Thomas Hardy's Unmen and Othered Men

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ABSTRACT: A majority of critics and readers seem to base their readings of Thomas Hardy's characters, both male and female, on a hetero-normative construction of nineteenth-century masculinity. However I argue that Hardy's novels can profitably be read as delineating specific liminal masculinities that can be designated as 'other' using concepts of gender originating in nineteenth-century biological and psychological discourses. In this way Hardy's novels embody a form of resistance that transcends contemporaneous societal conventions. He employs certain characters as agencies of anxiety and discomfort in order to demonstrate to his readership that the 'other' may in fact perform the function of a unifying principle within the confines of the text. Rather than be banished to the margins for their perceived 'anomalies', figures such as the Unman and the Other are integral to their respective communities, not in spite of their liminality, but because of it.

KEYWORDS: Thomas Hardy, masculinity, Other, Unman, Uncanny, liminality.

ACCORDING TO THE gender theorist R.W. Connell 'Opposition is not just "resistance", it brings new social arrangements into being (however partially)'.[1] Thomas Hardy's novels embody a form of resistance that transcends nineteenth-century societal conventions, allowing for the creation of new social arrangements within his fictional communities that are inclusive of the 'other'. In Husserlian terms one is 'othered' due to occupying a position of perceived social subordination within their society, thus requiring exclusion to ensure the social preservation of that society. Husserl's notion of intersubjectivity, or psychological relations between citizens, constitutes the 'other' as an epistemological problem, thus requiring banishment in order to maintain the status quo.[2] Hardy's texts do not call for the banishing of the other, but rather its integration into society in order to form an organic whole. He thus specifically enlarges and reflects a spectrum of

[1] R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), p. 229.

[2] See Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology* [trans. Dorion Cairns] (Lieden: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2013).

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masculinities much more pronounced than those contained within contemporaneous works. Hardy noted as his New Year's thought for 1 January 1879: "A perception of the FAILURE of THINGS to be what they are meant to be, lends them, in place of the intended interest, a new and greater interest of an unintended kind".[3] His 'unmen' and 'othered' men may at first appear to symbolize such failures, but they each in fact articulate a position of resistance which lends them an interest of an unintended kind. The liminal forms of masculinity evinced by characters such as Diggory Venn, Little Father Time, Thomas Leaf and Christian Cantle are not instances of deviancy and social subordination banished to the margins of society, they are integral to their respective societies, not in spite of their marginality, but because of it. And in the case of Diggory Venn, a marginal masculinity is in fact valourized by Hardy when he provides a conclusion to *The Return of the Native* in which Venn fulfils what David Gilmore has termed the 'imperative triad', the 'three moral injunctions' in any society in which '"real" manhood is emphasized' – impregnating women, protecting 'dependants from danger, and provision of kith and kin'.[4] Hardy's 'unmen' and 'othered' men may act as agencies of anxiety and discomfort for his readers, but they also perform the role of unifying principle within their respective texts, regardless of how far they may or may not conform to an 'imperative triad' of masculinity.

THE OTHER

To date critical and theoretical examinations of the 'Other' in nineteenth-century literature have generally been concerned with representations of women or of characters whose ethnic origins differ from that of the white, middle-class European/American male. Post-colonial criticism has dwelt at length upon representations of the 'subaltern native', Marxist literary theory has highlighted contextual concerns regarding the netherworld of the poor and the working classes, and through Queer theory emphasis has been placed upon the marginalization of non-normative sexualities.[5] Jonathan Dollimore states that 'Difference is a fashionable

[3] *The Life and Works of Thomas Hardy*, ed. Michael Millgate (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1984), p. 127.

[4] David D. Gilmore, *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), pp. 222-223.

[5] See for instance Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), and Holly Furneaux, *Queer Dickens: Erotics, Families, Masculinities*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

concept [which cannot be defined temporally]. So too is "the other", that highly charged embodiment of difference'.[6] Nineteenth-century literary examples of masculine Otherness include Emily Brontë's Heathcliff, the 'creature' created by Mary Shelley's Victor Frankenstein, and the figure of Teleny, a sexually ambiguous character attributed to the authorship of Oscar Wilde. Frankenstein's creature is not privileged with a name; stripped of any identity he is literally a conglomeration of parts, a biological anomaly. Heathcliff, the anti-hero of Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), is seen by critics both contemporary and modern as embodying a masculine sexuality that has been tainted by racial and class otherness, and what Jennifer Lodine-Chaffey has identified as 'a virility couched with aggression'.[7] Rene Teleny is a Hungarian pianist capable of sexually mesmerizing both men and women, and his passionate but ultimately tragic affair with a male admirer, Camille de Grieux, is the subject of one of the earliest published narratives written in English (1893) to explicitly and almost exclusively concern homosexuality. Hardy's 'others' do not personify any of these categorizations, they defy such arrangements in their failure as things "to be what they are meant to be".

Both Diggory Venn from *The Return of the Native* (1878) and Little Father Time from *Jude the Obscure* (1895) occupy a position removed from the *status quo*, being other-worldly, seemingly alienated from both their fellow protagonists and Hardy's readers. This is particularly the case with Little Father Time, who even though only a child is rendered as an exercise in nihilism, representing a rejection of religious and moral principles in a demonstration of the inherent futility of life. Sue Bridehead of course naively reflects that Little Father Time's profundities are simply the musing of a 'too reflective child'.[8] When explaining his theory of the Uncanny Sigmund Freud uses the German phrase – *unbehagliches, banges Grauen erregend* – which translates as 'a discomforting anxiety inducing horror or terror'. *Das Unheimliche* belongs to the 'realm of the frightening, of what evokes fear and dread'.[9] Freud wrote that there are many opportunities in literature to 'achieve uncanny effects that are absent in real life', and

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[6] Jonathan Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 249.

[7] Jennifer Lodine-Chaffey, 'Heathcliff's Abject State in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*', *Brontë Studies* 38.3, (2013), pp: 206-218 (p. 208).

[8] Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, ed. Patricia Ingham (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 2002), p. 323. All references will be to this edition.

[9] Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*. Trans. David McLintock (Middlesex: Penguin, 2003), p. 123.

thus 'better than anyone else, it is the writer who consents to give birth to the *Unheimliche*'.[10] In his portrayal of both Venn and Time Hardy 'gives birth' to the unfamiliar; it is the quality of Otherness displayed by each of these characters that is profitably employed by Hardy. His specific representation of othering causes discomfort and anxiety for the other characters within the novels, and they have a similar effect on readers also. Marjorie Garson writes that it is 'impossible to respond to him [Little Father Time] as a real child, a character in his own right'; and in a review of *Jude the Obscure* for *Harper's Weekly* in 1895 William Dean Howells wrote of the boy's acts as being 'revolting', making Victorian readers 'shiver with horror and grovel with shame'.[11] Diggory Venn's otherness is necessarily of a different kind owing to his being a man rather than a boy, but he, too, exhibits traits of the ethereal and otherworldly. He is a reddleman by trade who lives like a gypsy on Egdon Heath; remaining for the most part out of sight of the other denizens, he is aloof, isolated, 'not of them'.[12] As a result of his trade his skin is coloured red, the narrator informs us that 'He was not temporarily overlaid with colour: it permeated him'.[13] When he suddenly looms from the darkness the folk of the Heath believe they have been visited by 'the Devil or the red ghost', and Timothy Fairway refers to Venn as a 'fiery mommet' who gives him 'a turn'.[14] The character of Little Father Time uncannily appears on Jude's doorstep seemingly from nowhere, his only possessions a box, 'a key suspended round his neck by a piece of common string', and a half-ticket from his train journey to Aldbrickham stuck in the band of his hat. He is the son of Jude's marriage to Arabella, a boy of whose existence Jude had been unaware until a letter from his errant ex-wife announcing the boy's history and imminent arrival was received only hours earlier. These unexpected and sudden manifestations of both Venn and Time have repercussions within their respective narratives that, in the case of *Jude* especially, prove catastrophic. In the latter

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[10] Freud, *The Uncanny*, p. 156.

[11] Marjorie Garson, '*Jude the Obscure:* What Does a Man Want?', in *Jude the Obscure: New Casebooks*, ed. by Penny Boumelha (Hampshire: Macmillan, 2000), pp. 179-208 (p. 196); W. D. Howells, review in *Harper's Weekly*, 7 December 1895, *Thomas Hardy: The Critical Heritage* ed. by R. G. Cos (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), p. 255.

[12] Thomas Hardy, *The Return of the Native*. Ed. Simon Gattrell (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 2005), p. 78. All references will be to this edition.

[13] Hardy, *RON*, p. 13.

[14] Hardy, *RON*, p. 34.

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novel the preternatural child serves as a vehicle through which Hardy illustrates the cataclysmic consequences of sexual ignorance and its perpetuation in a society which was deeply rooted in rigid familial strictures.

Diggory Venn is a character who may be read as having deliberately chosen a life that keeps him separate from and unknowable to his fellow protagonists in *The Return of the Native*. Through him Hardy created what J.O. Bailey memorably described as a 'Mephistophelean visitant'.[15] Sandy Cohen sees Venn as exemplifying a 'mysterious, mystical, spectral figure',[16] the sight of whom arouses horror in young children: '"The reddleman is coming for you!" had been the formulated threat of Wessex mothers for many generations'.[17] While the character of Venn is viewed as exterior to his community, he is at the same time an integral part of it. And though the character of Diggory Venn is portrayed by Hardy as choosing to inhabit a space outside of his society, he simultaneously performs a vigilant omnipresent role amongst his fellow protagonists, he acts as the fulcrum upon which the plot of the novel revolves.

It is through the character of Venn that we as readers gain our first insight into the community within the novel, a glimpse through the eyes of an extimate figure who occupies a position on the periphery. During the course of the narrative we 'look in' through him whilst simultaneously 'looking out' at him. Hardy never makes the reader privy to Venn's thoughts, only the resultant actions; he sees much, acts accordingly, but says very little, and displays an uncanny ability to suddenly appear exactly when and where he can be most instrumental to others. John Paterson writes of Venn's almost ethereal omnipresence that:

> He appears and disappears throughout the novel…with an uncanny rapidity that suggests the possession of magical powers…Apparently beyond good and evil he intervenes in, and disrupts, the normal course of human affairs with results that cannot clearly be established as either for better or for worse.[18]

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[15] J.O. Bailey, 'Hardy's "Mephistophelean Visitants"', *PMLA, Journal of the Modern Language Association of America,* Vol. 61, No. 4, (1946), 1146-1184.

[16] Sandy Cohen, 'Blind Clym, Unchristian Christian and the Redness of the Reddleman: Character Correspondences in Hardy's *The Return of the Native*', *Thomas Hardy Year Book* 11, (Guernsey: Toucan Press, 1984), pp. 49-55, (p. 53).

[17] Hardy, *RON*, p. 77.

[18] John Paterson, '*The Return of the Native* as Anti-Christian Document', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, Vol. 14, No. 2, (1959), 111-127, p. 119.

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The narrative contains a number of instances where these interventions and disruptions obviate the necessity for the unknowable, or Otherness, as a controlling factor in stasis. Venn's actions are a necessary element in maintaining the equilibrium of Egdon. When Thomasin Yeobright wishes to return home in secret after her disastrous first wedding attempt with Damon Wildeve, Venn is there to transport her across the heath hidden from prying eyes within the confines of his van. When Wildeve through a game of dice cheats the hapless Christian Cantle out of the money Cantle had been sent to deliver to Thomasin by her aunt, 'the tall crimson form of the reddleman slowly rose from behind a neighbouring bush', and with only a few well-placed taunting words he immediately wins the money back from Wildeve in order to deliver it to the rightful recipient.[19] And again, towards the conclusion of the novel when Eustacia slips and falls into Shadwater Weir, with Wildeve plunging after her and Clym Yeobright unsuccessfully attempting a rescue, Venn arrives at the scene where he coolly and logically retrieves all three characters from the water, though only Clym has survived. Such incidents serve to demonstrate that Venn's *unheimlich* qualities are the very tools his society requires for its stability, in contrast to the intersubjective banishment posited in the philosophy of Husserl.

The other-worldly qualities with which Hardy has invested Diggory Venn – red skin, silence, sudden appearances, uncanny harmony with the landscape of the heath – combine designate him as marginal. Venn can be read as representing a liminal masculinity through which he can act as that which he cannot express. Such characters can be seen as an attempt at articulating a marginal masculinity amongst a society that tended to misunderstand or frown upon things, people or events that did not readily correspond to Victorian societal conventions. In *The Return of the Native* Hardy utilizes an instance of the Other as the unifying principle within the text. Venn's extimate position is intrinsic to the intimate connection of threads comprising the novel as an organic whole. If the Other constitutes the limits of the self, Diggory Venn defines the parameters of Egdon. His character, while occupying an extimate position with regards to his fellow protagonists, is placed at the centre of the narrative web from which all threads project.

The aberrant Otherness portrayed in *Jude the Obscure* is altogether more cerebral than that featured in the above novel. Here Hardy demonstrates how a

[19] Hardy, *RON*, p. 223.

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bewildered voice of protest is counteracted by an embodiment of Schopenhauerian anti-natalist philosophy.[20] Hardy wrote that 'The best tragedy – the highest tragedy in short – is that of the WORTHY encompassed by the INEVITABLE. The tragedies of immoral and worthless people are not of the best'.[21] Hardy's final novel was condemned vociferously as vile and immoral by commentators such as Margaret Oliphant.[22] In response Hardy referred to Oliphant as 'a woman more shameless' than that of his creation Arabella Donn; and the Bishop of Wakefield allegedly burnt his copy of the novel in protest.[23] However it may be inferred that Hardy thought the character of Jude 'worthy', and that of Jude's tragic son as 'inevitable' in the sense that the former was born before his time, the latter a sign of 'the coming universal wish not to live'.[24] Hardy's most extreme example of Othering, Little Father Time, can be figured as problematizing popular familial conceptions of childhood for the Victorians, particularly that of boyhood.

Little Father Time is 'Age masquerading as Juvenility'; he possesses a pale face with saucer eyes, and when he tries to smile, he fails.[25] A child with an 'octogenarian face' who walks with a 'steady mechanical creep', he is of the opinion that 'Rightly looked at there is no laughable thing under the sun'.[26] Rather than joining in with the play of his fellow students at school Little Father Time's boyhood is spent sitting in silence, 'his quaint and weird face set, his eyes resting on things they did not see in the

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[20] The nineteenth-century German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer was the author of *The World as Will and Idea* (1818) in which he maintained that as death is the true aim and purpose of life itself, and this that to live is to suffer, it is irresponsible to bring children into the world when all that will be achieved ultimately is death. This pessimistic view became known as anti-natalism. Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea* (1818) [Trans. Jill Berman], (London: Orion Publishing, 1995). Hardy had begun to read German philosophers such as Schopenhauer and Edward von Hartmann in English translation during the 1880s. See Michael Millgate, *Thomas Hardy: A Biography Revisited* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 230.

[21] *Life and Works*, p. 265.

[22] Margaret Oliphant, 'The Anti-Marriage League', *Blackwood's Magazine*, 158 (1896), pp. 135-149

[23] Thomas Hardy, *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy*, ed. by Richard Little Purdy and Michael Millgate, 8 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978-2012), ii (1980), p. 106. Subsequently *Letters: Life and Works*, p. 295.

[24] Hardy, *JO*, p. 326.

[25] Hardy, *JO*, pp. 265-266.

[26] Hardy, *JO*, pp. 266-267.

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substantial world'.[27] 'Age masquerading as Juvenility' in this novel becomes equated with the sublime territory of unfamiliarity. In Little Father Time we can perceive Hardy as utilizing the guise of *das Unheimliche* through which to represent a Schopenhauerian anti-natalism which was anathema to his contemporaries. Jude's son is other-worldly, more so than Diggory Venn, for where Venn exists on the margins of society, this boy seems part of a different plane of existence altogether. He is completely removed from and inaccessible to the other characters, including his father. Children are commonly represented in literature as playful and inquisitive, beings to whom all experiences are an adventure; yet when Jude and Sue take the boy to the Wessex Agricultural Show they are left perplexed when nothing is of interest to him: 'I'm very, very sorry father and mother...But please don't mind! I can't help it. I should like the flowers very very much, if I didn't keep on thinking they'd be all withered in a few days!'.[28] This bears out Sally Shuttleworth's observation that this child has been 'burdened from youth with the sense of suffering and hopelessness that Schopenhauer accorded only to adults'.[29] Hardy's fatalism here transcends boundaries of age.

The character of Little Father Time has been invested with a fatalism that reduces his existence to a sort of half-life, the inaccessibility of his Otherness is emphasized when we observe scenes such as Little Time standing all but 'submerged and invisible' among the Christminster crowds, and even when at home Jude and Sue are 'hardly conscious of him', which seems inexplicable considering the position his character occupies within the narrative.[30] Jude lives in an initially unconsummated relationship with a woman whom he passionately loves, who in turn withholds herself from him. He is then unexpectedly provided with a son through whom his masculinity may be fully realised and extended, yet this son's presence is barely registered. Like the reddleman, Little Father Time is both highly receptive and perceptive, he rarely speaks but when he does his comments are profound, mature well beyond his young years: 'It would be better to be out o' the world than in it, wouldn't it?'; and a moment later: 'if children

[27] Hardy, *JO*, p. 270.

[28] Hardy, *JO*, p. 286.

[29] Sally Shuttleworth, 'Done because we are too menny: Little Father Time and Child Suicide in Late-Victorian Culture', in *Thomas Hardy: Texts and Contexts* ed. by Phillip Mallett, (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 133-155, (136).

[30] Hardy, *JO*, p. 315, 272 respectively.

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make so much trouble, why do people have 'em?'.[31] These exchanges take place during a conversation with Sue in which she is unsuccessfully trying to explain to the boy that she has become pregnant for a third time (her relationship with Jude having finally become sexual) even though in their present impoverished state the family is struggling to survive. Time's judgement upon the situation once he has fully digested its implications is devastating: 'I think that whenever children be born that are not wanted they should be killed directly, before their souls come to 'em, and not allowed to grow big and walk about'.[32]

Jagdish Chandra Dave suggests that Hardy 'was prophetic in painting Father Time…as a representative of the generations possessed with a morbid death-wish which were soon to follow Hardy's'.[33] Hardy's close correspondent and fellow writer Agnes Grove used this particular scene from *Jude* to illustrate a point regarding knowledge that children should be made privy to, published as an essay entitled 'Our Children. What Children Should Be Told' in *Free Review* of July 1896. The essay was heavily influenced by Hardy, and he subsequently commented on it at length.[34] While advocating 'a middle course between disingenuousness and complete candour' in answering children's questions about childbirth, Mrs Grove also stated that such a course would not produce 'in an ordinary child such lamentable results as its readers will remember were produced by Sue's fatal conversation with the child in *Jude the Obscure*'.[35] The Otherness with which this tragic character has been invested ensures that he is rendered as anything but an 'ordinary' child. Indeed Hardy himself found it 'amusing' that his readers 'felt irritated' by his introduction of such a child into the novel 'without accounting for his presence'.[36] In this novel Hardy introduces an improbable, or at least irregular, pre-pubescent son into an already contentious story for the purpose of subverting traditional expectations of male-oriented familial relationships. Instead of being guided through educational, religious and career choices, and encouraged to explore the potential of his masculinity with reference to future romantic

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[31] Hardy, *JO*, p. 322.

[32] Hardy, *JO*, p. 323.

[33] Jagdish Chandra Dave, *The Human Predicament in Hardy's Novels*. (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985), p. 22.

[34] *Letters*, ii, p. 123.

[35] *Letters*, ii, p. 123.

[36] *Letters*, ii, p. 90.

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involvements, Little Father Time is subjected to an inept explanation of reproduction by a stepmother hopelessly unqualified for the task. Sue can thus be read as unconsciously obstructing Little Father Time's path through boyhood and into adolescence, and her exhortation 'You must forgive me…I can't explain…I can't help it' to a boy who has already been portrayed as decidedly *unheimliche*, can only result in confusion and ultimately tragedy.[37] The consequences of Sue's failure to dispel Little Father Time's naivete and anxiety leads directly to "the FAILURE of THINGS to be as they are meant to be", ending in a the tragedy of "the WORTHY being encompassed by the INEVITABLE". Little Time and his siblings die as a result of Sue's impotent attempt at feminine instruction.

A. Alvarez viewed Father Time in the light of *grand guignol*, claiming that the character was melodramatic and 'so overdone as to seem almost as though Hardy decided to parody himself', and goes on to claim that the child 'is redundant in the scheme of the novel'.[38] An alternative reading would see Little Father Time as occupying a position essential to our understanding of Hardy's interpretation of Schopenhauer's 'anti-natalism': 'our condition is so wretched that total non-existence would be decidedly preferable'.[39] Michael Millgate describes Hardy as 'Fundamentally pessimistic about the human condition, in the sense that he believed birth and coming to consciousness to be a kind of original doom'.[40] Rather than Little Father Time being a parody of this strain of pessimism on Hardy's part, he is its embodiment, a showcase for the wretchedness of the inevitable encompassing the worthy. Shalom Rachman perceives Time's character as a *deus ex machina,* 'the God out of a machine', a contrivance introduced to resolve exigencies of plot. Rachman observes that the boy 'has inherited from his father a hypersensitivity which engenders an unwillingness to grow up [or become a man], and when circumstances heighten instead of allaying such a disposition, the death-wish forces itself into consciousness'.[41] While it is true that the boy's murder of his siblings and his subsequent suicide are the tragic climax of the plot,

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[37] Hardy, *JO*, p. 323.

[38] A. Alvarez, '*Jude the Obscure*', in *Hardy: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Albert J. Guerard (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1963), pp. 113-122 (p. 121).

[39] Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea*. Trans. Jill Berman, (London: Orion, 1995), p. 204.

[40] Michael Millgate, *Thomas Hardy: A Biography Revisited* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 379.

[41] Shalom Rachman, 'Character and Theme in Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*', *English*, No. 22 (1973), 45-53, p. 51.

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this is not the sole function of his character. Through the creation of Little Father Time, Hardy can be read as proposing an 'anti-antidote' to the images of childhood as a symbol of purity and innocence promoted in the works of Romantic predecessors such as Blake and Wordsworth. This is the position adopted by Maria Di Battista who states that Time's character is a 'repudiation of Wordsworthian childhood, the logic of Wordsworthian consolation', the murder-suicide representing 'Hardy's cathartic disavowal' of Romantic notions of childhood.[42] Di Battista claims that Hardy's nihilistic representation of this episode 'inverts Wordsworth's consoling proposition that the child is father to the man', for Little Father Time will not be given the opportunity to father anyone, instead dying a despondent child.

Contrasting with Shalom Rachman is Peggy Blin-Cordon's argument that Father Time belongs to the realm of the symbolic and allegorical, for he 'is alien to realism and offers no transition with it', he is an element of discord, 'a dent in reality, a forced incongruity' clashing with the generic conventions of other novels published at this time.[43] Consonant with this line of criticism is Francesco Marroni's description of Time as an 'erupting character' who confounded Victorian readers 'not prepared to accept the portrait of such an unorthodox child'.[44] 'Confounding' and 'unorthodox' are indicators in accord with images of Little Father Time as Other, as a symbol of Hardy's non-conformity to the generic conventions of a society devoted to idyllic conceptions of infancy and childhood. The boy's last uttered words are 'If we children was gone there'd be no trouble at all', and he leaves a note containing just one cryptic sentence, 'Done because we are too meny'.[45] Jenny Bourne Taylor draws attention to the fact that the character of Little Father Time was delineated at a time of 'widespread concerns about the transmission and accumulation of morbid qualities' which amplified fears that 'children are particularly susceptible to both hereditary and acquired nervous disease', a phenomenon which culminated in a series of essays by practitioners such as Henry

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[42] Maria Di Battista, '*Jude the Obscure* and the Taboo of Virginity', in *Jude the Obscure: New Casebooks*, ed. Penny Boumelha (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 166-178, p. 174.

[43] Peggy Blin-Cordon, 'Hardy and Generic Liminality: The Case of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and *Jude the Obscure*', *Hardy Review* Vol. 15, No. 1 (2013), 44-52, pp. 49-50.

[44] Francesco Marroni, *Victorian Disharmonies: A Reconsideration of Nineteenth-Century British Literature* (University of Delaware Press, 2010), p. 183.

[45] Hardy, *JO*, pp. 324-325.

Maudsley on 'the apparent dramatic rise in child suicide'.[46] Taylor makes the salient point that while we need to place Hardy's work within such contexts 'it is equally important to recognize his engagement with a wider range of psychological theories and perspectives that span the century'.[47] Conversely, Hardy biographer Robert Gittings dismisses the murder/suicide episode as 'the height of improbability', describing it as 'terrible' and 'gratuitous'.[48] Terrible yes, tragically so, but 'gratuitous' would imply that Hardy had chosen to delineate this freakish and fatalistically resistant character within the story for merely salacious, titillating purposes, and this is evidently not the case. Man's 'will' led Schopenhauer to the conclusion that emotional, physical and sexual desires can never be truly fulfilled because human desire is ultimately futile, illogical and directionless. Hardy's belief that the 'highest' tragedy is that of 'the WORTHY encompassed by the INEVITABLE' is clearly borne out in this tale of a worthy man whose 'ideas were fifty years too soon to be any good', and his uncanny son representing a 'universal wish not to live', together embody a nihilistic futility that is ultimately inevitable.[49] Time and Venn, the reddleman and the fatalistic boy, can be read as extending explorations of Victorian masculinities that are Other, alien, unfamiliar and resistant within the context of nineteenth-century constructions of maleness.

THE UNMAN

While sexologists such as Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840-1902) were enumerating a plethora of sexual identities outside that of a normative heterosexuality, biologists and medical practitioners contemporary with Hardy were active in trying to eliminate such anomalies. Martha Vicinus argues that the concept of the hermaphrodite as a discursive term became a 'catch-all descriptor of all non-traditional sexual people and bodies' throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and describes how medical

[46] Jenny Bourne Taylor, 'Psychology', in *Thomas Hardy in Context*, ed. Phillip Mallett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 339-350 (p. 348). See also Henry Maudsley, 'Heredity in Health and Disease', *Blackwood's Magazine*, (1886).

[47] Taylor, 'Psychology', p. 348.

[48] Robert Gittings, *Young Thomas Hardy.* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1978), p. 262.

[49] Hardy, *JO*, p. 388, 326 respectively.

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discourses of this time classed such deviations from the norm.[50] Before the appearance of Darwin's *The Descent of Man* (1879) doctors still defined gender according to a doctrine of appropriate appearance and behaviour; anomalies did not lead them to draw conclusions as to a variety of physical types. Thus, as Vicinus notes, 'they sought a scientific explanation for all biological confusion' while they clung 'obstinately to their belief in the two sexes/two bodies model'.[51] Hermaphroditism was considered an aberration, and a programme of gender reassignment ensured that persons displaying questionable sexual characteristics were designated 'correctly' male *or* female.[52] As one may expect, the consequences were often disastrous. Vicinus directs our attention to the high rate of suicide amongst these patients due to the trauma of such an experience and its 'consequent social isolation'.[53] Androgyny was also viewed as an anomaly by the Victorian scientific establishment, marginalized for displaying characteristics of both sexes while possessing ambiguous physical features. At the advent of the aesthetic movement androgyny was celebrated for its beauty by proponents such as Walter Pater, Algernon Swinburne, Aubrey Beardsley and Oscar Wilde. Linked to the highest forms of art, Swinburne praised Michaelangelo's *David* not for its representation of strength and virility, but for it diaphanous ethereal qualities, the pleasurable elegance of its form.[54] Thaïs Morgan, in her essay 'Reimagining Masculinity in Victorian Criticism' (1993), critiques the homoerotic poetry of both Pater and Swinburne, addressing the authors' assumed masculine androgyny, and their preoccupation with the aesthetic beauty of Ancient Greek art. She reads these authors as valourizing effeminacy as an important masculine appropriation of a somewhat hermaphroditic ideal of beauty.[55] This section will discuss the characters of Thomas Leaf (*Under the Greenwood Tree*) and Christian Cantle (*The Return of the Native*) as 'anomalies', rather than hermaphrodites or androgynes per se, who do not suffer 'social isolation', but who in

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[50] Martha Vicinus, review of Alice Domurat Dreger, *Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex* (Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1998), *Victorian Studies* Vol. 42, No. 2, (1999), pp. 321-323 (p. 323).

[51] Vicinus, 'Hermaphrodites', p. 322.

[52] Vicinus, ibid.

[53] Vicinus, ibid.

[54] See Algernon Charles Swinburne, *Gems of Art*. (1890).

[55] Thaïs Morgan, 'Reimagining Masculinity in Victorian Criticism: Swinburn and Pater', *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 36, No.3, (Spring 1993), 315-322 (p. 316).

fact are seamlessly integrated within the novelistic communities which they each inhabit.

The 'Unman' as a biological and societal construct of resistance is independent of the figure of the androgyne, instead 'he' may be interpreted as not displaying any physical or social characteristics regarded as particular to either sex. Freud argued that all humans are constitutionally bisexual, as both masculine and feminine 'currents' exist within everyone. To this end Freud insists that masculinity can never exist in a pure state.[56] Rather than being bisexual in this Freudian sense, Hardy's representations of Leaf and Cantle are more asexual in orientation, each occupying a sexually indeterminate space within the masculinity spectrum. In this way Hardy's texts might be argued as articulating an 'Unman' perspective. The Otherness of Diggory Venn and Little Father Time demonstrates the possibility of remaining 'extimate' to society while simultaneously remaining vital to exigencies of plot. Through the characters of Leaf and Cantle Hardy represents an extreme liminality that is not only used as a yardstick by which to gauge the masculinities of the other protagonists, and by which they may measure each other, but also introduces instances of 'opposition and resistance' that 'facilitate the deployment of new social arrangements' to accommodate them.[57]

Thomas Leaf may be seen as an early attempt by Hardy (1872) at delineating an alternative gender perspective. Leaf in introduced into the narrative via indications of how his masculinity contrasts with that of the other characters within his narrative community. Leaf displays 'a weak lath-like form' and stumbles along 'with one shoulder forward and his head inclined to the left, his arms dangling nervelessly'.[58] If we juxtapose this image with the emphasis placed upon the 'ordinary-shaped nose…ordinary chin…ordinary neck and ordinary shoulders' of Dick Dewey, the novel's central protagonist, it is immediately apparent that Leaf is *extra*ordinary.[59] He is a 'human skeleton [in] a smock-frock…very awkward in his movements', but before the reader can become disconcerted, Hardy adds the qualification, 'apparently on account

[56] For a discussion of Freudian gender theories from a late twentieth-century perspective with particular emphasis on masculinities see R.W. Connell, *Masculinities*, op cit., chapter 1: 'The Science of Masculinity'.
[57] Connell, *Masculinities,* p. 229.
[58] Thomas Hardy, *Under the Greenwood Tree*, ed. Simon Gatrell (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 1999), p. 13. All references will be to this edition.
[59] Hardy, *UGT*, p. 12.

of having grown so very fast that before he had had time to get used to his height he was higher'.[60] This character is portrayed as never having understood the notion of physical attractiveness, and thus the arrival of Fancy Day to the village leaves him uncertain as to how he should react after hearing the other men praise her beauty.[61] In addition he seems to show not the least hesitation in comparing himself to a woman when trying to defend his singing ability: 'I can sing my treble as well as any maid, or married woman either, and better'.[62] Yet though he is described by the other characters as having a 'reedy voice', 'ghastly looks' and 'no head', he is accepted by them as a valid member of the narrative community.[63] Angelique Richardson notes that in this novel 'Hardy depicts a community underpinned by co-operation and inclusion, rather than struggle and exclusion, which underpinned the eugenicist position'.[64] She notes that even Leaf's name 'signals his belonging to the organic whole'.[65] This is an important observation because for such a liminal entity to achieve effortless integration into society can be construed as anathema to the eugenicist position of Hardy's contemporaries such as Max Nordau and Francis Galton. Grant Allen, a biologist and novelist, argued for the pre-eminence of biological beauty being equated with perfection in his book *Physiological Aesthetics* (1877): 'the heart and core of such a fixed hereditary taste for each species must consist in the appreciation of the pure and healthy typical specific form. The ugly for every kind...must always be (in the main) the deformed, the aberrant, the weakly, the unnatural, the impotent'[66]. He goes on to say that should any society prefer 'the morbid to the sound', then that race 'must be on the high road to extinction'.[67] But through the construction of Leaf's character Hardy ranges himself in opposition to thinkers like Allen. While Leaf is 'deformed', 'aberrant' and 'unnatural', he is also an example of resistance to a eugenicist dialectic – eugenicists who fear that the inclusion of the 'morbid' will lead to extinction. This is best illustrated

[60] Hardy, *UGT*, p. 17.
[61] Hardy, *UGT*, p. 34.
[62] Hardy, *UGT*, p. 77.
[63] Hardy, *UGT*, pp. 81-82.
[64] Angelique Richardson, 'Hardy and Biology', in *Thomas Hardy: Texts and Contexts*, ed. Phillip Mallett (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 156-180 (p. 166).
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.

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when Thomas Leaf appears at the wedding of Dick Dewey and Fancy Day at the novel's conclusion. At first members of the community are dubious as to his appearance on such a public occasion, until the Tranter gently explains why this inelegant effeminate youth should be welcomed: 'Suppose we must let 'en come? His looks are against 'en, and he is terrible silly; but 'a have never been in jail and 'a won't do no harm'.[68] In this passage of dialogue Hardy can therefore be read as affirming that a seemingly unfortunate appearance is not necessarily concomitant with an immoral or 'unnatural' disposition. And when Geoffrey bids Leaf 'th'rt welcome 'st know', he is not inviting the 'extinction' of the Mellstock community, he is instead 'bringing new social arrangements into being', acceptance of the 'morbid', of the Unman.[69]

The character of Christian Cantle is rendered more explicitly 'neuter' or 'third sex', he is the 'Unman' to Diggory Venn's 'Other'. References to Cantle's liminal masculinity are much more prevalent throughout the text than in Hardy's representation of Leaf, Cantle being a more fully developed character whose part within the plot of *The Return of the Native* (1878) is more intricate, his interaction with his fellow protagonists more involved. Like Leaf, Cantle's appearance is awkward to the point of abnormality. He is, according to the narrator, a 'slack-twisted slim-looking maphrotite fool' and a 'faltering man with reedy hair, no shoulders, and a great quantity of wrist and ankle beyond his clothes' who speaks in a 'thin gibbering voice'.[70] Emphasis is also placed upon his designation as 'the man no woman will marry'[71], due to suspicions that he is a 'man of no moon', a hermaphrodite. Christian was born during the interval between an old moon and the first appearance of a new one, which, according to Egdon folklore, identifies him with the saying 'no moon, no man'.[72] As his character admits of himself: 'Tis said I be only the rames of a man, and no good in the world at all'.[73] But as with Leaf, this Unman is also unquestioningly included as a valid

[68] Hardy, *UGT*, p. 190.

[69] Ibid, p. 190.

[70] Ibid, p. 28.

[71] Ibid, pp: 28-29. Ironically, the myth of how the original hermaphrodite was formed is based precisely upon sexual attraction and fulfilment. Hermaphroditus, the son of Hermes and Aphrodite, was the subject of Salmacis's sexual fascination, she prayed that they may become so inextricably united that 'the twain might become one flesh'. Her prayer was heard and she and the boy became one body.

[72] Hardy, *RON*, p. 29.

[73] Ibid.

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member of the community within the novel in his own right: 'Wethers must live their time as well as other sheep, poor soul'.[74] Wethers are rams that have been castrated before reaching sexual maturity.

Sandy Cohen sees Diggory Venn as a Christ-like figure while viewing Cantle as a 'negative Hermes', a 'messenger of evil' and an 'angel of destruction'.[75] Cohen is of the opinion that Christian's name is ironic, describing the character as a 'dourful' and 'defective doomsayer'.[76] Though Cantle is portrayed as exhibiting a gloomy disposition, Cohen provides no examples of any 'destruction' wrought by this individual within the plot, and the 'message of evil' referred to is simply Christian's account of an occurrence in Church one morning during which Susan Nunsuch pricks Eustacia Vye with a stocking-needle, believing her to be a witch. Cohen does not make clear how this event is meant to reflect negatively upon Cantle's character, and therefore his argument does not do justice to the complexity of Hardy's engagement with matters of masculine resistance. John Paterson's argument regarding Cantle's character is embedded with prejudices similar to those of Cohen when he writes of Cantle as being a 'ludicrous figure' who represents an 'explicit denigration of Christianity' on Hardy's part.[77] He uses the example of the Pagan bonfire the other denizens of Egdon Heath participate in early in the novel, and describes Cantle as quaking 'in constant terror of the sights and sounds of the savage heath', his 'physical decrepitude and sexual impotence' standing in contrast to 'the life-worshipping vitality' of the 'lusty crew' as they dance and enjoy themselves.[78] He does not explain why being unwilling to participate in a Pagan celebration is also a denigration of Christianity, like Cohen, Paterson seems to have taken a somewhat narrow approach to his reading of Hardy's tale.

In order to profitably investigate Cantle's character as an instance of liminal masculinity, Christian is better interpreted as articulating an Unman perspective. He is a 'neuter' or 'third sex' individual who, far from being 'ludicrous', acts as a gauge by which others may measure their own manliness, while also demonstrating an

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[74] Ibid.

[75] Cohen, 'Blind Clym', p. 54.

[76] Ibid.

[77] John Paterson, 'An Attempt at Grand Tragedy', in *Thomas Hardy: The Tragic Novels*, ed. by R.P. Draper (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), pp. 107-115 (p. 114).

[78] Paterson, p. 115.

inclusiveness in direct opposition to Grant Allen's eugenicist rejection of all such supposed aberrations within society. With reference to the masculinity assigned to Cantle's character by the narrator, the novel's other protagonists periodically exhort Christian to 'Lift up your spirits like a man!', and his father Granfer Cantle at times despairs of his son's complete lack of machismo: 'Really all the soldiering and smartness in the world in the father seems to count for nothing in forming the son'.[79] Traditional patriarchal expectations are subverted by one who describes himself as 'a bruckle hit'.[80] The rest of the Egdon community do not show a preference for what Allen termed 'the sound' over 'the morbid', Cantle is instead instructed by Timothy Fairway to 'never pitch yerself in such a low key as that'.[81] Hardy does not castigate this 'no moon' man's lack of manliness, rather he illustrates through his portrayal of Cantle the inefficiency of attempts at human conformity, and the position adopted by contemporary Malthusians that such individuals, via positive and preventive checks, should be left by the wayside in order to maintain a healthy population control.

While the character of Diggory Venn can be read as being Other within the confines of his particular narrative, he also displays the potential to fulfil David Gilmore's 'imperative triad', the 'three moral injunctions' in any society in which '"real" manhood is emphasized' – impregnating women, protecting 'dependants from danger, and provision of kith and kin'.[82] *The Return of the Native* concludes with Venn giving up his nomadic reddle business in order to finally marry Thomasin Yeobright. Though he may be considered an example of *das Unheimliche* by Freudian standards, this quality does not impair his character or impede his masculine progress. Hardy shows that he not only survives where others such as Eustacia Vye and Damon Wildeve perish, but goes on to prosper, an illustration of how a liminal masculinity may prove successful within a society which marginalizes that which it cannot readily assimilate. Little Father Time is also Uncanny but is unable to, or is never given the opportunity to, mature and achieve 'manhood'; his character is refuted in a demonstration of Schopenhauerian anti-natalism. Like Little Father Time the Unman is also incapable of enacting any component of the 'imperative triad'; Thomas Leaf and Christian Cantle's masculinity are

[79] Hardy, *RON*, p. 32, 382 respectively.

[80] Ibid., p. 382.

[81] Ibid.

[82] Gilmore, *Manhood in the Making*, pp. 222-223.

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both called into question by the modality contained within their respective plots, yet in a direct disavowal of a nineteenth-century eugenicist position Hardy places great emphasis on ensuring that these characters are both accepted and fully integrated into their respective narrative communities. Through these characters Hardy represents a 'FAILURE OF THINGS to be what they are meant to be', and demonstrates a range of instances of opposition and resistance in order to 'bring new social arrangements into being (however partially)'.

BIOGRAPHY: Tracy Hayes received her doctorate from the Open University in 2017 with a thesis that investigated representations of Victorian masculinity in the novels of Thomas Hardy. She is the Secretary, Website and Social Media Director, and an Academic Committee member of the Thomas Hardy Society U.K., and the Book Reviews editor and Publications Checklist Director for the Thomas Hardy Association U.S. She has published widely on Thomas Hardy and has articles forthcoming in *Victorian Popular Fictions Journal*, *DNHAS Proceedings*, *Palgrave Communications*, and *Short Fiction in Theory & Practice*. Her current project explores Gothic masculinity in the short stories of Edgar Allan Poe, Hardy, and M.R. James.

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