volumes.’²²¹ The self-reflection evident here suggests that Hardy

²²⁰ Henry Mansel, ‘Sensation Novels’ *The Quarterly Review*, 113.226, 481 - 514 (April 1863), p. 483.

²²¹ Florence Emily Hardy, *The Life of Thomas Hardy*, Op. Cit., p. 112.

was at once caught up in the pursuit of literary success and dismayed to find that such success compromised the perceived quality of his work.

Also in relation to the financial appeal of sensation fiction, Pamela K. Gilbert notes that at this time ‘the broadsheet and the ballad begin to give place to half-penny and penny-dreadful literature,’²²² which she concedes became increasingly difficult to separate from the middle-class novels that were synonymous with the circulating libraries. The ‘mass literature’ label given to sensation fiction meant that it was perceived as an inferior product because, as Mansel claims, ‘few men would burden their shelves with’ due to the fact that its literary substance ‘may be as one halfpennyworth of bread to an intolerable quantity of sack.’²²³ Yet the more popular publications were being continually re-issued and redistributed as cheaper editions, suggesting that sensation novels may not have had artistic merit in the eyes of many critics but they did have quantifiable monetary value for writers and publishers alike. Hughes also acknowledges the relevance of the circulating libraries at this time by adding that ‘any patron of Mudie’s Library [...] had only to order a copy of the most recent sensation novel to find himself plunged into a turbulent universe far removed from mid-Victorian stodginess and respectability,’²²⁴ which again indicates the accessibility and apparent unrespectable nature of the sensation novel. In relation to Hardy’s own writing career, the publication of *Far from the Madding Crowd* forced him to confront this conflict between artistic and monetary success when he was curious to observe ‘ladies carrying about copies of it with Mudie’s label on the cover’ whilst travelling ‘to and from London.’²²⁵ Hardy’s opinion of the latter occurrence is not documented, however, the runaway success of the novel, as well as

²²² Pamela K. Gilbert, *Disease, Desire, and the Body in Victorian Women’s Popular Novels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 17.

²²³ Henry Mansel, ‘Sensation Novels’, Op. Cit., p. 484.

²²⁴ Winifred Hughes, Op. Cit., p. 4.

²²⁵ Ibid., p. 133.

the manner of distribution, is reminiscent of what Mansel wrote about some ten years earlier. Furthermore, the specificity of Hardy's language when referring to the 'ladies' who were carrying his novel also emphasises the gender debates surrounding the sensation novel that Hardy (as this chapter will demonstrate) was exploring in his own early fiction.

The financial draw of writing sensation fiction may have had a strong bearing on Hardy's initial decision to develop and publish *Desperate Remedies*, but this is not a sufficient basis for the argument that Hardy was immersed in sensationalism during the 1870s. Instead, it is first important to establish what sensationalism actually meant/means in relation to literature during this period, before designating space for the exploration of Hardy's early Gothicism in his following prominent novels: *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *Far from the Madding Crowd* and *The Hand of Ethelberta*. With a reference to sensation fiction more broadly, Brantlinger writes that 'the assumption of intimacy between writer and reader conflicts with the very different thesis of increasing alienation caused by the capitalization and industrialization of publishing and the advent of mass literacy.'²²⁶ Although 'mass literacy' may have increased the anonymity of each reader, due to the large volume of books being distributed, this did not weaken the affinity the reader would have had with the sensationalist style. The 'intimacy' referenced by Brantlinger again reinforces the complicated relationship between reader and text, that is based upon the principle of stimuli (text) – stimulated (reader). In other words, the manipulation of an observer's emotions in turn instigates a heightened physical reaction. The 'blood curdling' reaction suggested by Tinsley is a case in point because it both acknowledges that Hardy's *Desperate Remedies* (and, indeed, other sensation novels) had the power to shock, whilst also positing that the body would suffer a negative reaction that was simultaneously pleasurable and unbearable.

²²⁶ Ibid., p. 13.

Although Tinsley's words were not intended to be taken literally, the conception that the body is the focal point of sensation fiction is at the essence of his words.

This somatic and sensory exploration of sensation novels is the focus of many recent critical analyses of the genre by critics such as Hugh Epstein, Emily Steinlight, Nicholas Daly, Meegan Kennedy and William A. Cohen. For example, Epstein argues that 'we find so vividly in Hardy's novels that the whole organism is the responsive agent, not just, or even primarily, the reflective and sequestering brain,'²²⁷ which resembles Daly's supposition that 'like pornography or its more innocent twin melodrama [...] the sensation novel was thought to conjure up a corporeal rather than a cerebral response in the reader.'²²⁸ Both comments imply that visceral responses to sensationalism, as well as the observation of these responses within the text, are pivotal to the understanding and interpretation of texts from this genre. The duality of intelligence and action within the 'whole organism' suggested by Epstein fits with the view that sensation fiction's popularity was primarily due to the primitive responses it instigated, both within and beyond the text, that did not challenge the intelligent brain of its readers. Henry Mansel's famous declaration that sensation novels were 'preaching to the nerves'²²⁹ and that they were a 'galvanic-battery type' of fiction which did not 'gently stimulate a particular feeling' but instead 'carr[ied] the whole nervous system by steam,'²³⁰ attests to this. Clearly, Mansel's comments do not explicitly separate the brain and the body of the reader, however, they do support the hypothesis that sensationalism was derived from the desire to generate physical responses. Also, it is reasonable to imply that the writer or publisher of this genre did not give any obvious consideration to the implication such

²²⁷ Hugh Epstein, *Hardy, Conrad and the Senses* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), pp. 37-8.

²²⁸ Nicholas Daly, 'Railway Novels: Sensation Fiction and the Modernization of the Senses', *ELH*, 66.2, 461-87 (1999), p. 466.

²²⁹ Henry Mansel, 'Sensation Novels', *Op. Cit.*, p. 482.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 487.

stimulation of the nerves had on mental development. Similarly, Daly's claim that responses to sensation fiction were 'corporeal' and not exclusively 'cerebral' proposes that the body is a vessel that transforms elements of pleasure/pain from visual experiences into synaptic reactions. Effectively, Daly reasons that 'cerebral' understanding was less important than the bodily responses that sensational stimuli produced.

Such cognisant observation of the human form is evident in Hardy's fifth novel *The Hand of Ethelberta*, which has received the least critical attention,²³¹ and is even deemed by Hardy himself to have 'nothing whatever in common with anything he had written before.'²³² However, the detection narrative that underpins the novel creates a tension between realism and sensationalism that effectively aligns the text with his other early novels. In the 1912 'Preface' to the novel Hardy confirms that *The Hand of Ethelberta* contains

Imaginary circumstances that on its first publication were deemed eccentric and almost impossible [but] are now paralleled on the stage and in novels, and accepted as reasonable and interesting pictures of life; which suggests that the comedy (or, more accurately, satire) [...] appeared thirty-five years too soon, (p. vi).

Within this passage Hardy appears to be confirming that the novel has a lack of 'believability,' which is perhaps a result of the shifting states of perception within the text. The satirical overtones of the novel also indicate that Hardy was still striving to replicate the work of writers such as Thackeray. Confirmation of this can be found in *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*, when, in the summer of 1884, the respectable Lady Portsmouth declared that in *The Hand of Ethelberta* 'the society scenes were just as society was, which was not

²³¹ See Peter Widdowson, *Hardy in History: A study in Literary Sociology* (London: Routledge, 1989), Richard H. Taylor, *Neglected Hardy: Thomas Hardy's Lesser Novels* (London: Macmillan, 1982), and Jane Thomas, *Hardy, Femininity and Dissent: Reassessing the 'Minor' Novels* (London: Macmillan, 1999), which do contain chapters on *The Hand of Ethelberta*, but do not draw parallels between the novel and Victorian sensationalism.

²³² Thomas Hardy, *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*, Op. Cit., p. 105.

the case with other novels.²³³ Although the novel is largely accepted by critics as a humorous satire,²³⁴ Hardy's use of evasion, manipulation, and surveillance bring it more in line with the type of detection narrative synonymous with the sensationalist style. Within the novel, for example, there is an interplay between the physical human form and identity, which seeks to complicate the process of cognition by disturbing reality and creating a form of unreality. Ethelberta Petherwin, the heroine of the novel, is widowed at nineteen and her late husband's wealthy mother Lady Petherwin allows her daughter-in-law to remain under her roof as companion. Her acceptance into high society saves Ethelberta from the limited prospects of a poor country maid, yet (following Lady Petherwin's death) she is forced to contrive a career as a poetess and storyteller to maintain her elevated social position. Ethelberta's subsequent three-fold existence requires her to intermittently exhibit and conceal the three guises of her persona necessary for her existence, depending on the observer. She vacillates between the physical and emotional states of upper-class lady, artistic muse/creator, and country maiden, which partly contributes to the 'eccentricity' of the novel cited by Hardy.

Ethelberta's evasion also aligns with recent criticism concerning the interconnectedness of mind and body, as well as the manipulation of individual history within sensation texts, because she both maintains a physical reality *and* psychologically manifests an alternate reality. Due to the fact that Ethelberta presents herself as an upper-class lady physically, yet maintains an intellectual connection to her working-class history through discourse with her poor relations and the weaving of tales as a poetess and story-teller, she is able to fluctuate

²³³ Ibid., p. 173.

²³⁴ One example of this critical approach is Andrew Radford, 'Hardy's Subversion of Social Comedy in *The Hand of Ethelberta*', *The Thomas Hardy Journal*, XVI.2, 63 - 70 (May 2000). In his essay, Radford claims that 'the novel was written in a style that Hardy understood to be the most popular at the time, namely the social comedy which revelled in the baroque affectations of fashionable life,' p. 64.

between varying states of ‘reality.’ Meegan Kennedy discusses what she terms ‘the trace,’ which she believes ‘writes on the surface what would otherwise be a “secret history.”’²³⁵ Kennedy’s premise is that the novel, like ‘the trace,’ is a written account of a person’s history which can be evidenced through their bodily presence within a text. She relates that this ‘secret history [...] necessarily replaces “public history” within the history of the individual body,’²³⁶ so that physical deception becomes a means of establishing and manipulating a personal record. What Kennedy is proposing is that a character, or even the novel itself, is inscribed with a past history or identity that the reader has to decipher. In the case of Ethelberta, and *The Hand of Ethelberta* more generally, Hardy demonstrates that the body is a vehicle for documenting material history because it reveals (or often conceals) ‘the trace’ of the past. Kennedy goes on to state that ‘the 1860s were a decade in which questions of history, the length and rhythm of the history, the individual’s status as an animal body, and the body’s place in history were particularly relevant.’²³⁷ This, she believes, was in direct response to publications such as Charles Lyell’s *Principles of Geology* (1830-1833) and Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* (1859). This is a point worth considering, though the immediacy of inception into the cultural consciousness that Kennedy proposes seems less plausible as an influence during the 1860s. As the following chapter will explore, post-Darwinian philosophy required time to develop into fully integrated literary discourse. Kennedy’s emphasis of ‘individual’ experience, however, which is realised in the sensation novel through both the present and absent body, is useful for the interpretation of the body within this genre. Like her earlier comment, Kennedy posits that the body was a means of interpreting an individual persona and determining their place within society. In relation to

²³⁵ Meegan Kennedy, ‘Some Body’s Story: The Novel as Instrument’, *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, 42.3, 451-59 (2009), p. 451.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 451.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 457.

Hardy's fiction, and sensationalism more broadly, the body was simultaneously a sensory experiment, a culturally-inscribed specimen, and a transformative object that served to reveal to the reader as much as it concealed within the text.

Perceptions of the Body and Sensationalism

To more effectively explore the sensationalism that Hardy and his contemporaries appeared to subscribe to in their work, it is important to first establish a context in which to place the movement of sensation fiction. The treatment or perception of the body during the period of the 1830s to the 1870s is particularly significant when analysing the construction of the Victorian sensation genre. The Victorian newspaper, like the periodical and magazine, could determine the success (or failure) of a sensation novel. In a similar way, the press often sensationalised the acts of criminals, giving them notoriety by detailing their illicit treatment of the body and utilising the demand for crime journalism. In 1861, for instance, Thackeray presented his readers with the English translation of the French theatrical term meaning 'Sensation Dramas' within his popular column 'Roundabout Papers' for *Cornhill Magazine*.²³⁸ The writer borrowed the term to categorise a scandalous murder that had occurred two months earlier in the West End of London. The event was subsequently sensationalised by the press owing to the apparent respectable nature of the persons involved and the shockingly close proximity to the up-market Strand theatre district.²³⁹ The disjuncture between the respectable perpetrator, victim and setting, and the particulars of the gruesome murder not only dramatized the story, but also reinforced the significance of the human body in relation to sensationalism. For example, Mansel declared that 'if a scandal of more than

²³⁸ William Makepeace Thackeray, 'Roundabout Papers', in *Cornhill Magazine*, September 1861, XVI, 4.21, p. 379.

²³⁹ For a detailed account of the murder, press coverage and subsequent trial see Richard D. Altick, *Deadly Encounters: Two Victorian Sensations* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989).

usual piquancy occurs in high life, or a crime of extraordinary horror figures among our causes *célèbres*, the sensationist [sic] is immediately at hand to weave the incident into a thrilling tale.²⁴⁰ Beyond the obvious and literal interpretation of Mansel's words, through which he attacks the imitation of reality in sensationalist art, lies a deeper acknowledgement of bodily trauma and societal manipulation. For the sensation genre to be effective, there would have to be a physical presence within both the original journalistic form and the subsequent fictional adaptation to allow for horror to manifest in the reader's psyche. The prevalence of the body within crime journalism is also noted by the narrator of Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) who relates: 'We hear every day of murders committed in the country. Brutal and treacherous murders' such as 'slow, protracted agonies from poisons administered by some kindred hand [and] sudden and violent deaths by cruel blows.'²⁴¹ Here, as is evident, Braddon places emphasis on the physical action and/or reaction of the persons involved. It also establishes the acts of poisoning and bludgeoning that are replicated most notably in Braddon's novel, Collins' *The Woman in White* and *The Moonstone* (1868), and Hardy's *Desperate Remedies*.²⁴² Braddon's words also speak of a wider discourse between reality and fiction that played into cultural fears and assumptions concerning the body.

During this 'age of Sensation,' as *Punch* termed it in July 1861,²⁴³ the body became an object of expression that could be used for dramatic effect or as a subject for the 'Sensation Dramas' that were being serialised within the periodicals. Boyle establishes the link between

²⁴⁰ Henry Mansel, 'Sensation Novels', Op. Cit., p. 489.

²⁴¹ M. E. Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 54.

²⁴² In *Desperate Remedies*, the villainous Æneas Manston confesses to having bludgeoned his first wife to death, p. 389. He also attempts to poison her *doppelganger* Anne Seaway with opium, pp. 366-7.

²⁴³ See 'Sense v. Sensation', *Punch Almanack*, xli (Saturday 20th July 1861). In this poem, the writer states that 'Some would have it an age of Sensation, If the age of Sense may not be- The word's not *Old England's* creation, But *New England's*, over the sea,' p. 31. The capitalisation of 'Sensation' and 'Sense' suggests that the terms were perceived as definitive titles and thus confirm a distinctive era of Sensationalism. Also, the reference to 'New England' is further confirmation that the American press had established the term prior to its inception into the British press.

Victorian sensation fiction and crime journalism when he identifies that newspapers of the day not only ‘influenced the sensation novel’²⁴⁴ but opened up the channel between the ‘two somewhat contrary senses: of “cognition” and “emotion.”’²⁴⁵ With this in mind, the label of ‘sensation’ (as penned in its literary sense by Thackeray)²⁴⁶ created a connection between the reader’s interpretation of a scene/event as being ‘sensational’ and the physical ‘sensation’ that occurred in response to what they have just read. As such, the murder near the Strand was not only defined as a ‘Sensation Drama,’ but the ill-treatment of the body was also adopted as a literary device that would elicit a physical reaction for readers of sensation fiction. The ‘contrary senses’ that Boyle identifies suggest that what a reader observes is not necessarily what causes their mind or body to react. Instead, there must be a more refined process by which manifestations of fear are reliant on wider cultural anxieties. For instance, Richard D. Altick has extended the study of the ‘Terrible tragedy in the Strand,’²⁴⁷ that Thackeray earlier referenced, by identifying similarities between the newspaper reports of the murder and key scenes within Collins’ *The Moonstone*. In Collins’ novel the apparently respectable Godfrey Ablewhite is also attacked within an office on Northumberland Street (the actual scene of the Strand murder) in the same way that the real-life Major Murray was reported to have been accosted.²⁴⁸ As a result, the sensational appeal of these texts (and many other like them) is in their ability to propagate the reader’s deeply embedded fears by subliminally aligning perception with cultural apprehensions. Therefore, sensationalism not

²⁴⁴ Thomas Boyle, Op. Cit., p. 115.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 188.

²⁴⁶ It is important to note that the term ‘sensation’ was already in circulation within the American press, instigated by the picturesque spectacles created on ‘painted lengths of canvas’ of the Mississippi. These paintings were prompted by the publication of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in 1851, some ten years prior to Thackeray’s reference in the British press. See Richard Altick, Op. Cit., p. 4.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 11. The description of the murder as the ‘Terrible tragedy in the Strand’ comes from *The Daily Telegraph* headline of Friday 12th July 1861; the morning after the events took place.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 156. Similarly, Hardy’s characters Farmer Boldwood and Æneas Manston, both highly regarded businessmen from *Far from the Madding Crowd* and *Desperate Remedies* respectively, commit murder within respectable settings and their victims are deemed to be innocent.

only established an intellectual process of ‘cognition’ affecting ‘emotion,’ it also posed an experimental movement of psychological manipulation.

During the period in which Hardy was writing his early novels, there was clearly an increasing public awareness of how the body was perceived, documented, categorised, and interpreted. The abundance of Movements, Reforms and Laws pertaining to the body attests to this and reinforced the dichotomous relationship between differing classes and genders. For instance, the earlier Anatomy Act (1832) allowed medical practitioners to experiment on cadavers taken from government hospitals and workhouses for the purpose of dissection. In the decades that followed, a divide then emerged between the educated upper-classes, whose pursuit of scientific innovation required the procurement of cadavers, and the working-classes who ultimately fulfilled this demand. Such division was further fuelled by the introduction of the Sanitary Reforms during the 1830s and 1840s. This reform was again developed by the upper-classes as a response to the ‘increasing number of bodies in urban spaces,’ which was a result of the ‘industrialisation’ and subsequent ‘urbanisation’ of the working-class population according to Alison Bashford.²⁴⁹ Sensational in itself is Gilbert’s recognition that the body began to be ‘biologically classed’²⁵⁰ during this period, which led to a shift in public opinion concerning the study of human anatomy. As a result, the exposed body was deemed at once unpalatable and intriguing for the middle- and upper-class public due to its accessibility within the press, novels, and medical textbooks. Sensationalism exposed and disrupted social perceptions of the body (both alive and in death) and capitalised on the cultural fascination with anatomy. Where critical observations of the body in sensation fiction differ from other readings of the body within literature more broadly, particularly

²⁴⁹ Alison Bashford, *Purity and Pollution: Gender, Embodiment and Victorian Medicine* (London: Macmillan, 1998), p. 3.

²⁵⁰ Pamela K. Gilbert, *Op. Cit.*, p. 67.

feminist critiques, is in the fact that culturally the body was a dichotomy of fascinating specimen and reviled object.

Specific to the sensation period, representations of the body in its dual state were a passing movement because scientific advances eventually de-sensationalised perception of the human form. Daly argues strongly that the period of sensationalism had expired by the end of the nineteenth century, due to a de-sensitisation towards ‘primitive’ fears in the modern mind/body.²⁵¹ He states that ‘by the 1890s the modern nervous body, and the railway/sensation connection had become familiar enough to be available for debunking.’²⁵² Whilst Daly is specifically linking his argument to the public fear of railway travel, owing to notable railway accidents in the immediate sensation period,²⁵³ his statement also indicates that by the late nineteenth century sensationalism was no longer a viable means of engendering fear in the reader. The ‘debunking’ of the nervous body that Daly refers to indicates that after the wave of sensationalism had ebbed, following the 1870s, sensory reactions to novel stimuli became less emotionally-centred and more scientific, thus resulting in desensitisation. In the absence of overt sensory responses from readers of sensation fiction, or the ambiguity of what constituted these physical reactions, sensationalism could no longer elicit fear in the reader by familiar means. Kennedy notes that the sensation novel made a ‘continuous record of bodily experience attending to scale, timing, and source,’ that was in direct response to the refinement of scientific instruments such as the sphygmograph.²⁵⁴

²⁵¹ Indeed, the bankruptcy of the prominent sensation fiction publisher Tinsley Brothers in the 1880s seemingly confirms this.

²⁵² Nicholas Daly, ‘Railway Novels: Sensation Fiction and the Modernization of the Senses’, *Op. Cit.*, p. 477.

²⁵³ Daly cites two prominent rail tragedies, including one famously involving Charles Dickens, that impacted cultural fears of railway travel. The physiological effects of such travel were even the focus of a paper in the *Lancet* in 1862 entitled *Report of the Commission on the Influence of Railway Travelling on Public Health*.

²⁵⁴ Meegan Kennedy, ‘Some Body’s Story: The Novel as Instrument’, *Op. Cit.*, p. 453. Kennedy also cites a comprehensive list of other medical devices that were developed or invented following the refinement of the sphygmograph, including the polygraph and the cardiograph.

Previously inexplicable to a general readership, the novelty of sensory stimulation would eventually become superseded and replaced by the ability to not only decipher the body but to control it also. The inevitable critical judgement of the body suggested by Kennedy, in terms of accurate scientific readings of the nervous body, emphasises that the rhythmic and responsive body was a ‘new kind of narrator’²⁵⁵ in the sensation novel. Yet such innovative interpretations of the body would ultimately disrupt the concept of sensationalism because physical reactions no longer posed such an anomalous threat.

It is not surprising, then, that debates surrounding the human form subsequently fed into the sensation novel, which Hughes argued represented the emerging appeal ‘not to the terror of the unknown, of the vaguely suggested and barely imagined, but to the even more terrifying terror of the familiar’²⁵⁶ and Emily Steinlight more recently described as ‘blurr[ing] the boundaries fiction itself had drawn between those within and those excluded from the household.’²⁵⁷ In other words, the sensation novel replicated contemporary perceptions concerning the treatment of the familiar body, as well as capitalising on the sensational appeal of the real-life scandal found within newspaper reports and the contemporary high-society. For instance, in *Desperate Remedies* Miss Aldclyffe cries “County Hospital! [...] why, it is only another name for slaughter-house – in surgical cases at any rate,” (p. 228) when she discovers that the heroine’s brother Owen may need surgery and cannot afford to pay for his treatment. Here, Miss Aldclyffe is applying her own emotional narrative to the idea of visiting a County Hospital, which supports the argument that sensation fiction manipulated broader cultural anxieties to generate fear in the reader. The reference to

²⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 458.

²⁵⁶ Winifred Hughes, *Op. Cit.*, p. 8.

²⁵⁷ Emily Steinlight, ‘Why Novels are Redundant: Sensation Fiction and the Overpopulation of Literature’, *ELH*, 79.2, 501 – 35 (2012), p. 503.

‘slaughter-house’ as a synonym for ‘County Hospital’ is a case in point because the horrific images produced in the reader’s mind become stimuli, which subsequently stimulates their senses. Then, more broadly, the perception of the County Hospital as a place of suffering and torture becomes a cultural stimulus that engenders wider fears concerning the working-class body.

Significantly, exhibitions concerning the body were also steadily increasing in popularity, parallel to the demand for sensation fiction. Recent criticism, such as Nadja Durbach’s essay “‘Skinless Wonders’: Body Worlds and the Victorian Freak Show’ (2014), has begun to outline the implications of the human body for the study of Victorian culture that still resonates with a twenty-first century audience. According to Durbach, the body in the Victorian ‘freak show’ and on the dissection table were inter-related, and the assimilation of the two seemingly separate mediums of exhibition had particular significance from the 1830s onwards. In a period when working-class cadavers were crudely mishandled and often the subject of unsympathetic autopsies,²⁵⁸ it was widely understood that the body was a commercial object that could be bought and sold as ‘a commodity.’²⁵⁹ This was a lucrative business because working-class bodies were both currency that could be passed between ‘body snatchers’ and middle-class anatomists, and examples of scientific spectacle that were marketed to the ‘respectable’ paying public as a form of entertainment.²⁶⁰ Debates surrounding the moral treatment of the cadaver during the mid-nineteenth century have been

²⁵⁸ For a detailed account of how the working-class corpse was ‘treated like offal’ prior to and during autopsy in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, see Ruth Richardson, *Death, Dissection and the Destitute* (London: Routledge, 1987), pp. 95-9.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 51

²⁶⁰ Many bodily ‘spectacles’ were advertised as scientific specimens, presented in establishments such as The London Anatomical Museum. This practice continued well beyond the end of the nineteenth century, with notable ‘freak shows’ including the display of “The Elephant Man” in 1884. See Nadja Durbach, “‘Skinless Wonders’: Body Worlds and the Victorian Freak Show’, in *The Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 69.1 (January 2014), pp. 44-6.

well documented by critics such as Ruth Richardson, Alison Bashford, and Pamela K. Gilbert, but very little research examines how the treatment of cadavers translated into the numerous representations of the body within sensation fiction.²⁶¹ For instance, in *The Woman in White* the corpse of Count Fosco (although not a working-class body) is displayed in a Parisian morgue in order to ‘excite the popular curiosity’ of the public, and feed the ‘popular appetite for horror.’²⁶² The Count’s body is made into a spectacle due to its ‘immense size’ and ‘a strange mark on his left arm,’ (p. 413) that set it apart as abnormal or a ‘freak’ of nature (to use the Victorian term). Hardy also seemingly emulates Collins’s sensationalism in *Desperate Remedies* when Manston clumsily handles the body of his dead wife Eunice, who he ‘hoisted’ in a sack ‘to his back by a jerk,’ (p.372) in the same unsympathetic manner that working-class cadavers were ‘trussed up in sacks,’ ‘manhandled’ and ‘damaged in transit.’²⁶³

The exhibition of the body, however, was not as crude or unsavoury as the freak show or public dissection in every case. Several museums and exhibitions opened within this period, including Madam Tussaud’s Wax Museum in 1834 (which was relocated to London), the famous Great Exhibition in 1851 and The National Portrait Gallery in 1856, as well as the famous International Exhibition of art and industry that opened its doors to the public in 1862. Interestingly, Hardy’s move to London coincided (perhaps deliberately) with the latter.²⁶⁴ Nina Auerbach believes that the opening of the National Portrait Gallery indicated a

²⁶¹ Attention should be given here to Emma Liggins’s PhD thesis *Representations of the Dead Body in Selected Victorian Novels*. Thesis (Ph.D.) – University of Leeds (School of English), 1997, which does begin to examine the importance of the visible dead body within nineteenth-century texts.

²⁶² Wilkie Collins, *The Woman in White*, ed. by John Sutherland (1860; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 639.

²⁶³ Ruth Richardson, *Op. Cit.*, p. 72. Furthermore, in George Du Maurier’s successful Gothic novel *Trilby* (1894) the female protagonist is exploited as a commodity in a similar way to Count Fosco due to her statuesque size and abilities as a singer. Significantly, Du Maurier illustrated *The Hand of Ethelberta* for its serialised publication, which further adds weight to the argument that Hardy was immersed within the ‘sensation school’ of literature.

²⁶⁴ See Thomas Hardy, *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*, *Op. Cit.*, p. 40. This is the same exhibition referred to by Hardy in his biographical sketch for *Literary Worlds* in 1878, which also confirms his attendance.

move towards ‘immortalising history as character.’²⁶⁵ This meant that artistic impressions of the body became symbolic of identity, class, gender, and even economic circumstance. The male artist/female muse relationship, for instance, was clearly gendered, but the disparity between the economic position of the middle-class ‘master’ painter and the working-class ‘model’ was also visible. This dynamic subsequently fed into the paintings found in exhibitions like the Royal Academy that Hardy himself frequented.²⁶⁶ In the hands of male artists, and under the gaze of a largely male audience, the female subject was objectified, and her beauty reduced to its material worth. The cognisance of the female body has often been heightened by artistic interpretations on canvas. However, during the sensation movement, these representations served as social constructs of the female body, that equally played upon ideological desire and disgust.

Instances of the exhibited body, which experiment and manipulate class and gender, can also be observed in several sensation novels. For example, emphasis is placed on the portrait of Lady Audley in Braddon’s sensation novel since it reveals to the reader the concealed identity of the female protagonist, who was actually born into poverty. Similarly, Miss Petherwin’s portrait in *The Hand of Ethelberta* places her under the critical gaze of the upper-class attending audience of the Royal Academy, where it is exhibited, who are oblivious to her origins as a poor country maiden.²⁶⁷ By permitting the artist Ladywell to paint a permanent illustration of her body, Miss Petherwin is able to contrive positive perceptions of her image that serve to manipulate her history as a form of evasion. These

²⁶⁵ Nina Auerbach, *Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth* (London: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 196.

²⁶⁶ In *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*, Hardy records viewing two paintings in the Royal Academy by Gérôme, ‘Death of Ney’ and ‘Jerusalem’, on May 18, 1870, p. 79.

²⁶⁷ Interestingly, the painter of Ethelberta’s portrait is described by the narrator as having a ‘Tussaud complexion’. This description of Ladywell seems to allude to the famous London waxwork museum of the same name. See Thomas Hardy, *The Hand of Ethelberta*, ed. by Tim Dolin (1876; London: Penguin, 1997), p. 178.

‘immortalised’ subjects, then, not only engaged with Victorian conceptions of the body but also fed into the construction of sensationalism, as the following section will examine in more depth.

Hardy’s Sensationalism and the Body

As already established, Gilbert engages with the mid-Victorian sensation novel by analysing the body as a literary device, through which fears concerning gender, identity and power could be realised. She remarks that ‘the whole notion of a sensation is a physical one, and the effects of sensation fiction are generally defined in physical terms.’²⁶⁸ This implies that to understand and interpret the sensational style, it is first necessary to examine the physicality captured within its pages. Like Gilbert, critics such as Elisabeth Bronfen and Linda M. Shires have discussed the role of the body within mid- to late-Victorian literature, largely from a feminist perspective, and their findings are well-documented.²⁶⁹ However, very little research has been conducted on the body in Hardy’s early fiction, with the exception of *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874) which features quite heavily in feminist criticism,²⁷⁰ and the research that does exist often does not examine the significant role that the body plays in sensation fiction. Victorian sensationalism and representations of the body often engaged with broader cultural and moral debates concerning class and gender. During the 1860s and 1870s in

²⁶⁸ Pamela K. Gilbert, Op. Cit., p. 73.

²⁶⁹ See Nina Auerbach, Op. Cit.; Elisabeth Bronfen, *Over her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992); Margaret R. Higonnet’s edited collection of essays, *The Sense of Sex: Feminist Perspectives on Hardy* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993); and Lyn Pykett, *The ‘Improper’ Feminine: The Women’s Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing* (London: Routledge, 1992).

²⁷⁰ See Linda M. Shires, ‘Narrative, Gender, and Power in *Far from the Madding Crowd*’, and Elisabeth Bronfen, ‘Pay As You Go: On the Exchange of Bodies and Signs’, both in *The Sense of Sex: Feminist Perspectives on Hardy*, Ibid., which provide two varied feminist readings of the body in Hardy’s *Far from the Madding Crowd*.

particular, perceptions of the human body were influenced by earlier laws and movements like the Poor Law, the Contagious Diseases Acts, and the Protection of Women Act (1849).

Jeffrey Weeks discusses the intersection of sexuality, political agenda and societal concern during the mid-nineteenth century by emphasising the disjuncture between the ‘ostensibly humanitarian instincts of those who campaigned for legal change, and the controlling impact they had on people’s lives.’²⁷¹ Such political ‘control’ was centred on the regulation of public behaviour and inevitably impacted the perception and treatment of bodies presumed to be vulnerable and/or problematic. Whilst being potentially exploitative, particularly for women and the working-class population more generally, contemporary legislation also fed into the exposure and concealment of the body within sensation fiction. Violet Fenn similarly argues that ‘laws intended to protect certain vulnerable sections of the population often had the unfortunate effect of others being demonised or even driven underground.’²⁷² Such ‘demonisation’ was especially true for prostitutes (as well as working-class women considered to be morally compromised) because certain laws encouraged the scrutiny of female bodies and held them up to the public gaze. With particular reference to the Contagious Diseases Acts of the 1860s, the ‘vulnerable’ female body was placed within the public sphere, which encouraged gendered discourses that further translated into sensation fiction narratives during this period.

Evidence of the socio-political influence on mid- to late-Victorian perceptions of the body can also be read in Bashford’s argument that ‘in [Florence] Nightingale’s and [Dr

²⁷¹ Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society: The regulation of Sexuality Since 1800* (London: Routledge, 2018), p. 92.

²⁷² Violet Fenn, *Sex and Sexuality in Victorian Britain* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2020), p. xiii.

Benjamin Ward] Richardson's sanitarian minds, the body should not be thought of as separate organs, but as a whole, interactive organism, which required constant internal and external balancing and regulating.'²⁷³ Bashford's reference to 'interactive organism' implies an exchange of sensory stimuli, resulting in a push-pull of experience between body and object. Effectively, the body was a receptive and reproductive agent that, with mid-nineteenth-century legislation in mind, was often regulated externally. Subsequently, this legislation and its broader implications raised the public's awareness regarding the disparity of treatment between upper- and lower-class bodies, as well as male and female ones. Writers of Victorian sensation fiction were just as concerned with the control, treatment, and presentation of bodies within their pages as the public was about the bodies in its prisons, workhouses, or even the family home. This further added a moralistic element to the treatment of the body that is a consideration when analysing Hardy's sensationalism.

In the 'Postscript' to *Our Mutual Friend* (1865), Dickens famously upbraided upper-class society for its supposed blindness towards the 'openly violated' and 'ill-supervised'²⁷⁴ Poor Law that he saw as being designed to mollify the conscience of the upper-classes, rather than spare the working classes from falling into pauperism. Hardy's own fiction of this period, like that of other sensationalist writers, also experimented with representations of the body. In a similar way to how Dickens explicitly described the plight of the working classes in his Postscript, Hardy's sensation writing identified the moral (or immoral) treatment of the body in relations to class distinctions. It is precisely for this reason that a reassessment of Hardy's early fiction must be conducted if a deeper connection between his work and Victorian sensationalism is to be established. The intention of the following sections,

²⁷³ Alison Bashford, *Op. Cit.*, p. 8.

²⁷⁴ Charles Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, ed. by Michael Cotsell (1865; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 82.

therefore, is to establish Hardy's engagement with contemporary perceptions of the body, whilst simultaneously positing that sensationalism generated an evocative sensory experience. Approaching sensationalism in this way will also demonstrate that Hardy's early novels can be more convincingly aligned with the wider sensation genre. To explore Hardy's sensationalism more effectively, it is useful to analyse representations of the body in three diverse ways within his sensation fiction. As such, this chapter will examine Hardy's early work under the following headings: The Sexualised Body, Representations of the Dead Body, and The Symbolic Body.

The Sexualised Body

Steven Marcus's influential work on Victorian sexuality discusses the treatment of the body within Victorian literature and pornography, suggesting that in certain sexual scenarios 'anybody can be or become anybody else, and the differences between the sexes are blurred and confused.'²⁷⁵ Marcus's observation not only emphasises the often distorted boundaries between the sexes within fiction, but also opens up the possibility that there is a channel of perception between text and reader based upon erotic impulses or sensations. The body as a device for eliciting sensory stimulus within sensation fiction has some basis in Marcus's study of flagellation. In *Desperate Remedies*, the female protagonist Cytherea Graye experiences a dream sequence in which she is being violently whipped by what appears to be her unscrupulous lover Æneas Manston. The narrator relates that,

During the dilemma she fell into a troubled sleep, and dreamt that she was being whipped with dry bones suspended on strings, which rattled at every blow like those of a malefactor on a gibbet; that she lifted and shrank and avoided every blow, and they then fell upon the wall to which she was tied. She could not see

²⁷⁵ Steven Marcus, *The Other Victorians: A study of Sexuality and Pornography in Mid-Nineteenth-Century England* (1964; London: Transaction, 2009), p. 257.

the face of the executioner for his mask, but his form was like Manston's, (p.242).

At first, it appears that both Cytherea and Manston are perpetuating the expected roles of men and women within the mid-Victorian period, when 'legally and socially women composed an oppressed class'²⁷⁶ and male 'bachelors [were] idealized figures,'²⁷⁷ according to Nina Auerbach. However, the crude description of flagellation in Hardy's novel actually inverts these expected gender roles when the erotic act of Cytherea being whipped is read against Marcus's discussion concerning the flogging of public-school boys. In the latter scenario Marcus writes, 'a person is accused of some wrongdoing. The person is most often a boy,'²⁷⁸ and 'the accuser is almost invariably some surrogate for [the boy's] mother.'²⁷⁹ At first glance, Cytherea may be perceived as a subordinate within the scene, much like the child in Marcus's example, because she is the victim of Manston's attack. Yet she is also the 'accuser' in the sense that she is experiencing Manston's apparent 'wrongdoing,' which the narrator foregrounds for the reader. Therefore, Manston becomes the 'accused' party, who is also the stimulus for Cytherea's physical reaction.²⁸⁰

In *Desperate Remedies*, then, the body of Cytherea is being sexualised, resulting in the overall sensationalism of the scene, and the gender of both participants has been inverted. Although Manston at first appears to be a dominant masculine presence, in reality he is a feminised form who is merely 'scolding' Cytherea. It is, in fact, the heroine of the novel who

²⁷⁶ Nina Auerbach, *Op. Cit.*, p. 188.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

²⁷⁸ Steven Marcus, *Op. Cit.*, p. 255.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 255.

²⁸⁰ It is useful to note here that both Hardy's *Desperate Remedies* and Braddon's sensation novel *Aurora Floyd* (1863) contain significant flagellation scenes. In the latter novel, it is the female protagonist Aurora who enacts the violence on one of her servants because she has witnessed them mistreating her dog. Braddon's novel reinforces the powerful and sexual feminine archetype that Hardy later explored in his own sensation novels.

really dominates the passage as she writhes and avoids every blow, becoming the main focus of the reader's gaze. And it is through the channel of Cytherea's thoughts and actions that Hardy's sensationalism is realised; for it is *her* dream and *her* fantasy that is being related. Violet Fenn observes that flagellation was a particular favourite of Victorian erotic literature,²⁸¹ which reinforces the sexual nature of this act in Hardy's novel. Additionally, the terms 'dilemma' and 'troubled' used by the narrator have connotations of Cytherea being between two states of experience - pleasure/pain, or desire/fear. Cytherea may be a prisoner within her own mind, but she still retains some level of control. For instance, expressions such as 'blow' and 'shrank,' paired with the concealed face of the 'executioner,' emphasise the brutal physicality of the scene, whilst also stimulating Cytherea's sensory perception beyond what she can materially see.

Consideration should also be paid to the implications of the 'executioner's mask' worn by Manston in Hardy's dream sequence, which emphasises the subject's exposure and concealment. Within the last two decades in particular, Hardy scholars have often noted the sexual metaphors that can be drawn from certain objects described in his novels. From 'phallic weapons'²⁸² such as the sword exhibited by Sergeant Troy in *Far from the Madding Crowd* which he vigorously thrusts, to the 'masturbatory implications'²⁸³ of Manston's musical organ in *Desperate Remedies* which he plays for his 'private amusement only,' (p. 137) close readings have often placed emphasis on the object itself and its power to elicit a sensation within the narrative. Yet what critics have scarcely examined when analysing sensation fiction is the importance of clothing when discussing the exposure and concealment

²⁸¹ Violet Fenn, *Op. Cit.*, p. 48. Fenn goes on to relate that 'boys raised in severe education establishments' like the ones described by Marcus, 'would often grow into men whose thrill-seeking involved being whipped and humiliated themselves, or conversely, taking it out on others,' p. 48.

²⁸² Linda M. Shires, *Op. Cit.*, p. 57.

²⁸³ Richard Nemesvari, *Thomas Hardy, Sensationalism, and the Melodramatic Mode*, *Op. Cit.*, p. 44.

of the sexualised body, that is also closely linked with the inversion of gender and/or class. In his study of Hardy's *A Pair of Blue Eyes* in relation to erotic dress, Simon Gattrel argues that Hardy considered the 'sexual component' of clothing and its 'relation to the body and the viewer.'²⁸⁴ Clothing was a way for Hardy to mask the body in a literal sense (especially the female form), yet it also allowed him to explore physical sensation and sensuality without it appearing overtly sexual for his readers. The work of Nemesvari should also be acknowledged here as he does go some way towards examining the sexual overtones of key scenes within *Desperate Remedies* that are revealed through clothing.

Nemesvari offers a detailed reading of the scene within chapter eight when Hardy's heroine Cytherea finds herself alone with the villainous Manston and the two discuss Manston's musical instrument. What follows is a 'suggestive exchange' in which the reader may note the 'eroticization' of Cytherea's clothing when she experiences the 'thrill' of Manston's touch as he brushes by her dress.²⁸⁵ The narrator relates that,

His clothes are something exterior to every man; but to a woman her dress is part of her body. Its motions are all present to her intelligence if not to her eyes; no man knows how his coat-tails swing. By the slightest hyperbole it may be said that her dress has sensations, (p. 136).

The concept of clothing as a 'second-skin' is interesting as it implies that a woman's body is more exposed than a man's and, consequently, more sensitive to outward stimuli. If a man's clothes are 'exterior' then, by implication, a woman's are 'interior.' This idea is subtly yet significantly different to what the narrator states concerning clothes being 'part' of a woman's body. Read as 'internal' experience, a woman's clothing becomes a metaphysical

²⁸⁴ Simon Gattrel, 'The Erotics of Dress in *A Pair of Blue Eyes*', in *Thomas Hardy Reappraised: Essays in Honour of Michael Millgate*, ed. by Keith Wilson (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2006), pp. 119-20.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.43-4.

embodiment of sensationalism because the female body reacts from within. The implication in Hardy's novel is that his portrayal of sensation is more sophisticated than the superficial, surface reaction that is often ascribed to the genre. An episode detailed in Collins' *The Woman in White* also places particular significance on clothing and physical sensations. When the novel's hero Walter Hartright encounters Laura Fairlie, who he had believed to be dead, the emotional exchange is expressed through the latter's dress which 'touch[s] the black letters'²⁸⁶ of her tombstone and sends a thrill through Hartright who is then possessed by the 'veiled woman [...], body and soul.'²⁸⁷ Similar to the scene described in Hardy's *Desperate remedies*, the sexual tension is detailed using the woman's dress as a sensational device which elicits a sensory response. Yet the 'thrill' is experienced by the male participant and not Miss Fairlie, whose only physical response is to nonchalantly lift her veil. Nemesvari reads the exchange between Cytherea and Manston as a lesson in masculine power and female submission that is typical of the preconceptions that Victorian society had about gender relations, as detailed above by Auerbach, and articulated by Collins. However, while Manston's projection of sexual prowess may be described by Nemesvari as 'narcissistic,'²⁸⁸ the distribution of power is actually in Cytherea's favour as she, like Hartright, takes the masculine lead. For *she* is the most aware of the sexual tension in the scene, and *she* is the one actively experiencing and deriving pleasure from the 'sensation' of Manston's touch through the medium of her dress that, the narrator simply states, 'was nothing to Manston,' (p. 136). As a result, it is the heroine who yet again shifts the sensation back upon herself and Manston becomes the feminised, subordinate observer.

²⁸⁶ Wilkie Collins, *The Woman in White*, Op. Cit., p. 419.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 419,

²⁸⁸ Richard Nemesvari, *Thomas Hardy, Sensationalism, and the Melodramatic Mode*, Op. Cit., p. 44.

The importance of clothing, then, warrants further consideration when analysing Hardy's early fiction and Nemesvari's reading serves as a useful basis for its discussion in relation to sensationalism. Yet to limit the discussion of this subject to *Desperate Remedies* would be to dismiss the sensational elements of Hardy's other early novels. Following the publication of *Desperate Remedies*, *Far from the Madding Crowd* is perceived by some modern critics to be the writer's next foray into sensationalism.²⁸⁹ Even during the 1870s one reviewer for the *Athenæum* seems to be founding this supposition. In a review of *Far from the Madding Crowd* Hardy is accused of a 'recklessness' and 'coarseness' that 'repels the reader', with some scenes being deemed 'worthy, in their extravagance, of Mr. Reade.'²⁹⁰ This review is reminiscent of an earlier review of *Desperate Remedies* found in the *Spectator* in which the reviewer scolds Hardy 'for prying into the way of wickedness'²⁹¹ before warning his readers 'against this book.'²⁹² The comparison to the sensation novelist Charles Reade is suggestive of Hardy's relationship with the sensation literary genre that characterised his early novels. Furthermore, the scorn shown towards Hardy's attempt at the 'low art' of sensation fiction appears to have been derived from the fact that he seemingly presented his readers with scandalous plot lines and provocative representations of the body that were clearly unpalatable for some middle or upper-class readers. However, amongst the 'coarseness' and 'wickedness' described by the two reviewers, there is a level of sophistication in Hardy's early novels that also captures the sensationalism of the period, without being overtly crude or scandalous.

²⁸⁹ For example, Richard Nemesvari, begins with an analysis of *Desperate Remedies*, then passes over *A Pair of Blue Eyes* to discuss *Far from the Madding Crowd*.

²⁹⁰ Unsigned Review, *Athenæum*, 5 December 1874, pp. 747-8, in *Thomas Hardy: The Critical Heritage*, Op. Cit., pp. 19-20.

²⁹¹ Unsigned Review, *The Spectator*, 481-3 (22 April 1871), in *Thomas Hardy: The Critical Heritage*, Op. Cit., p. 4.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

For example, in *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873), the overtly sensational and famous ‘cliff hanger’ scene is representative of what one anonymous reviewer for the *Saturday Review* described as Hardy’s demonstration of a ‘tragic power’²⁹³ that develops into ‘powerful representations’ of ‘passion’ that further foregrounded ‘social barriers.’²⁹⁴ Gatteral argues that in his early writing, Hardy was ‘always attempting to find substitutes acceptable to his audience for the direct statement of arousal.’²⁹⁵ The pairing of ‘power’ and ‘powerful’ in the review of Hardy’s novel underlines the attention that Hardy gave to the development of physical representations of sensuality and sexuality both within and beyond the text. During chapter twenty-two, Hardy’s heroine Elfride Swancourt is forced to take drastic action when Henry Knight, her lover, stumbles over the cliff edge and is only moments away from slipping to his death. In a spectacular show of courage, Elfride removes ‘her whole clothing, and replace[s] only her outer bodice and skirt,’²⁹⁶ allowing the heroine to form a ‘woollen and cotton’ (p. 221) from her undergarments.²⁹⁷ The obvious nakedness that takes place beyond Knight’s and the reader’s vision serves to vicariously objectify Elfride’s body. Moreover, the linen rope (as an extension of her once concealed body) is representative of Elfride’s physical and emotional strength, as well as her concealed modesty that she had to dismantle for the sake of Knight. In her detailed analysis of *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, Jane Thomas compares Elfride to Cytherea because she believes they are both ‘on the threshold of sexual awareness.’²⁹⁸ If a woman’s clothes are to be read as an extension of her body (as Hardy himself proposed in *Desperate Remedies*), then, by throwing her clothing over the cliff

²⁹³ Unsigned Review, *Saturday Review*, xxxvi, 158-9 (2 August 1873), in *Thomas Hardy: The Critical Heritage*, Op. Cit., p. 15.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

²⁹⁵ Simon Gatteral, Op. Cit., p. 123.

²⁹⁶ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, ed. by Pamela Dalziel (1873; London: Penguin, 2005), p. 221. All further references are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the text.

²⁹⁷ For a detailed description of the numerous ‘layers’ that formed a Victorian woman’s dress, see Violet Fenn, Op. Cit., pp. 9-11.

²⁹⁸ Jane Thomas, *Hardy, Femininity and Dissent: Reassessing the ‘Minor’ Novels* (London: Macmillan, 1999), p. 70.

edge, Elfride has crossed the social barriers dictating propriety, as well as the threshold of sexuality, and has effectively placed her vulnerable and intimate body in the hands of her lover. Furthermore, the gender roles are inverted when each ‘sex bears traits opposite to those by which hegemonic culture would define them,’²⁹⁹ which would make Knight the feminine damsel in distress and Elfride the masculine hero who uses her stealth and courage to save her lover.³⁰⁰

Parallels between sensationalism, the sexualized body, and sensibility can also be drawn, particularly when discussing *Far from the Madding Crowd*. In an early and oft-cited passage within the novel, Gabriel Oak is described as surveying the body of Bathsheba Everdene from a concealed position and the narrator provides a detailed account of the incident.³⁰¹ However, it is the reactions of both Oak and Bathsheba following this visual transaction that are the most revealing:

Rays of male vision seem to have a tickling effect upon virgin faces in rural districts; she brushes hers with her hand, as if Gabriel had been irritating its pink surface by actual touch, and the free air of her previous movements was reduced at the same time to a chastened phase of itself. Yet it was the man who blushed, the maid not at all, (p. 17).

Nemesvari interprets this type of exchange in *Far from the Madding Crowd* as demonstrating ‘Hardy’s refusal to follow standard gender assignments in [the] system of power,’³⁰² because

²⁹⁹ Linda M. Shires, *Op. Cit.*, p. 53. This observation concerns the relationship of Gabriel Oak and Bathsheba Everdene in *Far from the Madding Crowd* but can be applied to Hardy’s other novels which Shires also discusses in relation to suppressed feminine traits exhibited by a masculine figure and vice versa.

³⁰⁰ Rosemarie Morgan claims that Elfride is ‘sexually instigative’ which she argues feeds into Hardy’s ‘reversal of roles’ in *A Pair of Blue Eyes*. See Morgan, *Women and Sexuality in the Novels of Thomas Hardy* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 6.

³⁰¹ Thomas Hardy, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, ed. by Rosemarie Morgan and Shannon Russel (1874; London: Penguin, 2003), pp. 5-6. All further references are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the text.

³⁰² Richard Nemesvari, *Op. Cit.*, p. 91.

Bathsheba effectively erases Oak's presence from her gaze by 'brushing' it away, whilst Oak becomes the 'tickled' party who blushes in her presence. As such, the 'system of power' between Oak and Bathsheba has been compromised by the former's sensibility and the latter's emotional indifference. Although the blush can be clearly read in this way, attention should also be paid to the implications of the blush in relation to male sexuality and social boundaries. For instance, Marcus establishes a link between sensibility and sensation:

The idea of sensibility provided a juncture for feelings and emotions on the one hand, and for sensation or sensations on the other [...]. The cult of sensibility was at its origins connected with sexuality, with sexual claims and impulses.³⁰³

Within sensation fiction, 'feelings and emotions' become more than passive and unquantifiable embedded thoughts. Instead, they manifest as physical 'impulses' that are described relative to instinctive actions within the text. With this in mind, Oak's internal feelings of sexual desire for Bathsheba culminate in the physical sensation of the blush, which in turn links to sensibility and the hero's inability to control both his senses and his emotions. As such, Hardy effectively challenges both the class boundaries and gendered roles of the pair by creating a masculine, empowered heroine and a feminised, emotional hero.

Writers and critics often commented on the disparity of treatment between men and women's bodies in sex and marriage, with one anonymous critic in William Makepeace Thackeray's *Cornhill Magazine* (1861) conceding that 'young men in the present day prefer mistresses to wives, partly because women are not sufficiently well educated for the more honourable position, but mostly because marriage is too expensive.'³⁰⁴ This was perhaps a rather cynical view, but the message that it conveys is that women cannot be sexual subjects

³⁰³ Steven Marcus, Op. Cit., p. 207.

³⁰⁴ Unsigned Article, 'Keeping Up Appearances', in *Cornhill Magazine*, 4.21, 305-317 (September 1861), p. 306.

and wives; a theory that Hardy appears to be exploring through the physical actions/interactions of his heroines. For instance, Cytherea is sexually whipped by Manston, but fails to become his wife; Elfride exhibits her vulnerable body to Knight who then later rejects her; and Bathsheba surrenders her body to Troy yet is abandoned early in their marriage. Weeks relates that ‘what is strikingly absent in nineteenth-century thought is any concept of female sexuality which is independent of men’s.’³⁰⁵ The anonymous critic validates Weeks’s claim because they define what they believe is a woman’s place, based solely on male needs and desires. By analysing Hardy’s sensationalism, it becomes clear that the sexualised body engages with broader debates regarding class, gender and morality that are further developed in the sensational representations of the body in death and through symbolism that this chapter shall go on to discuss.

Representations of the Dead Body

Like the sexualised body, the image of the corpse is of particular importance within the sensation novel. For example, many scholars have remarked on the abundance of deaths and dead bodies in the later work of Charles Dickens, most notably *Our Mutual Friend* (1865) in which bodies are continually dredged up from the river Thames in London. For example, in chapter three ‘Gaffer’ Hexam nonchalantly describes the many bodies that he has recovered from the water in his capacity as a Thames waterside man. He describes ten bodies in detail, including ‘a sailor,’ a ‘young woman in grey boots,’ ‘two young sisters what tied themselves together with a handkecher [sic],’ and a ‘drunk old chap.’³⁰⁶ However, the large quantity of papers relating to bodies that have been recovered is remarked by Hexam to “‘pretty well

³⁰⁵ Jeffrey Weeks, Op. Cit., p. 45.

³⁰⁶ Charles Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend*, Op. Cit., p. 22.

[paper] the room,”³⁰⁷ which also alludes to the extent of the situation. John Ruskin, in his essay ‘Fiction Fair and Foul’ (1881), discusses another of Dickens’s seminal works *Bleak House* (1853), stating that ‘it is not the mere number of deaths [...] that marks the peculiar tone of the modern novel. It is the fact that all these deaths, but one, are of inoffensive [...] respectable persons; and that they are all grotesquely violent or miserable.’³⁰⁸ Class distinctions in relation to the corpse are particularly significant within sensation fiction. Novelists such as Collins, Dickens and Braddon frequently inverted the idea of the ‘good death,’³⁰⁹ which was often associated with the upper classes and the female form, and replaced it with an unnerving alternative death that was ‘grotesquely violent or miserable.’ One notable example of the inverted ‘good death’ can be found in Collins’ *The Woman in White* (1860) in which the staged, violent death-bed scene of the angelic heroine Laura Fairlie is detailed for the reader. In the hours leading up to her death Laura Fairlie is described as having a ‘face ghastly white, and hands fast clenched,’³¹⁰ before succumbing to a ‘fit of convulsions’³¹¹ and letting out a ‘sort of half cry,’³¹² which further expresses the agony of her condition and subsequent death. Hardy, like Dickens and Collins, used violence and the grotesque image, not only as a sensationalist device in his early fiction, but also to demonstrate contemporary cultural perceptions of gender and class.

In the one volume edition of his autobiography *The Life of Thomas Hardy, 1840-1928* (1933), Hardy recounts several notable occasions when he encountered death. One such

³⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 22.

³⁰⁸ John Ruskin, ‘Fiction, Fair and Foul’ in *The Works of John Ruskin*, ed. by E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (London: Longmans, 1908), p. 272.

³⁰⁹ See Elizabeth Bronfen, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 77-8 in which she discusses the ‘death bed scene’ in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novels. The ‘good death’ of a ‘virtuous young woman’ signified her social role and demonstrated her purity.

³¹⁰ Wilkie Collins, *The Woman in White*, *Op. Cit.*, p. 408.

³¹¹ Ibid., p. 408.

³¹² Ibid., p. 411.

instance refers to an event of June 1856 – when Hardy was a young architect’s apprentice of sixteen – that deeply affected him:

He remembered that a man was to be hanged at eight o’clock at Dorchester [...]. The sun behind his back shone straight on the white stone of the gaol [with] the gallows upon it, and the form of the murderer in white fustian [...]. At the moment of his placing the glass to his eye the white figure dropped downwards, and the faint note of the town clock struck eight. [...] He seemed alone on the heath with the hanged man; and he crept home wishing he had not been so curious.³¹³

For Hardy in this instance, the exposed and scrutinised corpse is a symbol of immorality and his early experience, at least in part, contributed to his awareness of the ‘bad death’ that he later replicated in his own sensation fiction. As a watchful Garbriel Oak-esq figure,³¹⁴ Hardy observes the ‘murderer’ through his telescope, which frames and contains the image, and exposes the dead body for his readers. The ‘white stone’ of the ‘gaol,’ mirrored by the ‘white fustian’ robe and the ‘white figure’ itself, creates a funereal atmosphere later replicated in *Far from the Madding Crowd* following Sergeant Troy’s murder.³¹⁵ Another particular significance of this passage, beyond the mere idea of Hardy witnessing a violent death at a particularly impressionable age, is that it foregrounds the gallows. Alison Bashford discusses the corpse in relation to the Victorian gaol and remarks upon the fact that ‘for a considerable time medical men, scientists and anatomists received their bodies from the gallows.’³¹⁶ It is particularly noteworthy, then, that Hardy chose to include the murderer Aeneas Manston (who is ultimately imprisoned in the County Gaol for the murder of his wife Eunice) in his first published novel.

³¹³ Thomas Hardy, *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*, Op. Cit., p. 37.

³¹⁴ Garbriel Oak’s voyeuristic persona will be discussed in the following section concerning the symbolic body and detection.

³¹⁵ The scene concerning the treatment of Troy’s body will be discussed later within this present chapter.

³¹⁶ Alison Bashford, Op. Cit., p. 109. Following the Anatomy Act of 1832 doctors could also ‘gain their bodies from those who died in government workhouses and hospitals’, and this remained the case for much of the century, p. 110.

In Chapter Twenty-One, Manston writes a lengthy confession before committing suicide by hanging, using ‘a handkerchief and some strips of his clothes,’ (p. 388) to do so. This was done to spare himself from the horror and indignity of a more public execution resembling the one witnessed by Hardy in *The Life of Thomas Hardy*. Yet despite the apparent differences in the manner of death of both Manston and the Dorchester prisoner, there are also possible parallels to be drawn because both of Hardy’s accounts refer to the cloth (‘handkerchief’ and ‘white fustian’ respectively) that shroud or entangle the body. It is also useful to note that sensationalist writing evolved from early criminal reports and publications such as the *Newgate Calendar*, first issued in 1773, in which biographies of notorious criminals were circulated in order to fulfil the curiosity of the reading public, and thus increase the demand for crime journalism.³¹⁷ Therefore, Manston’s confession also serves as a deeply autobiographical account that provides the reader with the sordid details of the violent murder of his wife. He writes: ‘scarcely knowing what I did, I furiously raised my hand and swung it round with my whole force to strike her,’ (p. 389) which would sit perfectly amongst other sensational tales of murder and corruption found in the *Newgate Calendar* or the Newgate novel of the 1830s and 1840s.³¹⁸

Bashford goes on to discuss The Anatomy Act, passed in 1832, which permitted the removal of bodies by medical practitioners from workhouses and hospitals for the purpose of dissection. In this sense, like the bodies received from the gallows, the body is simultaneously judged, classed and subject to public surveillance. Hence, the exposed corpse

³¹⁷ See Thomas Boyle, *Op. Cit.*, p. 42-3 for an account of the *Newgate Calendar*’s popularity from 1773 into the early nineteenth century, before periodicals and the Newgate novel took up the mantle of crime/sensation journalism and fiction.

³¹⁸ Novels such as Ainsworth’s *Rookwood* (1834) and *Jack Sheppard* (1839), as well as Dickens’s *Oliver Twist* (1838), are associated with the Newgate novel genre and can be viewed as providing the literary foundation for of sensation fiction.

has connotations of the physically vulnerable working-class body, whilst also often being associated with immorality. William A. Cohen discusses the concept of culturally ‘classed’ bodies, which he believes surfaced as a result of ‘mass industrialism and urbanization [that] provided new locations, such as factories, metropolises, and imperial colonies, in which conflicts over the relation between the body and its interior arose.’³¹⁹ In other words, the body becomes an embodied object according to its surroundings, which in turn influences its moral status and social position.³²⁰ When considering the arguments of both Cohen and Bashford, the status of the corpse is determined by its environment and, as will be observed in Hardy’s early fiction, the disparity of treatment of upper- and lower class-bodies, as well as male and female ones, is to some extent influenced by their environment.

Resembling Manston in *Desperate Remedies*, Sergeant Troy is the villain within *Far from the Madding Crowd*. His ‘crimes’ include: an affair, fathering an illegitimate child and abandoning his mistress on their supposed wedding day, which then causes her to fall into destitution and results in her subsequent death; as well as marrying the novel’s heroine Bathsheba Everdene, before disappearing and allowing her to believe he is dead. When Troy, on his dramatic return over a year later, is sensationally murdered by his love rival Farmer Boldwood, the treatment of his corpse and his surroundings are both gendered and classed.

The narrator states that,

Looking into the chamber of death she [Bathsheba] had vacated they saw [...] a tall straight shape lying at the further end of the bedroom, wrapped in white. Everything was quite orderly. The doctor went in, and after a few minutes returned to the landing again [...] “It is all done, indeed, as she says,” remarked Mr. Aldritch, in a subdued voice. “The body has been undressed and properly laid

³¹⁹ William A. Cohen, *Embodied: Victorian Literature and the Senses* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), p. 1.

³²⁰ See also Alison Bashford, *Op. Cit.*, who writes ‘a dirty or badly ventilated dwelling, be it a home or a hospital, threatened the onset not only of physical disease, but of declining moral status’, p. 17.

out in graveclothes. Gracious Heaven – this mere girl! She must have the nerve of a stoic!” (p. 335).

During this passage Bathsheba transforms into the image of the pure, virginal, religious ‘new’ nurse, first promoted by sanitary reformers such as John Simon and Edwin Chadwick in the 1860s as distinctly middle-class.³²¹ The white sheet she covers her husband with perpetuates the idea of her innocence, and distinctly contrasts with the corpse that lies under it which has been coldly laid out on the table and stripped of its soldier’s uniform. Although the doctor’s exclamation alludes to the ‘stoic’ sensibilities Bathsheba must possess that enable her to face the dead body of her husband, who shows signs of having experienced a ‘bad death’ (more readily associated with a male character), she has also fulfilled the typical feminine role of ‘preparing the corpse for burial’ in the ‘domestic context.’³²² The figure of Troy ‘wrapped in white’ also bears a strong resemblance to the ‘hanged man’ dressed in ‘white fustian’ described within *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy*.

Prior to this scene is the description of Troy actually being shot where he ‘uttered a long guttural sigh – there was a contraction – and extension – then his muscles relaxed, and he lay still,’ (p. 332). During this passage, the dying body is clearly visible to the reader and the apparent agony and violence of Troy’s death is exposed and detailed in the manner that Ruskin’s essay describes. This instance, and other examples that this chapter shall go on to discuss, are indicative of the visible corpse which is exposed through Hardy’s detailed description and engages with contemporary public gender discourse. Like Troy, the corpse of Manston’s murdered wife Eunice is made visible to the reader and is treated with the same

³²¹ The movement for Sanitary Reform first emerged in the 1830s and 1840s due to an increase in the spread of infectious diseases that were caused by the poor water supply and treatment of sewage. In the 1860s John Simon and Edwin Chadwick further aided the cause by speaking publicly and publishing reports on the poor sanitation found in the home and in hospitals. See Bashford, *Op. Cit.*, p. xi – xv.

³²² *Ibid.*, p. 108.

indignity as the bodies taken from the gallows or the workhouse. Eunice herself may be innocent of any crime, but she is described as a morally low person who ‘drank brandy everyday’ (p. 443) and worked as an actress on the stage. As such, she becomes a reviled specimen, presented to the reader to be scrutinised and critiqued. For instance, immediately following her murder the reader discovers that Eunice is thrown in a sack, placed in a bricked-up portion of an outhouse and her body left to decompose for over a year. Cohen argues that ‘Hardy erases distinctions between the human body and its exterior surroundings,’³²³ with particular reference to rural ‘Wessex’ and ‘the heath.’ However, it is also possible to extend Cohen’s supposition to include buildings. Eunice’s body is concealed behind a wall to avoid detection. This mirrors her position in life as a woman forced by her villainous husband to mask her identity and live as a morally compromised woman who cannot bear ‘her husband’s name openly,’ (p. 351). Then, when her body is eventually transported by Manston for burial, he clumsily carries it in a sack ‘hoisted [...] to his back’ (p. 372) with no mark of her identity. The police officer who then discovers the sack ‘seize[s] it by the bottom, and jerk[s] forth the contents’ (p. 376) with little sympathy, and in the same poor manner that bodies from the gallows were controlled by the middle and upper classes.

Similarly, in Wood’s sensation novel *East Lynne* two debt collectors treat the body of the immoral Lord Mount Severn like a commodity when they ‘cunningly [...] arrest the dead corpse’³²⁴ because he owes their employer a large sum of money. The two men not only prevent the Lord’s burial, due to its supposed material worth, they also expose his body within the text. This further sensationalises the situation for the reader because it forces his daughter Lady Isobel Vane to crudely question if they intend ‘to disfigure it? [or] to sell

³²³ William A. Cohen, Op. Cit., p. 96.

³²⁴ Mrs Henry Wood, *East Lynne*, ed. by Elisabeth Jay (1861; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 89-90.

it?’³²⁵ Such crude handling and exposure of a dead body is also replicated within Hardy’s own sensation fiction. Significantly, in *Desperate Remedies* the officer only realises it is the body of Eunice when he extracts ‘a long hair, the hair of a woman’ (p. 376) from her head, that is peeping out from the tarpaulin it has been carelessly wrapped in, and matches one extracted when she was alive. That her hair is used as a scientific means of identifying the body by the officer is also significant as it reinforces the idea that body parts such as the eyes, and hair were prominent features of sensation fiction as they were often used in detection plots or as a means of physically displaying emotional sensation.³²⁶ Furthermore, Eunice’s visible corpse is also ‘cunningly’ handled by the detective, who only acknowledges its value as criminal evidence, in the same way that Lord Mount Severn’s body is objectified and commercialised.

Hardy develops this suggestion of the embodied corpse in *Far from the Madding Crowd* when Troy’s lover Fanny Robin dies and is subsequently buried “‘behind church’” in a section of the graveyard reserved for supposed malefactors known as ‘reprobates’ quarter,’ (p. 280). In his grief, Troy plants a range of flowers that cover Fanny’s body, ‘some of the summer flowers he placed over her head and feet, the lilies and forget-me-nots over her heart,’ (p. 273). The early- to mid-nineteenth-century response to disease (both physical and moral) was believed to have originated from an increasing awareness of ‘decomposing, putrefying matter in the surrounding environment’³²⁷ that caused pollution and must therefore be eliminated. The flowers on Fanny’s grave, then, symbolically act as a barrier between the decomposing dead body and the living world by purifying the environment. Yet this is a

³²⁵ Ibid., p. 90.

³²⁶ The significance of body parts observed in isolation will be discussed further in the following section concerning ‘The Symbolic Body: Detection and Surveillance.’

³²⁷ Alison Bashford, *Op Cit.*, p. 5.

flawed endeavour as the nearby gargoyle, with its connotations of the medieval castles and churches often described in ‘Radcliffian’ Gothic novels,³²⁸ performs nature’s judgement on the grave:

The persistent torrent from the gargoyle’s jaws enacted all its vengeance into the grave. The rich tawny mould was stirred into motion, and boiled like chocolate. [...] The flowers so carefully planted by Fanny’s repentant lover began to move and writhe in their bed. [...] Soon the snowdrops and other bulbs danced in the boiling mass like ingredients in a cauldron, (p. 276).

Fanny’s grave becomes flooded and dirtied, allowing the grotesqueness of the decomposing corpse to be realised by the reader. It can be aligned with the Thames River corpses found in Dickens’s *Our Mutual Friend*, which are also poorly treated and sensationalised by the writer. As a result of nature’s cruel downpour, the distinction between the body and its surroundings is erased and Fanny, like the boiling mass of mud, becomes a reviled and embodied object. The flowers that ‘writhe’ can be read as a metaphor for Fanny’s own restless spirit, due to her ill-treatment when she was alive. Furthermore, the muddied grave, smothered in ‘rich tawny mould’ is a grotesque reminder of her ‘bad death’ and even more unfortunate burial. In death, as in life, her vulnerable working-class body is reviled, scrutinised, and condemned.

By contrast, Elfride Swancourt’s body in *A Pair of Blue Eyes* is used as an exemplar of purity and innocence. Hardy does not describe the physicality of her corpse, and instead makes only passing reference to her coffin which is ‘bright and untarnished in the slightest degree,’ (p. 379). Whilst Fanny Robin’s corpse is observed by a tormented Bathsheba who

³²⁸ This is one of numerous instances where Hardy utilises medieval Gothic imagery to convey the grotesque side of human nature and circumstance. However, it is imperative that such examples are not mistaken for a complete replication of the eighteenth-century Gothic aesthetic, of which there is little evidence to legitimise this. Hardy’s exploration of the Gothic architectural and literary revival shall be discussed more comprehensively within chapter three.

stands ‘beside the uncovered coffin of the girl whose conjectured end had so entirely engrossed her,’ (p. 258) with a critical gaze, Elfride’s body is placed in a position of higher standing within the tomb of Lord Luxellian’s family, which positions her “beyond our love, [...] beyond our reproach,” (p. 376) according to one of her former sweethearts Henry Knight. Although both Fanny and Elfride’s bodies are observed romantically by their former lovers, they are divided by class and are perceived in different social positions: in the mud and in the tomb. From a position of class, which is here linked to morality, the bodies of those who are deemed to be of higher social standing often remain un-described. For instance, Cytherea’s upstanding architect father Mr Graye falls to his death, and indeed out of the scene, during the opening of *Desperate Remedies* whilst performing work on a nearby church: ‘In stepping, his foot slipped. An instant of doubling forward and sideways, and he reeled off into the air, immediately disappearing downwards, (p. 15). Contrasted with this is the body of the scheming villain Miss Aldclyffe from the same novel, whose agonising death resulting from breaking a blood vessel and suffering an agonising internal haemorrhage, is clearly detailed for the reader, (p. 395). Also, in *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, the morally corrupt Mrs Jethway is ‘pronounced [...] dead from suffocation, induced by intense pressure on the respiratory organs’ (p. 329) when the Gothic church tower falls and crushes her body. Here, the decaying ruins of the tower become a metaphor for the degenerate morals of Mrs Jethway. For instance, Morgan writes of Mrs Jethway that she is the ‘personification of guilt and punishment’³²⁹ directed towards Elfride. As such, Mrs Jethway’s vengeful acts in life are manifest in the negative representation of her body after death.

As Ruskin suggested, writers of the ‘modern’ novel often detailed the gruesome deaths of upstanding persons and used the ‘terror of the familiar’ to sensationalise their narratives.

³²⁹ Rosemarie Morgan, Op. Cit., p. 19

However, the disjuncture between Hardy's aspiration towards the 'high art' of literature and his apparent success in the 'low art' of sensation fiction appears to have contributed to the disparity of treatment of the dead body within his early work according to class, gender and morality. Hardy was seemingly responding to broader debates concerning the corpse by exposing and concealing it under the guise of sensationalism. This not only allowed him to push the boundaries of propriety and decency, but also enabled him to provide his readers with a satirical account of the societies that he was exposed to both in London and his native Dorset. As a result, he was able to replicate the 'mischief' of *The Poor Man and the Lady* by using sensationalism as a plausible and lucrative 'method.'

The Symbolic Body: Detection and Surveillance

In the same way that the corpse became a material and embodied object within the 1860s and the 1870s, representations of the human body were also influenced by commodity culture. Lyn Pykett suggests that contemporary reviewers 'repeatedly identified sensation fiction as a form of writing the body,'³³⁰ citing as an example Braddon who was renowned for continually referencing the 'hair of her heroines.'³³¹ Hughes also identifies the underlying significance of hair, as well as eyes, in sensation fiction, which she argues served as 'dramatic or symbolic devices.'³³² Hughes' extensive research on the sensation novel draws some parallels between Braddon's *Aurora Floyd* and Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, claiming that Hardy's fiction 'offers a fascinating illustration of the ways in which the imagination of a major novelist can work upon and transform the materials of a popular

³³⁰ Lyn Pykett, Op. Cit., p. 35.

³³¹ Ibid., p. 35.

³³² Winifred Hughes, Op. Cit., p. 26.

tradition.’³³³ The key term in this statement is ‘transform,’ which is founded on the general consensus within Hardy criticism that he was not a writer of Gothic fiction *per se*, but adopted some of the phraseology of the sensation novelists when describing the physicality of his characters.³³⁴ Yet this analysis is still founded on the assumption that during the mid-Victorian period descriptions of the eyes and hair were indicative of sentimentality and romanticism. Examples of this can be found in the work of several Victorian poets, including Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Charles Algernon Swinburne, and Alfred Lord Tennyson; who Michie suggests used hair as a fetishized object.³³⁵ This can be clearly read in Swinburne’s poem ‘A Woman’s Hair’ (1866) when the speaker of the poem describes the female subject’s hair by stating: ‘feel how it seems to cling/ about one’s finger for a ring.’³³⁶ Here, as in similar poems by Rossetti and Tennyson, the hair is presumed to be golden and is attached to the subject’s head, with connotations of a sentimental and physical attachment between the two lovers. However, sensation novels removed the concept of hair as a love token, or eyes as objects of beauty, and inverted the beautiful into a grotesque image. Hardy and his sensationalist contemporaries thus created a symbolic body, transforming eyes into commoditised objects that could be utilised for material gain, and making hair a key component that could be scrutinised and examined within detection narratives.

Examples of the symbolic body can also be observed in Collins’ *The Woman in White* and *The Moonstone*, which both utilise eyes as a means of surveillance and detection. The same is also true of Dickens’ *Our Mutual Friend* and Wood’s *East Lynne*, in which amoral

³³³ Ibid., p. 187.

³³⁴ Ibid., p. 187. For example, Hughes posits that Hardy’s description of his heroine’s eyes as “neither black nor blue nor grey nor violet; rather all these shades together” in *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, suggests that his work had similarities with Braddon’s style.

³³⁵ See Helena Michie, *The Flesh Made Word* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 101-2.

³³⁶ Charles Algernon Swinburne, ‘A Woman’s Hair’ (1866) University of Leeds: Special Collections, BC MS 19c Swinburne/94, p. 1, Lines 6-7.

characters lurk in the shadows and uncover secrets. Furthermore, the sensational plot of Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* is heavily reliant on hair as a means of detection and concealment, which shall be analysed later in this section. However, the fragmented body as a sensationalist device has not yet been examined within Hardy's early fiction. As already stated, Marcus claimed that 'the cult of sensibility was at its origins connected with sexuality, with sexual claims and impulses,' which can further be applied to sentimental objects that were perceived as desirable and sexualised. Within sensation fiction, the sexualised body was represented by clothing that became an extension of the body (as previously demonstrated earlier in the present chapter). By contrast, the once fetishized objects of the eyes and hair were no longer as desirable once they were seemingly detached from the body and perceived analytically. Therefore, in the same way that the working-class corpse became a commodity, the symbolic body served as a material object synonymous with the scientific process of detection and the voyeuristic act of surveillance.

Bronfen argues that death within literature created a 'fragmentation and idolisation' of the body because it was severed from any emotional or material context. The same can be argued of the symbolic body within sensation fiction, which loses any emotional attachment to the animated body when it is perceived as a separate object. It is no coincidence, then, that as well as engaging with sensationalism during this period, Hardy was also studying scientific works such as Herbert Spencer's *First Principles* and *Principles of Biology*.³³⁷ For example, an entry in Hardy's literary notebook, copied from J. H. Bridges' essay 'Evolution and Positivism' (1877), underlines the significance of the 'human countenance' for the advancement of science. The extract reads: "No curve could be found, it was thought [...], so

³³⁷ See *The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy: Volume 1*, ed. by Lennart A. Björk (London: Macmillan, 1985), p. 335. Björk provides details of a letter written by Hardy in which he states: 'My pages show harmony of view with Darwin, Huxley, Spencer, Comte, Hume, Mill, and others'.

subtle as to evade analysis. The contour of every human count^{ce}, so it was said, could be expressed by an equation.”³³⁸ Within the context of Hardy’s literary work, the human countenance becomes a quantifiable object that can be analysed and interpreted as a material specimen. Chapter Two will further engage with science and the Gothic in relation to Hardy’s work; however, it is important to establish the link between the human countenance and the scientific thought behind detection and surveillance within sensation fiction. In the same way that Bridges proposed that facial expressions could be analysed using equations, Hardy and his contemporaries established eyes and hair as symbols that could be both examined and, in the case of eyes, became a valuable means of examination.

On May 29, 1872 Hardy recorded a small portion of a conversation that he overheard in Dorset. “Well, mind what th’rt [sic] about. She can use the corners of her eyes as well as we can use the middle.”³³⁹ This excerpt, composed when Hardy was in the midst of writing *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, alludes to the deceptive stare of an unknown female. Such devious or vengeful observations are indicative of the lurking voyeur character synonymous with Victorian sensation fiction. In *The Hand of Ethelberta*, the heroine is regularly placed under the watchful and scrutinising gaze of the servants (including the dishonest maid Menlove) who are ‘voyeurs, grimly sporting in the shadows.’³⁴⁰ The narrator relates that the ‘pleasures’ of being a servant stem from the ‘thrills and titillations’ of ‘uncovering sensational surprises’ (p. 226) whilst secretly observing their masters and mistresses. Here, the eyes become a valuable instrument used for relaying information within the narrative, as well as for revealing secrets to the reader. In *East Lynne*, the heroine’s maid Wilson also conceals

³³⁸ J. H. Bridges, ‘Evolution and Positivism’, *The Fortnightly Review*, xxii (1 July 1877), in *The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy: Volume One* (London: Macmillan, 1985), p. 133.

³³⁹ Richard H. Taylor, *The Personal Notebooks of Thomas Hardy* (London: Macmillan, 1978), p. 10.

³⁴⁰ Richard H. Taylor, *The Neglected Hardy: Thomas Hardy’s Lesser Novels* (London: Macmillan, 1982), p. 72.

herself in the shadows to observe Mr Carlyle and Miss Hare, who are conducting a private meeting. Wilson falsely concludes that they are in the midst of a love affair, just as Menlove and her fellow servants enjoy ‘peeping up upon human beings from their shady haunts’ in order to form their own conclusions. Equally, in *A Pair of Blue Eyes* Mrs Jethway haunts Elfride from the shadows and threatens to reveal to Knight the sensational details of her failed elopement with his love rival Stephen Smith. Her critical gaze is represented by the ‘two red eyes of the Needles’ projected across the boat that Elfride and Knight are travelling on, which rise ‘like shadowy phantom figures’ (p. 288-9) into the evening sky. Mrs Jethway, like the servants in Hardy’s later novel, is an immoral being whose ‘hostile eyes’³⁴¹ become a valuable commodity that she can exploit for her personal gain. The symbolism of the ‘two red eyes’ not only intimidates Elfride within the narrative, it also seemingly places her under the microscope of the reading public.

In an early passage from *Far from the Madding Crowd*, Gabriel Oak observes Bathsheba from a concealed position, likened by the narrator to when ‘Satan first saw Paradise,’ by ‘putting his eye close to a crack’ (p. 13) through which he can place her under his surveillance. Cohen discusses the symbolism of the keyhole within the work of Dickens, which he believes was ‘at once a figure *for* the eye’ and ‘*like* the eye’ because it created a channel ‘through which information, emotions and matter’ could pass.³⁴² The surveying eye, then, is at once receptive to the external object of its gaze, and an instrument that is able to process and analyse this object. Oak is labelled by Morgan as ‘Oak-the-spy/censor’ because she perceives him as the ‘moral watchdog’ of the novel, who acts as a moral leveller to

³⁴¹ This phrase is taken from an Unsigned Review of the novel found in the *Saturday Review*, xxxvi, 158-9 (2 August 1873), in *Thomas Hardy: The Critical Heritage*, Op. Cit., p. 17.

³⁴² William A. Cohen, Op. Cit., p. xiii.

counteract Bathsheba's overt sexuality.³⁴³ Oak's observation, however, may also be interpreted as voyeuristic and involves a level of scrutiny beyond his supposed moral duty. He routinely discovers, dissects, and digests Bathsheba's image for his own pleasure and (most importantly) he gains information/knowledge that he can later use to his advantage.³⁴⁴ Morgan proceeds to describe how 'from behind hedges, through the crevices of sheets and field-hut' Oak 'pruriently stares, probes and exposes.'³⁴⁵ Instead of drawing Bathsheba into the open, Oak actually contains her image in his restricted eye as lens (a trope discussed further within Chapter Two). As such, Bathsheba is not 'censored' for the reader because Oak merely perceives rather than prevents indecorous behaviour. Whilst Oak 'stares' and 'exposes' Bathsheba for the reader, he also scrutinises her in isolation as a disjointed image by focusing on the minutiae of her body.

Gilbert also suggests that through the medium of sensation fiction the writer 'invites his readers to examine the British workingman rather as an entomologist might invite a class of naturalists to inspect a rarely seen and particularly voracious locust.'³⁴⁶ What becomes apparent is that in the Victorian novel working-class bodies were being examined and scrutinised by the middle-class reading public, and this division was then manifested within the sensation novel. The fact that Oak observes Bathsheba from a concealed position, in the same manner that a servant would place their masters under surveillance, indicates his status as a lower being. Also, by reversing the channel of perception that the hole represents, the reader is interpreting Oak's voyeuristic eye via the metaphorical 'microscope' that Hardy has

³⁴³ Rosemarie Morgan, *Op. Cit.*, p. 25.

³⁴⁴ For example, Morgan notes that whilst 'crouching in his hut in another attempt at spying, Oak clutches to himself the article he has found and will restore to its owner,' *Op. Cit.*, p. 31, which is none other than Bathsheba's hat. Oak's act of tracing movements and observing behaviour enables him to locate the most opportune time to encounter and potentially endear himself to Bathsheba.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

³⁴⁶ Pamela K. Gilbert, *Op. Cit.*, p. 51.

created. Whilst surveying Bathsheba, Oak identifies the individual parts of her body such as her ‘eyelids’ and her ‘lips,’ but does not piece these together to form a complete and animated figure for the reader. Hardy’s process of ‘dissecting’ the body resembles Michie’s analysis of Dickens’ portrayal of the body as ‘component parts’³⁴⁷ within *Our Mutual Friend*, which she claims led to the fetishization of the female form. During the period between the publication of *Far from the Madding Crowd* and *The Hand of Ethelberta*, Hardy had become increasingly aware that publications which engage with the ‘scientific game’³⁴⁸ were becoming increasingly popular during this period. Therefore, by providing his readers with detailed ‘pictures of modern customs and observances,’³⁴⁹ he was able to combine Realism with sensationalism, which resulted in a more analytical approach in his writing.³⁵⁰

The concept of the ‘examined’ body is further developed in *The Hand of Ethelberta* when the heroine describes how she is able to draw the anatomy of small creatures to decorate her chimneypiece. She states: ‘the flowers, mice, and spiders are done very simply, you know: you only press a real flower, mouse or spider out flat under a piece of glass, and then copy it,’ (p. 125). Beyond the grotesque process outlined by Ethelberta, there is a suggestion that biological study was displacing the beauty of nature and the human form. In a similar passage from *The Moonstone*, the house steward Gabriel Betteredge relates how the ladies and gentlemen of Frizinghall:

³⁴⁷ Helena Michie, Op. Cit., p. 100.

³⁴⁸ Thomas Hardy, *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*, Op. Cit., p. 107.

³⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 107.

³⁵⁰ See *The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy: Volume One*, Op. Cit., p. 363. Hardy copied several passages from an article by John Addington Symonds entitled ‘Matthew Arnold’s Selections from Wordsworth’ found in *The Fortnightly Review*, xxvi (1 November 1879). In the selected passages there is a particular emphasis on the distinction between science and religion. The former seemingly explains the construction of universe, and the latter details the human perception of it, p. 125-6. In his annotations, Björk interprets Hardy’s notes as suggesting the writer’s awareness that poetry was not a sufficient means of describing the materiality of the universe. This can also be extended to include the literary representation of the human body as a material object which was observed scientifically and not poetically.

Catch newts, and beetles, and spiders, and frogs, and come home and stick pins through the miserable wretches, or cut them up, [...] into little pieces. You see my young masters, or my young mistresses, poring over one of the spider's insides with a magnifying-glass [...] and when you wonder what this cruel nastiness means, you are told that it means a taste [...] for natural history.³⁵¹

In the same way that sensation fiction writers inverted the 'good death,' they also took examples of animated beauty, such as nature and the 'familiar feminine tropes'³⁵² of blue eyes and flowing curls of hair, and mutated them into unconscious objects that could be examined and dissected by the reader. Gilbert's observation also links to Cobbe's suggestion that immoral or 'low' characters are the literary equivalent of 'wasps, toads, and maggots.' By viewing the subjects of fiction scientifically and placing them under surveillance, the public could in a sense 'capture, catalogue, [and] diagnose'³⁵³ a character in the same way that the scientist would examine a particular specimen.

Cohen argues that in Hardy's fiction 'the face is a fungible medium in which the subject's ethereal thoughts or feelings are given the material shape of an object.'³⁵⁴ However, when the components of the face are analysed as separate entities, they actually lose their affinity with sentimentality, and instead become scientific objects of analysis. As

³⁵¹ Wilkie Collins, *The Moonstone* (1868; London: Penguin, 1994), p. 59.

³⁵² See Helena Michie, Op. Cit., p. 59. Here Michie cites Dante Gabriel Rossetti's poem *Jenny*, in which the speaker of the poem uses 'conventional' Victorian 'tropes' in order to compare the heroine's hair to "countless gold" and her eyes to "blue skies". See also Dinah Birch, 'Beauty and the Victorian Body', in *Essays in Criticism* (1994), pp. 102-116, which closely analyses Charles Dickens' *Old Curiosity Shop* (1841), Robert Browning's *The Ring and the Book* (1869), and Alfred Lord Tennyson's *Maud* (1855) in relation to Victorian perceptions of beauty, death and sex. Birch suggests that the juxtaposition of the beautiful and the grotesque originated from fairytales such as Cinderella, in which the beautiful heroine is placed alongside the ugly sisters who served as a binary opposite. The beautiful heroine was the 'embodied ideal of femininity', p. 102, and thus became the conventional model for subsequent heroines.

³⁵³ Patrick Brantlinger, Op. Cit., p. 76.

³⁵⁴ William A. Cohen, Op. Cit., p. 91. This comment is made specifically in relation to *The Return of the Native*, in which Cohen believes Hardy was beginning to develop his scientific approach to novel writing. However, when viewing Hardy's early work in relation to sensationalism and detection, the emotional connection to the 'ethereal' qualities of the individual is severed when the physical features of the face are seemingly detached from the body.

commodities, the hair and eyes establish a material worth that is detached from their value as aesthetic objects or harbingers of 'ethereal' thoughts. Within sensation fiction, the detachment of the hair from the body is often a brutal act that signifies male ownership of the female form. For instance, in *Far from the Madding Crowd* Troy 'sever[s]' a 'winding lock' of Bathsheba's hair from her 'manifold tresses' using his sword and 'twist[s] it round his finger' (p. 163) before placing it in the breast pocket of his coat. This violent act is indicative of the sentimental love-token (in this case the hair) being replaced with the image of a severed object or 'component part.' As a result, any emotional attachment diminishes and the ownership of the hair, along with Bathsheba herself, transfers to her masculine superior. Bronfen suggests that Hardy creates a 'depersonalising sight' within his novels that 'induces a blindness towards the body's physical materiality,' in reference to the female body as a 'text' through which the viewer can write their own version of the self.³⁵⁵ In other words, the body becomes a depersonalised object that is interpreted by the voyeuristic character or reader as a specimen of a particular class and/or gender, rather than as a unique subject. In *The Hand of Ethelberta*, Lady Petherwin advises the heroine not to 'spoil' her eyes by crying as she 'may have to sell them,' (p. 89). Here, the eyes are being presented as a separate object that can be 'sold' to the opposite sex to secure a lucrative marriage or higher social standing. Subsequently, there are implications of female ownership within marriage, as well as the working-class body being defined according to its material value. Similarly, in *The Moonstone* the aptly named 'Gooseberry' is employed as a detective owing to the 'prominence' of his eyes that 'projected so far' and 'rolled about so loosely.'³⁵⁶ His title not

³⁵⁵ Elisabeth Bronfen, *Op. Cit.*, p. 227. Bronfen analyses *Far from the Madding Crowd* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* in which she argues the emotions of the living are displaced onto the corpse. As such, the material worth of the individual's physical body is substituted with the viewer's external interpretation.

³⁵⁶ Wilkie Collins, *The Moonstone*, *Op. Cit.*, p. 427.

only depersonalises him, but also establishes his status as a lower being whose physical features can be bought as a commodity and exploited.

The sensation novel paid ‘obsessive attention to hair,’³⁵⁷ particularly Braddon’s work in which Michie claims the hair was ‘always an icon of the true personality of the heroine.’³⁵⁸ Again, this implies that there is an attachment between hair and the female psyche; however, Michie’s claim does not account for the fact that hair is often severed from its owner within the Victorian sensation novel. In *Lady Audley’s Secret*, hair is a major component in the construction of the detection narrative.³⁵⁹ By viewing the ‘pre-Raphaelite’ painting of the heroine with the ‘glimmer of gold’ hair and ‘deep blue eyes,’³⁶⁰ George Talboys uncovers the fact that his ‘dead’ wife is actually a bigamist living as the Lady of Audley Court. The poetic image of the heroine’s hair and eyes within the painting are effectively repurposed as a medium of detection and surveyed both within the text and by the reader. This pre-Raphaelite representation is later substituted with the image of the heroine ‘twining her fingers in the loose amber curls’ and making as if ‘she would have torn them from her head.’³⁶¹ Once her crime has been revealed, the material worth of her hair is diminished as the appeal of its beauty to her husband is tarnished. The motif of ‘twining’ her hair round her fingers is replicated in *Far from the Madding Crowd* and mirrors the speaker in Swinburne’s poem. Yet the tenderness of the sentimental act portrayed within the poem is sensationalized by both Braddon and Hardy, who then transform it into a grotesque performance. The inversion of the sentimental is also replicated in *Desperate Remedies* when an ‘intangible filament’ is pulled

³⁵⁷ Helena Michie, Op. Cit., p. 101.

³⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 101.

³⁵⁹ In *Representations of Hair in Victorian Literature and Culture* (Surry: Ashgate, 2009), Galia Ofek suggests that a woman’s hair is not only an ‘integral part of Victorian gender narratives,’ but also a ‘narrative thread itself,’ p. 30. Ofek proceeds to argue that hair can be read as ‘obscuring and hiding the true female experience through masquerade’ whilst also indirectly ‘communicating and revealing’ experience to ‘readers,’ p. 30.

³⁶⁰ M. E. Braddon, *Lady Audley’s Secret*, Op. Cit., p. 70

³⁶¹ Ibid., p. 297.

from Eunice Manston's corpse and is then closely examined by the detective. Like Braddon, who uses hair that 'conceal and reveals'³⁶² elements of her plots, Hardy effectively places hair under a microscope to be scrutinised as a scientific object.

Conclusion

Although critics have largely accepted that *Desperate Remedies* is an example of sensation fiction, wider research on Hardy and sensationalism has not been sufficiently developed. Criticism on the Victorian sensation novel also regularly overlook Hardy's other sensation novels: *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *Far from the Madding Crowd* and *The Hand of Ethelberta*. Nemesvari's work in particular does broadly outline Hardy's sensationalism, yet this is in relation to his entire literary canon. This chapter provides strong evidence to suggest that Hardy's sensation fiction was specific to the early- to mid-1870s when the genre was still at the height of its popularity. By situating Hardy's early novels within a specific context and historical period, it has been possible to identify the origin of his Gothicism that he continually developed throughout his literary career. Furthermore, broader cultural debates concerning class, gender, morality, and representations of the body have been identified and analysed within Hardy's work from the perspective of sensationalism. This has built on existing criticism, which has previously focused specifically on more recognised sensation writers such as Collins, Braddon, Wood, Reade, and Dickens. As such, it has been possible to draw parallels between Hardy and other writers and critics of sensation fiction by analysing their collective Victorian Gothic style. This challenges the assumption that Hardy's first published novel was an anomaly, written according to Meredith's advice to write a novel with a 'more complicated plot.' Instead, Hardy was both conscious that his work engaged with sensationalism *and* responsive to the popularity of the genre. Contemporary reviews in

³⁶² Helena Michie, *Op. Cit.*, p. 100.

the *Athenæum*, *The Saturday Review* and *The Westminster Review*, for example, all suggest that Hardy was continuing to write sensation fiction by comparing his subsequent work with that of Braddon and Reade. Similarly, *The Hand of Ethelberta* was largely accepted as ‘having nothing whatever in common with anything he had written before.’ However, the detection narrative and the narrator’s description of a symbolic body both suggest that it actually has a great deal in common with Hardy’s earlier novels. Hardy’s novel writing career was founded on the growing demand for ‘cheap’ literature and was subsequently influenced by contemporary cultural debates. In particular, the body and sensationalism were key components in Hardy’s early Gothic style. The physicality captured within the pages of the sensation novel often engaged with broader cultural and moral debates concerning the disparity of treatment of the body according to class and gender. Hardy’s early fiction has not previously been analysed in these terms, with the main focus being on feminist criticism. Therefore, this discussion further opens-up the debate concerning Hardy’s sensationalism. Comparisons with sensation fiction published during this period also become a way of tracing Hardy’s Gothicism from its origin.

Chapter Two

Thomas Hardy's Scientific Gothic in a Post-Darwinian Universe

Introduction

During the infamous cliff-hanger scene within chapter twenty two of *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, Henry Knight meticulously describes 'an embedded' fossil that is 'regarding him' (p. 213) as his life, quite literally, hangs in the balance. The narrator notes:

It was one of the early crustaceans called Trilobites. Separated by millions of years in their lives, Knight and his underling seemed to have met in their place of death. It was the single instance within reach of his vision of anything that had ever been alive and had had a body to save, as he himself had now, (p. 213).

Within this extract, the supposed insignificance of humankind is foregrounded when viewed in opposition to the natural world which seemingly exists with or without a human presence. The reference to 'underling' serves to establish a dichotomy between humankind and nature by creating a hierarchy of living organisms, that places humankind in a privileged position. Yet there is also a disjuncture between human history and natural history. Human history, here represented by Knight, is placed in a precarious position when balanced against the steadfast presence of nature's legacy, as demonstrated by the immovable fossil. It becomes clear at this moment within Hardy's novel that humankind's existence is not necessarily conducive to the survival of the natural world. This idea would later be explored during the post-Darwinian period of the 1880s, that was built on the earlier principles of Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer. These two writers primarily exposed the processes of the natural world by identifying how biological elements both evolved and existed regardless of human intervention. As such, it was science that uncovered the natural history of the world. This meant that comprehending and recording history, both natural and human, was a mental

process and not an outwardly visual one. Similarly, the only way for humankind to achieve a sense of ownership of the natural world and to rationalise human existence during the mid to late Victorian period was to pay attention to what scientific doctrines uncovered. Yet, reality is malleable and, in relation to the post-Darwinian sublime, the pursuit of scientific truth generated fear by exposing as many incalculable mysteries as knowledge it revealed. It was biological science that held the key to unlock the mysteries of the past, as well as the universe itself, but science also shattered the illusion that humankind occupied a privileged place within the natural world.³⁶³

Marjorie Garson addresses what she terms the ‘post-Darwinian mystery’³⁶⁴ within Hardy’s later novels, which she attributes to his description of architectural structures that appear to nullify the human gaze. She writes that,

Without a gaze to meet, the human gaze is turned back upon its own gazing. The unforthcoming deadness of stone evokes in Hardy an intense awareness not only of the vulnerability of the human body but also the mystery of human consciousness.³⁶⁵

Firstly, the reference to ‘post-Darwinian mystery’ legitimises the argument that Hardy’s later novels should be critically observed through a post-Darwinian lens. The ‘vulnerability of the human body’ is foregrounded by the deadness of stone, which serves as a grotesque reminder that physical objects - including the human body and stone structures alike – decay. What Garson terms the ‘geological sublime’³⁶⁶ is in fact a dichotomy of geological history and

³⁶³ For an analysis of *A Pair of Blue Eyes* within the context of the sublime see Roger Ebbatson, ‘*A Pair of Blue Eyes: The Cliff-Scene and the Literary Sublime*’, *The Hardy Society Journal*, 14.1, 57-62 (Spring 2018). Significantly, Ebbatson suggests that ‘Knight’s dilemma acts as a precursor to an intuitive sense elaborated in Hardy’s ensuing writing,’ (p. 61).

³⁶⁴ Marjorie Garson, ‘Written in stone: Hardy’s Grotesque Sublime’, in *Thomas Hardy Reappraised: Essays in Honour of Michael Millgate*, ed. by Keith Wilson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), p. 108.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

humankind's imagined history, that culminates in an existential fear connected to survival. Like the fossil in *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, the metaphor of dead eyes within stone structures is remarkable due to the absence of life, and this serves as a reminder of human mortality as well as the brevity of human history on Earth. The 'mystery of human consciousness' revealed in both Garson's and Hardy's scenarios is in fact a human self-consciousness, felt most keenly when balanced against remnants of geological history that exist despite human intervention. In his essay that concerns Hardy, evolution and 'deep time,' Kevin Padian discusses natural history by identifying how it was perceived by Hardy and his contemporaries. He posits that Hardy's, like Darwin's, 'attachment to Nature and the earth [...] did not depend on regarding human existence teleologically.'³⁶⁷ This idea is largely due to the realisation that the earth and wider universe by far predate or extend beyond the capacity of human memory and perception respectively. Similarly, humans were, and indeed still are, only able to have autonomy over their own history, which is also specifically connected to the period in which they exist, meaning that knowledge of the distant past or predictions for the future were largely determined via scientific discoveries. Padian further characterises Hardy as having the approach of 'an uncaring mechanistic universe'³⁶⁸ in his writing because Nature only passively interacts with humankind. To extend his analysis further, Padian also utilised the term 'deep time,' which is founded on the principle that 'everything in the universe, animate and inanimate alike, bears the mark of its history as it changed through time,' leaving behind an "evolutionary legacy."³⁶⁹ The fossil in *A Pair of Blue Eyes* exemplifies this observation because it represents a pre-existing life-form that by

³⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 220.

³⁶⁸ Kevin Padian, 'Evolution and Deep Time in Selected Works of Hardy', in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Thomas Hardy*, ed. by Rosemarie Morgan (Surry: Ashgate, 2010), p. 224. Padian's wording here is interesting, in that it alludes to the idea that Hardy was an omnipresent narrator who seemingly viewed the natural world and humankind as two separate spheres of existence within his work.

³⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 219.

far precedes any memory of Knight. For this reason, the fossil is a disturbing reminder that Nature is an independent force which does not require human intervention.

This chapter will discuss the integration of Darwinian theory into Hardy's *Two on a Tower* (1881) and *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886) from the perspective of perception and the ability or, indeed, inability to see beyond the immediate. The past and future, like the universe, is unattainable because it cannot be teleologically processed. Padian analyses Hardy's internalised Darwinian evolutionary biology as a way of recording and describing his 'characters' lives and [their] spatial and temporal background.³⁷⁰ Yet, this argument does not acknowledge the immediacy of Hardy's literary exploration of anthropologic observation within his work, which is manifest in his characters' physical and metaphysical self-awareness. Hardy's literary observations are arguably centred around aesthetic presentations and the ways in which humankind's appearance is an observational, scientific construct, somewhat separate from emotional attachment. Significantly, in her study of Darwinian theory and the nineteenth-century novel, Beer notes that the 'two emotional and creative problems which evolutionary theory forced on Hardy were to find a scale for the human, and a place for the human within the natural order.'³⁷¹ The concepts of 'place' and 'scale' that Beer is here referring to serve as a useful starting point when outlining the focus of this chapter.

³⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 219.

³⁷¹ Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (1983; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 235. Beer places particular emphasis on *The Return of the Native* (1878) for much of her analysis, due to the heavy association that the novel has with the 'natural' space of Egdon Heath. She writes of the novel's title that there is a 'near impossibility of return' because 'in an evolutionary order it is not possible to return to an earlier state,' p. 237. This statement begins to address Hardy's idea of locating a 'place for the human' that will be discussed in more depth within Chapter Two.

Firstly, in *Two on a Tower* it is possible to trace Hardy's engagement with the post-Darwinian sublime through his depiction of shifting scale. The unforgiving stellar universe, which serves as the novel's backdrop, is juxtaposed against the two infinitesimal lives of Viviette Constantine and Swithin St Cleeve who are the lovers at the centre of Hardy's narrative. The resultant effect is that the universe itself becomes at once an awe-inspiring phenomenon *and* a terrifying emotional threat to the miniscule lives that are affected by its presence. Furthermore, as Garret Peck emphasises in his study of Hardy and Victorian astronomy, it is important to acknowledge that 'increasingly powerful telescopes' were 'combined with new research technologies including photography and spectrography'³⁷² and that this had a profound influence on sublime experience and perceived fear in the late-nineteenth-century scientific Gothic novel.³⁷³ To return again to Beer's statement, the second aspect of the post-Darwinian Gothic that is traceable in Hardy's novels of the 1880s is his exploration of humankind's 'place' within the universe. In *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Hardy makes a marked shift towards more scientific language, largely influenced by his own research as well as his acquaintance with the writer and anthropologist Edward Clodd. Hardy's literary evolution developed in parallel with his desire to establish a space for the human in literature within the post-Darwinian age. By the 1880s, Darwin's work had altered the perception of humankind's importance within the natural order of the universe. Simply put, humankind was no longer at the centre of the universe and this realisation was a fear-inducing hypothesis that (as this chapter will demonstrate) the scientific Gothic began to explore.

³⁷² Garret Peck, *Op. Cit.*, p. 28.

³⁷³ It is useful to note that whilst sensory apparatus provoked and inspired sensation fiction in the 1860s and 1970s, developments in the microscope and telescope also had a similar effect on Scientific texts and the post-Darwinian sublime during the 1880s. This observation will be discussed more comprehensively within Chapter Two.

The Eye as Lens: Hardy's Post-Darwinian Sublime

During the mid-nineteenth century writers such as John Ruskin were beginning to revisit the sublime, deeming it 'anything which elevates the mind,' produced by 'the contemplation of greatness of any kind' and the subsequent 'effect of greatness upon the feelings.'³⁷⁴ Ruskin is here applying the principles of the sublime to 'physical perception'³⁷⁵ and the judgement of art and nature using the eye as a means of determining the properties of a given object, both aesthetically and scientifically. The term 'physical perception,' as defined by Ruskin, describes the impact of a person's 'moral nature' on their 'perception of truth,'³⁷⁶ which is in keeping with Morris's definition of eighteenth-century Gothic sublimity as 'affective' and 'pictorial.' Perceiving and responding to examples of 'greatness,' particularly in representations of the natural world, was still a Burkean concept.³⁷⁷ However, in *Modern Painters, Vol. 1* (1843) Ruskin also emphasizes the importance of observation, maintaining that it should be an 'accurate science' and not in line with the work of the 'ancients,' which he argues resembles 'the productions of mere children' because of 'feebly developed intelligence & ill-regulated observation.'³⁷⁸ Ruskin's statement, then, implies that representations of nature should be informed by aesthetic judgement, yet must also conform to the code of scientific truth. In the two decades following the publication of Ruskin's critical work, there were notable scientific developments that both altered what constituted 'greatness' within nature and extended humankind's ability to observe and comprehend. In

³⁷⁴ John Ruskin, *Modern Painters Vol. 1*, ed. by Lionel Cust (1843; London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1923), p. 37.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

³⁷⁷ Burke argues that the 'large and gigantic' are 'very compatible with the sublime,' and goes on to suggest that 'the ideas we naturally annex to that size are those of tyranny, cruelty, injustice, and everything horrid and abominable.' See Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, Op. Cit., pp. 157-8.

³⁷⁸ This quotation from Ruskin's *Modern Painters, Vol. 1* is actually taken from an entry in Hardy's notebook, which was copied from the original text in the early 1880s. See Hardy, *The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy*, Op. Cit., p. 173.

particular, the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) raised questions concerning 'the very large and the very small, the near and the far' as Beer suggests, and impacted how nature and the universe were perceived and interpreted in late-nineteenth-century literature.³⁷⁹ This section will examine Hardy's *Two on a Tower* (1882) by exploring the science of astronomy that is foregrounded in the novel, and establishing the ways in which optical gadgetry, such as the telescope, impacted Hardy's representation of nature and the universe. Specifically, this section aims to demonstrate that in Hardy's novel the perceiving eye as, or through, a lens is used as a mode of identifying sublimity that establishes a new form of terror, derived from the supposed necessity of determining 'truth' in an image. For instance, the lens of the telescope becomes a means of observation that simultaneously extends the possibility of observing nature and increases the viewer's own awareness of their apparent inferiority and/or mortality against the sublime backdrop of the universe.

David B. Morris identifies the somewhat differing principles of the eighteenth-century sublime, that he argues was 'fundamentally affective and pictorial,' and the Romantic sublime that he deems 'fundamentally hermeneutic and visionary.'³⁸⁰ He suggests that although the philosophy of the sublime, famously detailed in Edmund Burke's 1757 book *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*,³⁸¹ has previously been applied to analyses of Romantic texts, the Gothic presented a 'significant revision of the

³⁷⁹ Attention should also be paid here to Herbert Spencer's work in the field of biology that Hardy would likely have been familiar with at this time. See Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Biology, Vol. 1* (Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1864). In his book, Spencer argues that the physical form comprises four elements that make up its organic matter, and stresses the idea of 'molecular mobility,' p. 3. This scientific work perpetuates the Darwinian concept of identifying largeness and smallness in nature, as well as utilising scientific developments to extend the possibilities of observation.

³⁸⁰ David B. Morris, 'Gothic Sublimity' pp. 299-319, *New Literary History*, 16.2 (Winter 1985), p. 299.

³⁸¹ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. by James T. Boulton (1759; London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987).

eighteenth-century sublime.³⁸² What Morris's essay established was an intrinsic link between the Gothic novel, the philosophy that underpins the sublime, and the literary construction of terror that he surmises is the "ruling principle of the sublime."³⁸³ It also emphasised the need to revise the critical approach to analysing Gothic texts in relation to the sublime, according to the period in which they were published. This is particularly important when analysing literary texts published after Burke's *Enquiry* that experiment with the idea of the sublime, but in which terror is informed by later theory and criticism. For example, at the end of chapter twelve of *Two on a Tower* Viviette Constantine gazes through her lover Swithin's 'great telescope' to view the comet that is described as 'trailing its luminous streamer, and proceeding on its way in the face of a wondering world.'³⁸⁴ Upon locating the comet in the sky, Viviette is described as 'looking at the nucleus of the fiery plume, that now filled so large a space of sky as to completely dominate it,' (p. 77).³⁸⁵ The nucleus indicates a clarity of perception, aided by the telescope, that would have been impossible during the eighteenth century. Likewise, the dominance of the comet over such a great portion of the visible sky suggests a literal sublime image paired with the metaphysical experience of being overwhelmed by the intensity of uncontrollable forces, here represented by the comet which 'should choose to vanish as suddenly as it had come,' (p. 74).³⁸⁶

³⁸² David B. Morris, *Op. Cit.*, p. 300.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 300. Here Morris is quoting directly from Burke's *Enquiry*, in which he also suggests that terror is a source of the sublime because it is derived from the 'strongest emotion,' p. 39.

³⁸⁴ Thomas Hardy, *Two on a Tower*, ed. by Sally Shuttleworth (1882; London: Penguin, 1999), p. 74. All further references are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the text.

³⁸⁵ It is no surprise that Hardy utilised scientific terminology to describe the 'nucleus' or heart of the comet because he would have encountered similar vocabulary within the press coverage of the 1874 transit of Venus expedition. See Garret Peck, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 31-3.

³⁸⁶ It is also worth noting that the reference to 'fiery plume' appears to be an attempt to rationalise the image by comparing it to the more familiar, less threatening one of a bird. By contrast, the phrase may also be read as a description of the mythical phoenix, that could be reborn from the ashes of a fire. In the latter interpretation, the mysterious image represented by the 'fiery plume' becomes a metaphor for the unknown depths of space that are both awe-inspiring and intimidating.

In a more recent study of the sublime, Ann C. Colley examines public perceptions of the sublime ‘during the second half of the nineteenth century,’ in which she argues that the public desire for sublime experiences was ‘still very much a factor to be reckoned with.’³⁸⁷ However, Colley’s suggestion that literary and public interpretations of the sublime effect had begun to ‘slip into a careless colloquial mode,’³⁸⁸ seems too reductive. So too does the statement that ‘the concept of the sublime seemed to be in the ascendancy’ and ‘was losing its power’ by gradually ‘sliding toward the commonplace, even toward the ludicrous.’³⁸⁹ Colley’s comments specifically address late-Victorian perceptions of mountains and mountaineering, and the wealth of evidence to support her argument does lend itself to this interpretation.³⁹⁰ Yet, consideration is not given to the ways in which the Romantic sublime had evolved from its foundations in eighteenth-century philosophy and/or interpretations of nature, into a mid- to late-nineteenth-century literary and philosophical exploration of the natural world and the wider universe, that was as much reliant on scientific advances as it was on aesthetics.³⁹¹ Colley does, however, proceed to argue that ‘the word “sublime” might have been used thoughtlessly, but it was not completely severed from its more precise meaning.’³⁹² The ‘precise’ meaning is the definition proposed by Burke some hundred years prior to the Victorian common usage, in which he stated that ‘no passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear,’ which proposes that sublimity can

³⁸⁷ Ann C. Colley, *Victorians in the Mountains: Sinking the Sublime* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), p. 2. In her book Colley discusses the late-nineteenth-century revision of the Romantic sublime in relation to spectators, tourists, and professional climbers within ‘mountain landscapes,’ p. 3.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

³⁹⁰ Colley cites several examples of the sublime concept being adopted by the public and the press as a clichéd form of expression. These include satirical advertisements, witness statements and London stage melodramas.

³⁹¹ Colley does, however, discuss the telescope by identifying how this scientific instrument extended the possibility of gaining a sublime experience through spectatorship. She suggests that terror had shifted away from observations of the mountain itself (which had become more accessible due to increased tourism from the mid nineteenth century onwards, and the camera, which Colley claims destroyed the mystery of the mountain), to the drama of the ‘body in danger,’ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

³⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 4.

be interpreted as a debilitating response to a particular stimulus.³⁹³ The casual use of terminology suggested by Colley is at odds with the complex connotations of what the ‘sublime’ represented in the mid to late nineteenth century. The production of fear in humans became more complex in the post-Darwinian period and, as the concept of sublimity evolved, began to be rooted in social fears concerning mortality. Sublimity, therefore, transformed from responses to external stimuli, such as colossal mountains or wide oceans, to more internalised expressions of terror rooted in metaphysical experience. This internal dialogue was a product of the inception of Darwinian theory into the public sphere, which created a dichotomy of the natural world and humankind, whilst simultaneously emphasising the supposed insignificance of humans within the wider universe.

Colley further discusses the evolution of the term ‘sublime’ by arguing that,

These mountaineers’ nostalgia, perhaps, anticipated the modernists’ mourning the defeat of the sublime, and fore-shadowed what was eventually to be perceived as a lack or void in the heart of human experience and expression. Their nostalgia looked ahead to a world for which the sublime is not only an impossibility, but also, in its absence, a symptom of traumatic loss.³⁹⁴

Such a ‘lack’ or ‘void’ referenced by Colley is an interesting concept because it can be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, within the context of ‘human experience’ this ‘void’ can be read as an absence of any emotional reaction within the observer because the natural world had lost its ability to overwhelm or terrify.³⁹⁵ Secondly, the term ‘lack’ suggests a limitation

³⁹³ Edmund Burke, *Op. Cit.*, p. 57. To suggest that the Burkean sublime can be ‘defeated’ is to simplify what the philosophy of the sublime is derived from, that being anything which generates fear. Although the aspects of the natural world that contributed to feelings of terror may have altered over time, the concept of a debilitating psychological response to stimuli still resonated in the Victorian period and, indeed, beyond.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

³⁹⁵ Colley’s view here is significant, yet it does not account for the mid-nineteenth century fascination with sensationalism and biological reactions to stimuli that populated much of the literature and scientific discourses of the 1860s and 1870s. Therefore, a more cautious approach would be to trace how the sublime experience evolved, rather than arguing that it was completely absent.

of potential knowledge or experience, as well as an absence of mystery in the natural world. In this sense, the world became smaller as more of the landscape was dominated by humans. However, Colley does not take into consideration that the absence of knowledge can be even more threatening than that which is visible. For instance, as technology such as the telescope and microscope began to improve, the possibilities of perception were also extended.³⁹⁶ As a result, the more that was revealed about the universe, the larger the space humankind inhabited became and fear of the *potential* unknown increased. The supposed ‘impossibility’ of the sublime identified by Colley, that began in the mid-Victorian period when mountains were less awe-inspiring visions and more accessible tourist destinations, further creates an extreme binary of hypothetical experience and actual experience. That is to say, the potential to experience terror when in the presence of an intimidating place or object, such as a mountain that Colley uses as the basis for her analysis of the Victorian sublime, was being replaced by the impossibility of suffering any form of debilitating emotion due to familiarity. More specifically, Colley appears to be suggesting that the Victorian public were exceeding the physical parameters of the sublime set out by Burke in his *Enquiry* by ‘defeating’ the mountains that often emotionally overpowered the eighteenth-century spectator. Again, advances in science and technology during this period may have (to a certain degree) eliminated the overwhelming, all-encompassing mood of the sublime posited by Burke, but the developing modes of perception forced individuals to confront tangible realities concerning the vastness of the universe that amplified their own supposed insignificance.

³⁹⁶ For an in-depth study of the technologies of vision within the Victorian period, that increased the ability to discern previously hidden aspects of the natural world as well as providing entertainment, see Kate Flint, *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Like Colley, Emily Brady observes that the sublime gradually lost its capacity to terrify following its ‘heyday in eighteenth-century aesthetic theory.’³⁹⁷ However, she does state that she seeks ‘reclaim’ the ‘meaning of the sublime’ by investigating its relevance for ‘contemporary debates in philosophy, especially in aesthetics.’³⁹⁸ With this in mind, it is possible to build upon theories of the sublime, as set out by ‘Addison, Burke, Kant and others,’³⁹⁹ *and* reinterpret the philosophy of the sublime in response to contemporary culture. This is particularly relevant in cases where science had advanced possible elucidations of the sublime significantly. Like this chapter, Brady makes room for both an exploration of human imagination and responses to the natural world by positioning her argument in relation to Kant’s philosophy of aesthetics, whilst also being mindful that ‘more emphasis on the human mind and freedom of the sublime’ has resulted in many critics leaving ‘much less room for attributing the sublime to the external world.’⁴⁰⁰ Brady is here arguing for a critical realignment of the sublime that is sympathetic to more recent interpretations of the philosophy, yet also maintains some semblance to earlier explorations of the Burkean sublime in connection with the physical environment. In the case of the post-Darwinian novel, the sublime *does* manage to encapsulate the physical world *and* the metaphysical experience because writers such as Hardy were still influenced by earlier theories of the sublime, whilst also being mindful of and responding to contemporary cultural fears in their work.

³⁹⁷ Emily Brady, *The Sublime in Modern Philosophy: Aesthetics, Ethics, and Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 2.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

There are several notable critical studies concerning Hardy's fictional eye and 'pictorialism,'⁴⁰¹ but there has not been an in-depth analysis of how Hardy's own study of the sublime translates into a post-Darwinian representation of nature and construction of terror.⁴⁰² J. B. Bullen suggests that in Hardy's fiction 'what may seem to be an objective record of a landscape, a building or a character is frequently charged with feeling and ideas which are not, strictly speaking, visual at all.'⁴⁰³ This implies that Hardy's description of the physical world is charged with an externalised depiction of his characters' otherwise internalised emotions, that transcends the mere relation of an aesthetic experience. With this in mind, the 'visuality' or 'pictorialism' of the narrative is substituted with a philosophical or theoretical approach to nature and the universe.⁴⁰⁴ Bullen further claims that Hardy's mode of observation 'somewhat resembles Ruskin, who was forever attempting to reconcile reason and visual imagination.'⁴⁰⁵ The term 'reason' implies that Hardy, like Ruskin, was searching for 'truth' within nature by applying logic to observations of the natural world. Indeed, surveying and perceiving are aspects of the Scientific Gothic novel itself, in that what is observed is not always what the 'visual imagination' receives. Additionally, striving to reconcile scientific certainty with imagination is what characterises the post-Darwinian sublime because observations of the natural world forced the public to confront an uncomfortable truth, which was that science only revealed as much as the universe concealed.

⁴⁰¹ See J. B. Bullen, *The Expressive Eye: Fiction and Perception in the Work of Thomas Hardy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986); Alastair Smart, 'Pictorial Imagery in the Novels of Thomas Hardy', *The Review of English Studies*, 12.47, 262-80 (August 1961); and Judith Bryant Wittenberg, 'Early Hardy Novels and the Fictional Eye', in *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, 16.2, 151-64 (Winter 1983).

⁴⁰² Critics have examined Hardy's interpretation of both Darwinian theory and the Sublime within his writing, most notably Gillian Beer and S. F. Johnson respectively, but have not established a correlation between the two theories.

⁴⁰³ Bullen, *Op. Cit.*, p. vii.

⁴⁰⁴ In particular, Bullen identifies Hardy's reading of John Stuart Mill and Darwin, alongside Ruskin, as creating a juxtaposition of the visually real and the visually imagined in his novels that is underpinned by his theoretical and philosophical study.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4. Bullen suggests that there are two versions of Hardy, the "'conscious' Hardy [who] is the polemicist' and the "'unconscious' Hardy [who] is the observer, the recorder of impressions,' with the latter example enabling Bullen to draw parallels with Ruskin, p. 4.

This translated into the Scientific Gothic novel because readers were unwittingly forced to confront uncomfortable realities, that in turn triggered post-Darwinian fears connected with mortality and the insignificance of humankind within the wider universe.

Despite his comprehensive examination of observation in Hardy's later novels, Bullen overly relies on the concept of a 'retinal image' being 'translated into language' by a 'process of mental association'⁴⁰⁶ using the eye as a vehicle, which he contends is often 'fallible,'⁴⁰⁷ without considering the implication of scientific advances in astronomy that to an extent eradicate the supposed fallibility of the eye. Similarly, despite the overt symbolism of the telescope as a means of perception, Bullen only pays fleeting attention to *Two on a Tower* in his study. Nevertheless, Bullen's analysis of Hardy in relation to observation is useful here, particularly his statement that in his later novels Hardy was,

Less concerned with the psychology of perception than with the philosophy of perception, less with vagaries and the fallibility of the eye in yielding the truth about the material or moral realm, than with the significance of independent modes of perception for belief and conduct.⁴⁰⁸

Again, the 'fallibility' of the eye is, predictably enough, a limitation when striving to comprehend the true impression of an object or scene. Yet what is most intriguing here is Bullen's idea that to yield the 'truth about the material or moral realm' Hardy was more concerned with the 'philosophy of perception.' Whilst Bullen had already established a parallel between Ruskin's and Hardy's attempt to reconcile 'reason' with 'imagination,' his statement also hints at the earlier philosophy of the sublime detailed by Burke and Kant that

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 4.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 12. Bullen goes on to argue that the eye often 'distorts what it sees, and that it tends to observe parts rather than wholes,' p. 12. It should be noted that Bullen's text only makes a fleeting biographical reference to *Two on a Tower* (see p. 139), therefore the altered perception of the eye when observing objects through a lens is not explored in relation to Hardy's 1882 novel.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 88.

Hardy continually referred to in his notebooks. However, the ‘vagaries’ associated with the eye in its purest form seemingly contradict earlier philosophies by deeming them unsuitable for determining ‘truth about the material or moral realm’ in the late nineteenth century, owing to the physical limitations evident in earlier modes of perception. The underlying statement in relation to Hardy’s work, then, is that technologically aided observation served as a viable alternative to the fallible eye when endeavouring to seek truth in nature.⁴⁰⁹

Colley dedicates an entire chapter in her book to Ruskin’s exploration of the Alps and his subsequent scientific recordings of the wild environment, which were facilitated by technological apparatus. She notes that ‘compensating for the imperfections of the eye and its susceptibility to deception, Ruskin spent a great deal of his time scrambling among the rocks measuring the angles at which the side of a mountain or a precipice slanted and stood in relation to others.’⁴¹⁰ To achieve this, Ruskin had to rely on ‘anything mechanical’⁴¹¹ to aid his failing eyesight, and this also meant that he was consistently establishing comparisons between elements of nature that were both unstable and changeable.⁴¹² The possibility that the fallible eye may not detect an alteration within a natural landscape leads to what Colley argues was Ruskin’s decision to use photography as a ‘mechanistic substitute’⁴¹³ for the eye in its purest form. By substituting the naked eye for an optical instrument, Ruskin (like Hardy in his novel) was essentially establishing the need to observe nature scientifically, with less reliance on the subjective judgement of an unstable subject. Kate Flint also discusses the

⁴⁰⁹ Bullen’s reference to Hardy being ‘less concerned with the psychology of perception’ could also extend to post-Darwinian culture more generally, which was less reliant on subconscious, pre-conditioned moral beliefs and more inclined to seek tangible or quantifiable truths that were based in scientific theory.

⁴¹⁰ Colley, *Op. Cit.*, p. 162.

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

⁴¹² Ruskin also relied heavily on daguerreotype to stabilise the image for his paintings, which, like the telescope, helped to both frame and contain nature within imposed limits.

⁴¹³ Anne C. Colley, *Op. Cit.*, p. 164.

fallible eye and the introduction of technologies of vision during the Victorian period. She writes that ‘nothing showed up the limitations of the eye so much as technological developments.’⁴¹⁴ Technology progressively revealed the incapability of the human eye by exposing its physical limitations, whilst simultaneously surpassing the previous limits of human perception, and increasing human exposure to new sublime experiences.

Susan R. Horton discusses in greater depth the significance of optical gadgetry within the Victorian period. She states that ‘from 1820 to 1840 huge numbers of experiments were conducted on the physiology of the eye and on the processes of vision; the more that was learned about vision, the more unreliable it seemed to be.’⁴¹⁵ Arguably, this revelation was one of the key factors in the move towards developing more sophisticated modes of mechanically aided vision. In relation to optical experience as a form of entertainment, that steadily grew in popularity as the Victorian period progressed, Horton writes:

The Victorians were paying to see the world differently and to experience the joys of spectatorship; and what they were paying for was undoubtedly changing them. They were experiencing [...] the driving a wedge between the *real* and the *optical*; between *seeing* and *believing*.⁴¹⁶

According to Horton, such altered perceptions (based purely on visual experience) would mean that reality was divested from imagination. Yet this idea may be inverted because the binaries of ‘*real*’ and ‘*optical*’ can also be read as a single ‘process of vision,’ determined both by what an audience was *seeing* and what their imagination was *perceiving*. In effect, what was ‘changing’ the Victorian public was being able to envision a world beyond the

⁴¹⁴ Kate Flint, *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 30.

⁴¹⁵ Susan R. Horton, ‘Were They Having Fun Yet? Victorian Optical Gadgetry, Modernist Selves’, in *Victorian Literature and the Victorian Visual Imagination*, ed. by Carol T. Christ and John O. Jordan (London: University of California Press, 1995), p. 3.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

reality of an image, which in turn allowed them to occupy the sublime space between knowing and imagining, ‘*seeing*’ and ‘*believing*.’ Significantly, in chapter twenty-two of *Two on a Tower* Swithin declares that ‘matter is matter, and mental association only a delusion,’ (p. 134). Here, Swithin is suggesting that truth is located in the visual image itself, and that any perceptions beyond this - particularly emotional responses to the image, such as terror - are human constructs. The ‘delusion’ referred to by Swithin further reinforces that mental misrepresentation of reality is possible only when objects are viewed as more than simple ‘matter.’ However, a sublimation of negative perception is only possible if the rational mind is engaged, which is at odds with the emotionally ‘affective’ sublime experience manifest in the novel.

In Hardy’s novel, what Horton terms the ‘processes of vision’ are continually channeled through technology, which significantly decreases the unreliability of the eye and optimizes the subject’s capacity to observe. Also, the possibility of cognition aided by scientific instruments such as the telescope and the ‘equatorial’(p. 10)⁴¹⁷ meant that ‘greatness’ became a term used to describe aspects of the natural world that far surpassed what eighteenth-century writers and theorists would have defined as ‘great.’ Even Ruskin’s observation that ‘it is a strange thing how little in general people know about the sky’⁴¹⁸ in 1843 appears somewhat out-dated in the early 1880s when Hardy was revisiting Ruskin’s work and writing *Two on a Tower*.⁴¹⁹ So too is Ruskin’s argument that ‘the sky is to be

⁴¹⁷ Reference to the ‘equatorial’ is made by Swithin St Cleve, the astronomer of Hardy’s novel, who acknowledges that it is the ‘proper instrument for [his] pursuit, p. 10.

⁴¹⁸ Ruskin, *Modern Painters, Vol. 1*, Op. Cit., p. 194.

⁴¹⁹ Hardy made several notes on Ruskin’s work in his *Literary Notebooks*, and in 1862 he wrote a letter to his sister in which he stated that he was reading *Modern Painters*. See, Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy: Volume One*, ed. by R. L. Purdy and M. Millgate (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978). Bullen notes that even though Hardy ‘rarely mentions Ruskin by name’ his ‘literary notes show that [...] he frequently turned to Ruskin’s views on the nature of perception,’ Op. Cit., p. 23.

considered as a transparent blue liquid, in which [...] clouds are suspended,' which does not consider the implication of science, that to some degree disenchant the perception of nature as mysterious. The supposition that in nature 'you always see something, but you *never* see all,'⁴²⁰ however, was to an extent contested in the decades following the publication of Ruskin's *Modern Painters, Vol. 1*. For instance, scientists like Darwin and Spencer were effectively shedding light on the subject, creating a dichotomy between the earlier reliance on 'sensory' experience to describe nature, particularly in Romantic poetry, and newly established 'theoretical and mathematical analyses' of the universe during the late nineteenth century.⁴²¹

In the 1895 Wessex Edition of *Two on a Tower*, Hardy famously stated in his preface that it was his intention to 'set the emotional history of two infinitesimal lives against the stupendous background of the stellar universe, and to impart to readers the sentiment that of these contrasting magnitudes the smaller might be the greater to them as men,' (p. 289). Expressed in this excerpt is the juxtaposition of the 'stupendous' universe, accessed through the astronomer's lens, and the seemingly 'infinitesimal' existence of humankind represented in the novel by the two lovers Swithin St Cleve and Lady Constantine. These 'contrasting magnitudes' are further emphasised by the symbolic tower of the novel's title. The tower acts as both an observatory for Swithin, who has ambitions to be an astronomer, and as a 'curious and suggestive' elevated beacon that intimidates by its mere presence, stretching 'above the

⁴²⁰ Ibid., p. 183.

⁴²¹ See Pamela Gossin, 'Hardy's Poetic Cosmology and the 'New Astronomy'', in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Thomas Hardy*, ed. by Rosemarie Morgan (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), p. 240. In her essay, Gossin notes Hardy's interest in both 'observational and theoretical astronomy,' p. 237 but suggests that John Herschel's (1791-1871) discoveries (which were familiar to Hardy) were 'achieved through mathematics, physics and chemistry, rather than traditional observation,' p. 238. This argument is heightened by the fact that rural landscapes were seemingly blurred by the 'encroachments of technological development,' p. 236 which meant that, out of necessity, visual observation was being surpassed by more scientific means of analysis.

trees' and 'into the sky [like] a bright and cheerful thing,' (p. 5).⁴²² It also offers the inhabitants a privileged viewpoint of life below them, for when Swithin and Constantine's eyes are cast downwards they become the greater magnitude by virtue of their physical position. Consequently, the people they perceive below become minute entities that can be scrutinised and analysed in equal measure. This idea is further expressed in chapter sixteen when the narrator relates that 'under any other circumstance Lady Constantine might have felt a nameless fear in thus sitting aloft on a lonely column, with a forest groaning under her feet, and palaeolithic dead men feeding its roots,' (p. 102). Here, the tower facilitates the sublime experience *beyond* its daunting scale because it symbolically signposts the geological layering underneath its foundations by drawing the reader's attention to their own unfathomable pre-history.

Like the fossil that taunts Henry Knight in *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, or the outward proportions of the 'lonely column' itself, these 'palaeolithic dead men' diminish Lady Constantine's presence by emphasising her insignificance. The physical traces of human history, that groan along with the forest as a reminder of human mortality, disturb Lady Constantine's imagination and exemplify her mortality. In effect, she is a blot, a mere speck, both within the physical universe and in relation to human history more broadly. In a critical reading of *The Well-Beloved* (1897) against theories of the sublime, Garson argues that the imagery of Deadman's Bay and its tides focus 'less on cultural and spiritual than individual, bodily, disintegration.'⁴²³ Garson links this theory to the fact that 'on the bottom of the sea are the bones of all the men who have been drowned off the coast, and, like the pebbles, these

⁴²² The reference to the tower being 'curious and suggestive' has connotations of phallic symbolism, later perpetuated by the narrator who refers to Swithin's telescope as an 'instrument' (p. 8) during a passage describing the physical beauty of the youth. There is also a link here to Burke's theory of the sublime in relation to architecture where 'greatness' corresponds with height and is favoured over length. See Burke, Op.Cit., p. 76.

⁴²³ Marjorie Garson, Op. Cit., p. 105.

many have become one.’⁴²⁴ Garson’s reading of Deadman’s Bay is strikingly similar to the passage concerning the ‘palaeolithic dead men’ under the forest in *Two on a Tower*. Both the ‘dead men’ and the ‘bones’ from Hardy’s novel and Garson’s article respectively become a metaphor for the fragile structure of the human body, as well as society more broadly. The pebbles on the beach, or the skeletal remains under the tower, are effectively ‘drowned’ and buried men who are merely a part of a wider geological history of earth. These human remains emphasise that nature is equally unforgiving and impartial to human presence, which is evident in the fact that the human remains merely ‘feed the roots’ of trees or succumb to the powerful tides that cause them to scatter across the seabed like ‘pebbles.’ Also, Garson’s emphasis of ‘individual’ rather than ‘cultural’ disintegration implies that it is the physical body that determines rational human experience. As such, anything beyond this physical realm of comprehension, including imagination as defined by Kant,⁴²⁵ is sublime by comparison.

An excerpt in *The Literary Notebooks*, copied by Hardy from an article in *World* (23 February 1881) summarises Ruskin’s argument that in the work of the pre-Raphaelites ‘absolute uncompromising truth’ is ‘obtained by working everything down to the most minute detail from Nature & from Nature only.’⁴²⁶ The word ‘minute’ is particularly significant as it suggests a scientific approach to the scrutiny of nature that is largely achieved via scientific apparatus, whilst also alluding to the importance of size when determining the

⁴²⁴ Ibid., p. 105.

⁴²⁵ For example, Kant writes that if an object is ‘projected into an incalculable future, then it has something of the fearsome in it,’ which implies that humans may become overwhelmed if their imagination extends beyond images they can physically process. This would also fit with the idea that human history is a product of individuals striving to reach beyond their physical limits of observation by engaging their imagination. See Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*, trans. by John T. Goldthwait (1764: Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1965), p. 50.

⁴²⁶ Thomas Hardy, *The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy*, Op. Cit., p. 137. The article in question is ‘Exhibition of Pictures by Mr. Millais’, *World* (23 February 1881), p. 8.

sublimity of an object. Similarly, Kant discusses what he terms the ‘mathematically sublime,’⁴²⁷ which he defined as a logical determination of magnitude that is distinct from aesthetical judgement. Kant further stressed that to determine the ‘magnitude of [a] unit’ it must be cognitively measured.⁴²⁸ That is, the process of determining the size of an object or ‘unit’ goes through several phases of perception beyond mere visual determination. The term ‘cognitively’ itself suggests that visual experience also incorporates the other senses to evoke both emotional and physical responses. Like the Romantic sublime reference by David B. Morris, the sublime is clearly ‘affective’ in this sense, yet in the post-Darwinian period extinction narratives meant that the cognition of magnitude (as connected to human insignificance within the wider universe) was even more terrifying. In *Two on a Tower*, during an early exchange between Swithin and Lady Constantine, the former cautions the latter against disturbing her “‘ignorance of the realities of astronomy,” (p. 11). Swithin then states that ‘perhaps [he] shall not live’ (p. 10) due to the immensity of the subject that is gradually suppressing him. What this statement alludes to is the vastness of the universe that reduces the observer to infinitesimal proportions. It also suggests that ‘enlightenment on the subject’ (p. 11) may result in terror, due to the sheer depth of knowledge possible and the magnitude of the heavens that seemingly dwarfs the observer.

Within the same passage, Swithin is described as having a mixture of ‘scientific earnestness and [a] melancholy mistrust of all things human,’ (p. 10). Simply put, Swithin indirectly supports the hypothesis that humans lie/conceal, whereas science tells the truth/reveals. This is due to the fact that he perceives science as the one constant in his life, which is balanced against the common portrayal of humans within Hardy’s writing as

⁴²⁷ Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, Op. Cit., p. 105.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

mutable and unpredictable. The comparison with evolutionary and/or extinction narratives is also traceable here because humankind cannot be controlled, yet also has no autonomy over the natural world. Swithin's apparent character flaw is later manifest in his pursuit of astronomy that impairs his ability to form a viable romantic attachment with Lady Constantine.⁴²⁹ For example, Peck writes that Hardy represents Swithin as being 'emotionally distant and incapable of passionate engagement.'⁴³⁰ Swithin's engagement is with the sublime and the beautiful, yet this lies beyond the earthly limits represented by his lover. He is, in effect, as 'emotionally distant' as the starry heavens that he holds so dear. Moreover, Swithin's lack of trust of 'all things human' serves two purposes within *Two on a Tower*. Firstly, when observing the universe, the telescopic lens addresses the fallibility of the eye in its purest form. Yet once the optical gadgetry has been removed, and Swithin's gaze is focused on his fellow man, his capacity to align the physical human form with scientific truth is compromised. Secondly, the idea that the sublime is merely 'affective' and 'pictorial' is called into question when emphasis is placed on the quantifiable matter of the universe, disrupting the link between consciousness and existence, and the material world.

Bullen emphasizes the importance of physicality and physiognomy in Hardy's work, arguing that the 'visual image' is the 'primary vehicle for the expression of ideas and sentiments.'⁴³¹ However, by foregrounding the science of astronomy, Hardy succeeds in diverting both Swithin's and the reader's attention *away* from the physical human form. This in turn establishes a distinction between cognition and imagination that Kant defines as 'representations [that] are rational,' and therefore logical, and 'aesthetical' judgements that

⁴²⁹ Swithin's study of astronomy ultimately leads to his abandonment of Lady Constantine, who remains at home in Wessex whilst Swithin travels to Cape Town, Melbourne, Boston, Cambridge U.S., and then finally to the South Pacific, pp. 244-5

⁴³⁰ Garret Peck, *Op. Cit.*, p. 36.

⁴³¹ Bullen, *Op. Cit.*, p. 8.

instigate an emotional response in the viewer, such as ‘pleasure or pain.’⁴³² As such, the ‘visual image’ of the starry heavens is less an expression of a particular sentiment or the construction of an internal emotional narrative for the observer, and more a vehicle for communicating a process of scientifically aided cognition that is somewhat detached from humankind. Therefore, on one level the sublimity in *Two on a Tower* is derived from depictions of the ‘great’ universe, that serves as the novel’s backdrop, against which the observer becomes the ‘infinitely small.’⁴³³ Yet on a deeper level, terror is elicited by Swithin’s decision to neglect his conscious human existence (with a capacity to form emotional human connections via the process of vision that is in turn linked to his imagination) and earthly duty as Lady Constantine’s lover, in favour of his study of astronomy and desire to find logical structure in nature. As a result, by only “‘thinking of the heaven above,’” Swithin does not “‘perceive-the [...] earth beneath,’” (p.81). This dialogue between the two lovers, then, seemingly emphasizes that in Hardy’s novel the eye is less a means of making aesthetic judgements, and more a scientific lens used to identify scientific truth.

Ruskin’s argument that ‘the eye, like any other lens, must have its focus altered, to convey a distinct image of objects at different distances; so that it is totally impossible to see distinctly, at the same moment, two objects, one of which is much farther off than another,’⁴³⁴ also warrants consideration. Although Ruskin is here discussing the eye’s physical limitations, his argument that by focusing one’s attention on a distant object, the nearer loses its definition, has broader implications. When considered in relation to Hardy’s novel, Ruskin’s statement also suggests that the further Swithin gazes ‘into other worlds’ via his

⁴³² Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, Op. Cit., pp. 45-6.

⁴³³ Ibid., p. 109.

⁴³⁴ Ruskin, *Modern Painters Vol. 1*, Op. Cit., p. 176.

telescope, the less his imagination can comprehend ‘the depths of other eyes,’ (p. 39). This conflict of perception subsequently leads to his detachment from ‘all things human.’ Here, Swithin’s lack of engagement with Lady Constantine, whose presence is over-shadowed by the sublime universe once again, establishes a new perspective on terror due to the vastness of the heavens not only diminishing the physical human form, but also disrupting the emotional connection between two beings. This disturbance of the natural course of their courtship threatens reproduction, with the stark reminder that the progression of humanity is reliant upon aesthetic attraction. Swithin’s rejection of Lady Constantine because he does not possess ‘the eyes to understand as well as to see’ and cannot look beyond her ‘worn and faded aspect’ to observe the ‘more promising material underneath’ (p. 259) ultimately leads to his lover’s death. Thus, his critical and scientifically-centred perception of a subject, that is removed from any emotional or aesthetic attachment that would transcend the mere perception of her physical form, is emphasized. Lady Constantine represents an ageing body for Swithin, not an emotionally provocative body that would transcend this image. As such, her entire worth lies in the gradually declining materiality of her body that is visible to the naked eye, and Swithin does not possess the ability to look beyond this scientific fact whilst his attention is directed towards the wider universe.

In May 1882, when Hardy had just begun his serialisation of *Two on a Tower*,⁴³⁵ *The Spectator* published an article entitled ‘Mr. Justice Fry on Materialism’ which Hardy recorded a small portion of in his notebook. Hardy’s excerpt reads

He felt it a striking fact that he, like others, was conscious of the same personality, the same individual consciousness now, that he had 30 yrs. ago, although meanwhile, according to the physiologists, the material portion of his

⁴³⁵ *Two on a Tower* was serially published between May and December 1882 in *Atlantic Monthly*.

being had completely changed every 7 years. Hence there was to be experienced a being within us separate from matter.⁴³⁶

The separation of the ‘consciousness’ from the ‘material portion of [a] being’ is interesting as it creates a juxtaposition of the imagined persona and the physical body that Hardy appears to explore in *Two on a Tower*. In Hardy’s novel, imagination can be defined using the process of perception detailed by Ruskin as requiring ‘energy and passion,’⁴³⁷ that in turn implies an emotional attachment between the object and the observer. Perceptions of the physical human form, on the other hand, are derived from Swithin’s ‘scientific earnestness’ which disrupts his ability to read and respond to physical signals projected by Lady Constantine. Their emotional connection, then, becomes severed and is often replaced by Swithin’s pursuit of quantifiable truths in the universe. For instance, in an early passage, Swithin is described as dwelling not on ‘woman’s looks’ but on ‘stellar aspects,’ (p. 39) suggesting that his scientific endeavours cloud his judgement of Lady Constantine’s physiognomy. Linked to the idea that consciousness and the materiality of the human body act as binaries within Hardy’s novel is Kant’s argument that the judgement of nature can be divided into ‘*aesthetical*’ and ‘*teleological*’ judgement.⁴³⁸ Kant’s hypothesis outlines the need to make a distinction between imagination, or emotionally charged responses to the observation of nature, and judgement which he states is governed by determining the ‘purposiveness’ of an object through ‘Understanding’ and ‘Reason.’⁴³⁹ As already indicated, Swithin appears to be upholding these binaries by separating the aesthetic judgement of his lover’s physicality from the teleological judgement that is achieved through the lens of his telescope.

⁴³⁶ This excerpt, originally taken from *The Spectator*, LV (20th May 1882), is reproduced in *The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy*, Op. Cit., pp. 147-8.

⁴³⁷ Ruskin, *Modern Painters Vol. 1*, Op. Cit., p. 48.

⁴³⁸ Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, Op. Cit., p. 36.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

The idea that Swithin has established purposiveness in the stellar universe is further expressed within the following passage:

To his physical attractiveness was added the attractiveness of mental inaccessibility. The ennobling influence of scientific pursuits was demonstrated by the speculative purity which expressed itself in his eyes whenever he looked at her in speaking [...]. He had never, since becoming a man, looked even so low as to the level of Lady Constantine. His heaven was truly in the skies, and not in that other place where they say it can be found, in the eyes of some daughter of Eve, (pp. 39-40).

The reference to eyes has significance beyond Swithin's anatomical ability to observe that this excerpt alludes to. It also proposes that the process of optically determining the physical qualities of a given object can be achieved independently of aesthetic judgement that is a product of emotionally affected perception. The description of Swithin's 'speculative purity' indicates his naivety with women, as well as expressing that he is only knowledgeable within the context of his 'scientific pursuits.' Furthermore, the analogy that the 'skies' are Swithin's 'heaven', or the focal point of his observation, implies that the channel of his vision is directed towards his preferred sublime object. Consequently, the alternative and much closer sublime subject of Lady Constantine is displaced by astronomy, thus resulting in Swithin's imaginative incapacity to determine greatness in his fellow human. Therefore, Swithin's eye becomes a lens through which he examines nature. Yet the balance between determining reason and developing a mental attachment to Lady Constantine is seemingly impossible when the former's role as a scientist takes precedence over his role as a lover.

Colley argues that telescopes created an 'emotional distance' between the spectator and the subject, which 'disengaged the eye from the body' and meant that the viewer was having

a ‘vicarious experience.’⁴⁴⁰ However, in *Two on a Tower* it is not only the eye that is disengaged from the object, but the entire capacity of the person attached to the eye to determine aesthetic value in an object. Therefore, the imagination’s ability to process and interpret the image becomes severed, so that when the narrator refers to ‘the voids and waste places of the sky’ (p. 29) this could easily be read as a metaphor for Swithin’s disenchanting imagination. Moreover, Swithin has found purposiveness in nature beyond the earthly ‘level’ of Lady Constantine. This in turn causes his eye as lens to perceive nature largely via ‘teleological’ judgement, rather than interpreting it from an aesthetical perspective, which (in reference to the latter) Kant concedes ‘contributes nothing toward the knowledge of its objects.’⁴⁴¹ And it is ‘knowledge’ that Swithin desires above all else, even at the cost of his romantic attachment to Lady Constantine who seemingly lacks the purposiveness that Swithin seeks. In short, Swithin’s desire to forge a career as an astronomer means he is governed by reason, and as such he is only prepared to observe the aspects of nature that provide truth and reason. For instance, in chapter eighteen Swithin receives a letter from his Uncle Jocelyn St. Cleeve, a Doctor of Medicine, with the offer of ‘400*l.* a year’ to be paid when he reaches twenty-five for his ‘scientific studies’ on the condition that he is ‘not married before reaching that age,’ (p. 113). St. Cleeve also cautions that if Swithin’s studies ‘are to be worth anything [...] they must be carried out without the help of a woman’ if he means to ‘achieve any worthy thing,’ (pp. 113-4). This passage also perpetuates the idea that Swithin must sever any romantic attachments to gain success within the scientific field of astronomy.

⁴⁴⁰ Colley, *Op. Cit.*, p. 68.

⁴⁴¹ Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, *Op. Cit.*, p. 38.

Ruskin's argument that 'we measure ourselves against nature,'⁴⁴² is also of interest here, because, as a theory, it is disseminated in *Two on a Tower* by the telescope and the architectural structure of the tower. That a person can be interpreted as quantifiable matter, and measured against nature, again reinforces Hardy's hypothesis that his novel explores lesser and greater magnitudes. The scientific instrument of the telescope, and the naked eye that serves as a lens within itself, simultaneously emphasise the lack of control humankind has in relation to its sublime surroundings, largely due to the possible size comparison between the object (nature) and the observer (humankind). In *Modern Painters, Vol. 1* Ruskin states that a product of the 'measurement of doom' is terror, which he readily associates with the sublime, and is derived from the perception that the observer has 'little control'⁴⁴³ over what they are witnessing. Concerning technological apparatus and vision Flint writes that,

The more one could see when the natural powers of the eye were augmented by the crafted lens, the more scientists were aware of what lay beyond one's visual reach. It was here that observation of the natural world had to yield place to the importance of the imagination, increasingly recognised as having a central role within scientific enquiry. It took one beyond the part played by the eye.⁴⁴⁴

Flint's comments concerning the physical limitations connected to human observation is an important aspect of the post-Darwinian sublime because it emphasises that there is a sublime space beyond the 'visual reach' of the individual. The emphasis on human physical limitations, therefore, does not necessarily equate to beyond the scope of imagination. As Flint goes on to note, the 'imagination' may have been a key factor within 'scientific enquiry,' but it was also a significant contributor to the post-Darwinian sublime. For

⁴⁴² Ruskin, *Modern Painters Vol. 1*, Op. Cit., p. 25.

⁴⁴³ Ruskin, *Modern Painters Vol. 1*, Op. Cit., p. 38.

⁴⁴⁴ Flint, Op. Cit., p. 62.

example, ‘beyond’ at once suggests something out of reach *and* a deeper, more emotionally affected, field of perception that lies in that which cannot be determined through sight alone.

As a vantage point, the tower in Hardy’s novel is both an observatory when the lens protrudes upwards, and a means of transforming the eye into a microscopic lens when the eye is cast downwards. In the latter scenario, the perceived object is reduced to miniscule proportions, because the elevated position of the observer in the tower creates a notable distance between the observer and the object. For instance, when Swithin *does* divert his attention away from the sky towards Lady Constantine, her physical presence is reduced due to her supposed position within the confines of his eye as lens.⁴⁴⁵ She is described as ‘diminishing towards the fence,’ before becoming ‘a dark spot on an area of brown,’ (p. 11). On encountering another figure, Lady Constantine’s companion is likened to the observer distinguishing ‘the caterpillar from its leaf,’ (p. 11).⁴⁴⁶ The elevated tower gives Swithin the perspective of a scientist examining atoms under a microscope. Lady Constantine is once again a blot on the surface of the literal and metaphorical ‘field’ of nature, whilst being judged comparatively to her surroundings. By association, she too can be read as an insect, lost within the vast expanse of the surrounding natural elements. There is, as a result, a further exploration of her fragility and insignificance because (as Mark Asquith writes in his article concerning Hardy, philosophy, metaphysics and music) she is characteristically ‘out of

⁴⁴⁵ In *Thomas Hardy’s Novel Universe: Astronomy, Cosmology, and Gender in the Post-Darwinian World* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007), Pamela Gossin offers an alternative reading of Swithin’s telescopic observation of Lady Constantine. She suggests that as a result of his uncle’s stipulation concerning the pursuit of astronomy, that must be given precedence over marriage, Swithin ‘finds himself directing his telescope more often toward Viviette’s window to watch for a signal to rendezvous,’ p. 172. This implies that Swithin uses his telescope as a channel of communication between the pair. However, the telescope in this scenario actually appears to act as a barrier between the lovers because it highlights Swithin’s decision to establish a physical and emotional distance from Lady Constantine that will not compromise him financially or professionally.

⁴⁴⁶ The companion in question is Amos ‘Haymoss’ Fry, a labouring man whose apparel is described as being ‘in harmony with his environment,’ (p. 13).

harmony'⁴⁴⁷ with the world around her; unlike her companion who fits comfortably into his surroundings. She is also trapped within the frame of the lens and appears like a particle that can easily be eradicated.

A similar scenario is famously played out in *The Return of the Native* (1878) when Mrs Yeobright is traversing the heath and observes an army of ants at her feet. The narrator relates that 'to look down upon them was like observing a city street from the top of a tower.'⁴⁴⁸ The reference to the 'tower' again establishes the literal raised position of the observer, whilst also stressing a hierarchy of species. Herbert Spencer, in his seminal work *The Principles of Biology, Vol. I*, outlined this chain of existence by clearly delineating that the 'low and high forms of life' had become more distinct, by arguing that this concept was in ascendancy within the scientific field.⁴⁴⁹ With Spencer's text in mind, insects were deemed to be one of nature's lowest and simplest forms, and humankind a higher, more heterogeneous form. Therefore, Mrs Yeobright not only has the proportional advantage, but she also possesses the evolutionary one. Furthermore, like Lady Constantine who is reduced to an analogy of an insect – fragile and easily snuffed out – the ants are equally subject to Mrs Yeobright's decision to either destroy them or leave them to their 'low' existence. Swithin and Mrs Yeobright are both on the top of a tower, literally and metaphorically respectively, and they are both perceiving objects below them as a scientist would study an atom. The resulting sublime image is derived from nature being processed by the observer as terrifying, where lesser forms are engulfed, and their mortality amplified.

⁴⁴⁷ See Mark Asquith, 'Philosophy, Metaphysics and Music in Hardy's Cosmic Vision' in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Thomas Hardy*, ed. by Rosemarie Morgan (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), p. 197. Here Asquith suggests that Hardy's characters often find themselves in 'despair' if they are 'out of tune' p. 197 with their environment and not mindful of the 'ambivalent universe that seems to take no interest in their welfare,' p. 195.

⁴⁴⁸ Thomas Hardy, *The Return of the Native* (1878; London: Penguin, 1994), p. 341.

⁴⁴⁹ Spencer, *Op. Cit.*, p. 71.

Later in *Two on a Tower* the idea of opposing magnitudes is again revisited in chapter thirty four when the narrator relates that ‘the vastness of the field of astronomy reduces every terrestrial thing to atomic dimensions,’ (p. 205). This contrast can also be applied to the tower, which too reduces every terrestrial thing to atomic dimensions. The eye as lens, then, can be read as the lesser magnitude when the observer is peering upwards, by proxy of their position and inability to process the entire subject within the confines of one telescopic frame. Sequentially, the terror of the sublime and unstable universe that is disconcerting for the individual becomes manifest. This is particularly evident when the observer is seeking knowledge through a lens depicting changeable matter, yet cannot frame a single, consistent image despite advances in optical equipment. Yet, when projected downwards, the eye *is* able to frame an image. This gives the observer the stance of an omnipotent presence, with the ability to contain their subject within a lens. Kant argues that human purpose determines ‘the form as well as the size’⁴⁵⁰ of an object or building, which implies that humankind has immediate control over their surroundings. The illusion of control, however, does not anticipate the possible terror that might ensue when the vastness of a manmade structure, such as the tower, is used to determine the observer’s lesser magnitude, which is amplified by the vast universe that dwarfs them.

An entry in Hardy’s notebook, made on 1st July 1892, reads: ‘we don’t always remember as we should that in getting at the truth, we only get at the true nature of the impression that an object, etc., produces on us, the true thing in itself being still, as Kant shows, beyond our knowledge.’⁴⁵¹ The ‘impression’ that Hardy is here referring to has

⁴⁵⁰ See Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, Op. Cit., p. 113.

⁴⁵¹ Florence Emily Hardy, *The Later Years of Thomas Hardy 1892 - 1928* (London: Macmillan, 1930), p. 9.

implications of human subjectivity, which, as Flint suggests, is ‘filtered through many cultural convention.’⁴⁵² Therefore, the observer’s impression is culturally inscribed, meaning that although judgement is an individual cognitive process, determining a universal truth in relation to nature or natural objects is achieved by humankind collectively. This idea is particularly important when considering late-nineteenth-century teleological judgement, achieved through a microscope or a telescope, which was both an individual endeavour and underpinned by culturally inscribed scientific theory. With the term ‘impressions’ Hardy is also characterising truth as lying ‘beyond’ human comprehension which, in itself, is a sublime prospect because what lies outside of human knowledge is a more terrifying mystery. Similarly, by stating that impressions are placed ‘on us’ rather than ‘within us,’ Hardy is implying that images make a physical impression on the observer rather than merely an emotional one. In a sense, the Scientific Gothic, as exemplified by the post-Darwinian sublime in this instance, is a more sophisticated form of sensationalism, rooted in scientific ‘truth’ instead of only imagination. Within *Two on a Tower*, Hardy’s literary conception of the universe is realised by Swithin via his telescope, and, as such, it becomes his own psychological creation or ‘truth.’ Yet due to Swithin’s scientific determination, but distinct lack of professional and emotional experience, the sublime universe becomes an unmanageable space that reflects his own turmoil and overwhelmed attitude.

In his informative study concerning Hardy and Burke’s ‘sublime,’ S. F. Johnson notes that Hardy ‘recurrently contrasts the vastness of the scene with the insignificance of man.’⁴⁵³ In this case, the sublime can also be applied to the individual’s imagination and their mental construction of the object, whilst simultaneously taking into consideration the greater

⁴⁵² Flint, Op. Cit., p. 2.

⁴⁵³ Johnson, Op. Cit., p. 66.

magnitude that dwarfs the observer and perpetuates the idea of their physical and mental fragility. Brady suggests that for Kant ‘the sublime, in its overwhelming magnitude or power, is associated with formlessness and limitlessness.’⁴⁵⁴ The universe lends itself well to this definition as this object may be accessible through a lens, but the increased ability to perceive via technologies of vision actually confirms the true ‘limitlessness’ of nature, much like the impenetrable mountains appeared to Romantic poets. Brady also argues that Kant is ‘using language where both nature and the mind are called sublime,’⁴⁵⁵ which generates an agreement between the internal and external world. Furthermore, she states that ‘imagination is expanded through attempting to present an image of the object to the mind. The vast size of an ocean reaching into the horizon [...] vitalizes and extends the imagination.’⁴⁵⁶ Brady, like many of the early philosophers concerned with the sublime, places emphasis on physical elements within nature to illustrate the capacious ability of human perception. However, it is also possible to utilise Kantian theory to discuss the sublime in relation to imagination in a more abstract sense. The eye in its purest form may roam, but the telescope intensifies and extends the image. On the one hand, imagination is invested in more than confined images, whilst on the other scientific instruments seek to frame the image. Due to the dual aspect of the sublime within this context, the object is simultaneously unstable and constant; uncontained and confined; and unframed and enclosed.

Removing the Lens: Hardy and Anthropologic Observation in a Post-Darwinian Universe

⁴⁵⁴ Brady, *Op. Cit.*, p. 56.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

Also determined by Kant's theory of 'impressions'⁴⁵⁷ is the idea that 'knowledge' and 'truth' are two separate principles, subject to individual interpretations. As evidenced through his re-reading of Kant, Hardy was, at least in part, acquainted with debates concerning anthropology (or the 'observation of the real actions of human beings'⁴⁵⁸ as Kant terms it in his 1798 work *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*) and individual consciousness (or the persona). The dichotomous relationship between 'knowledge' and 'truth,' which resembles Ruskin's theory of aesthetic judgement detailed in *Modern Painters, Vol. 1*, appears to represent an existential debate for Hardy. Whilst in *Two on a Tower* perceptions of the sublime universe were complicated due to technological advances in optical apparatus, the simultaneous progression in the scientific study of anatomy reinforced the point that 'selfhood' (or a person's identity) was separate from their physical body. In effect, the more that anthropology revealed about the mechanics of the human body through the processes of 'cognition,' 'understanding' and 'apprehending (*attentio*),' the more mysterious human consciousness became.⁴⁵⁹ The scientific lens, then, was not a sufficient device for the study of humanity's construction of the 'self.' Therefore, post-Darwinian literature, in its attempt to reconcile the distance between scientific understanding and art, became culturally inscribed with pre-existing theories and philosophies.

Going some way towards bridging the gap between science and literature, the work of Edward Clodd - who was a friend and correspondent of Hardy, as well as a literary influence

⁴⁵⁷ Florence Emily Hardy, *The Later Years of Thomas Hardy*, Op. Cit., p. 9.

⁴⁵⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 5. Kant is here describing the process of observation, used in the creation of plays and novels, as supplementing the writer's 'invention' by providing features that 'correspond to human nature in kind,' p. 5. For Kant, then, the study of culture surpasses sociology or socioeconomics and instead recapitulates the idea that individuals possess both physical and emotional identities within their respective environments.

⁴⁵⁹ Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, Op. Cit., p. 27. Linked to this hypothesis is Kant's argument that it is not possible to comprehend an object without the inter-related faculties that enable cognition, which also include the 'faculty of abstracting (*abstractio*)' and the faculty of reflecting (*reflexio*),' p. 27.

- appears to embody both the conception of the persona *and* the scientific perception of human anatomy. Clodd's work *The Story of Creation: A Plain Account of Evolution* (1888) engaged with scientific discourse concerning 'the gulf between consciousness and the movements of the molecules of nerve matter,' which he claimed was 'impassable' and reached the 'threshold' of the 'known.'⁴⁶⁰ From Clodd's text it can be understood that human consciousness and self-consciousness are not distinct from biological function.⁴⁶¹ Clodd explains that 'the botanist and zoologist alike miss the significance of the phenomena of plant and animal life if these are treated as separate departments of biology,' suggesting an intrinsic link between anthropology and perceptions of the self and others. Furthermore, the philosophical implications of this debate indicate a possible re-imagining of anthropologic study that explores the duality of scientific theory and aesthetic judgement, as well as elucidating Hardy's attempt to reconcile this distinction in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. The earliest surviving letter from Hardy to Clodd is dated 3. June. 1891, in which Hardy discusses an invitation from Clodd to stay at his 'little house down [...] on the coast.'⁴⁶² Another letter details the short period of time the two men spent together on this visit 'down at Aldeburgh' from June 5th-7th 1891, which provides a good indication of when their close acquaintance likely commenced.⁴⁶³ Then, in a letter dated Nov 10. 1895, Hardy discusses the particulars of 'natural and human laws [creating] tragic dramas' in reference to his then recently published novel *Jude the Obscure* (1895).⁴⁶⁴ Hardy also states 'I hope that you did not feel any ill

⁴⁶⁰ Edward Clodd, *The Story of Creation: A Plain Account of Evolution* (London: Longmans, Green, And Co., 1888), p. 152.

⁴⁶¹ In *The Story of Creation: A Plain Account of Evolution*, Clodd goes on to explain that 'the psychologist may analyse and catalogue the operations of the mind, but the key to understanding them lies in the study of the brain structure and function, of which the physiologist is master,' *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

⁴⁶² See Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy, Vol. 1, Op. Cit.*, p. 236-7.

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 254. The letter to Mary Hardy on 8 June 1891, mentions 'a friend of mine, a Suffolk man, who writes scientific books [...] invited me, with W. Besant, & J. M. Barrie, to stay with him [...] a couple of days,' p. 237. The friend referred to is Edward Clodd, and from this letter it is possible to determine the date of their meeting.

⁴⁶⁴ Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy: Volume 2*, ed. by R. L. Purdy and M. Millgate (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), p. 92.

effects from that really rash jump you took in the dark on the heath?’⁴⁶⁵ Significantly, Clodd’s annotations on the manuscript of this letter illustrate the nature of the ‘rash jump’ mentioned by Hardy, explaining that ‘the “rash jump” was taken when Hardy & I took a midnight walk on “Egdon Heath”.’⁴⁶⁶ This seemingly trivial comment provides a strong case to suggest that Hardy had spent a notable amount of time with Clodd *prior* to the postmark of the letter, during a period when he was reading proofs of his novel *The Mayor of Casterbridge* in preparation for the publication of the Wessex Novels collected edition for the publishers Ogood, McIlvaine. A letter composed by Hardy, dated Feb 1, 1895, relays the following information that confirms this supposition:

Dear Mr Crawford: [...] Unfortunately I cannot write for the first number; for the sole and simple reason that my present work (including a complete edition of all my old books, & of the long serial running in Harper’s) prevents my undertaking anything new. I can therefore only say that I will contribute to future numbers of the magazine if I am able.⁴⁶⁷

Furthermore, the novel clearly carried some significance for the two men, since Hardy later gave a copy of the 1887 one volume edition to Clodd in 1912.⁴⁶⁸ This suggests that there may have been some degree of scientific influence from Clodd on Hardy, particularly whilst editing his novel, which appears to have shaped the phraseology used in certain sections of the text.

In relation to the influence of science on literature, Beer explains that ‘evolutionary ideas are even more influential when they become assumptions embedded in the culture than

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 93.

⁴⁶⁶ Thomas Hardy Letters to Edward Clodd (1900-1923) University of Leeds: Special Collections, BC MS 19c Clodd).

⁴⁶⁷ Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Thomas Hardy Collection: Series IV Additions since July 1997, Box 5, Folder 69.

⁴⁶⁸ This dedicated copy of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* can be found in Special Collections, University of Leeds. BC Gen/HAR

while they are the subject of controversy.⁴⁶⁹ Beer's statement proposes that the power of acceptance (in this case scientific knowledge) lies in the way theories and philosophies are presented. Arguably, the subtlety in presentation of scientific, philosophical and anthropological theories when inscribed in non-scientific/non-medical literature is influential because it remains allusive. In her 1888 article concerning 'The Scientific Spirit of the Age,' Cobbe posits that art is 'no longer the art of fancy, but the art of intellect, wherein the beautiful is indefinitely postponed to the technically true.'⁴⁷⁰ Cobbe appears to be suggesting that 'art' (here referenced in its broadest sense to include literature, painting, depictions of nature and fashion) was a medium through which scientific notions could be expressed. As if to reinforce this point, Cobbe also states that the 'aesthetic faculty' was being 'ruled out of court, in favour of the 'Scientific Spirit.'⁴⁷¹ It appears that both the mode and outcome of cognition have been altered, in the sense that the criteria for processing nature, including humankind, has shifted from emotionally affected responses (i.e. aesthetic judgement) to a more linear scientific approach.⁴⁷² More pointedly, Cobbe questions "'What shall it profit a man if he find[s] the origin of species and know[s] exactly how earth-worms and sun-dews conduct themselves, if all the while he grow blind to the loveliness of Nature, deaf to music, insensible to poetry,'"⁴⁷³ Here, Cobbe is not only resisting this linear approach, but also implying that humankind is guilty of allowing the physical sciences to blind it from observing the beauty in nature, whilst also conceding that the 'Age of Science' both forms/informs literature and subsequently creates a means of broadening '*intellectual*

⁴⁶⁹ Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, Op. Cit., p. 2.

⁴⁷⁰ Frances Power Cobbe, 'The Scientific Spirit of the Age', 126-139, *The Contemporary Review* (July 1888), p. 126.

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

⁴⁷² The term linear is to here be taken to mean a person's perceptions being more directly influenced by a strict set of criteria, rather than an unquantifiable range of emotions.

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

instruction.’⁴⁷⁴ Therefore, Cobbe’s argument indicates that science and literature may be regarded as two sides of the same coin with physical science expanding the possibilities of observing ‘truth’ in nature, increasing self-awareness and the knowledge of human consciousness.

Drawing on Cobbe’s argument, as well as Kant’s conception of ‘observance,’ i.e. ‘a methodical compilation of the perceptions formed in us,’ which lead an individual to become an ‘*observer of oneself*,’⁴⁷⁵ outlined in his 1798 text, this section will argue that Hardy’s *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886) presents a significant evolution of his ideas concerning the construction or conception of the ‘self.’ Although not as obviously scientific as Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (also published in 1886) or Wilkie Collins’s *Heart and Science* (1882), Hardy’s *The Mayor of Casterbridge* displays the subtle characteristics of a knowledge of anthropology. Anthropology, in a sense, is an intersection of science and literature, and although Kant and Darwin appear to have differing agendas – as well as writing in separate historical periods – they are speaking to the same argument. For the living organism is an emotive, present object for both writers, that cannot be understood by simply observing it through a lens. It is an internal study, not just an external one, and simultaneously encapsulates the persona and the person. However, it is not sufficient to claim that Hardy’s novel merely re-presented Darwin’s theory of evolution, or Kant’s philosophy of observance, in a literal sense. Instead, it seems more reasonable to suggest that in Hardy’s work of the 1880s, the exploration of human consciousness and self-awareness evolved simultaneously with contemporary scientific developments, seemingly underpinned by earlier philosophies concerning aesthetics and identity. In particular, the various revisions of

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 128.

⁴⁷⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, Op. Cit., p. 20.

Hardy's language and phraseology in his novel (conducted primarily by Hardy himself, rather than the numerous editors and publishers associated with each new edition) suggest an increasing awareness of self-consciousness, self-reflection and abstraction. This linguistic development exemplifies the range of scientific theories and philosophical enquiries that late-Victorian society was exposed to, and that Hardy (both consciously and subconsciously it would appear) represented in his work. In her introduction to the Oxford University Press edition of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Pamela Dalziel acknowledges that the novel 'evolved,' not by undergoing obvious, explicitly available revisions, but slow, protracted and subtle ones.⁴⁷⁶ It is a novel that seemingly developed organically over a period of nearly ten years.

It is interesting to note that in her exploration of Darwin's impact on Victorian literature, Beer also makes a distinction between 'fear' and 'terror,' arguing that 'though terror may be an oblitative [sic] experience, fear makes keen.'⁴⁷⁷ Specifically, she identifies that a response to fear is demonstrated by 'the self becom[ing] alert, ready, yet passive.'⁴⁷⁸ This definition of fear implies that fear increases self-awareness and perhaps allows for a more transcendental experience; the physical reaction, as it were, generating an altered perceptual or sensory response. In the case of Scientific Gothic fiction, fear of the supernatural (or the scientifically unexplainable) was transformed into an anxiety towards the 'truth' (or the scientifically attainable 'facts'). The synergy between art and science seems to be underpinned, in Hardy's case, by his acceptance of both Darwin's scientific theories and Kant's philosophy on anthropology. In his characteristic third person narrative, Hardy writes

⁴⁷⁶ Pamela Dalziel, 'Introduction' in Thomas Hardy, *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. xiv.

⁴⁷⁷ Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, Op. Cit., p. 221.

⁴⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 221-2.

that ‘as a young man he [Hardy] had been one of the earliest acclaimers of *The Origin of Species*.’⁴⁷⁹ Hardy was also a prolific reader of Kant and, in particular, Kant’s theory of ‘observance’ serves as a useful model for interpreting Hardy’s conception of the self and his allusion to anthropological study in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. There have been several readings of the novel within the last forty years that address the influence of Darwin, yet attempt to do so by establishing direct comparisons with *The Origin of Species* (1859).⁴⁸⁰ Conversely, there has not been a significant analysis of Hardy’s etymological development of the novel, from manuscript to the 1895 Wessex Novels collected edition often used as the source for recent critical editions, which charts Hardy’s increased awareness of scientific terminology and philosophy. In his OUP edition of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1987, reissued 2008) Dale Kramer primarily uses the 1912 Wessex Edition issued by the publisher Macmillan as the basis for his text. Kramer does, however, refer to earlier editions in his ‘Texts of the Novel,’⁴⁸¹ and ‘Significant Revisions to the Text,’ (pp. 353-64). For example, many of the ‘substantives’ are carried through from the 1895 edition.⁴⁸² Therefore, Kramer does not consistently incorporate earlier manuscript or published versions of the text into the main body of the novel.

⁴⁷⁹ Florence Emily Hardy, *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy*, Op. Cit., p. 198.

⁴⁸⁰ See Beer, Op. Cit., Tess Cosslet, *The ‘Scientific Movement’ and Victorian Literature* (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1982); John Glendening, *The Evolutionary Imagination in Late-Victorian Novels* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007); Bruce Johnson, “‘The Perfection of the Species’ and Hardy’s Tess”, in *Nature and the Victorian Imagination*, ed. by U. C. Knoepfelmacher and G. B. Tennyson (London: University of California Press, 1977); and Phillip Mallet, ‘Hardy, Darwin and the *Origin of Species*’, in Phillip Mallet (ed.) *Thomas Hardy in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). Although not exhaustive, this list is indicative of the range of scholarship that addresses the supposed direct influence of Darwin on Hardy.

⁴⁸¹ Thomas Hardy, *The Life and Death of the Mayor of Casterbridge*, ed. by Dale Kramer (1886; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. xii. All further references are to this edition, unless otherwise stated, and are given parenthetically in the text.

⁴⁸² Despite the fact that Kramer primarily utilises the 1912 Wessex Edition (Macmillan) for the OUP edition, the ‘substantives’ have been cross-referenced against the Wessex Novels collected edition that was published by both Osgood, McIlvaine and Harper and Brothers. See Thomas Hardy, *The Mayor of Casterbridge: A Story of a Man of Character* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1895).

Most notably, in chapter thirty two of the 1895 edition the narrator describes the pessimistic attitude of the '*miserables*' found in the town, whose number also includes the former mayor Michael Henchard. In the MS of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Hardy clearly erased the term 'characters' and replaced it with '*miserables*.'⁴⁸³ Hardy's decision to adopt the French word '*miserables*', translated as 'unhappy wretches' (OUP, p. 342), is perhaps a result of his journey to the 'scene of Napoleon's exploit' in early 1887, prior to editing the manuscript ready for its publication as the English first one-volume edition in late 1887.⁴⁸⁴ This editorial change indicates that life experiences often influenced Hardy's work, becoming embedded in future editions of his novels whilst he was editing them. These '*miserables*' often visit the 'remoter' (p. 269) of two bridges located on the edge of the town, and for many this visit leads to their untimely death. In the manuscript, the passage reads: 'the eyes of this *group* were mostly [~~?~~ ~~downwards~~, and ~~were~~ directed over the parapet upon the running water below.'⁴⁸⁵ However, in the 1895 Wessex Collected Novels edition the same passage reads: 'the eyes of this *species* were mostly directed over the parapet upon the running water below,' (p. 207).⁴⁸⁶ The significance of this revision, amongst others that this section shall proceed to identify and analyse, cannot be understated. It is indicative of Hardy's awareness of the term 'species', in the Darwinian sense, as 'only strongly-marked and permanent varieties.'⁴⁸⁷ Despite being an 'early acclaimer' of Darwin, Hardy's increased fascination with scientific terminology was perhaps influenced by his acquaintance with Clodd, with whom he discussed theories pertaining to humankind in particular environments.

⁴⁸³ M.S. (Dorset County Museum), p. 319; Thomas Hardy, *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886; New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1895), p. 269; and OUP edition, p. 207.

⁴⁸⁴ English first one-volume edition (Sampson Low, Marston: 1887). See Florence Emily Hardy, *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy*, Op. Cit., p. 257 for an account of Hardy's visit to the Bridge of Lodi.

⁴⁸⁵ Thomas Hardy, *The Life and Death of the Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886) Manuscript: Dorset County Museum, p. 319. Hardy's crossing-out, my emphasis.

⁴⁸⁶ My emphasis. In the 1895 Harper and Bothers edition this phraseology occurs on p. 269.

⁴⁸⁷ Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*, ed. By Gillian Beer (1859; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 47.

A letter dated Oct 7. 1898 details Hardy's intrigue at 'how vast & striking is the body of unwritten human experience in this so called literary age. It is only necessary to become familiar with the outlying cottagers of a remote district to be let into this subterranean world of impressions, fancies, & knowledge.'⁴⁸⁸ The implication here being that Hardy's reception of Clodd's text "'Tom Tit Tot,'" which he declares to have 'sat up reading [...] last night'⁴⁸⁹ has made a distinct impression on him. The suggestion that 'unwritten human experience' was still a contemporary concern, indicates that Hardy was aware of the importance of minutiae when observing his surroundings and constructing his characters. He appears to include himself within the minority of writers who acknowledge and explore such 'impressions, fancies, & knowledge' in contrast with those that he feels may neglect performing such a close inspection of humankind whilst writing.

When assimilated with the dialogue between the study of anthropology and the physical form, the term 'species' begins to carry connotations of distinct appearance and characteristics that set a particular specimen apart from other humans. In *The Mayor of Casterbridge* the term 'species' appears to suggest that Henchard is one of a breed of individuals, categorised by their 'strongly-marked' physicality, who seemingly epitomise dejection and melancholy: 'There was a *marked difference* of quality between the personages who haunted the nearer bridge of brick and the personages who haunted the far one of stone,' (pp. 206-7).⁴⁹⁰ Therefore, whilst the term 'group' signifies at least a minor attachment to humankind as a whole (in-line with Darwin's definition of 'varieties'), 'species' suggests the severance of any such connection by deeming Henchard to be part of a smaller, more insular,

⁴⁸⁸ University of Leeds, Special Collections (BC MS 19c Clodd).

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁰ My emphasis. See also Harper and Brothers, *Op. Cit.*, p. 269.

genera.⁴⁹¹ Although groups of humans are not a distinct species biologically, Hardy is using this phraseology to create an imagined divide between certain classes of people. This separation is further replicated in the description of Mixen Lane and its disconnection from the main town of Casterbridge. The narrator relates that ‘a brook divided the moor from the tenements,’ which ‘to an outward view there was no way across,’ (p. 236) However, the narrator goes on to relate that ‘under every householder’s stairs was kept a mysterious plank nine inches wide; which was a secret bridge,’ (p. 236). Here, the residents are defined by their supposed connection or disconnection with civilisation, which further determines if they are perceived by the wider community as civilised or uncivilised. Read as an evolutionary signpost, the Mixen Lane residents become a separate species who are only tentatively connected to the wider population by their ‘mysterious planks.’ Like the ‘*miserable*’ who frequent the ‘remoter’ bridge, they have become an oxymoron of evolved species *and* shunned outsiders. This is further exemplified by Hardy’s word selection of ‘mysterious’ and ‘secret’ within the passage which reinforces that the locals are indeed outsiders who defy scientific definition.

As previously stated, the term ‘group’ was used in the MS version of the novel and many subsequent published editions, which remained faithful to Hardy’s original word choice. By carefully tracing the evolution of Hardy’s phraseology, it is possible to identify that ‘group’ is used in the serialised edition, published in Britain in *The Graphic* (2 January – 15 May 1886) and in America in *Harper’s Weekly* (2 January – 15 May 1886); the English first one-volume edition (1887); and the Osgood, McIlvaine Wessex Novels collected edition

⁴⁹¹ The verb ‘haunted’ is in many respects passive and implies that Henchard and the other visitors to the bridge are undergoing a form of existential crisis that deems them not entirely conscious of their movements. ‘Haunted’ also insinuates that there is an element of the supernatural, also commonly associated with the Gothic.

(n.d. – although this publication certainly succeeds the former editions). Yet in the 1895 edition the term ‘group’ is altered to ‘species’, and the wider connotations of this amendment are two-fold.⁴⁹² Firstly, the 1895 publication of the Wessex Novels collected edition was deemed by contemporary critics to represent the most definitive edition to date. For it was in this collection that Hardy identified the three categories that his novels should be placed in which he named ‘Novels of Character and Environment,’ ‘Novels of Ingenuity’ and ‘Romances and Fantasies,’ and which Hardy scholars still uphold. Significantly, both *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and *The Woodlanders*, which are often viewed as Hardy’s most ‘Darwinian’ texts, are defined as Novels of Character and Environment which suggests they are concerned with how characters are received by their surroundings. Secondly, the term ‘species’ has connotations of humankind as biologically separate from other species, which is not conveyed by the earlier, less coded, term ‘group.’ Furthermore, the word ‘species’ is suggestive of a knowledge of accurate (although reasonably limited) anthropological distinctions, rather than the more subjective form of aesthetic judgement which is exemplified by the collective noun ‘group.’

A mere eight years following the publication of Hardy’s Wessex Novels collected editions, Edward B. Tylor wrote: ‘Culture or Civilisation, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.’⁴⁹³ As a contemporary of Hardy, what Tylor is suggesting is that humankind can be analysed in such

⁴⁹² It should be noted that although the Wessex Collected Novels edition was first issued in 1895, which falls within the period of the Decadent Gothic (as defined in chapter three), Hardy’s editing process for *The Mayor of Casterbridge* would have begun earlier. Furthermore, Hardy was likely to have read Clodd’s *The Story of Creation* prior to or during this period of proof-reading, which suggests an earlier scientific influence that still falls within what this thesis terms the post-Darwinian period.

⁴⁹³ Edward B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art, and custom, Vol 1* (London: John Murray, 1903), p. 1.

terms to further define a particular ‘culture’ or class of people. Read against Hardy’s chosen phraseology of the ‘eyes of this *species*,’ that refers to ‘all the failures of the town; those who had failed in business, in love, in sobriety, in crime,’ it seems reasonable to conclude that Hardy was trying to detail a specific section or ‘group’ of civilisation that was more definably removed from society by stronger characteristics than merely temperament or experience. The distinction between ‘species’ and ‘varieties’ was openly debated by Darwin, and in *The Origin of Species* he argued that ‘varieties, in order to become in any degree permanent, necessarily have to struggle with other inhabitants of the country,’⁴⁹⁴ particularly against the more dominant species. Darwin’s term ‘inhabitants’ serves to humanise nature, despite the fact that he was outwardly referring to nature in its broadest sense. In both versions of the narration, Hardy establishes a duality of perception of the external physical body and the emotional capacity of the inner persona, placed within the context of an unforgiving universe.⁴⁹⁵ Furthermore, to refer back to Hardy’s description of Mixen Lane, the lack of ‘permanence’ is also demonstrated by the ‘plank’ of wood that serves as a tentative connection to Casterbridge for a whole ‘species’ of people. Therefore, the ‘struggle’ that Darwin theorises in his text may also relate to humankind who similarly strive to coexist with ‘other inhabitants of the country.’

A further example of evolved word selection, also taken from chapter thirty two, can be evidenced in the following excerpts: ‘Some had been known to stand and think so long with a fixed gaze downwards, that eventually they had allowed their poor *carcasses* to follow that

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 46.

⁴⁹⁵ See Kevin Padian, Op. Cit. Within his article, Padian defines the universe of Hardy’s novels as ‘uncaring’ and ‘mechanistic,’ p. 224. Similarly, Pamela Gossin, suggests that Hardy expresses a ‘deep empathy for the infinite variety of exquisitely painful paths by which human individuals make their way through life in the universe,’ Pamela Gossin, ‘Hardy’s Poetic Cosmology and the ‘New Astronomy’’, in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Thomas Hardy*, ed. by Rosemarie Morgan (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), p. 250. My emphasis.

gaze.’⁴⁹⁶ Again, in the 1895 edition Hardy uses the term ‘carcasses’, whereas in the manuscript the same passage reads: ‘eventually they had allowed their poor *persons* to follow that gaze.’⁴⁹⁷ The evolution of the term ‘persons’ to ‘carcasses,’ this time as early as the English First One Volume Edition (1887), begins to foreground the body as an anatomical specimen, rather than merely a persona. The alteration in language further underlines Hardy’s awareness of more scientific terminology during the late nineteenth century. The grotesque image created by the term ‘carcasses’ also links to the Gothic aesthetic of the novel that further establishes it as Scientific Gothic in style. Another instance of scientific language in Hardy’s writing can be observed at the end of chapter six in which the bay window of the Three Mariners Inn is described as being ‘closed with shutters, in each of which appeared a heart-shaped aperture, somewhat more attenuated in the right and the left ventricles than seen in nature,’ (p. 40). Hardy’s scientific observation is seemingly unnecessary; however, this fact makes it all the more fascinating. The biological details are in keeping with the scientific tone of the period and Hardy’s knowledge of human anatomy is also foregrounded. The lack of romanticism in this passage, which would ordinarily be associated with the symbol of the heart, simultaneously removes any sense of the ‘pictorial’ and replaces it with an unaesthetically ‘real’ image for the reader. There are also possible parallels to be drawn here with Wilkie Collins’s *Heart and Science: A Story of the Present Time* (1882), in which the unscrupulous Dr Benjulia exposes and details the human and animal anatomy for the reader through his interest in vivisection. Although the plot of Collins’s novel is seen by many critics as a remnant of the sensation fiction genre,⁴⁹⁸ the foregrounding of biological science

⁴⁹⁶ Thomas Hardy, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, English First One Volume Edition ((London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1887), p. 300, Harper and Brothers edition, p. 270; and OUP edition, p. 207.

⁴⁹⁷ Dorset County Museum, Dorchester. MS of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), p. 320.

⁴⁹⁸ For example, see Jessica Straley, ‘Love and Vivisection: Wilkie Collins’s Experiment in *Heart and Science*’, *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, Vol. 65, No. 3, pp. 348-73 (December 2010). Straley upholds that ‘vivisection was an apt subject for the Sensation novel, a genre developed in tandem with new scientific techniques for explaining, exploring, and exploiting the human mind,’ (p. 352).

also lends itself to the Scientific Gothic sub-genre. The fact that the sub-title of Collins's novel is 'a story of the present time' elucidates the idea that his text, like Hardy's, was rooted in the 'scientific spirit of the age,' as Cobbe termed it in her 1888 essay of the same name.⁴⁹⁹

In an entry made during July 1886 within his *Literary Notebook*, Hardy summarises an article by G. J. Romanes published in the *Contemporary Review*. It reads:

The World as an Eject. Prof. Clifford s.^d that unless we can show in the disposition of the heavenly bodies some morphological resemblance to the structure of a human brain, we are precluded from rationally entertaining any probability that self-conscious volition belongs to the universe... This is... illogical. [...] Although all conscious volition is matter in motion... it does not follow that all matter in motion is conscious volition.⁵⁰⁰

Embedded within this extract is the issue of identity, and the idea that humankind is simultaneously a vehicle for conscious expression *and* subconscious behaviour. In a discussion of what she terms the 'Victorian scientific movement,' Tess Cosslet suggests that 'science expels Mystery, and reduces Creation to a material process,'⁵⁰¹ yet this is only partially the case. When balanced against the claims of Professor Clifford, as expressed in the article by Romanes, science cannot possibly explain all aspects of the human condition because the 'material process' also encompasses unconscious 'volition.' Examples of spontaneous matter in motion can be observed in many of Hardy's novels, and each scenario expresses the possibility that the anatomical and psychological aspects of a person are not

⁴⁹⁹ To further demonstrate the prominence of scientific debates during this period, it should be noted that Cobbe also published an anti-vivisection pamphlet in 1879 that dealt specifically with this contemporary issue entitled *Bernard's martyrs. A comment on Claude Bernard's Leçons de physiologie opératoire*, which was followed in 1883 by a second pamphlet on the same subject entitled *Light in Dark Places*. Her pamphlets and other similar texts by notable contemporary writers were later published in *Illustrations of Vivisection, or, Experiments on Living Animals: From the Works of Physiologists* (1887).

⁵⁰⁰ G. J. Romanes, 'The World as an Eject', *The Contemporary Review*, L, 49-58 (July 1886), in *The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy: Volume 2*, Op. Cit., p. 174.

⁵⁰¹ Tess Cosslet, Op. Cit., p. 1.

always in perfect sync.⁵⁰² As such, Henchard's conscious physical journey towards the remoter bridge is also marked with his subconscious attempt to align himself with his own 'species.' Cosslett also argues that 'the image of universal organism has both aesthetical and moral implications. Aesthetically, the beauty of its interconnected processes can be admired; and a moral lesson can be drawn from the interdependence and co-operation of its 'parts' for the benefit of the 'whole,'"⁵⁰³ which is particularly useful when analysing the aftermath of the pivotal 'effigy' scene within chapter thirty nine of the novel.

Following a painful act of humiliation enacted by some of the rustic characters of Casterbridge, during which an effigy of Lucetta and one of Henchard are paraded through the town to expose their intimate relationship, the two effigies are thrown into the river. The subsequent discovery of Henchard's effigy, by the man himself within chapter forty-one, is related by the narrator:

While his eyes were bent on the water beneath [the bridge] there slowly became visible something floating in the circular pool formed by the wash of centuries; the pool he was intending to make his death-bed. [...] In the circular current imparted by the central flow the form was brought forward, till it passed under his eyes; and then he perceived with a sense of horror that it was *himself*. Not a man somewhat resembling him, but one in all respects his counterpart, his actual double, was floating as if dead in Ten-Hatches-Hole. (p. 276).

Within this Gothic extract, Henchard is described as possessing a degree of self-awareness that is in-keeping with Hardy's apparent exploration of the dual aspects of physical person and persona in his novel. On self-observation, Kant writes that 'noting oneself (*animadvertere*) is not yet *observing* oneself,' and cautions that truly observing oneself can

⁵⁰² For instance, attention might be paid to the famous sleep-walking scene in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891) in which Angel Clare seemingly moves without consciously determining his ultimate destination.

⁵⁰³ Tess Cosslett, *Op. Cit.*, p. 21.

‘easily lead to enthusiasm and madness.’⁵⁰⁴ Kant’s argument being that if a person is faced with their own ‘materialism’ or physicality, it may become too overwhelming for the mind to comprehend rationally. More broadly speaking, extreme self-awareness (in a distinctly physical sense, as proposed by Kant) can be a terrifying experience. In relation to Hardy’s novel, the narrator refers to the effigy being both Henchard’s ‘counterpart’ and his ‘double’ which subsequently creates an interesting dichotomy. Firstly, as a ‘counterpart,’ the effigy is a means of describing Henchard’s stilted aesthetics, his self-destruction and the unforgiving universe which appears to conspire against him. Through the metaphor of the effigy, these qualities are disembodied from his physical person and suggest a metaphysical, parallel or imagined existence in a non-physical sense. Essentially, an identity has been attached to physical matter that is neither alive nor animated yet succeeds in delineating Henchard’s persona. Secondly, as a ‘double’ the effigy becomes a re-production of his physical body that reinforces his mortality whilst more broadly determining the fragile nature of humankind collectively. In relation to Kant’s ideas on anthropology and human self-construction, the ‘double’ is also a projected image of a ‘real’ person. This displaces the traditional motif of the supernatural *doppelganger* with a more scientifically rooted idea of survival and self-preservation; whether in a literal sense, where the body is perceived as fragile, or metaphysically as a form of expressing pride and dignity. Interestingly, the narrator states that the encounter with his effigy gives Henchard a sense of the ‘supernatural,’ (p. 276), which again reinforces the Gothic aesthetic of the novel.

On February 13 1887, Hardy wrote ‘I was thinking a night or two ago that people are somnambulists – that the material is not the real – only the visible, the real being invisible

⁵⁰⁴ Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, Op. Cit., p. 20. Here, Kant is aligning enthusiasm with “fanaticism.”

optically.’⁵⁰⁵ The implication in this excerpt, taken from Hardy’s biography, is that unlike perceptions of the sublime universe that were becoming more accessible due to advances in the telescope, humankind was becoming more of a mystery owing to advances in the ‘scientific lens’ (used here to refer to both the mechanical apparatus, and the intellectual perceptions of scientists). This was largely owing to the revelation that the more science revealed about the body, the more challenging humankind’s observation and interpretation of the ‘self’ became. Namely, science reveals the mere surface of body and matter, but cannot fully explain how this matter is influenced by the persona. Hardy’s reference to ‘somnambulists’ also acknowledges the possibility of a deeper consciousness/unconsciousness that cannot be explained, just as Darwin’s theories, although extensive, cannot explain deeper consciousness. Clodd’s 1888 text also incorporates the science and art of perception by exploring both the inner and outer sense through an analysis of anthropology. For example, during the introduction to his text Clodd states that Darwin’s theory ‘deals only with organic evolution.’⁵⁰⁶ He argues that this is only a

Small part of an all-embracing cosmic philosophy. For whatever lies within the phenomenal – the seen or felt – and therefore within the sphere of observation, experiment, and comparison, whether galaxy which only the telescope makes known, or monad whose existence only the microscope reveals, is subject matter of enquiry, both as to its becoming and as to its relation to the totality of things.⁵⁰⁷

That is, whatever may be processed via sensory perception, should also be balanced against the significance it has for anthropology. Clodd’s statement defines a sensory process of perception that seemingly incorporates both Darwinian theory *and* Burkean/Kantian philosophy. The cognition of ‘magnitudes’ already defined by Kant in the eighteenth century is extended by Clodd in the late-nineteenth century to include the great galaxies observable

⁵⁰⁵ Florence Emily Hardy, *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy*, Op. Cit., p. 243.

⁵⁰⁶ Clodd, Op. Cit., pp. 2-3.

⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 2-3.

through the powerful ‘telescope’ and the minute ‘monad’ detectable only through the ‘microscope.’ Furthermore, humankind fits within an indeterminate scheme of existence, which biological science has not yet reconciled in terms of a natural hierarchy. The implication for the post-Darwinian universe, then, is that there is no definitive ‘place’ for the human. A letter sent by Hardy to The Revd. Alexander Grosart, on what is presumed to be 22 February 1888, describes Hardy’s understanding of the universe in response to Grosart’s suggestion that ‘the fact and mysteries of nature and human nature have come urgently before Mr. Hardy’s penetrative brain.’⁵⁰⁸ He writes: ‘Perhaps Dr. Grosart might be helped to a *provisional* view of the universe by the recently published *Life of Darwin*, and the works of Herbert Spencer and other agnostics.’⁵⁰⁹ Interestingly, Björk notes that the original draft of Hardy’s letter reads ‘*true* view of the universe,’ rather than ‘*provisional*,’ indicating his assurance that an understanding of the universe is not necessarily led by metaphysical experience.⁵¹⁰ Instead, he is signifying that the universe would be better understood by observing natural science.

William Hughes writes that during the nineteenth century ‘the discourses of medicine, anthropology, imperialism [...] collided with popular fiction, producing works which seemingly express both the fearful unease of an era perceived as closing, and the prospect of a future rendered decidedly uncertain.’⁵¹¹ Read against Hardy’s vision of the ‘true view of the universe,’ Hughes’ comment considers the impact of scientific advances on the contemporary understanding of humankind and the wider universe. The ‘fearful unease’ that Hughes refers

⁵⁰⁸ The original letter from Grosart is only partly reproduced in Florence Emily Hardy, *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy*, Op. Cit., p. 269.

⁵⁰⁹ Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy*, Op. Cit., p. 174. My emphasis.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

⁵¹¹ William Hughes, ‘Victorian Medicine and the Gothic’, in *The Victorian Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion*, Op. Cit., p. 187.

to can be aligned with Hardy's view that perceptions of the universe and existence are reliant on scientific scrutiny where 'the telescope makes known' and the 'microscope reveals.' This appears to reinforce how scientific writers such as Darwin and Herbert Spencer expanded human knowledge of the 'self' in a much more profound way than, in Hardy's view, religion or spirituality ever could. Interestingly, in chapter thirty three of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, the patrons of the Three Mariners are described as regularly discussing Sunday morning's 'sermon' by 'dissecting it, [and] weighing it, as above or below the average' with the 'general tendency being to regard it as a scientific feat or performance which had no relation to their lives, except as between critics and the thing criticised,' (p. 213). The oxymoron 'scientific feat' and 'sermon' emphasises a level of scrutiny of orthodox religion consistent with cultural perceptions in the post-Darwinian period. Simultaneously, however, is the implication that an analogous relationship exists between science and religion because one could not develop or evolve without resisting or building on the other. Yet the main concern here is humankind 'dissecting' the meaning of life from a critical perspective, where human existence is a sum of parts that should be 'weighed' and scrutinised to determine purpose, particularly against an unforgiving, autonomous universe.

In Kant's philosophy, the 'self' is a key component in what he deems to be the construction of a person's character. He surmises that 'the fact that human beings can have the "I" in his representations raises him infinitely above all other living beings on earth. Because of this he is a *person*.'⁵¹² Such terms are coded, and their association with existence and identity become key to interpreting the construction of the self. The implication being that humankind's ability to establish an identity, distinct from their aesthetic quality, is

⁵¹² Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, Op. Cit., p. 15.

paramount to the process of understanding a persona from a less superficial, more scientific perspective. Kant goes on to note that ‘the child who can already speak fairly fluently nevertheless first begins to talk by means of “I” fairly late [...] When he starts to speak by means of “I” a light seems to dawn on him.’⁵¹³ Kant determines that this is because ‘before he merely *felt* himself; now he *thinks* himself,’ before conceding that ‘this phenomenon might be rather difficult for the anthropologist.’⁵¹⁴ The suggestion here is that the emotional, as well as the scientific, understanding of a person is built on an ability to perceive the internal persona simultaneously with the external, or physical, person. Consider, there is ‘life’ in a body and an absence of life when its ability to function biologically expires, yet the physical person remains throughout this process. Kant’s impression also resembles that of Romanes, in that there is strong suggestion of the separation of ‘feeling and thinking’ within the former interpretation, just as there is a discrepancy between the acts of pre-determined and unconscious volition in the latter.

Kant’s concern with the term ‘I’ also opens the debate on other forms of personal pronoun which may also present as coded, particularly in Hardy’s fiction, when analysing human consciousness. Hardy does demonstrate this model of defining the self/existence (both philosophically and scientifically) in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* again during chapter thirty-two. Within the manuscript Hardy uses the third person plural pronouns ‘their’, ‘them’ and ‘those’ to define the frequent visitors to the remoter bridge.⁵¹⁵ Hardy’s word choice here suggests a wider demographic, which is less concerned with identifying a specific person, and more invested in describing a collective consciousness. Read against Darwin’s theory, these ambiguously positioned terms suggest that ‘groups of species’ – in Hardy’s case, the

⁵¹³ Ibid., p. 15.

⁵¹⁴ Ibid., p. 15.

⁵¹⁵ Thomas Hardy, *The Life and Death of the Mayor of Casterbridge* (MS., 1886), Op. Cit., p. 320.

visitors to the bridge in question – appear and disappear as a ‘family.’⁵¹⁶ Therefore, the word choices ‘their’, ‘those’ and ‘them’ remove any possibility of discerning an individual persona. By contrast, in the 1895 edition the third person singular pronouns ‘one’, ‘him’ and ‘his’ are used as a substitute, and directly identify Henchard as the subject.⁵¹⁷ Such a significant shift in phraseology at once establishes the desire for what George Levine terms scientific ‘scrutiny’⁵¹⁸ because the latter wording isolates a particular person, i.e. Henchard, and places him under the perceived microscope of the reader, and elucidates the distancing devices employed by Hardy in the original manuscript. In the 1895 edition, observation is centred on the individual (in this case we are, as readers, to assume Henchard) and any mystery that was attached to the subjects of the plural terms has been eliminated. Where Kant’s work and Hardy’s novel become interrelated is in the act of determining a subject in both the original manuscript of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and the 1895 revision, which differ in terms of their understanding of humankind. A body may be dissected, but this will only reveal the anatomical components that form a body, meaning that the true essence of what it is to be a person is still a mystery. For Hardy, ‘he’, ‘him’ and ‘his’ can be read as an attempt to reconcile the earlier, more general, terms by providing the equivalent of Kant’s ‘I’. In this sense, Hardy’s ‘he’ is at the centre of his own universe, just as Kant’s ‘I’ is the focus of individual self-perception. Therefore, the coded term ‘species’ creates a person at odds with their surroundings.

In his 2008 study of the Gothic Botting writes: ‘Gothic and science fiction share a common fascination with the ruination of the idealised image of the species and in specific

⁵¹⁶ Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*, Op. Cit., p. 256.

⁵¹⁷ Thomas Hardy, *The Life and Death of the Mayor of Casterbridge* (Harper and Brothers, 1895), Op. Cit., p. 269.

⁵¹⁸ George Levine, *Darwin among the Novelists: Patterns of Science in Victorian Fiction* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 233.

yet repeated encounters with the monstrous dissolution of the imaginary integrity of the human body.⁵¹⁹ The disruption to the ‘idealised image of the species’ here implies a visual deterioration or diversion from scientific truth that creates a grotesque image for the reader. However, in relation to post-Darwinian fiction Botting’s hypothesis may also be read as an acknowledgement of the subordination of humankind, or even a deterioration/degeneration of the species itself. Scientific Gothic fiction not only compromised the ‘integrity’ of the ‘body,’ it also raised questions concerning whether humankind occupied a privileged space within the wider universe is. The ‘ruination’ referred to by Botting, therefore, can be applied to the imagined space that humankind was presumed to inhabit on Earth that was disrupted by Darwinian theory that challenged such belief systems. Although not a typical ‘monstrous’ figure, Henchard is an example of ‘ruination’ because he is somewhat separated from his contemporaries due to removing himself from the community or ‘idealised image of the species’ as represented by a character such as Farfrae, who successfully integrates himself into society. For instance, Farfrae is described by his admirer Lucetta, who states that “‘it is amusing to look for somebody one knows in a crowd’ because ‘it takes off the terrible oppressiveness of being surrounded by a throng and having no point of junction with it through a single individual,’” (p. 148). Here, Henchard’s rival and eventual usurper of his life and position can effectively integrate into society by becoming not only a part of his ‘species’ but a superior ‘individual’ specimen who Lucetta wishes to observe within the crowd. By contrast, Henchard cuts a lonely figure whose isolation is amplified by the ‘he’ pronoun which sets him apart from his fellow ‘species.’

⁵¹⁹ Fred Botting, *Gothic Romanced: Consumption, Gender and Technology in Contemporary Fictions* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), p. 144.

Levine, in a similar vein to Kant, evinces that Hardy's literary process of observation is not necessarily led by aesthetics or an emotional attachment. Instead, he suggests that the importance of scientific 'scrutiny' of one character by another surpasses the need to be familiar with the person, and further extends the possibility of a deeper understanding of humankind. Levine also discusses the somewhat dichotomous relationship between science and aesthetics in Hardy's *The Woodlanders*, which has strong relevance here. He writes: 'Hardy's narrator [Giles Winterbourne] works like the post-Darwinian scientist. He needs to achieve the fullest possible distance from his subjects compatible with the closest possible scrutiny of them.'⁵²⁰ The suggestion here being that an emotional attachment is not as important as scientific understanding, particularly when examining a corpse. Within *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Solomon Longways describes a situation concerning Susan Henchard's corpse, with words to the same effect as Levine's when the latter is discussing Winterbourne. Longways states that "to respect the dead is sound doxology; and I wouldn't sell skellintons – leastwise respectable skellintons – to be varnished for natomies, except I were out o' work. But money is scarce, and throats get dry. Why *should* death rob life o' fourpence?" (pp. 112-3). The same distancing device that Levine identifies in *The Woodlanders* is used by Longways in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, in that money is given precedence over a corpse. Therefore, Longways does not identify the physical human corpse as having any sentimental attachment. Rather, he places emphasis on the minute details of the body that appear to surpass the observation of Susan Henchard's persona when she was alive – thus removing her identity and replacing it with a scientific specimen. Furthermore, the reference to 'skellintons' and 'natomies' generate a space in which the persona diminishes, and the physical person is foregrounded. Also, the discussion of specimens and corpses, as expressed by Longways, is indicative of a knowledge of science and dissection. Not only

⁵²⁰ Ibid., p. 233.

does this suggest Hardy's acquaintance with medical practises, but also the possibility that even the archetypal rustic Longways would have at least some basic knowledge of anatomy. Conversely, this reinforces the point that scientific discourses had become 'assumptions embedded' within nineteenth-century culture and that they underpinned the Gothic aesthetic of Hardy's Scientific Gothic novels.

Conclusion

This chapter has established that the Scientific Gothic of the 1880s was a period in which writers such as Hardy were greatly influenced by post-Darwinian theories. Beer's claim that Hardy was challenged with finding 'a scale for the human, and a place for the human' in his work was a route into Hardy's exploration of the post-Darwinian sublime and anthropologic observation. The post-Darwinian sublime affected audiences by granting them both a physical and metaphysical experience that amplified their self-awareness. For instance, Horton notes that

Science became the new "god," blessing spectatorship in the Victorian age. Nineteenth-century performers were almost always preceded by a brief lecture by the lanternist [sic] or the projectionist on the wonders of the technology and science that made the performance possible.⁵²¹

This statement reinforces that the late-Victorian public wanted to understand the mechanics of experience, just as they desired to comprehend the fabric of existence itself. Although science clearly did not displace theology in its broadest sense by becoming a literal 'god,' biological science was able to successfully examine nature in the absence of an omnipotent God. Advances in science and technologies of vision also challenged the perception that humankind had a privileged space within the wider universe because the more science

⁵²¹ Susan R. Horton, *Op. Cit.*, p. 14.

revealed about the world, the more mysterious and unattainable it became. Key principles of formative studies by Spencer and Darwin, as well as Clodd's personal and public writing, became embedded within Hardy's novels *Two on a Tower* and *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, which visibly influenced his language and style. Therefore, by examining Hardy's work via a post-Darwinian lens, it is possible to trace the Scientific Gothic aesthetic that he was exploring during the 'Scientific Age' of the 1880s.

Chapter Three

Restyling the Gothic: Thomas Hardy, the Gothic and Decadence at the *fin de siècle*

Hardy and the Decadent Movement

Thomas Hardy is a name rarely noted by critics as a prominent figure in studies of the Decadent movement. Rather, he is cited as publishing work and developing as a writer ‘alongside the emergence of the Decadent or *fin de siècle* movement in Britain,’ as Gillian Beer notes in her study ‘Hardy and Decadence’ (1996).⁵²² Hardy is not, however, generally perceived as actively producing literary work that could be marked as definitively decadent in its own right. Therefore, the immediate purpose of this chapter is to explore Hardy’s *fin de siècle* work in relation to the aesthetics of Decadence. Beer defines Decadence as representing a ‘theological sense of loss’ that in the Middle Ages was termed ‘“wanhope,”’ an ‘expression more immediate than despair.’⁵²³ This perceived ‘loss’ is linked to Beer’s primary focus on the ‘new scientific ideas about sound waves’ and ‘survival’ in the late nineteenth century, which she claims ‘gave Hardy ways out of the impasse of human mortality and decay.’⁵²⁴ By placing emphasis on ‘mortality’ and ‘decay’ in Hardy’s work, Beer is able to reason that his *fin de siècle* work was influenced by contemporary voices in the fields of art, science and philosophy.⁵²⁵ As a result, Hardy’s later work was permeated with examples of the uneasy relationship between the past, the present and the uncertain

⁵²² Beer does discuss Hardy within the context of Decadence in her essay ‘Hardy and Decadence,’ in *Celebrating Thomas Hardy*, ed. by C. P. C. Pettit (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996). In her essay, Beer notes that Hardy is ‘not often set in close relation to Decadent writing of the 1880s and 1890s,’ p. 90, which gives further credence to the argument that this field is under-represented within Hardy criticism.

⁵²³ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

⁵²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

⁵²⁵ For example, Beer writes on Hardy that ‘the scientific ideas of his time [...] enter the temper of his creativity,’ *Ibid.*, p. 96. Beer primarily cites Charles Darwin as being a key influencer of Hardy (which is well-documented by Hardy scholars) but also acknowledges his affinity with Arthur Symons by stating that ‘like Symons, Hardy is making a claim for a new kind of actuality not bound to longer-known laws,’ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

future, largely fuelled by his exploration of the aesthetics connected with Decadence. Such aesthetics of Decadence originate from the idea that the term itself, as Neville Morley argues, ‘rests on a sense of difference between past and present, and a sense of the meaning of that difference.’⁵²⁶ In other words, Beer observes Hardy’s exploration of the inevitability of death or decay in his descriptions of the physical world, which he attempted to reconcile by relying on sensory perception. Yet there is also the issue of temporal decay that is prevalent in Hardy’s *fin de siècle* work, that feeds into this conflict between past and present. Although Beer’s analysis offers valuable insights into Hardy’s *fin de siècle* work as examples of Decadent writing, there is still some way to go to critically align Hardy’s later work with the Decadent movement.

Beer goes on to surmise that ‘sound for Hardy becomes a way of thinking about transience and eternity, about decay and continuance, about *being* now.’⁵²⁷ Here, Beer is identifying sound – encapsulating the language Hardy’s narrators and characters use in his novels, as well as his poetic ability to create sounds in the rhythm of his written word – as a means of demonstrating his resistance to the apparent moral decline of literature and even society within the *fin de siècle*. The written and spoken word, then, were a means for Hardy to counter-act the transience identified by Beer, yet he apparently utilises the Decadent aesthetic in his later work to achieve this. Max Nordau provocatively wrote of the *fin de siècle* in 1892 that it was ‘the despair of a sick man, who feels himself dying by inches in the midst of an eternally living nature blooming insolently forever.’⁵²⁸ Whilst Nordau is suggesting that humankind was a weak creature, whose impotence was heightened against the

⁵²⁶ Neville Morley, ‘Decadence as a Theory of History’, *New Literary History*, 35. 4, 573-85 (2004), p. 573.

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

⁵²⁸ Max Nordau, *Degeneration*, ed. by George L. Mosse (1892: London: University of Nebraska Press, 1968), p. 3.

backdrop of a thriving natural world, Beer argues that one way of escaping entropy, from a literary perspective, was for writers such as Hardy to transcend the limitations of the physical world within their work. Linda Dowling seemingly acknowledges this idea when she notes that ‘spoken dialects [...] not only more perfectly reflect language really than did written languages; they also persisted in their linguistic purity.’⁵²⁹ Dowling’s important study of language at the *fin de siècle* provides a fresh insight into the use of dialectic and Decadence that still informs current studies of the Decadent Movement. Hardy was well-known for his use of peasant speech within his writing. For instance, in the original manuscript of *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* Hardy made several revisions to the first chapter that included additional words added to the dialogue between John Durbyfield and the village Parson. These are primarily examples of peasant speech given to John Durbeyfield, such as ‘t’ye’ and ‘I know ‘ee by sight’⁵³⁰ and ‘daze my eyes.’⁵³¹ Dowling’s observations concerning dialect appear to legitimise the need to conduct new interpretations of Hardy’s literary style in relation to Decadence. If one aspect of Hardy’s later fiction can be classified as Decadent, using well-established definitions developed by critics such as Dowling and David Weir, then further investigations may reveal other examples of literary Decadence.

The argument concerning Hardy and sound has some basis in Walter Pater’s 1888 essay ‘Style’, in which he states ‘how wholesome! how delightful! as to identify in prose what we call the poetry, the imaginative power, not treating it as out of place and a kind of vagrant intruder.’⁵³² The melding of both poetry – that is, the language chosen by the writer to achieve a certain artistic effect – and the linguistic ‘sounds’ achieved by the writer that the

⁵²⁹ Linda Dowling, *Language and Decadence at the Victorian Fin de Siècle*, Op. Cit., p. 83.

⁵³⁰ See, The British Library, *TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES*, by Thomas Hardy. Original autograph MS; Western Manuscripts; Add MS 38182, p.1.

⁵³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁵³² Walter Pater, *Appreciations: With an Essay on Style*, Op. Cit., pp. 2-3.

reader is able to read, ‘hear’ and interpret, would legitimately contribute to an analysis of Hardy’s *fin de siècle* work in relation to Decadence. The ‘imaginative power’ Pater describes can be inferred to mean engaging the senses of the reader and writer alike, including their ability to interpret sensory signals within prose. Though Beer’s essay begins to identify Hardy’s late-nineteenth-century work as Decadent, aligning his writing with only the Decadent movement poses its own limitations. For instance, it does not sufficiently reconcile the other nineteenth-century influences on Hardy’s literary style that are evident in his work during this period. That being said, Beer’s essay is one of the few investigations into Hardy’s writing and Decadence and is therefore an important text in this field. He is absent, for instance, from major critical studies in the field, such as Weir’s *Decadence and the Making of Modernism* (1995)⁵³³ and only fleetingly mentioned in Linda Dowling’s *Language and Decadence in the Victorian Fin de Siècle* (1986). Dowling’s text identifies the philological transmutation of late-Victorian literature that she claims, for many contemporary writers, threatened the ‘linguistic order of language’⁵³⁴ earlier established by the ‘Latin of Horace or the English of Shakespeare,’⁵³⁵ who many nineteenth-century writers regarded as epitomising elite scholarly language.

As part of her argument, Dowling cites Hardy as a writer whose interests included regional dialects which were ‘the last whispers of ancient and vanishing races.’⁵³⁶ Within his article ‘Fine passages in Verse and Prose’ (1887), Hardy wrote that

I know this is an old-fashioned taste; but it is a well-considered relapse on my part, for though in the past years I have been very modern, in this matter I begin

⁵³³ David Weir, *Decadence and the Making of Modernism* (Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995).

⁵³⁴ Linda Dowling, *Op. Cit.*, p. 65.

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

to feel that mere intellectual subtlety will not hold its own in time to come against the straightforward expression of good feeling.⁵³⁷

When Hardy's argument is scrutinised in greater depth, it appears that he was supporting a move away from strict 'intellectual' writing towards 'straightforward,' seemingly organic language. The oxymoron of 'past' and 'modern' should not be understated, because within this juxtaposition lies Hardy's indebtedness to the evolution of language. In an 1896 article for the *Saturday Review*, an unsigned reviewer addressed Hardy's writing from a linguistic perspective. They acknowledged that novelists 'outdo one another in their alertness for anything they can by any possible measure of language contrive to call decadent.'⁵³⁸ The reviewer's words 'by any possible measure of language' are significant because language in and of itself cannot be Decadent without a certain level of intention. Equally, a reader cannot be merely *surrounded* by Decadence as though it were some form of transcendental experience. Even on a literal level, Decadence is neither an object to be viewed nor an element that can physically penetrate a reader's consciousness. As such, the *only* means available to writers to create any impression, obviously enough, is language. Or, rather, the arrangement and intonation or 'style' of language adopted by the writer aligns it with a certain movement, in this case Decadence. Hardy's Decadence, therefore, cannot entirely rest on his use of peasant speech, owing to the fact that it is infrequently and inconsistently adopted in his later novels.⁵³⁹ The placement and description of architectural and interior objects within literature is also fundamental to the understanding of the Decadent movement. For instance, in Joris Karl Huysman's Decadent novel *A Rebours* (1884), translated into

⁵³⁷ Thomas Hardy, 'Fine Passages in Verse and Prose,' *Fortnightly Review* (August 1887), p. 304.

⁵³⁸ Unsigned Review, *Saturday Review*, lxxxi, 153-4 (8 February 1896), in *Thomas Hardy: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by R. G. Cox (London: Routledge, 1970), p. 279.

⁵³⁹ As previously identified, Hardy added peasant speech to *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* after its original publication. Hardy's intentional edit indicates that he was consciously trying to demonstrate a particular style, yet also suggests that his literary Decadence cannot rest purely on this form of language in his later novels.

English as *Against Nature*, some of the protagonist Des Esseintes's rooms contain a plethora of decoration and ornament. These spaces continually undergo alteration at the hands of the protagonist, according to his mood. There is 'an endless succession of pink boudoirs' and a 'little silver cage containing a cricket' which he has 'suspended from the ceiling' in one such room.⁵⁴⁰ Furthermore, Des Esseintes is described as furnishing the 'public rooms of his house with ostentatious oddity' because he is a self-proclaimed 'connoisseur of colours both simple and subtle.'⁵⁴¹ Such outward displays of Decadence, then, are pivotal to understanding Huysmans style, as well as the wider Decadent movement.

Pair this observation concerning Decadent literature and decoration with the fact that similar architectural advances during the *fin de siècle* were not necessarily 'advances' in most cases, and were instead echoes of an earlier Gothic style, and the Gothic becomes equally significant when interpreting late-nineteenth-century literature such as Hardy's.⁵⁴² The 'ancient temple to the Christian divinities,' otherwise known as the Gothic church referenced in chapter one of *Jude the Obscure* (1895), is a physical manifestation of historical Decadence and a pivotal symbol of what this chapter defines as Decadent Gothic. Decadence's association with the binaries of decline and rebirth posits that the physical object is an emblem of degeneracy, collapse and decay but also re-emergence, growth and progress; particularly when read against examples of supposed advancement, such as the 'new building of German-Gothic design' that Hardy acknowledges as the 'original' church's replacement, (p. 12). As early as 1870, Hardy was indirectly discussing the application of

⁵⁴⁰ Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Against Nature*, ed. and trans. by Robert Baldick (1884; London: Penguin, 1959), pp. 25-6.

⁵⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 25-6.

⁵⁴² Another clear example of Gothic architecture aiding a writer's experiment with the Decadent style is Joris Karl Huysman's *La Cathédrale* (1898), which Hardy copied a portion of into what would later be presented as *The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy, Vol. II, Op. Cit.*, p. 227.

modern techniques on Gothic churches and their implications for ‘modern’ attitudes. In an article for the *Dorset County Chronicle*, the journalist (thought to have been informed by Hardy about the specific architectural details of the project)⁵⁴³ wrote that the original tower of Turnworth church should remain because there was a ‘consideration that antiquity, however bald, has a claim upon our respect, and a charm which is vainly sought for in the most elaborate modern production.’⁵⁴⁴ This statement, which surpasses mere architectural observation, alludes to the idea that old and decaying Gothic buildings should still be honoured in the present. Here, as with Hardy’s *fin de siècle* literature, language is utilised as it typically is - to create a certain effect on the reader. Yet Hardy’s language (although in the *Dorset County Chronicle* this language is vicarious) specifically signposts architectural symbols to create a Decadent effect on the reader within his later fiction.

In many ways both Hardy’s relationship with language and Dowling’s statements are similar to Beer’s suggestion because speech in Hardy’s writing, for Dowling, is a method of overcoming transience and resisting the death of certain forms of language by promoting others. Hardy’s ‘straight forward expression’ is a result of what Dowling refers to as ‘high-Victorian linguistic optimism’ that is ‘haunted by the spectre of an eventual disintegration.’⁵⁴⁵ Lexically speaking, Hardy’s use of peasant speech was another method of literary Decadence that challenged the empirical notion of language by the ‘demoralization’ of earlier

⁵⁴³ In *Thomas Hardy’s Public Voice: The Essays, Speeches, and Miscellaneous Prose*, ed. by Michael Millgate (1870; London: Clarendon Press, 2001), Millgate states that the reopening of Turnworth Church was ‘a project designed by Hicks, taken over by the Weymouth architect, G. R. Crickmay, after Hick’s death, and completed by Crickmay under Hardy’s close and apparently almost exclusive supervision,’ p. 5. This observation indicates that at least some of the text of the article was Hardy’s, as was apparently much of the sentiment behind it.

⁵⁴⁴ Unsigned Article, ‘Reopening of Turnworth Church’, *Dorset County Chronical* (28 April 1870), p. 8. This article was actually untitled, but for the purposes of clarity it shall be given the title as shown. This title is also given in *Thomas Hardy’s Public Voice: The Essays, Speeches, and Miscellaneous Prose*, Op. Cit., pp. 5-7, where the article has been reproduced.

⁵⁴⁵ Linda Dowling, Op. Cit., 50.

‘Romanticism.’⁵⁴⁶ This is owing to the fact that, at the *fin de siècle*, Hardy was moving away from the Romantic purity of traditional language by stripping it back to reveal the nuances of non-standard speech; the type that would have been characteristic of the working-class population who typically inhabited the small towns and villages featured in Hardy’s novels. For instance, Hardy wrote in his 1878 essay for the *Athenaeum* ‘Dialect in Novels’ that ‘an author may be said to fairly convey the spirit of intelligent peasant talk if he retains the idiom, compass, and characteristic expression.’⁵⁴⁷ The reference to ‘intelligent peasant talk’ suggests that Hardy felt demoralised by the proliferation of caricatures associated with the working man/woman within his novels.⁵⁴⁸ His challenge to language stereotypes was at once a resistance to unfair satire *and* a move away from the traditional Greek and Latin language towards a, seemingly, more Decadent style. Another example of Hardy outlining his literary style can be observed when, on 11th October 1890, he responded to a letter sent by Reverend George Bainton,⁵⁴⁹ in which the latter asked Hardy to provide an insight into his working methods. Unexpectedly for Hardy, an abridged section of his response was published mere months later – alongside contemporary writers and scholars, including Walter Pater – in Bainton’s *The Art of Authorship* (1890) within the section entitled ‘Truthfulness to One’s Self.’ Hardy’s letter reads,

“Any studied rules I could not possibly give, for I know none that are of practical utility. A writer’s style is according to his temperament, and my impression is

⁵⁴⁶ Thomas Hardy, ‘Fine Passages in Verse and Prose,’ Op. Cit., p. 304.

⁵⁴⁷ Thomas Hardy, ‘Dialect in Novels’ *Athenaeum* (30 November 1878), p. 688.

⁵⁴⁸ In his later article, ‘The Dorsetshire Labourer’, *Longman’s Magazine*, 2 (July 1883), pp. 252-69, Hardy clearly states that he was striving to distance his own descriptions and dialogue of the working man/woman from the satirical figure of ‘Hodge’ the archetypal farm-labourer. In a pamphlet, which reproduces this original article and was published locally in Dorset, ‘The Dorset Farm Labourer: Past and Present’, *Dorset Architectural Workers’ Union* (1884), Hardy writes that Hodge’s speech is ‘such a chaotic corruption of regular language that few persons of progressive aims consider it worth while to enquire what views, if any [...] are conveyed in these utterances,’ p. 1.

⁵⁴⁹ The letter sent by Bainton is dated 26th September 1887 and is now located in the Dorset County Museum archive.

that if he has anything to say which is of value, and words to say it with, the style will come of itself.”⁵⁵⁰

The resulting impression of Hardy’s own style is that he was willing to break with more rigid codes of language, like some of the Decadent writers of the period,⁵⁵¹ which he believed were impractical and inauthentic during the 1890s when he was asked to discuss the topic. Within the same chapter Walter Pater states that a writer relies on ‘truthfulness,’ that being the writer’s ‘own inward view or impression’ when constructing their prose.⁵⁵² As a prominent advocate of Decadence, Pater’s words appear to reason that style is led by an individual’s synthesis with a subject that is then relayed in a written style appropriate to them. As such, it is not language in its own right that defines Decadence, as critics such as Dowling posit, but the formulation of an applicable style more generally. Most importantly, the style should break with tradition, if this is in-keeping with the writer’s ‘condition of mind,’ as Pater goes on to state in his contribution.⁵⁵³ Similar to Pater, Hardy also proposes that the artist or writer should follow their own intuitive style. The significance of Hardy’s statement emanates from his admission that language more broadly had the power to express worthy ideas only if produced in an authentic and distinct style. Within Hardy’s *fin de siècle* work there is evidence of a Decadent style, yet this is developed as a result of more than the language he selected. Hardy effectively established a style of writing in the late 1880s and 1890s, within the parameters of the Decadent Movement, that also incorporated elements of the Gothic revival which was running concurrently.

⁵⁵⁰ George Bainton, *The Art of Authorship* (New York: Appleton and Company, 1890), pp. 320-1.

⁵⁵¹ For example, in *La Cathedrale* (a text that Hardy was familiar with) J. K. Huysmans broke with traditional prose style by shifting his focus away from a plot-driven narrative, towards a descriptive style that primarily explored the history of Christianity and architectural places of worship. For Hardy’s interest in Huysmans novel, see *The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy, Vol. 2, Op. Cit.*, pp. 30-1.

⁵⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 293.

⁵⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 293.

Thomas Hardy and the Decadent Gothic

Within his article 'The Profitable Reading of Fiction' (1888) Hardy states that 'a story should be an organism,' where nothing precedes it.⁵⁵⁴ Whilst on the surface Hardy was boldly suggesting that analyses of prose should be detached from external influences such as the author, period or societal constraints, his writing during the latter part of the nineteenth century warrants further enquiry by actively considering the influences of Decadence and the Gothic, or, more usefully, the Decadent Gothic. Jamil Mustafa argues that 'Hardy's debt to the Gothic novelists preceding him is in no way diminished by the fact that he inverts standard Gothic paradigms in order to address the particular sociocultural moment in which he writes.'⁵⁵⁵ Indeed, Hardy was writing *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (Mustafa's primary focus in his essay on Hardy and the Gothic) in the 1890s, when culturally the Gothic was reaching the height of its popularity in relation to architecture and literature, and socially Decadence was a flourishing movement in Britain. The implication of 'moment' in Mustafa's statement is that Hardy was expressing himself in a fleeting and unstable period, whilst subsequently striving for authenticity. At first glance, it may appear that traditional Gothic symbols are evident in Hardy works of the late-Victorian period, yet these are executed by Hardy in such a way that they are no longer founded on the traditional Gothic literature that Mustafa claims. Mustafa also writes that the Gothic 'centres on a nexus of topoi: a maiden in flight from a satanic, sexually predatory villain; a heroic rescuer, revelations about ancestry and bloodlines,' amongst other archetypes and idiosyncrasies associated with the eighteenth-century Gothic.⁵⁵⁶ However similar these points appear to be to the surface plot-line of *Tess*

⁵⁵⁴ Thomas Hardy, 'The Profitable Reading of Fiction', *Forum*, 57-70 (February 1888), p. 67.

⁵⁵⁵ Jamil Mustafa, "'A good horror has its place in art': Hardy's Gothic Strategy in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*", *Studies in the Humanities*, 32.2 (December 2005), p. 19.

⁵⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

of the d'Urbervilles, there is more to be read into Hardy's exploration of the Gothic than merely drawing on familiar, out-dated notions of the 'Gothic,' as though it is a stable, grounded aesthetic exclusively bound to a certain period. Therefore, Mustafa's analysis of Hardy's novel, although innovative in the sense that it tackles the neglected field of the Gothic in relation to Hardy's work, does not sufficiently reconcile what it means for literature to be defined as Gothic in the late nineteenth century. Mustafa's reliance on familiar medieval 'topoi' is a case in point, because this interpretation does not consider the other *fin de siècle* influences that were also present in Hardy's work during this period. In addition, the diverse influences on the Gothic during the wider Victorian era inevitably affected the Gothic aesthetic, and subsequently shift the focus when analysing Hardy's literary style.

A good example of Hardy's Decadent Gothic, which is a definition more in-keeping with his style during the late nineteenth century, can be observed in a later section of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* when the protagonist Tess Durbyfield flies into a rage. She does so when confronted by Alec d'Urberville, Tess's supposed 'kin,' who has wronged her terribly in the past.⁵⁵⁷ The narrator relates that, 'without the slightest warning she passionately swung the glove by the gauntlet directly in his face [...]. Fancy might have regarded the act as the recrudescence of a trick in which her armed progenitors were not unpractised.'⁵⁵⁸ Hardy, however, does not seem to desire that his readers succumb to such 'fancy' when interpreting this section. Instead, readers were perhaps shocked by Tess's bold, almost heroic, behaviour. Hardy's word choice 'recrudescence,' or the recurrence of an undesirable condition, could be

⁵⁵⁷ At the end of Phase the First, the narrator relates 'why it was that upon this beautiful feminine tissue, sensitive as gossamer, and practically blank as snow as yet, there should have been traced such a coarse pattern as it was doomed to receive [...] many thousand years of analytical philosophy have failed to explain to our sense of order, (p. 119). The implication here being that Alec d'Urberville has sexually violated Tess, which is confirmed when she is later described as 'suckling the child,' (p. 140) that is a product of her earlier traumatic encounter.

⁵⁵⁸ *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, ed. by Tim Dolin (1891; Middlesex: Penguin, 2003), p. 331. All further references are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the text.

read as both a metaphor for not conceding to imitation *and* Tess's literal Decadent morality because she exhibits degenerative behaviour that is supposed to be hereditary. Similarly, the reference to Tess's 'progenitors' places her actions firmly in an historical context, as though her physical body had been transplanted from an earlier age to enact revenge on a long-standing enemy.⁵⁵⁹ Her passionate act is not rational, instead it is a reflex that is again presumed to be hereditary and is apparently fuelled by her ancestors' mis-deeds. The words 'not unpractised' attests to this and suggest that Tess's impulsive action echoes throughout history, culminating in a present conflict that will reverberate into her future. Again, 'armed progenitors' defines and reinforces the presence of an earlier period, yet the past events being replicated reverberate into the present. Therefore, the boundaries between past and present are distorted. This hauntingly Gothic, visceral and degenerative act will ultimately lead to Tess's decline into obscurity, just as Jude's failures in the present within *Jude the Obscure* will lead to his undoing in the future. There is also the significance of the glove itself, which places a physical distance between Tess and Alec and increases their emotional detachment. This distancing also mirrors Tess's tenuous connection to her d'Urberville ancestors, who she can only connect with on a metaphysical level through her instinctive and impulsive behaviour.

The scope of analysing Hardy's *fin de siècle* work alongside definitions of the Decadent Gothic is too complex for a stream of close readings, that draw on the alternative designations of this style, to suffice. Therefore, it is necessary to divide this section into two distinct parts that both investigate Hardy's style during the late nineteenth century, but from varying perspectives. Firstly, the Decadent Gothic can be read as a process observing the

⁵⁵⁹ This is strikingly similar to the plot-line of Vernon Lee's Decadent story 'Oke of Okehurst' (1886), in which the female protagonist Alice appears to be the eerie reincarnation of her criminal ancestor Mrs Oke.

minutiae of a subject in decay, whether this be physical, emotional, or social. Paired with this hypothesis is the concept that Hardy and his fellow Decadents explored spatial and architectural decay, which also warrants closer scrutiny. Secondly, the Decadent Gothic is also a movement concerned with heredity, as well as the tension between gradualism and transience. Therefore, it is important that Hardy's later work is also analysed in relation to temporality, history, and ancestry in its own right. As such, the following two sections will address these dual aspects of the Decadent Gothic in relation to Hardy's *fin de siècle* work in greater depth.

Victorian Identity and the Decadent Gothic: Hardy, Gothic Architecture and Decay

In an early passage, taken from *Jude the Obscure*, the narrator states,

The site whereon so long had stood the ancient temple to the Christian divinities was not even recorded on the green and level grass-plot that had immemorably been the churchyard, the obliterated graves being commemorated by ninepenny cast-iron crosses warranted to last five years, (p. 12).

The steady decline of theological traditions, and therefore the removal and/or destruction of its associate buildings, is exposed in this excerpt. Further evidence of this can be observed in the earlier description from the novel in which the aforementioned church has been 'cracked up into heaps of road metal in the lane, or utilized as pig-sty walls, garden seats, guard-stones for fences, and rockeries in the flower-beds of the neighbourhood,' (p. 12). There is a restlessness connected with this description, in the sense that the church should be utilized and dispersed in such a way that its original purpose is completely diminished. In effect, the church symbolises a social decay and can be analysed in relation to Nordau's argument concerning the term *fin de siècle* which he claims, 'means the end of an established order.' Nordau is actually referring specifically to what he deems a societal 'contempt for traditional views,' which disrupt 'traditional discipline' thereby compromising humankind's ability to

avoid degeneration.⁵⁶⁰ Effectively, Nordau views modern thought as disrupting the traditional views that have ‘governed minds’ for centuries by instead forming a ‘tangled web’ of ideologies, creating a ‘deepening gloom.’⁵⁶¹ Hardy’s writing in *Jude the Obscure* suggests that the decay of the church is symbolic of the breakdown and fragmentation of society, specifically the rural village of Marygreen in which the early part of *Jude the Obscure* is set. As Nordau writes, the established order (represented in this instance by the feudal society that the church signifies) has been undermined by its dispersal across the village. In *Modern Painters, Vol. 4* (1843), Ruskin discusses Italy in the mid nineteenth century, describing the ‘ruined wall, neglected garden, and uncleansed chamber’ as uniting to express ‘a gloom of spirit possessing the inhabitants of the whole land.’⁵⁶² Although Ruskin’s writing pre-dates the *fin de siècle*, and concerns a different geographical location to Hardy’s Marygreen, his comments still resonate in Hardy’s image of the demolished church that has been divided into smaller, seemingly decaying, sections. Ruskin is directly aligning the breakdown of physical spaces, including environments where society may interact, with the disintegration of the human spirit. Ruskin’s argument serves as a completely different approach to the one later taken by Darwin. Therefore Beer’s observation also seems to oppose Ruskin’s by instead suggesting that Darwin envisioned organic struggle as ultimately culminating in ‘beauty, aptitude, strength and range.’⁵⁶³ In fact, quite the opposite to what Darwin anticipated appears to be occurring when translated into Hardy’s Decadent Gothic. The struggle between nature and the environment in this section of Hardy’s novel paints a much bleaker image than Darwin’s by depicting grotesque and disintegrating remnants of architecture that are at the mercy of natural elements.

⁵⁶⁰ Max Nordau, *Op. Cit.*, p. 5.

⁵⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁵⁶² John Ruskin, *Modern Painters Vol. 4*, ed. by Lionel Cust (1843; London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1923), pp. 345-6.

⁵⁶³ Gillian Beer, ‘Hardy and Decadence,’ *Op. Cit.*, p. 94.

Evidence of Hardy's engagement with the architectural mirroring of social status that Ruskin describes can also be observed in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. The Durbyfield family, including the tragic heroine Tess, are relocated by their mother Joan Durbyfield to their "ancestor's lands" (p. 361) where there are still remnants of their apparent feudal blood-line. In the absence of formal lodgings, the family take refuge 'under the south wall of the church, the part of the building known as the d'Urberville Aisle, beneath which the huge vaults lay,' (p. 447). Their physical position underpins the family's desperate endeavour to secure a tangible link with their d'Urberville ancestry. The narrator continues by describing that 'over the tester of the bedstead was a beautifully traceried window [...]. It was the d'Urberville Window, and in the upper part could be discerned heraldic emblems like those on Durbyfield's old seal and spoon,' (p. 362). Previously omitted from the serial edition,⁵⁶⁴ this passage alludes to a sense of architectural grandeur that contrasts with the deprived family seeking refuge underneath. Their scattered and fragmented belongings, which resemble the careless scattering of church stones in *Jude the Obscure*, are inscribed with a level of disorder that juxtaposes the dignified architectural style that judgmentally looms over them. Similarly, the d'Urberville Window represents a level of cultural elevation that they will never attain. The social decay of the family's identity is, therefore, evident in their literal fall from the prophetic feudal image above them, to the disordered one below. Kevin Padian writes of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* that 'what is inherited (heredity) is more than just corporeal, it is material and social.'⁵⁶⁵ The 'social' form of heredity that Padian discusses is manifest in the space that the Durbyfield family occupy. This space is both physical (under the d'Urberville Window) and perceived because they inhabit a completely different social sphere than their ancient

⁵⁶⁴ This section appears both in the original manuscript and the 1912 Wessex edition. No evidence exists to suggest why this passage was omitted from the serial edition in the *Graphic* from 4th July to 26th December 1891.

⁵⁶⁵ Kevin Padian, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 228-9.

predecessors. On the other hand, the materiality implied by Padian is also evident in the objects that fill the Durbyfield ‘space’, like a Decadent boudoir such as those belonging to Des Esseintes or Gray in Huysman’s and Wilde’s novels respectively. The family’s spatial position in both aspects of Padian’s argument concerning inheritance emphasises their longing to connect with their ancestry as a substitute for attaining a higher social reputation in reality. Heredity, and the implications of this for the understanding of the Decadent Gothic, in *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* is as much about metaphysics as it is about the physical remnants of the past. The d’Urberville ‘old seal and spoon’ that the Durbyfield family take (perhaps misplaced) pride in signify degeneration, and their silent cry for social elevation aligns them with the Decadent Gothic. This is due to the fact that their family tree has devolved from the physical sphere of grand houses, land deeds, registries and claims to titles, to a few sparse and almost worthless artefacts connected to the family’s history that carry no weight in the present. Their claim to kin, therefore, is as dead as the corpses located in the d’Urberville tomb, which in turn offers a grotesque image of decay that in itself can be read as a form of Decadent Gothic.

In relation to endings or tenuous connections, Nordau argued that ‘one epoch of history is unmistakably in its decline, and another is announcing its approach.’⁵⁶⁶ This theory is evident both within the previous passage taken from *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* and within the same paragraph of *Jude the Obscure* as the description of the dismantled church. However, in the latter instance, the narrator takes the description of physical objects much further by detailing the church’s architectural replacement:

In place of [the original church] a tall new building of German-Gothic design, unfamiliar to English eyes, had been erected on a new piece of ground by a

⁵⁶⁶ Max Nordau, *Op. Cit.*, p. 5.

certain obliterator of historical records who had run down from London and back in a day, (p. 12).

Here, Hardy appears to be as scathing towards late-nineteenth-century architecture as William Morris was in his 1893 article ‘Gothic Architecture.’ Morris states that ‘the greater part of what we now call architecture is but an imitation of an imitation of an imitation, the result of a tradition of dull respectability, or of foolish whims without root or growth in them.’⁵⁶⁷ Not only does Morris’s statement reiterate that the Gothic is a fluid and changeable aesthetic, that is not confined to a particular period, it also suggests that upholding ‘tradition’ is not conducive to progress. Similarly, the fact that both writers believe that Gothic architecture represents an attempt to revisit past splendour and tradition, yet this is a failed endeavour, brings the Gothic architectural revival (as explored within late-nineteenth-century literature in particular) into the realm of the Decadent Gothic. As already noted, the Decadent movement within literature was often concerned with Gothic architecture, with texts such as Huysmans’s *La Cathedrale* and Morris’s *News from Nowhere* both going as far as to consciously foreground this subject.

Furthermore, during the *fin de siècle* many prominent London buildings were being constructed or refurbished, and this led to what many critics commonly term the ‘Battle of Styles.’⁵⁶⁸ Due to his personal history as a young architect, serving under Arthur Blomfield in London from 1862, Hardy’s comment on the Gothic architectural revival in his own work seems appropriate.⁵⁶⁹ Fred Botting goes some way to theorise why the archaic aesthetic of the

⁵⁶⁷ William Morris, ‘Gothic Architecture’, Op. Cit., p. 490.

⁵⁶⁸ In her article, Kelly J. Mays notes that in the Victorian period debates arose concerning the building or refurbishment of prominent London buildings such as ‘the Foreign Office (1856-73) [...] the Houses of Parliament (1834-70), Law Courts (1866-82) and National Gallery [...] (1866-76), Op. Cit., pp. 4-5.

⁵⁶⁹ Hardy continually drew from his early architectural career to inspire and supplement his writing, and many critics have studied this aspect of his work in depth. A recent example is Kester Rattenbury, *The Wessex Project: Thomas Hardy Architect* (London: Lund Humphries, 2017). In addition to the article ‘The Reopening

Gothic resurfaced during the late nineteenth century. He writes that ‘Gothic fiction in the fin de siècle aspires to a realm of mystery beyond the scientific and commercial materialism obliterating Victorian culture.’⁵⁷⁰ Botting is commenting specifically on the literature published during this period, yet the ‘commercial materialism’ he references in his study of the Gothic indicates that the decadent and ‘debilitating’ aspect of literature, represented in *Jude the Obscure* by the destruction of the church, extended beyond the scope of the *fin de siècle* novel. For example, the destruction of the church in *Jude the Obscure* represents the break-down of community spirit in favour of materialism. This is evident in the fact that portions of the original church have been used for commercial purposes and not in the way they were formerly intended. This is at odds with Hardy’s thoughts on the melding of architectural styles and the respect he believes ancient buildings deserve, as already discussed in relation to Hardy’s article ‘Restoration of Turnworth Church.’

Such societal breakdown is also evident in Jude Fawley’s inability to fulfil his intellectual hunger, which is exclusively a product of his failure to penetrate the reinforced boundaries (both physical and imagined) that govern elite scholarship. It is no coincidence that those who are educated occupy the important physical spaces and, as such, do not struggle to achieve their social and intellectual needs. Beer notes that,

Evolutionary theory, in Darwinian language, emphasized the movement towards complexity, the subtle relatedness of organism and organism, but also the struggle for life – most vehement between those closely related or needing the same space and nutriment.⁵⁷¹

of Turnworth Church’ already cited, Hardy states that between 1856 and 1862 he made several contributions to the *Dorset County Chronical* concerning church-restoration whilst he was an apprentice to the Dorchester architect John Hicks. See Florence Emily Hardy, *The Life of Thomas Hardy*, Op. Cit., p. 40-1 for one such example. Hardy states that ‘much beautiful ancient Gothic, as well as Jacobean and Georgian work, he was passively instrumental in altering beyond identification,’ and that this was a ‘matter for his deep regret in later years.’

⁵⁷⁰ Fred Botting, *Gothic Romanced: Consumption, Gender and Technology in Contemporary Fictions*, Op. Cit., p. 141.

⁵⁷¹ Gillian Beer, ‘Hardy and Decadence,’ Op. Cit., p. 94.

The conflict Beer notes in relation to Darwinian theory, which acknowledges the idea of two competing ‘organisms,’ can also serve as a metaphor for competing architectural and cultural spaces. The language concerning evolutionary principles can still be applied on a more social level, for Beer’s statement can also be read in terms of humanity and community mindedness. Darwin’s basic scientific tenets, then, still had strong resonance in the *fin de siècle* because there will always be a struggle when two or more types, forms or styles of people, language and animals compete for the same ‘space and nutriment.’ In *Jude the Obscure*, the gap between educated and uneducated is physically subtle, yet socially vast. Jude’s thirst for knowledge cannot be quenched because he is unable to access the well of knowledge that Christminster College represents. Christminster College (based on Oxford, as is widely known) is a force of impenetrable superiority. It is an institution of knowledge only accessible to the ‘worthy.’ Hardy’s narrator writes that ‘the little houses were darkened by the high collegiate buildings, within which life was so far removed from that of the people of the lane as if it had been on opposite sides of the globe; yet only a thickness of wall divided them,’ (p. 329). The imposing and unforgiving structure looms oppressively over those who have no opportunity to break through the invisible barrier that educated-society has placed at the gates. A contemporary of Hardy, Edward B. Tylor discusses such divisions in his *Primitive Culture* (1903) when he relates that ‘in judging of the relations between savage and civilized life, something may be learnt by glancing over the divisions of the human race.’⁵⁷² Tylor believed that classifications were inevitable, yet these seem inscrutable by today’s standards because they relied too heavily on physical differences. The ‘classification’ and segregation of educated and uneducated, exemplified by the ‘wall [that] divided them’ in Hardy’s novel, appears to represent a realisation of Tylor’s observation.

⁵⁷² Edward B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, Op. Cit., p. 48.

Hardy also acknowledged such discrimination in his 1883 article ‘The Dorsetshire Labourer’ in which he writes scathingly about the archetypal ‘Hodge’ figure who was a ‘degraded being of uncouth manner and aspect,’⁵⁷³ commonly used to solidify stereotypes of the working-class man. Jude Fawley (Hardy’s ‘Hodge’ figure) also typifies such rigid divisions in the late nineteenth century due to his desire to join the scholars at Christminster college but failing to do so. His physical profiling as a stone mason or ‘working-man’ (p.117)⁵⁷⁴ by one of the scholars he is striving to impress becomes the barrier to his success and has associations with the ‘savages’ that Tylor describes. With a Dorian Gray type appearance, Jude is described as having a ‘corpse-like face in the watery lamplight,’ (p. 392) whilst in a state of delirium following his acknowledged failure to become a scholar during the latter part of the novel. The narrator further adds to this description of Jude’s delusion by stating that he ‘saw people where there was nobody,’ (p. 392). The presence of phantoms hints at the uneasy relationship between reality and illusion in Jude’s mind, similar to the process that Dorian undergoes in Wilde’s novel. Jude is effectively Dorian, yet without a painting to ease his sorrows. He is a living-dead entity, who is veiled by the ‘watery’ lamplight, which creates the grotesque image of Jude as a shadow, obscured (as the novel’s title has suggested all along) within his own delusions. He is the type of ‘savage’ figure that Tylor identifies in his text because he does not entirely fit within civilised society and is therefore an outcast. Just as Gray cannot meld the reality of his painting with the *unheimlich*, surreal persona that he presents to the world, Jude cannot fathom what is real and what is imagined. In an earlier section of *Jude the Obscure*, Jude’s occupation is described as ‘working and lettering headstones, which he kept in a little yard at the back of his little

⁵⁷³ Thomas Hardy, ‘The Dorsetshire Labourer’, *Longman’s Magazine*, 2 (July 1883), p. 252.

⁵⁷⁴ The brief and disheartening letter, signed by T. Tetuphenay of Biblioll College, goes on to claim that Jude ‘will have a much better chance of success in life by remaining in [his] own sphere and sticking to [his] trade,’ (p. 117).

house,' (p. 261). Here, there is an emphasis on death, both of the people whose headstones Jude is working on, but also the death of Jude's career. He is surrounded by mourning and spatially he is consumed by the void of an ending. His manual labour is also indicative of his failure to surpass society's expectations because he cannot integrate into the society that he longs to be accepted into. He is a man of letters, but not in the same sense as the scholars of Christminster. His letters do not belong to him and, therefore, serve as a disjointed reminder that his prospects have been curtailed. The repetition of 'little' further emphasises that he is diminished and remains insignificant, unlike the names and dates he inscribes that serve as personal histories, destined to extend beyond Jude's own ending. Subsequently, Jude undergoes both a social and physical decay, foreshadowed by the 'little houses' that are also diminished by an unforgiving establishment.

Such temporal disturbance is similarly evident in Morris's novel *News from Nowhere*, which depicts a utopian society thriving within a future period in history one hundred and fifty years beyond the date of the novel's publication. The text features an idealised version of London that explores the intersection of art, politics, and social responsibility. In Morris's novel, the sage-like character Hammond relates to the time-traveller protagonist William Guest that "in the nineteenth century Oxford and its less interesting sister Cambridge became definitely commercial,"⁵⁷⁵ leading to the assumption that at the time the novel was published, materialism and commercialism were causing a shift away from the arts and religion. As such, education was perceived a privilege, not a right and the 'commercialism' referred to in Morris's novel is in many ways a synonym for elitism by 1890s standards. Hammond continues by stating that "towards the end of the nineteenth century the villages were almost

⁵⁷⁵ William Morris, *News from Nowhere or An Epoch of Rest: Being Some Chapters from a Utopian Romance*, ed. by David Leopold (1890; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 60.

destroyed [...]. Houses were allowed to fall into decay and actual ruin. [...] All the small country arts of life which once added to the little pleasures of country people were lost.”⁵⁷⁶ Again, the implication is that community life was in ‘decay,’ much like the village houses that represented it and the dialects of the simple country people that also would have diminished. This decline also befell the ‘country arts’ referred to in Morris’s novel, which resembles Hardy’s statement concerning the London architect who would be deemed the complete opposite of the village craftsman. Eventually, Jude himself accepts his own failures and limitations and a ‘brooding undemonstrative horror’ is said to have ‘seized him,’ (pp. 332-3). This paralysis is an admission of his hopelessness because he seems to have fallen in-line with a ‘pattern of living’ that he did not wish for. Again, he is an outcast. The term ‘brooding’ also proposes that Jude has lost any of the frivolousness that may have brought him happiness, the like of which Morris describes in his utopia. His decaying mind is itself a ‘horror’ of Gothic proportions and Jude’s ‘obscurity’ is an echo of the societal uncertainty expressed by Hardy in his 1893 letter concerning individuality and ‘spontaneity.’ Jude is the epitome of the failure of individual happiness at the hands of such ‘curbed’ and ‘uniform’ existences that Hardy rejects in his letter and Morris critiques in his novel. For instance, in *News from Nowhere*, Hammond states that ‘the rich middle classes (they had no relation with the working classes) treated them with the kind of contemptuous toleration with which a mediaeval baron treated his jester.’⁵⁷⁷ There is a correlation between this statement and Jude’s desire for a form of educational enlightenment and social freedom that is barred from him due to social systems that govern a person’s social position. Also, in both a Darwinian and Tylorian sense, Jude is at odds with his surroundings and therefore cannot thrive.

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 61.

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 60.

From a slightly different perspective, in his well-known article for *Forum* 'The Profitable Reading of Fiction' (1888), Hardy wrote that good fiction,

May be defined here as that kind of writing which lies nearest to the epic, dramatic, or narrative masterpieces of the past. One fact is certain: in fiction there can be no intrinsically new thing at this stage of the world's history.⁵⁷⁸

What is fascinating in this excerpt is the swift change in semantics from reading/writing fiction to the entire 'world's history' within the space of a mere two sentences. It is interesting, then, that Hardy uses the term '*new* building of German-Gothic design'⁵⁷⁹ in his novel. The '*new*' church reinforces his argument that nothing new can be created within literature because, as Hardy's italics suggest, it is a mere imitation. Although the church is newly-built, the 'Gothic' design itself could not be defined as 'new' due to the Gothic style being a much earlier architectural style. Hardy's supposition, then, proposes that literature contains descriptions that are already familiar to the reader, thus reinforcing the idea that societal concerns about modernity or 'newness' and literature are intertwined. Therefore, the description of the church is a way for Hardy to elucidate the concept that communities and architecture alike were decaying. With this in mind, it seems fair to suggest that Hardy, like many of his contemporaries in the field of the arts, was preoccupied with the notion of gazing backwards to create something in the present. Morris also wrote words to this effect in his article 'Gothic Architecture,' in which he argues that 'an organic style cannot spring out of an eclectic one, but only from an organic one'⁵⁸⁰ in reference to the 'organic' aesthetic that he believes traditional Gothic architecture encapsulates. Here, Morris is identifying a form of Decadence in relation to the futility connected with what he deems the decay of architectural style. He believes that architectural superiority cannot be authentically realised at the *fin de*

⁵⁷⁸ Thomas Hardy, 'The Profitable Reading of Fiction', Op. Cit., p. 60.

⁵⁷⁹ My italics.

⁵⁸⁰ William Morris, 'Gothic Architecture', Op. Cit., p. 492.

siècle unless the Gothic revival undergoes a ‘new birth’⁵⁸¹ rather than representing eclecticism.

Linda Dowling writes of Decadence that ‘the imminent cultural collapse so many Victorians were to see in the literary movement [...] was derived from an analogy with Roman Civilisation, an analogy of rise and decline.’⁵⁸² Here, Dowling is proposing that literature is reflective of cultural status or, at least, that what is occurring culturally can be evidenced in the literature produced during the same period. Linked to both Dowling’s and Hardy’s observations, Neville Morley claims that both ‘decadence and decline are historicizing concepts; a societies temporal context’ because the terms ‘look back to an earlier, higher stage, from which the present has declined or fallen.’⁵⁸³ Therefore, Dowling may propose that literature replicates, or even instigates ‘cultural collapse,’ but Morley shifts this focus by contending that society is effectively assessed against its architectural choices. When Dowling and Morley’s concepts are analysed against each other, the resulting images are those found in the work of Hardy, Morris, Oscar Wilde and even the French novelist Joris-Karl Huysmans, whose 1898 novel *La Cathédrale* Hardy made notes on in his *Literary Notebooks*. Furthermore, the fall of the feudal system, represented by the demolition of the church in *Jude the Obscure*, also establishes a connection between Hardy’s literature, Decadence and Gothic architecture that places his work within the realm of a culturally-driven narrative.

The conflicts of architectural style are further present in *Jude the Obscure* when Jude Fawley has finally reached his desired destination of Christminster college, where he believes

⁵⁸¹ Ibid., p. 488.

⁵⁸² Linda Dowling, Op. Cit., p. 84.

⁵⁸³ Neville Morley, ‘Decadence as a Theory of History’, *New Literary History*, Op. Cit., p. 577.

he will receive the classical education he has dreamed of. However, he experiences the juxtaposition posed by the college buildings themselves and the chambers of knowledge housed within. The narrator relates that

What at night had been perfect and ideal was by day the more or less defective real. Cruelties, insults, had, he perceived, been inflicted on the aged erections. The conditions of several moved him as he would have been moved by maimed sentient beings. They were wounded, broken, sloughing off their outer shape in the deadly struggle against years, weather and man, (p. 84).

In this passage Jude is experiencing the realities of Christminster college. He has discovered that the ‘walls and doorways’ that he ‘rambled under’ (p. 79) the previous evening are dissatisfying and decaying remnants of Gothic architecture. The ‘wounded’ and ‘broken’ stones indicate not only the disintegration of the stone structures but may also signify declining ideologies. The fight for survival elucidated by the ‘deadly struggle against years, weather and man’ is indicative of what Beer terms the ‘withering of hope’ that ‘exemplifies decay.’⁵⁸⁴ The two parallel forms of Decadence that are expressed in this section of *Jude the Obscure*, namely the decline of knowledge and an uncertain cultural identity, further align the novel with the Decadent Gothic. For instance, Christminster colleges house the leading philosophers of the period, yet the buildings in which they study and resist the “‘fierce intellectual life of our century’” (p. 81) according to Jude, are archaic and certainly not modern in style. The uncertain cultural identity is, therefore, established by Hardy through the tension created by modern thought and Gothic architecture being unable to coexist. During the same dialogue with the reader, Jude announces that Christminster is “‘so valuable, so lovely’” (p. 81), but, in the subsequent 1903 and 1912 editions of the novel the word ‘valuable’ is changed to ‘venerable.’ This subtle edit by Hardy is interesting because it suggests that the architectural structure of the city is perceived as less important than at the

⁵⁸⁴ Gillian Beer, ‘Hardy and Decadence,’ Op. Cit., 90.

end of the nineteenth century and is instead only appreciated passively thereafter. Even before Jude experiences the college during the harsh light of day, the narrator remarks, ‘it seemed impossible that modern thought could house itself in such decrepit and superseded chambers,’ (p. 79). Again, the ‘decrepit’ chambers are counter-constructive because Hardy suggests that ‘modern thought’ cannot possibly thrive within such archaic surroundings.

Patrick R. O’Malley has also examined Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure* by aligning it with the traditional literary Gothic style, characterised by the imposing architecture of Christminster that ultimately haunts Jude in the same way that the ‘monasteries and fortresses [...] curse and contain Ann Radcliffe’s heroines.’⁵⁸⁵ Such a haunting for Jude is founded in knowledge, whereby modern thought is stunted by the place of its study. Interestingly, Hardy copied a significant excerpt from J. K. Huysmans novel *La Cathédrale* (1898) in which the protagonist Durtal offers Huysmans the opportunity to express dualities of wonder and terror in relation to certain architectural delights, namely the Gothic edifice Chartres Cathedral. Hardy’s chosen passage, duplicated by him in the original French language, contains the following paragraph:

*“Avec l’aube qui commençait à poindre, elle devenait vraiment incohérente la forêt se cette église sous les arbres de laquelle il était assis les formes parvenues à s’ébaucher se faussaient dans cette obscurité que fondait toutes les lignes, en s’éteignant.”*⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸⁵ Patrick R. O’ Malley, ‘Oxford’s Ghosts: *Jude the Obscure* and the End of the Gothic’, in *Gothic and Modernism: Essaying Dark Literary Modernity*, ed. by John Paul Riguelme (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2008), p. 60.

⁵⁸⁶ For Hardy’s excerpt in the original French language, see *The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy, Vol. 2*, Op. Cit., p. 227. The translated version runs as follows: ‘with dawn now beginning to break, the forest of this church, beneath whose shade he was sitting, was becoming really muddled. Forms that had been sketched out in the gloom began to distort as it faded, blurring every outline.’ J. K. Huysmans, *The Cathedral*, Trans. by Clara Bell and Brendan King (1898; Cambridge: Dedalus, 2011), p. 32.

In this passage, Durtal is reminiscing about his earlier experience of the cathedral, which he describes as ‘vaguely Byzantine and vaguely Romanesque in its architecture.’⁵⁸⁷ Like Jude’s perspective on the Christminster Colleges during his evening stroll, Durtal observes the cathedral that has been ‘transformed in the gloom,’ with a mixture of awe and horror. Additionally, the degraded images presented by Huysmans lack the earlier eloquence of Decadent narratives, which brings them into the realm of the Gothic. For example, the ‘faintly sketched’ images, that are shrouded in ‘gloom’ and ‘blurred’ for both Durtal and the reader alike, are less reliant on the vibrant and indulgent colour palette that Huysmans’s presents in *Against Nature*. Instead, the Decadent Gothic in *La Cathedrale* emanates from the distorted images that haunt the protagonist and place him in a transient state because such visions ‘transform’ before his eyes. This process is similar to how Jude is tormented by his visual memory of Christminster College, which also blurs the line between imagination and reality. Furthermore, the ‘shade’ of the Cathedral consumes Durtal, much like the Decadently Gothic chambers of Des Esseintes and Sue oppress them.

Significantly, later in the novel Sue Bridehead, who critics often title as a ‘modern’ or New Woman,⁵⁸⁸ discusses with her cousin Jude Fawley where the most appropriate place for them to sit might be. The exchange runs,

‘Shall we go sit in the Cathedral?’ he asked, when their meal was finished.
 ‘Cathedral? Yes. Though I think I’d rather sit in the railway station,’ she answered [...] ‘That’s the centre of town life now. The Cathedral has had its day,’ (pp. 134-5).

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 29.

⁵⁸⁸ Sue Bridehead is analysed in a selection of essays and articles in which she is referred to as a ‘modern’ or ‘New woman.’ For example, see John Goode ‘Sue Bridehead and the New Woman,’ in *Women Writing and Writing about Women*, ed. by Mary Jacobus (London: Routledge, 2012) and *The Sense of Sex: Feminist Perspectives on Hardy*, ed. by Margaret R. Higonnet (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1993). Furthermore, within *Jude the Obscure*, Jude exclaims to Sue ‘‘How modern you are!’’ (p. 134) when she wishes to sit in the railway station rather than the cathedral.

There is both a theological uncertainty and an architectural disturbance that can be examined here. In this passage the railway station is representative of modern architecture, a style far-removed from the traditional Gothic style usually aligned with grandeur and feudalism. Indeed, Kelly J. Mays remarks that the ‘Mediæval Gothic,’ illustrated in Hardy’s novel by Christminster Cathedral, ‘designates not only or even primarily edifices dating from the Middle Ages, but also recent buildings and monuments in the Gothic mode that purportedly fail to accommodate or reflect modern ‘conditions,’ and ‘requirements.’⁵⁸⁹ Essentially, the cathedral is a building that does not fulfil modern requirements, and this flaw is not lost on the ‘modern’ Sue Bridehead. At the *fin de siècle* Morris wrote extensively about the absence of Art in the design and construction of Architecture, by claiming such an oversight ‘indicates a transference of the interest of civilised men from the development of the human intellectual energies of the race to the development of its mechanical energies.’⁵⁹⁰ In the case of Hardy’s novel, the opposing principles of medievalism and modernism mark a break-down of human connection in favour of industrial progress. Sue’s lack of interest in the cathedral in favour of the railway station represents a shift away from community and traditional human archetypes of power, towards an impersonal and superficial society grounded in ‘mechanical’ progress.

This conflict between architectural styles, and the subsequent eclectic⁵⁹¹ mix of ancient and modern, can be observed in Morris’s novel *News from Nowhere*, published a mere five years prior to *Jude the Obscure* and also falling within the parameters of the *fin de siècle*.

⁵⁸⁹ Kelly J. Mays, Op. Cit., p. 6.

⁵⁹⁰ William Morris, ‘Gothic Architecture’, Op. Cit., p. 475.

⁵⁹¹ William Morris wrote of the term eclectic that ‘an organic style cannot spring out of an eclectic one, but only from an organic one,’ Ibid., p. 492. Here, the term eclectic is used to represent a mixture of styles that are deemed to be unnatural. Morris also believed that ‘the form, as well as the spirit’ of architecture ‘must be Gothic’ because this style was the most organic, Ibid., p. 492.

Morris's protagonist Hammond poignantly states that "the world was being brought to its second birth; how could that take place without a tragedy?" in an explanation of how London and its surrounding environs came to evolve into such an idyllic society.⁵⁹² What is expressed in this statement is the unnerving approach of modernity, as well as the acknowledgement of a period beyond Decadence, that Guest at once anticipates in his own age and Hammond recollects in his study of British history. In Hardy's 1895 novel, the 'tragedy' arguably emanates from the faltering of religious beliefs and a shift towards industrialisation. Morris articulates his desire for 'intelligent co-operation,' yet the supposed irrelevance of the cathedral, expressed by Sue in Hardy's novel, is indicative of the societal dispersal and social decay that Morris is resisting in his personal and fictional writing alike. Metaphorically, the railway station represents a place of functionality and mobility, with each passenger navigating their own personal journey (that will eventually become their individual history). By contrast, the cathedral is a traditional hub of the community that would bring humankind together, specifically those with the same religious beliefs and, therefore, like-minded ideas. Viewed from an alternative perspective, however, the modern architect in *Jude the Obscure* is depicted as a lone worker, exemplified by the London architect who 'had run down from London and back in a day' (p. 12). Compared to the imagined construction of the Gothic cathedral, and beauty radiated by it, the resulting image is a stark contrast.

Furthermore, Sue's preference for the railway station indicates her desire to move forwards. Alternatively, Jude's perspective is that he is holding on to the past and this is not conducive to success. Again, in his essay 'Gothic Architecture,' Morris argues that 'architectural beauty is the result of the harmonious and intelligent co-operation of the whole

⁵⁹² Ibid., p. 113.

body of people engaged in producing the work of the workman.’⁵⁹³ Morris was passionate about architecture as a means of uniting society for what he deemed a higher artistic purpose. For instance, he believed that creating a beautiful masterpiece should involve collaboration between members of the community, and that the final product should be for the ultimate benefit of the wider-public. It is well documented that Morris was an active, and extremely vocal, member of The Socialist League, which he founded in 1884.⁵⁹⁴ Therefore, he was heavily invested in determining the positive future dynamics of society. Hardy was also outspoken in his views of social politics and art, as evidenced by his many essays, speeches and contributions to prominent journals on these subjects.⁵⁹⁵

Within another scathing verbal attack on the Gothic style, Sue declares that, “intellect at Christminster is new wine in old bottles. The mediaevalism of Christminster must go, be sloughed off, or Christminster itself will have to go,” (p. 150). The wine metaphor that Sue uses can be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, her words identify the emergence of a more modern form of education and philosophy, yet this is destabilised when articulated by aged scholars. Secondly, Sue also appears to believe that modern thoughts can be heard echoing through the walls of Gothic buildings, which she believes undermines them. Whichever perspective is adopted here when interpreting Sue’s metaphor, the core argument is that ancient and modern cannot co-exist without a disturbance. The receptacle, as an analogy of spatial tension, does not adequately *contain* its contents. The ‘new wine’ is essentially

⁵⁹³ William Morris, ‘Gothic Architecture’, Op. Cit., p. 490.

⁵⁹⁴ Morris was also a member of the Social Democratic Federation prior to founding his own party.

⁵⁹⁵ Hardy was commissioned to write several articles for notable magazines and journals during the late 1880s and the early 1890s that concerned literature and the processes of writing: ‘Fine passages in Verse and Prose’ (1887); ‘The Profitable Reading of Fiction’ (1888); ‘Candour in English Fiction’ (1890); ‘The Art of Authorship’ (1890); ‘The Science of Fiction’ (1891) and ‘Why I Don’t Write Plays’ (1892). He also wrote several articles on labour and the workman, including his most prominent work on this subject ‘The Dorsetshire Labourer’ (1883). Although far from an exhaustive list, these are perhaps the most prominent of titles produced by Hardy at this time.

modern thought, and the ‘old bottles’ Gothic buildings, resulting in the two elements negatively affecting or polluting each other. Sue’s desire is that medievalism be eradicated due to its oppressive and limiting aesthetic. For example, Sue’s chambers are described by the narrator as containing ‘Gothic-framed prints of saints, the church-text scrolls, and other articles which, having become too stale to sell, had been used to furnish this obscure chamber,’ (p. 95). Much like medievalism for Sue, the Gothic remnants in her residence are under-valued by her. Similarly, the description again reinforces the metaphor of her negative feelings towards the past and its stale logic. The logic referred to here is representative of the expected behavioural conventions and traditional values associated with medievalism that Sue is condemning. However, the passage concerning Sue’s chamber does not consist of her words directly. Instead, they come from the narrator, thus hinting at broader assumptions about medievalism and the ‘stale’ past. There is also a conflict between ‘sham’ art and ‘real’ art that Morris identifies in ‘Gothic Architecture.’ The portrayal of Sue’s compartment as an oppressive space shares some similarities with Des Esseintes’s chamber in Huysmans’s novel *Against Nature*. In the latter case, the narrator states that

These pictures [from *Religious Persecutions*], full of abominable fancies, reeking of burnt flesh, dripping with blood, echoing with screams and curses, made Des Esseintes’ flesh creep whenever he went into the red boudoir, and he remained rooted to the spot, choking with horror.⁵⁹⁶

Both accounts of Sue’s and Des Esseintes’s rooms are dealing with a form of disintegration, demonstrated by the fragile ‘scrolls’ and ‘stale’ objects in the former case, and the ‘burnt flesh’ and images that are ‘rooted’ in the past and are therefore stagnant in the latter. The disconnection between past and present proposed in both passages emphasizes the oppressive

⁵⁹⁶ Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Against Nature*, Op. Cit., p. 71.

aesthetic of the Gothic past, as well as suggesting that traditional pious worship has been replaced by the worship of objects and decoration.

Sue continues to voice her disdain for the Gothic by scolding Jude for his choice of vocation. She states,

You ought to have learnt Classic. Gothic is barbaric art, after all. Pugin was wrong and Wren was right. Remember the interior of Christminster cathedral [...] Under the picturesqueness of those Norman details one can see the grotesque childishness of uncouth people trying to imitate the vanished Roman forms, remembered by dim tradition only, (p. 306).

The strong, scathing statement of ‘grotesque childishness’ has connotations of ideas in their infancy, as though imitation is both unpalatable and unstable. Similarly, the implications of ‘grotesque’ can be aligned with the Decadent aesthetic, in that the term ‘grotesque’ can be perceived to represent physical matter in decay as well as the distortion of intellectual and cultural ideas. Whilst Wren was primarily a scientist and mathematician during the seventeenth century (who later became an architect),⁵⁹⁷ Pugin relied on architecture as a measure of morality, with many of his projects possessing religious undertones.⁵⁹⁸ Ruskin viewed ‘Grotesqueness’ as the realisation of truths,⁵⁹⁹ but Sue’s stance is that such realities represent the ideologies of ‘uncouth people’ who are afraid to visit upon the present period anything innovative, by instead relying on archaic forms. Even Sue’s use of ‘barbaric’ appears to second this notion, due to its subtext of primitive style and uncivilised aesthetic. Reverberations of Morris’s words can also be observed in the emphasis of architectural

⁵⁹⁷ One of Christopher Wren’s most famous architectural projects was St Paul’s Cathedral in London. Amongst other accolades, Wren was elected as Savilian professor of astronomy at Oxford in 1661 yet turned to architectural projects soon after.

⁵⁹⁸ In 1836, Pugin published what is often referred to as his architectural manifesto *Contrasts*. In his text, Pugin imbues architecture with social and moral improvement, aided by religious and political understanding.

⁵⁹⁹ John Ruskin, *Modern Painters, Vol. 3*, Op. Cit., Ruskin writes that one of the principles of the grotesque is that, in art, it arises from the ‘confusion of the imagination by the presence of truths which it cannot wholly grasp,’ p. 100.

‘imitation.’ The Gothic is viewed by Sue as a lesser form, even if realised at the same standard of workmanship, whereas Morris accepts Gothic imitations if they possess the same level of artistic skill as the medieval period. Sue’s forceful tone on this subject again suggests Hardy’s concern with the appropriation of earlier architectural styles.

A Modern Disturbance: Hardy, History and Temporal Decay

The amplification of a distinctly Victorian identity at the *fin de siècle*, that first emerged within literature published during the 1850s, does not begin and end with the construction or replication of Gothic architecture, despite this endeavour being pivotal to the Gothic revival. There is also the implication of temporal decay, or the blurring of boundaries between the past and present to create a Decadent Gothic effect within literature. In turn, such obscuring of chronological limits created a disturbance for the reader as the modern era approached. To turn again to *Jude the Obscure*, Sue’s association with the repressive force of the Gothic and the blurring of boundaries between literary and historical periods is also manifest. As a child, Sue is said to have recited Edgar Allen Poe’s *The Raven* (1845) and her aunt Drusilla Fawley’s nurse relates to Jude that the young girl would,

‘Knit her little brows and glare round tragically, and say to the empty air, as if some real creature stood there – ‘Ghastly, grim, and ancient Raven, Tell me what thy lordly name is, On the night’s Plutonian shore!’ She’d bring up the nasty carrion bird that clear, [...] that you could see un a’most before your very eyes,’ (pp. 111-2).

Often viewed by critics as a precursor to the Decadent Movement, as well as being Gothic in style, Poe’s work is an important signpost on the path towards the Decadent Gothic.

Therefore, the direct reference to Poe’s poem (although slightly misquoted) in Hardy’s novel is yet another marker of his Decadent Gothic style, as well as an example of the past casting a

long shadow on the present. The ‘ancient [...] carrion bird’ hovers and torments like Christminster college in Jude’s gradually degenerating mind and Tess’s d’Urberville ancestry, as this section shall go on to discuss. The raven instigates a haunting from the past for the speaker of the poem, creating a displacement between past and present that torments him.⁶⁰⁰ His chamber becomes a haunted space, divested of a connection to the present and his words are trapped within the confines of the chamber, like the stifling chambers of Des Esseintes and Sue Bridehead. When aligned with the Gothic aesthetic at the *fin de siècle*, the bird is at odds with its surroundings because ancient and modern struggle to coexists within Decadent Gothic literature.⁶⁰¹

The raven’s only word ‘nevermore,’⁶⁰² repeated at the end of each stanza, rings in the ears of the speaker as an emotional, physical, and temporal disturbance. The ‘ghastly, grim’ creature is reminding the reader and the speaker alike of what will never be, what is caged in the past, and what has no future because the raven sits ‘above [the] chamber door’⁶⁰³ as though it were blocking progress. Again, this section from *Jude the Obscure* is a metaphor for the past as a haunting presence, that is simultaneously representative of history as a form of death and a ‘ghastly, grim’ reworking of the grotesque image. The emotional decay expressed in Poe’s poem further develops Sue’s and, indeed, Hardy’s perspective by emphasising that logic and old-fashioned values are actually remnants of the past that eclipse

⁶⁰⁰ Within Poe’s poem, the male speaker is haunted by the loss of his love ‘Lenore’ and the raven symbolises the tormenting grief that consumes him. See Edgar Allan Poe, ‘The Raven’, in *The Complete Poetry of Edgar Allan Poe* (1845; London: Signet, 2008), pp. 92-8.

⁶⁰¹ Here, modernity refers to the period immediately following the *fin de siècle* when decadence had arguably evolved into modernism. See David Weir, *Decadence and the Making of Modernism* (Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), p. 17. Weir argues that the late nineteenth century was commonly regarded as ‘a period of Decadence’ and not as the end, per se, ‘but the ending,’ p. 17. Seemingly, the ‘new’ beginning the surfaced after this time was a modern identity when ‘newness becomes necessary, imitation no longer suffices,’ p. 18.

⁶⁰² Edgar Allan Poe, ‘The Raven’, Op. Cit., p. 94 The word ‘nevermore’ is then repeated at the end of each stanza until the finale of the poem.

⁶⁰³ Ibid., p. 94.

rather than enhance the present. There is also a sense that Sue's stance as a tragic muse is foreshadowed by her childhood declarations because she finds herself much closer to the Gothic aesthetic in her early years than she would later appear be comfortable with. This idea is later reinforced by her revelations concerning the Gothic and its limited value when observed against modern education. Ruskin, in his *Modern Painters, Vol. 3*, wrote of perception and aesthetics that 'beauty is continually mingled with the shadow of death.'⁶⁰⁴ As readers we may question what form of death Ruskin is referring to: the heart? soul? liberty? physical? emotional? For Sue, her death is that of her aspirations, which occurs once her moral and physical freedom are compromised. Sue is, in fact, the obscure character in the novel because as she 'glare[s] round tragically' she herself becomes a tragic figure for the observer, and her words are carried forward into her future. Hardy also adopts poetic rhythms to manifest images of torment and emphasise the degradation of time, which is reminiscent of Pater's theory of the music of Decadent literature referred to earlier in this chapter. Sue is a dark and obscured 'carrion bird' who is unable to settle and, instead, remains tormented.⁶⁰⁵ The observing of phantoms 'as if some creature stood there' is strikingly similar to Jude's delusions later in the novel where he 'saw people where there was nobody,' (p. 392). Here Sue, like Jude and even Dorian Gray in Wilde's novel, has degraded perceptions of reality that surpass temporal limitations and create a disturbance in the present.

⁶⁰⁴ John Ruskin, *Modern Painters, Vol. 3*, ed. by Lionel Cust (1843; London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1923), p. 346.

⁶⁰⁵ Within *Jude the Obscure* Sue is obscured by the shadow of her own actions. The raven of Poe's poem is an aide-mémoire of loss just as Sue's own history is a reminder of her inability to reconcile her emotions. For instance, she moves between Jude and Phillotson because she cannot settle into her romantic situations. Similarly, Sue's controversial escape from the teaching school in part third, chapter three is a manifestation of her tormented and restless persona in the novel. Following the infanticide of her children at the hands of Arabella and Jude's son Little Father Time, Sue declares "Arabella's child killing mine was a judgement – the right slaying the wrong," (p. 350). Again, this anguished statement emphasises that Sue can neither distinguish between right and wrong nor process reality without descending into obscure, grotesque tropes.

What is also particularly striking in Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*, in relation to temporal decay, is the reference to the 'cast iron crosses' that occurs early in the novel. These crosses are the last surviving remnants of the churchyard and possess a disturbingly short life-span of 'five years.' The implication here is that human memory also has an expiry date. If set against the publication date of the novel, the life cycle of the crosses marks the transition period from 'ancient' to modern *and* symbolises the move towards a new century. Weir notes that 'decadence was as crucial to the development of the modern novel as symbolism [...] was to the development of modern poetry,' in that, literarily speaking, the decay that was synonymous with decadence surrendered to a progressive aesthetic that denoted the possibility of a new beginning in the future.⁶⁰⁶ Although it cannot be definitively proved that Hardy was conscious of the significance of his chronological reference, he did remark in 1890, 'things move in cycles; dormant principles renew themselves, and exhausted principles are thrust by. There is a revival of the artistic instincts towards great climatic motives.'⁶⁰⁷ This passage, taken from Hardy's essay 'Candour in English Fiction' for the *New Review*, foregrounds his theory concerning the cyclical nature of literature. However, Hardy is also demonstrating an awareness of Decadence and even extinction. He appears to be suggesting that 'revival' is inevitable, yet he does not outwardly state if this is a positive or negative pattern. Instead, Hardy's two prominent novels,⁶⁰⁸ written and published within the *fin de siècle*, more explicitly demonstrate that moving 'in cycles' is a negative experience.

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid., p. xvii.

⁶⁰⁷ Thomas Hardy, 'Candour in English Fiction', *New Review*, 2, 15-21 (January 1890), in *Thomas Hardy's Public Voice: The Essays, Speeches, and Miscellaneous Prose*, ed. by Michael Millgate (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), p. 96.

⁶⁰⁸ The two novels referred to are *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*. Hardy's final published novel was *The Well-Beloved* (1897), however, due to the fact that this novel was serialised earlier than its publication date as *The Pursuit of the Well-Beloved* (1892), Hardy's final novel is usually considered by critics to be *Jude the Obscure*.

In relation to chronology and disturbance, Hayden White discusses how history is presented within literature by stating that it,

belongs to the category “discursive writing,” so that when the fictional element – or mythic plot structure – is obviously present in it, it ceases to be a history altogether and becomes a bastard genre, product of an unholy, though not unnatural, union between history and poetry.⁶⁰⁹

Here, White is essentially foregrounding the unreliable, and often subjective, portrayal of history as a way of exploring the blurred boundaries between fact and fiction, or ‘history and poetry’ as he terms it. During the *fin de siècle*, many notable writers, including Hardy, were revisiting historical works by other famous writers. For instance, Hardy was making notes on several pieces of Thomas Carlyle’s historically-centred work, as well as a select number of articles and essays that discussed Carlyle alongside other writers who engaged with historical events in their narratives.⁶¹⁰ Carlyle’s *French Revolution* is a case in point, because the author neither experienced the French Revolution first-hand, nor was he completely unpoetic in his work on the subject. In Hardy’s *Literary Notebooks, Vol. II*, there appears an article taken from the *Times Literary Supplement* in which Carlyle is berated because in his work he ‘would not trust to the true prose writer’s art of logical arrangement or leave the facts, even if they were most eloquent to speak for themselves [...] as if he were a poet instead of an historian.’⁶¹¹ Although the article is dated 1908, and is therefore beyond the scope of the *fin de siècle*, it serves as confirmation that history may be perceived as a fiction. Documenting history, then, can be interpreted as a form of social degeneration because the process involves

⁶⁰⁹ Hayden White, ‘The Historical Text as Literary Artifact’, in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. by Vincent B. Leith (New York: Norton, 2010), p. 1538.

⁶¹⁰ Hardy was in possession of a newspaper cutting, placed in his notebook in c1888, that contained references to a number of writers who engaged with historical periods in their work. These included: Arthur Henry Hallam’s *A View of the State of Europe during the Middle Ages* (1818); François Guizot’s *General History of Civilization in Europe by François Pierre Guillaume Guizot* (1828) and the eighteenth century study by Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776). The newspaper clipping itself is unidentified. See, Thomas Hardy, *The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy: Volume Two*, Op. Cit., pp. 4-5.

⁶¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.195.

gazing backwards instead of progressing forwards. This is particularly pertinent at the end of the nineteenth century, when a new, modern era was approaching. For instance, Fred Botting quite firmly claims that ‘modernity from its inception [...] has depended on an end to history.’⁶¹² In a rather Markovian manner, Botting is suggesting that the modern era would need to be severed from all that precedes it, otherwise it cannot thrive. In other words, without the ability or foresight to sever a connection with the corrupt and degenerative past, an optimistic future is impossible. This concept is reminiscent of the Durbeyfield plight in Hardy’s novel that this section shall now discuss.

In Hardy’s novel *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, Tess’s lineage is tentatively connected to the present via a series of unstable elements: decaying monuments and tombstones; vague recollections within ancient documents; and general hearsay, instigated by the village Clergyman. The implications of historically centred literature are hinted at by Edward B. Tylor, who wrote in 1903 that ‘the simple keeping up of ancient habits is only one part of the tradition from old into new and changing times,’⁶¹³ where the ancient habits in Hardy’s novel could be referring to how human history is both commemorated and documented. The narrator states that ‘Pedigree, ancestral skeletons, monumental record, the d’Urberville lineaments, did not help Tess in her life’s battle as yet,’ (p. 17). The decaying d’Urberville ancestry is neither useful nor a way for the Durbyfield family to progress because Tess’s past, and theirs, is in fact a fiction that has been carelessly written and communicated to Tess’s father John Durbyfield.⁶¹⁴ Hardy’s use of ‘ancestral skeletons’ serves to expose the dead

⁶¹² Fred Botting, *Gothic Romanced: Consumption, Gender and Technology in Contemporary Fictions*, Op. Cit., p. 53.

⁶¹³ Edward B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, Op. Cit., p. 16.

⁶¹⁴ In the opening of *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, the Clergyman incorrectly informs John Durbyfield that he is a direct descendant of the d’Urberville family. He states that ‘‘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,’’ Ibid., p. 8.

relics that represent the past in the novel, as well as emphasising that Tess's history is far-removed from her life and the late-Victorian period alike. Also, the final two words of the passage 'as yet' hint at a future, yet this is undermined by Tess's 'life's battle' and implies a potential survival or, more appropriately within the context of the novel, lack thereof. The Durbyfield identity, particularly that of the protagonist Tess, is marked by shadows of the past and their life is held-up for scrutiny as it slowly degenerates before the reader's eyes. On temporality and heredity, Kevin Padian writes that 'everything in the universe, animate and inanimate alike, bears the mark of its history as it has changed through time.'⁶¹⁵ Padian is here arguing against the 'Markovian process,'⁶¹⁶ by suggesting that present events actually do have links to the sequential processes that precede them. In effect, the d'Urberville family are historicised, and the fall of the ancient family directly parallels the decay and destruction of the current one. The 'monumental record' referred to in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* resembles the 'cast-iron crosses' in *Jude the Obscure*, in that they speak of a history marked by inanimate objects. There is also a hint of the feudal system, represented by 'pedigree,' that still reinforces a hierarchical system that certainly does not favour Tess herself.

In a later section of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Angel Clare (Tess's eventual husband, who is oblivious to her purported ancestral history at this point in the novel) remarks of the ancient family that "I never pass one of their residences without thinking of them. There is something very sad in the extinction of a family of renown, even if it was fierce, domineering, feudal renown," (p. 186). In his statement to Tess, Clare uses the term 'feudal' as synonymous with power, equally emphasizing the d'Urberville family's once prominent existence and their surprising demise. The term 'extinction' is provocative, in that it signals

⁶¹⁵ Kevin Padian, Op. Cit., p. 219.

⁶¹⁶ Ibid., p. 219.

the demise of an animate being. In this case, the reader is well-aware that it is the d'Urberville family line that has effectively collapsed. However, more universally, Hardy's exploration of 'extinction' again suggests an ending. Significantly, in the serial edition for the *Graphic* (4 July – 26 December 1891) the quotation reads '*is fierce, domineering,*'⁶¹⁷ which indicates that Hardy's original intention was to align Clare's remarks with a present-day d'Urberville family. Whereas the 1912 Macmillan Wessex Novels edition, containing '*was fierce, domineering*'⁶¹⁸ speaks of a distant, unreachable d'Urberville family, far-removed from the present. The termination of the family, then, coincides with the novel's publication during the *fin de siècle*, an ending within and of itself, as well as the termination of the Victorian period. The past in Hardy's novel is dying out, yet this concept extends beyond the novel. The family foundations crumble away, leaving an uncertain future, just as a new century dawns outside the novel that is itself unknown.

The past is consistently threatening to catch up with Tess and she is haunted by her ancestry. In an exchange between Tess and her husband Angel, the dialogue runs:

'A certain d'Urberville of the sixteenth or seventeenth century committed a dreadful crime in his family coach; and since that time members of the family see or hear the old coach whenever – But I'll tell you another day- it is rather gloomy' [...] 'Is it when we are going to die, Angel, that members of my family see it, or is it when we have committed a crime?' (p. 244).

The collective term 'we', used by Tess, suggests her strong affinity with her history, yet also encapsulates a cultural 'we'. Death and decay are consistently at the forefront of the narrative and are embodied in the metaphorical death of an age or familial tie. The illustration of the phantasmagorical d'Urberville coach conjures images of ancestral greatness and historical

⁶¹⁷ Thomas Hardy, 'Tess of the d'Urbervilles', *Graphic* (26 September 1891). My emphasis.

⁶¹⁸ The 1912 edition is the version used by Penguin for their 1978 reprint. See Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, ed. by David Skilton (1891; London: Penguin, 1978). My emphasis.

power, balanced against the challenge of hereditary curses and belligerent traditions that undermine the present. In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Hardy explores the Decadent Gothic which is simultaneously aligned with resurrections of the past and disturbance in the present. The coach symbolises entrapment because it continually relives the same moment in time and, therefore, cannot progress. Furthermore, death and crime haunt Tess throughout the novel and her moral degeneration witnesses her slowly transitioning from innocence to self-destruction. The 'old' coach is another relic from the past that has no place in the present, and the negative connotations of its presence foreshadow Tess's fate in that same way that Sue's recital of Poe's poetry foreshadows hers. Through the presence of the haunted/haunting coach, history is transformed into a sensory experience that the present d'Urberville family 'see or hear.' This sensory emanation of history surpasses the physical manifestations expected of inheritance, much like the gauntlet that Tess strikes Alec with is a metaphysical form of heredity.

Significantly, Hardy copied an excerpt from a collection of essays by John Addington Symonds in 1890, in which Symonds summarises Walter Pater's earlier 1888 article 'Style' for *Fortnightly Review*. Symonds's summary lends itself well to an analysis of the Decadent Gothic and temporal disturbance when he writes that,

Art, as art, aspires towards a complete absorption of the matter into the form – towards such a blending of animative thought or emotion with the embodying vehicle that the shape produced shall be the only right & perfect manifestation of a spiritual content to the senses, so that, while we contemplate the work, we cannot conceive their separation – then there is nothing either new or perilous.⁶¹⁹

⁶¹⁹ Thomas Hardy, *The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy: Volume Two*, Op. Cit., p. 43. The article referred to is John Addington Symonds, *Essays Speculative and Suggestive, II* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1890).

The importance of Walter Pater to literary Decadence at the *fin de siècle* has already been established and the emphasis on animate and inanimate lends itself to an analysis of temporal decay.⁶²⁰ One of Hardy's primary concerns in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* is heredity and the implications of seemingly striving to resurrect history.⁶²¹ In the section concerning the d'Urberville coach for example, Angel is relaying a somewhat poetic history, much like Carlyle's historical narratives could be read as 'unholy, though not unnatural, union[s] between history and poetry,' as Hayden White writes in relation to such narratives. Similarly, in Addington Symonds's summary art becomes a manifestation of wider ideologies, as well as emphasising cultural incongruities due to the fact that there appears to be an invisible line that can be drawn between art and influence. Like the Gothic aesthetic, which is both influential and influenced, art is susceptible to cultural moods just as it is an instigator of social self-awareness. The idea of a 'perfect manifestation' of emotion and art in one space or time, then, is a myth because the 'senses' are too susceptible to external influences for them to be a 'manifestation of spiritual content.' The ideal equilibrium between 'animative thought' and the 'embodying vehicle' suggested by Pater also builds on earlier sensationalism and the Gothic sublime respectively. This is due to the fact that knowing too much or achieving 'a complete absorption of the matter-form' creates a form of terror. In relation to the haunted coach, Tess is a victim of her own crude self-awareness and her sublime realisation concerning her own possible fate is also representative of her 'embodying' the spirit of the age. The philosophical nihilism, represented by Tess's ability to observe not only matter but the movement of time slipping away, gives rise to a sense that

⁶²⁰ Pater's widely cited essays on the subject of Decadence attest to his invested knowledge in this field. See Walter Pater, *Appreciations: With an Essay on Style* (1889; London: Macmillan, 1889) and the Preface to *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* (1873; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

⁶²¹ For instance, the entire plot-line of the novel relies on the immediate revelation that John Durbyfield is related to an ancient and wealthy d'Urberville family. The succeeding novel traces Tess Durbyfield's journey towards discovering and reacquainting her own family with the d'Urbervilles, whilst simultaneously learning of her history through historical records, vague anecdotes, as well as physical and emotional traits that she has inherited.

beyond the novel the *fin de siècle* is compromised by heightened familiarity with the feudal past at a time when progression is desired.

With such temporal interference in mind, Jamil Mustafa argues that in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* 'the present, locked in the tenacious grip of repetition compulsion, blends into the past until the two are, in a sense, nearly indistinguishable from each other.'⁶²² Effectively, in Mustafa's interpretation, time dissolves and the past and present become one continuous stream of events with no definitive beginning or end and 'indistinguishable' boundaries. However, Mustafa's interpretation of Hardy's novel is somewhat at odds with definitions of the Decadent Gothic. The faithfulness to 'history' suggested by Mustafa is actually degraded and manipulated in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, to a degree that it actually damages the present for many of the characters, meaning that past and present struggle to coexist rather than time following a linear process. The familial ties that bind the d'Urbervilles and Durbyfields indicate a tragic repetition of the past, rather than one catastrophic event flowing into another. Tess is a product of her ancestry and the 'repetition' identified by Mustafa is more appropriately an imagined alternative existence that is fractured from the supposed timeline of the novel. Read against other examples of Decadent literature, both Hardy and Morris (in *News from Nowhere*) are exploring the same process of the Decadent Gothic when they determine to illustrate a 'new and perilous' history. Whilst Morris inverts the linear process of temporality by fictionalising an imagined, yet somewhat plausible, 'future' in his novel, Hardy fictionalises the d'Urberville history both outside of and within the text. Morris's literary past is actually the present (seemingly the period of the novel's publication) and Hardy's present is relying heavily on the past to decipher it. The inability for Guest and Tess

⁶²² Jamil Mustafa, "'A good horror has its place in art': Hardy's Gothic Strategy in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*", *Op. Cit.*, p. 9.

respectively to maintain a chronology that is not flawed is impossible because both writers present a poeticised version of history that undermines the present. In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* particularly, with each new generation the family loses its grasp on the present. The village parson even poignantly informs John Durbeyfield that “you are extinct,” (p. 45) as if to emphasise the metaphysical manifestations of decay.

Similarly, the Fawley family history in *Jude the Obscure* suffers the same tragic repetition. Little Father Time, Jude Fawley's biological son with his first wife Arabella Donne, seemingly returns to haunt both Jude and the text alike. He chillingly remarks to his step-mother Sue that “it would be better to be out o' the world than in it, wouldn't it?” (p. 333). The nihilism demonstrated by Little Father Time's words here, as well as the degeneracy referred to earlier in the chapter, is explicit. Equally, his ‘universal wish not to live,’ (pp. 336-7) as stated by the attending doctor following his infanticide and subsequent suicide, also seemingly reverberates into *fin de siècle* society's ‘universal’ consciousness. The young boy's words mirror Jude's own declaration of “I wish I hadn't been born,” (p.333) within the same passage and further speak of a wider unease and dissatisfaction during this period. The word choice ‘world’ is an interesting one because it replaces other, more credible, terms such as ‘life’ or ‘situation.’ The statement encompasses the entire world, as though it were a concept rather than a physical space or social position. The metaphysical brooding and ‘undemonstrative horror’ that the narrator states ‘seemed to have seized him’ (pp. 332-3) is reminiscent of Hardy's statement concerning how in fiction ‘there can be no intrinsically new thing at this stage of the world's history,’ as though the world were again a ‘pastime/past-time’ and, therefore, devoid of a future. Little Father Time's degenerative mind (like Jude's, Sue's, and even Des Esseintes's and Dorian Gray's before him) emphasises that a marginalised existence, where time and progress have no place, is destructive. The

Decadent Gothic almost provides an answer to the boy's rhetorical question 'wouldn't it?' by acknowledging that decaying reality, at the hands of the temporal disturbance created by gazing backwards to a historicised 'unreality,' makes progression towards modernism almost impossible.

Hardy's historicised 'unreality' and subsequent literary Decadent Gothic style is also demonstrated again in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* when Tess reluctantly visits her ancestral vaults. On entering she tragically declares "why am I on the wrong side of this door," (p. 364). Curiously, Tess's words are a statement rather than a direct question, much like Little Father Time's rhetorical question that is never truly answered.⁶²³ Her strained relationship with her ancestors holds her back and, therefore, her plea is more of a realisation than a quandary. Padian acknowledges that Hardy utilises his characters' struggles to explore 'what happens to humans caught between their own desires and society's conventions.'⁶²⁴ In relation to *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Tess is trapped in a form of purgatory because she cannot utilise her crumbling ancestry for her social advancement without sacrificing her own desires. Tess is, quite literally at this point in the novel, buried in the past and is perpetually resistant to her inevitable inheritance. Her entire world is confined within the parameters of her history, and this in turn is a result of her following the 'conventions' referred to by Padian in order to aid her family's progression. Where this becomes a flawed endeavour is in the fact that the Durbyfield family cannot advance when bound to a romanticised family history that is no longer thriving (hence the skeletons laid in the d'Urberville tomb, for instance). Their ancestry is inauthentic and built on an ideology rather than a reality, similar to the *fin de siècle* Gothic revival which was an 'imitation of an imitation of an imitation,' to refer back to

⁶²³ Little Father Time's question is vaguely acknowledged by Sue, who states 'it would almost, dear,' (p. 333).

⁶²⁴ Kevin Padian, *Op. Cit.*, p. 226.

Morris's earlier statement. The subliminal question that Tess is posing would more appropriately read 'why am I occupying the wrong space in time?' because her narrative communicates a wider concern than mere spatial occupation. Her entrapment, again like Little Father Time's, is reliant on a poetic notion of pastness and a pessimistic world-view. Her ancestral skeletons, who occupy the space with Tess in this moment, provide a grotesque reminder that she is morally, socially, and emotionally regressing by pursuing her questionable history. Tess epitomises Padian's argument by demonstrating that, through Hardy, temporality, status, and societal obligations must be aligned to allow for progress. If there is an imbalance, as there is in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*, then the future can only ever be indeterminate.

Conclusion

This chapter has established that the Decadent Gothic, and its manifestations as both architectural and temporal decay, is evident in both *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*. The analysis of this style builds on earlier and more tentative studies by critics such as Beer and Mustafa, who have begun to discuss Hardy in relation to Decadence and the late-Victorian Gothic revival, respectively. It is also possible to suggest that definitions of the Decadent Gothic, which this chapter has introduced, can also be applied more broadly to texts published during the *fin de siècle* that have previously been analysed by critics such as Dowling, Weir, Botting and Riquelme against definitions of Decadence or the Gothic Revival, but not both aesthetics simultaneously as one distinct style. In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, for example, Tess is said to have dreamed of 'an aged and dignified face, the sublimation of all the d'Urberville lineaments, furrowed with incarnate memories representing in hieroglyphic the centuries of her family's and England's history,' (p. 40). These 'hieroglyphic' images are inscribed visions that Tess uses to decipher her history, and

the ‘incarnate memories’ that they possess are a physical signpost pointing to the past. A similar passage also appears at the beginning of Huysmans’s *Against Nature*, where Des Esseintes describes the ‘forbidding faces’ of his family ‘imprisoned in old picture-frames’ displayed at the ‘Château de Lourps.’⁶²⁵ Both protagonists’ stance as descendant is ubiquitous when interpreted more broadly in relation to the Decadent Gothic because the Victorians, like civilisation in any other epoch of history, were descendants also. The relationship between past and present, both architecturally and temporally, is problematic when the ‘descendants’ rely too heavily on physical and metaphysical inheritance in order to forge a path to the future. In relation to *fin de siècle* literature and culture alike, such desired progression is hindered by a reliance on the Gothic aesthetic that is synonymous with decay and is often pivotal to fully interpreting, as this chapter has established, the Decadent movement.

⁶²⁵ Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Against Nature*, Op. Cit., p. 13.

Conclusion

This thesis has examined the work of Thomas Hardy within the context of the Victorian Gothic aesthetic, identifying and investigating the three distinctive modes of the Victorian Gothic that Hardy was engaging with both consciously and unconsciously. Despite the extensive criticism on Hardy's essays, novels, poetry, and short stories, little attention has been given to Gothic representation within his work. Additionally, the number of *published* works that consider Hardy and the Gothic is even scarcer. It should, nevertheless, be noted that studies by a range of critics already identified within this thesis have contributed invaluablely to the analysis of Hardy and the Gothic. Yet there has been no consistent dialogue between the research that does exist, which has led to a fragmented evaluation of this rich topic that this thesis has gone some way to address. Furthermore, the studies that do exist often rely heavily on the eighteenth-century origination of the Gothic literary genre and medievalism, when there is little evidence to suggest that Hardy read 'Radcliffian' Gothic novels. This study has instead considered the modern philosophical, theoretical, and scientific debates that Hardy was actively responding to in his personal notebooks that subsequently informed his distinctly Victorian Gothic aesthetic.

Within the last twenty years, the examination of the Victorian Gothic as a distinct historical period of the Gothic has been steadily gaining impetus due to the innovative work of critics such as Ruth Robbins, Julian Wolfreys, Glennis Byron, and David Punter. However, notwithstanding the seeming proliferation of criticism within this field, Hardy's work is largely absent. Consequently, this thesis has begun to expand the field further by justifying Hardy's inclusion within this developing area of criticism. Prior to the publication of *Victorian Gothic: Literary and Cultural Manifestations in the Nineteenth Century* (2002) the term 'Victorian Gothic' was used more broadly to label nineteenth-century texts deemed

to be Gothic in style. As such, any studies concerning Hardy and the Gothic that pre-date this publication would have been unable to utilise the critical framework of the Victorian Gothic that has become invaluable to literary studies within the past twenty years.⁶²⁶ For example, Ruth Robbins and Julian Wolfrey (2002), as well as Andrew Smith and William Hughes in *The Victorian Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion* (2012), actively foreground and delineate the term ‘Victorian Gothic’ before then identifying key literary forms within this genre. By first drawing boundaries around what constitutes the Victorian Gothic, whilst simultaneously considering the modern definitions of this historic period of the Gothic, it has been possible to interpret Hardy’s work in relation to its contemporary historical context. For instance, Hardy’s engagement with cultural debates concerning class and gender, evolutionary theory, the sublime, Decadence and degeneracy, history and heredity, and modernity, has enabled the categorisation of his novels into the major modes of the Gothic that he was exploring: Victorian Sensationalism, the Scientific Gothic, and the Decadent Gothic. Many previous critical readings of Hardy’s work discuss it in relation to Realism, with Hardy himself even claiming to desire the success of notable realist writers such as Dickens and Thackeray in his early work.⁶²⁷ Yet this thesis has demonstrated that by analysing the Gothicism of his novels it is possible to shift the critical focus away from more familiar readings of his work *without* dismissing its realism.

This thesis has presented compelling evidence to suggest that Hardy was engaging with sensationalism in his novels during the 1870s. Literary reviews within contemporary periodicals such as the *Athenaeum*, the *Spectator*, and the *Saturday Review* were particularly

⁶²⁶ The other key text within this developing field of the Victorian Gothic is Andrew Smith’s and William Hughes’s edited collection *The Victorian Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion* (2012).

⁶²⁷ See Florence Emily Hardy, *The Life of Thomas Hardy*, Op. Cit., p. 54.

useful when documenting the early responses to Hardy's novels. From the reference to the 'tragic power'⁶²⁸ of *A Pair of Blues Eyes*, that an anonymous reviewer for the *Saturday Review* (1873) later attributed to the 'intense minuteness and vivid concentration'⁶²⁹ exhibited by Hardy, to the *Spectator* review (1884) of *Far from the Madding Crowd* by R. H. Hutton who confirms that Hardy 'adopted a style of remark on his imaginative creations which is an exaggeration of George Eliot's',⁶³⁰ it was possible to categorise Hardy's early Gothic style. In light of what Chapter One has already uncovered, it can be inferred that Hutton's reference to 'exaggeration' is a hint that Hardy's Realism, a style which Eliot was often recognised for, had developed through his 'imaginative' literary technique into what can now be interpreted as sensationalism. Indeed, in the *Saturday Review*, the reviewer even argues that 'by some of his former critics Mr. Hardy has been unwisely compared with George Eliot',⁶³¹ which reinforces that Hardy's early work should not be exclusively aligned with Realism. Similarly, Hardy's correspondence, offered a rich source of material to supplement and reinforce Hardy's views concerning writing style during this period. A letter written to his sister Mary in 1863 revealed Hardy's admiration for Thackeray's 'representations of actual life' in his work that were manifest in his 'truthfulness',⁶³² which this study interpreted as Hardy's affinity with literary Realism. Hardy's literary aesthetic was, however, to be additionally influenced by the popular sensation fiction genre of the day, which would both offer him commercial success *and* impact his novels published within the 1870s.

⁶²⁸ Unsigned Review, *Saturday Review*, xxxvi, pp. 158-9 (2 August 1873), in *Thomas Hardy: The Critical Heritage*, Op. Cit. p. 15.

⁶²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁶³⁰ R. H. Hutton, '*Far from the Madding Crowd*', *Spectator*, 1597-9 (19 December 1874), in *Thomas Hardy: The Critical Heritage*, Op. Cit., p. 23.

⁶³¹ Unsigned Review, *Saturday Review* (2 August 1873), Op. Cit., p. 16.

⁶³² Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy*, Op. Cit., p. 5.

Even within Hardy's lifetime, Samuel C. Chew began laying down the critical foundations for investigating the sensationalism in Hardy's early writing. Chew's work paved the way for subsequent analyses of his work within this context by critics such as Kevin Z. Moore, Richard Nemesvari, and George Wing. Where this criticism offered invaluable insights into Hardy's sensationalism as a starting point, with particular emphasis on *Desperate Remedies*, there were still overlooked areas of research that this thesis has uncovered and explored. The largely overlooked fact is that Hardy consciously sent his first novel to Tinsley Brothers, a renowned publisher of sensation fiction, which suggests he was complicit in the reception of the novel as sensational. Critical emphasis is often placed on Hardy's 'Prefatory Note' in the 1889 edition of *Desperate Remedies*, in which he discusses his 'feeling a way to a method' as a way to distance himself from the text, when, in fact, he was actually endeavouring to build upon the popularity of the genre in a much more direct manner. Instead of feeling his way to a method, then, Hardy appeared to have been actively cultivating his early Gothic style. This understanding of Hardy's early literary approach also opens the possibility of analysing three of his subsequent novels within the context of Victorian Sensationalism. The alignment of *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *Far from the Madding Crowd* and *The Hand of Ethelberta* with the sensation fiction sub-genre of the Victorian Gothic was also reinforced by comparisons with the work of other sensation writers such as Braddon, Reade, Collins, Dickens, and Wood in an extensive way not done before.

Within the 1880s, Hardy was considering post-Darwinian scientific theories and the sublime whilst writing and editing *Two on a Tower* and *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. The Scientific Gothic was perhaps the most difficult mode of the Gothic to define during the course of this study because critics have not yet begun to discuss the 1880s as a distinct Gothic literary period. Unlike sensationalism and the Decadent movement, which have more

definitive historical parameters, classification of the Scientific Gothic is reliant on research that considers the impact of post-Darwinian theory on Gothic texts published during this era. Therefore, to interpret Hardy's work within this context, it was necessary to first delineate the boundaries of the Scientific Gothic by categorising this form in way that was distinct from the general term Gothic Science Fiction.⁶³³ This was accomplished by analysing a variety of contemporary publications, that dealt with scientific discourse (either directly or indirectly), alongside Hardy's own literary study pertaining to science and philosophy. Also, by observing Hardy's own diverse reading within this period, as well as considering the impact of post-Darwinian discourse on his two novels (rather than relying on direct comparisons with Darwin's work), it was possible to examine his Scientific Gothic style. For instance, entries within *The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy Vol. 1* and *Vol. 2* from the 1880s reinforced that Hardy was actively engaged with texts by and relating to Burke, Kant, Ruskin, Spencer, Darwin, and Huxley. Works such as Huxley's 'The Coming of Age of "The Origin of Species,"' Romanes's 'The World as an Eject,' Clodd's *The Story of Creation*, and Spencer's *The Principles of Biology* further elucidated Hardy's preoccupation with the scientific discourse of the day that ultimately fed into his work.

Criticism concerning Hardy and science is often approached via the lens of Darwinism, with Gillian Beer, George Levine, and Phillip Mallet being leading figures in this discussion, and this is certainly an important factor when defining the Scientific Gothic sub-genre. Beer's statement that evolutionary theory forced Hardy to 'find a scale for the human and a place for

⁶³³ Gothic Science Fiction is a broad critical term, which is often used to describe Gothic literature containing scientific themes. Examples of which range from Mary Shelley's 1818 novel *Frankenstein* to H. G. Wells's *The Time Machine* (1895) and *The War of the Worlds* (1898). However, the Scientific Gothic discussed within Chapter Two refers specifically to novels published under the influence of the 'Scientific Spirit' of the 1880s, as defined by Cobbe in her essay 'The Scientific Spirit of the Age' (1888). These texts were guided by post-Darwinian theory, which affected their language in particular, rather than them being perceived as science-fiction in its widest sense.

the human' served as a useful starting point for the discussion of Hardy's post-Darwinian Gothic aesthetic. In *Two on a Tower*, the implication of modern technologies of vision on perceptions of the universe shaped the definition of the post-Darwinian sublime, introduced for the first time within this study. The telescope in the late-Victorian period offered a mode of observation that extended the possibility of observation beyond what was conceivable within the eighteenth century, when Burke and Kant were exploring their philosophies of the sublime. Moreover, such 'processes of vision' (to borrow Horton's terminology) amplified the scale between the 'contrasting magnitudes' of the 'stellar universe' and the 'two infinitesimal lives' of the lead characters of the novel, (p. 289), which contributed to the Scientific Gothic terror of the novel. Another factor that this thesis draws attention to, that also contributed to the analysis of Hardy's novels within the post-Darwinian framework established within chapter two, was Hardy's acquaintance with Edward Clodd. The influence of Clodd is particularly pertinent when considered alongside Hardy's textual revisions of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, especially since Hardy gifted Clodd a copy of the 1887 one volume edition of the novel. Hardy was active in the editorial preparation of his novel for the Wessex Collected Edition whilst corresponding with Clodd. This acquaintance had a significant impact on the evolution of Hardy's phraseology, which began to incorporate more scientific terminology,⁶³⁴ with further implications traceable in his exploration of the construction of the 'self' that built on Kant's earlier philosophy. Therefore, Beer's suggestion that Hardy was trying to find a 'place' for the human fits with the notion that there were anthropologic significances to his conception of the post-Darwinian universe within his novel.

⁶³⁴ From documented evidence contained within Special Collections, University of Leeds. Thomas Hardy Letters to Edward Clodd (1900-1923) BC MS 19c Clodd, and *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy, Vol. 1* and *Vol. 2*, Hardy and Clodd were acquainted from at least as early as 1891 and discussed topics such as superstitions and customs, 'natural and human laws,' as well as 'modern views of marriage.' The latter references are taken from a letter from Hardy to Clodd dated Nov 10. 1895, in which Hardy is discussing the plot of *Jude the Obscure* and indicates that the two men were accustomed to dissecting aspects of Hardy's novels. See *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy, Vol. 2, Op. Cit.*, pp. 92-3.

There is strong evidence to indicate that Hardy was exploring the conflict between ‘pastness’ and modernity in his *fin de siècle* novels *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*. Although Hardy’s later novels have been analysed in relation to both the literary and architectural Gothic revival, as well as the Decadent movement, these two prominent aspects of his work have not been discussed as one distinct mode of the Victorian Gothic. As such, Chapter Three provides a definition of the Decadent Gothic aesthetic, which is a term introduced for the first time within this thesis. The work of Gillian Beer is again useful here, as are the theoretical underpinnings of the Decadent Gothic presented by critics such as Linda Dowling and David Weir. Yet despite the range of criticism concerning the Decadent Movement and literature, Hardy’s work is largely absent. Therefore, in the first instance, Chapter Three makes the case that Hardy’s work of the 1890s can be evaluated within this context. Analysing Hardy’s work within the framework of literary Decadence is also a route into reading the conflict of past and present in the language of his later novels. Moreover, by then aligning Hardy’s Decadent style with the Gothic aesthetic, it is possible to contextualise his exploration of death, degeneration, and temporal decay. The Decadent Gothic form considers both the Decadent writer’s amalgamation of romantic and realist observation, as outlined by Weir, *and* the degenerative mode of expression synonymous with Gothic novels such as in Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.⁶³⁵ As Chapter Three identifies, the Gothic genre itself is continually over-spilling its boundaries, and at the end of the nineteenth century it merged with the Decadent aesthetic to create a hybrid form that was exemplified in Hardy’s later work.

⁶³⁵ In his ‘Preface’ for *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Wilde famously wrote that ‘the nineteenth century dislike of Realism is the rage of Caliban seeing his own face in a glass’ and its ‘dislike of Romanticism is the rage of Caliban not seeing his own face in a glass,’ *Op. Cit.*, p. 3. This suggests that both Realism and Romanticism become embodied and intertwined within Decadent literature.

Another significant discussion within Chapter Three, that suggests Hardy was considering in greater depth his writing style at the *fin de siècle*, is his letter published (without, it should be noted, Hardy's consent) in George Bainton's *The Art of Authorship*. Under Bainton's chapter-heading 'Truthfulness to One's Self,' Hardy discussed the supposed authenticity of language, which he believed his fellow writers could achieve by cultivating a 'style [...] according to their temperament.'⁶³⁶ This letter was published alongside others from notable figures connected to the Decadent Movement, including Walter Pater, which places Hardy firmly within the contemporary discourse surrounding literary Decadence.⁶³⁷ Hardy's conscious development of a distinct style during the late 1880s and the 1890s was also fuelled by the architectural and literary Gothic revival that was running in parallel to the Decadent movement. The similarities between Weir's definition of Decadence and Riquelme's depiction of the Modern Gothic is also striking and solidifies the notion that the Decadent Gothic is a justifiable aesthetic within itself. For example, Weir notes that 'Decadence seems to emerge as both an extension of and a reaction to romanticism'⁶³⁸ and Riquelme parallels this argument by contending that the Gothic rose 'along with the English novel during the decades that are the prelude to Romanticism.'⁶³⁹ Texts such as Huysmans's *Against Nature* and *The Cathedral*, and William Morris's *News from Nowhere*, also straddle the line between Decadence and the Gothic. Each novel's ruminations on social degeneration,

⁶³⁶ George Bainton, *The Art of Authorship*, Op. Cit., pp. 320-1.

⁶³⁷ It should again be noted that Hardy and the other writers featured in *The Art of Authorship* were solicited by the Bainton to provide their views on style via informal correspondence, and these 'private' letters were then published without the author's consent. Whilst this was clearly unethical practice on Bainton's part, the candid discussions offered by Hardy, Pater and their contemporaries still offer a rich source of material concerning literary style.

⁶³⁸ David Weir, Op. Cit., p. 10. Also resembling the Gothic, Weir goes on to note that Decadence was 'both a languorous and rebellious state of mind' and 'both a decorative, superficial art and a pioneering, profound aesthetic,' p. 10.

⁶³⁹ John Paul Riquelme, 'Dark Modernity from Mary Shelley to Samuel Beckett,' Op. Cit., p. 4. With similarities to Decadent writing, Riquelme also writes that the Gothic is 'a narrative form [that] engages issues of beauty, the character of the sublime and the grotesque,' p. 4.

as well as their lavish Decadent style (in the case of Huysmans), link to Hardy's exploration of temporal, spatial and cultural decay in his later work.

In a 2007 article published within *The Thomas Hardy Journal*, Michael Thorpe argued strongly for a reconsideration of how Hardy's texts are critically handled. He states that critics should be mindful of whether they are reading 'not Hardy, but 'Hardy,''⁶⁴⁰ which implies that there is an 'authentic' version of Hardy and 'Hardy' as a construction of modern criticism. Thorpe also suggests that 'over the past twenty years especially, as critiques and PhD theses have multiplied [...], the need to say the new radical thing inevitably produces such far-fetched readings, tenuously grounded.'⁶⁴¹ Yet he does commend the work of Andrew Radford, who he claims 'uncovers Hardy's intellectual influences and demonstrates how one exploratory, original mind uses them.'⁶⁴² The limitation of Thorpe's argument, however, is that it does not acknowledge the fact that in his later life Hardy also created a public 'Hardy' within his biographies, which were 'deceptively' published under the name of his second wife Florence Emily Hardy. Whilst this is a much broader topic than may be discussed here, it is worth noting that although some critical studies concerning Hardy may be perceived as over-speculative, this thesis (alongside much of the wide-ranging critical material that this study is built upon) is not based on conjecture. Instead, this present study is heavily grounded in documented evidence which details the intellectual influences on Hardy throughout his novel writing career. Therefore, for Thorpe to suggest that it is feasible to maintain an 'authentic' version of Hardy when critiquing his work is too simplistic and dismisses potential innovation within the field of Hardy studies.

⁶⁴⁰ Michael Thorpe, 'Hardy's Unspoken Subjects', *The Thomas Hardy Journal*, 23, 173-186 (Autumn 2007), p. 179.

⁶⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 183. Thorpe heavily disputes the work of critics such as Neill and Riquelme because he believes that 'analysing 'Hardy as Text' becomes the critic's inventive word-game,' (p. 179).

⁶⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 184.

Hardy's two biographies *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy, 1840-1891* (1928) and *The Later Years of Thomas Hardy, 1892-1928* (1930), published under the name of his second wife Florence Emily Hardy, are often a route into critically discussing his other writing. Yet there is also a missed opportunity to decisively handle these texts in their own right as autobiographical works. Despite their first person narrative voice, it is often agreed by critics that Hardy's two biographies were composed and edited by Hardy himself.⁶⁴³ Tim Armstrong claims that Hardy's 'self-conception' within his poetry was bound up with 'biological inheritance' and 'historical phenomena.'⁶⁴⁴ However, Hardy was in many ways trying to exorcize his ghosts, rather than striving to 'rescue a voice from history' as Armstrong goes on to suggest.⁶⁴⁵ Hardy's conception or construction of the self was often at odds with ancestry and 'hauntedness,' rather than a result of them, because Hardy presented an evasive representation of his family history in his prose.⁶⁴⁶ A possible future study, that builds on Hardy's representation of the Gothic already established within this thesis, would be to analyse his autobiographies as Gothic texts. This would be possible by examining their depiction of ancestry and the conception of the self, in addition to considering the complex relationship between 'pastness,' modernity, and 'hauntedness.' This will open-up new possibilities of reading Hardy's work in relation to death, mortality, evolutionary theory and heredity, and the conception of the self that this present study also explores.

⁶⁴³ See Richard L. Purdy, *Thomas Hardy: A Bibliographical Study* (1954), in which Purdy strongly claims that the two volumes were written and edited by Hardy himself with little input from his second wife.

⁶⁴⁴ See Tim Armstrong, *Haunted Hardy: Poetry, History, Memory* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2000), p. 1.

⁶⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁶⁴⁶ Further evidence can be derived from the fact that Hardy's autobiographies were originally published as biographies under the name of his second wife Florence. This was done by Hardy to ensure that his literary 'self-conception' and the representation of his ancestry were taken to be factual.

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