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Marlene Springer

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life, Clym appears more comfortable worshipping women than living with them. That portrait of his sitting and contemplating his mother's chair, or fingering a lock of Eustacia's hair, shows a man more content with symbols than longing for tangibles. Alone in his dark house through which the sounds of life can only filter through, or on the Barrow at a distance from the people to whom he preaches, he is like so many of Joyce's Dubliners a study in stasis. In his resolve to preach only on "morally unimpeachable subjects" (p. 485) which will involve him in no controversy, he is a man whose body may move from place to place, but whose soul remains stationary. Unlike Lawrence's Paul Morel who chooses life in the end, or even Gerald Crich who elects death, Clym is life-in-death — a tragic example to Hardy of the family trap.



INVENTION AND TRADITION:
ALLUSIONS IN *DESPERATE REMEDIES*

By MARLENE SPRINGER

When writing retrospectively of his first published novel, Thomas Hardy described *Desperate Remedies* (1871) as a work wherein "he was feeling his way to a method." It is now well-known that the book was the result of George Meredith's admonition to "write a story with a plot," and critics in the nineteenth as well as the twentieth century agree that Hardy was eminently successful in following Meredith's advice. Beyond this consensus, however, critical opinion is characteristically varied: Hardy himself admitted that "the principles observed in its composition are, no doubt, too exclusively those in which mystery, entanglement, surprise, and moral obliquity are depended on for exciting interest"; Irving Howe in his *Thomas Hardy* (1967) deems the novel "one of the most interesting bad novels in the English language"; F. R. Southernington in *Hardy's Vision of Man* (1971) calls it a strange book, admits that it deserves attention, but assigns its merits to its foreshadowing of themes in the later works.

Given the vantage point of a century, one has little doubt

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that Hardy was correct in his criticism, that he was feeling his way, and that the novel is a crowded book. The story, in the suspense tradition, has all the required entanglements. The book opens at a fast pace with "The Events of Thirty Years" covered in Chapter One; here is the life of Ambrose Graye, father of Owen and Cytherea, who has in his past a mysteriously unrequited love for a woman later identified as Cytherea Aldclyffe. Mr. Graye dies from a fall from a church tower; his children are left penniless, and they attempt to solve their financial problems by becoming a governess and a draftsman. Cytherea just happens to get a position with Miss Aldclyffe, who as we ultimately discover, did not marry Cytherea's father because of her guilt over bearing a child after being seduced by a cousin. For the major love interest, Cytherea loves Edward Springrove, a colleague of Owen's. Miss Aldclyffe in turn loves Cytherea with a Sapphic passion unequalled in Victorian literature, and hopes for vicarious enjoyment by arranging for Cytherea to marry Manston, her bastard son, whom Miss Aldclyffe brings to her farm as a steward. Manston refuses to court Cytherea because he is already married, but just as his despised wife comes to live with him, she ostensibly dies in a fire. Manston now presses his suit on an unwilling Cytherea, who agrees to the marriage only to get the money needed to save her ailing brother, and only after she learns that Edward has been engaged to his cousin for years. Springrove is jilted, much to his relief, but he arrives at Cytherea's wedding too late to stop the ceremony. Cytherea is saved from her marriage bed, however, by Edward's discovery that Manston's wife may still be living, since new evidence proves that she did not die in the fire.

At this juncture the plot becomes exceedingly intricate, and affairs are so entwined that Hardy found it necessary to untangle everything in the last chapter by the rather artificial device of a six-page suicide note from Manston. It seems that on the night of the fire Manston had accidentally killed his wife, and had hidden her body. After news of his wife's escape from the fire became known, Manston had taken a mistress, Anne Seaway, to act as a cover for Mrs. Manston's death. The mistress begins to doubt his motives; she, and three other people, watch in the night as Manston tries to remove the body,

and he is exposed — but not captured before an attempt to abduct Cytherea. Edward rushes to the rescue, Manston is caught, and confesses all in his prison cell. Fortunately, a rigid time scheme guides the reader through this labyrinth, and consequently the strands of the story are seldom raveled, as they sometimes are in Dickens, for example. From the events of Chapter One, dated October 12, 1863, through Chapter Twenty-one, at ten minutes past four on March 30, 1866, almost every hour is accounted for; the “Sequel” is just as specifically placed in “Midsummer Night, 1867.”

But even though Hardy followed tradition in plotting, there are important elements in the book which indicate that even with his first novel he was willing to experiment boldly with both character and method. Lawrence Jones, in one of the few studies devoted exclusively to the novel, astutely points out that though Hardy seemingly wrote a typical sensation novel, “he could not totally suppress his personal mode of regard,” and goes on to show that there is an apparent conflict in the novel between Hardy’s artistic and philosophic desires to make the novel a love tragedy, with the villain a victim of the forces of natural law, and the requirement of a thriller that the antagonist be a double-dyed blackguard.¹ Jones then proves what has since become generally accepted, that though the characters in this novel do have the attributes of conventional types, they are much more complex than they need be for popular sensation fiction. What Jones, and equally so more recent critics, has failed to note about the novel is that in conjunction with this unusual complexity of character development Hardy also experiments with complexities of method, especially in his use of allusion.

That some kinds of allusions are prevalent in Victorian fiction has always been patent — one reviewer of *Desperate Remedies* noted that “popular mottoes from some book of quotations . . . form the headings of chapters in nine-tenths of novels.” Hardy’s admiring familiarity with the work of Wilkie Collins also indicates that he quite obviously knew the formula for sensation fiction: brave heroes, virtuous heroines, unmitigated villains, a benign Providence who insures poetic justice

1. Lawrence Jones, “*Desperate Remedies* and the Victorian Sensation Novel,” *Nineteenth Century Fiction*, XX (June 1966), 37.

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at the end of a complicated series of morbid, terrifying, semi-supernatural events. But Hardy's strikingly innovative use of allusions indicates an eagerness to transcend convention and to appeal to more than the escapist who reads hurriedly for emotion and plot. From the start Hardy made unusual demands of his audience, and was later to contend in "The Profitable Reading of Fiction" that "a perspicacious reader will see what his author is aiming at, and by affording full scope to his own insight, catch the vision which the writer has in his eye."² It is to the shrewd reader, then, that Hardy directs his allusions. Placed in context with their original sources, or when viewed in the novel's context, these allusions become more than mere embellishments added by a self-educated novelist to impress the Establishment. Rather, a close scrutiny of the allusive patterns in the novel reveals that Hardy's references give important clues to both plot and character. In a book where mystery is of such import, they afford added enjoyment to the detective-reader by providing flatteringly subtle clues to the plot. On a more academic level, others are used ironically to help furnish consistency to the portrait of Manston. When action and conversation come dangerously close to making Manston too sympathetic for the role of sensation-antagonist, the allusions artfully erode his personality and foreshadow his ultimate defeat.

Compared to later Hardy novels, *Desperate Remedies* contains relatively few allusions: approximately twenty from the Bible, and some sixty historical and poetical ones, including three quotations from Virgil in the original. As will be his practice in the rest of his canon, most of these allusions are important for their comment on character rather than their contribution to the nuances of the plot. However, in a novel such as this where action takes precedence over character, those allusions which adumbrate events assume added significance. Hardy is explicit in his directive to the reader that the allusions have ramifications beyond their overt meanings, for he has one of his characters use the device, and be discovered at it. While Springrove is conversing with Cytherea about his poetic past, he admits that he " 'mediates the thankless Muse' no longer."

² Thomas Hardy, "The Profitable Reading of Fiction," in *Thomas Hardy's Personal Writings*, ed. Harold Orel (Lawrence, Kansas, 1966), 117.

The narrator then enters:

Cytherea's mind ran on to the succeeding lines of the poem, and their startling harmony with the present situation suggested the fancy that he was "*sporting*" with her, and brought an awkward contemplativeness to her face.

Springrove guessed her thoughts, and in answer to them simply said "Yes" (p. 48).³

The narrator thus informs the reader of the technique, and encourages his attentiveness to source whenever allusions are used.

Since Manston is the ostensible villain in the novel, and is therefore the prime motivator of much of the mysterious action, he appropriately utters several of the adumbrative allusions, and all are related to him. On the most obvious level, his name Aeneas gives a clue to heritage; as in the classics, he is the son of Cytherea-Aphrodite. (Aeneas Manston's father, however, instead of being struck by a flash of lightning, merely goes to India.) More covertly, historical, classical and Biblical allusions are all used to predict the courses of Manston's life. For example, when Miss Aldclyffe confronts Manston with her knowledge of his marriage, he tries to unnerve her by candidly acknowledging his status; he decides to "burn his ships and hazard all on advance" (p. 179). The reference warns us of his fate for it alludes to Cortez's tactic in Mexico when he attempted to prevent his men's panicky return to Cuba. Though both men are temporarily successful, Cortez, on this expedition, ultimately failed in spite of his method, and so does Manston. In Chapter Twelve, still another foreshadowing is offered by a description of Manston. Now, after his wife's death, he is forcefully courting Cytherea, and he is pointedly compared to "Dares at the Sicilian Games." Hardy quotes from Dryden's translation of the *Aeneid* V, 587-589:

He, like a captain who beleaguers round
Some strong-built castle on a rising ground,
Views all the approaches with observing eyes,
This and that other part again he tries,
And more on industry than force relies (p. 251).

The pronoun reference is to Dares, who is fighting Entellus.

³ All page references are to Thomas Hardy, *Desperate Remedies*, Greenwood Edition (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1960), which is based on the Wessex 1912 text.

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There is every indication that Dares will win because of his superior fighting ability, but he leaves the arena in shame after Entellus summons a superior strength attributed to his moral fortitude. Manston's situation is analogous: he accepts a favorable challenge, but shares Dares' failure.

Because Hardy's audience undoubtedly knew Scripture better than Cortez or Dryden, the Biblical references, though no less encompassing, are less difficult — especially since at one point Hardy supplies the identification lest the reader miss the significance of the context. Thus Hardy reaches a wider audience for his clues when, for example, he has Manston observe his wife arriving on a train and quote aloud an identified line from Jeremiah: "A woman shall compass a man" (p. 166). In context (Jeremiah 31:22) God sarcastically rebukes the children of Israel, saying that this is a new thing: the woman, or Israel shall "surround" (the Hebrew dictates this implication of "compass") the man, or God — and that the result will be Israel's downfall. This is precisely what happens to Manston: the woman does surround him by her discoveries, cuts off his escape, and is killed for her effort. Or, later in the novel, when Manston is discussing his loss of Cytherea because of the discovery of his earlier wife, he says with disarming casualness: "Abigail is lost, but Michal is recovered" (p. 321) — a reference to David's early wife, and Michal, Saul's daughter, who was also given to David, lost, and returned as a token of faith by Abner (I Samuel 25 - II Samuel 7). Manston's comparison of Abigail to Cytherea is an obvious defense against revealing his true feeling. But it is his reference to Michal which forewarns the reader of Manston's fate; Anne Seaway comes to hate Manston just as Michal ultimately does David. The final foreshadowing allusion continues this connection. Once Anne has begun to suspect Manston of chicanery, she adds fear to her hate. She feigns innocence as he nonchalantly looks for an opportunity to poison her. Here the narrator intervenes with another clue: "But what is keener than the eye of a mistrustful woman? A man's cunning is to it as was the armour of Sisera to the thin tent-nail" (p. 404). The nuances of this situation are parallel to that of the source, Judges 4:21. Anne Seaway contributes to Manston's downfall, just as Jael drove a nail into Sisera's temple after he fled to her following his

defeat by Deborah's forces.

But Hardy does not restrict himself to foreshadowing; he also employs allusions ironically as comments on character. Each of the major figures is the object of this device; e.g., Cytherea's very name is ironic — this contentedly virginal girl is anything but a goddess of love. It is Manston, however, who is the novel's most complex figure, both stylistically and psychologically, and it is he, once again, who receives the most important allusive treatment.

The stereotype for the Gothic villain was well established by 1871: his birth is upper-class, his appearance handsome; he is surrounded by a sense of mystery, often with an aura of some past secret sins; he must have great strength of will to persevere in his evil until the end; he must be, above all, a misogynist, and because of this misogyny he remains unregenerate.⁴ Even a cursory glance at Manston proves that Hardy partially conceives of him in terms of the tradition, but refuses to force him into the mold completely. Manston is "an extremely handsome man, well-formed, well-dressed" and well-born; he is shrouded in mystery, and he has a strength of will. But the major secret sin is his mother's, not his own; his own evil originates from a cruel trick of fate; he does repent and confess; and he is anything but a misogynist. It was Hardy's tragic vision, suffused with irony as it was, rather than his ignorance of genre, that dictated this mixture. As the result of his conviction that man never receives the good fortune his dignity deserves and because of the force of coincidence is not responsible for most of his actions nor their outcome, Hardy has almost no unredeemed villains in his work, and even his worst characters are complex combinations of good and evil.

Manston initiates this pattern, and is, at first glance, almost too sympathetic to be realistic as the antagonist. (Hardy was to face this problem in future novels; in *The Return of the Native*, Wildeve's manuscript name is "Toogood," and he also is a very likable correspondent.) Hardy's *Weltanschauung* forced him into difficult stylistic problems with Manston, for he must be a believable suitor for the angelic Cytherea, a realistic victim of irrational forces, and a scoundrel who would stoop to chasing

4 Peter I. Thorslev, Jr., *The Byronic Hero: Types and Prototypes* (Minneapolis, 1962), 53-55.

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the heroine around the table, a "panting and maddened desperado." (Even at this crucial moment Hardy chose to mitigate Manston's villainy: the first edition reads "demon" for "desperado.") Granted, Hardy's confrontation of this problem shows some of the weaknesses of the fledgling novelist. Manston's change from suitor to husband to potential rapist is precipitously fast, and his early willingness to take advantage of Cytherea's vulnerability comes as a rude surprise. Nonetheless, Hardy does soften some of his own awkwardness in construction by manipulating the careful reader's response to Manston through an ironic use of allusion. For, while Manston is allowed to retain the respect of other characters in the novel, and thus sustain the necessary picture of a well-meaning man, he is narratively undercut by the references he receives.

Hardy begins to erode Manston's facade two chapters after the steward enters the novel — sixty-six days after his arrival at Miss Aldclyffe's. The reader becomes retrospectively aware of the craft involved in the description of Manston: "Like Curius at his Sabine farm, he had counted it his glory not to possess gold himself, but to have power over her who did" (p. 183). Curius, a man of legendary frugality and virtue who refused all spoils of war, affords an ironic and debilitating contrast to Manston, whose final aim is to possess everything. When Manston hears of his wife's ostensible death, he is again the victim of an unflattering allusive connection with a noble character and a sympathetic situation: David's receipt of the news from Cushite that his son Absalom has been killed (II Samuel 19:32-33). But while the great man cries upon hearing the news, Manston shows no emotion, not even slight regret, and is an "unmoved David" (p. 205). When he is once again required to show some response to his wife's death he demonstrates his callousness by replacing emotion with cold intellect, quoting from Stern's letters "that neither reason nor Scripture asks us to speak nothing but good of the dead" (p. 213). And, with only one exception, all the allusions continue to degrade: his religion is Laodicean, or lukewarm (p. 244); he is Corinthian, synonymous with dissoluteness and love of luxury; and he preys "on virginity like St. George's dragon" (p. 378).

As the references accumulate, Manston is stylistically reduced until he can perform the progressively baser deeds perpetrated

by his initial accidental misfortune, demeaned toward the Gothic villain he is supposed to represent. But just as he is redeemed in the plot through his confession which clears Cytherea's honor, so is he stylistically redeemed by the balm of one dramatic restorative reference. When Manston loses Cytherea, Hardy slackens his ironic noose and allows Manston one moment of compensatory humanity: "Yes, the artificial bearing which this extraordinary man had adopted before strangers ever since he had overheard the conversation at the inn, left him now, and he mourned for Cytherea aloud" (p. 321). He reveals his wound with a lament: "A land of darkness as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death without any order, and where the light is as darkness." The quotation is from Job 10:22, the Biblical voice for suffering man — the same voice Jude used twenty-five years later. The "demon" is only a "desperado"; and when measured allusively, he is consistently just that.

Robert Hume notes that the prime feature of the Gothic novel is "its attempt to involve the reader in special circumstances."⁵ Hume is speaking primarily of the reader's emotional response to the fiction, but the point could also apply to intellectual response — and it is to the intellect that Hardy's allusions are directed. In *Desperate Remedies* Hardy is obviously testing new allusive techniques. He is not always successful, often simply because he lacked restraint. His rudimentary discipline is clearly evident, for example, when the narrator deadens the excitement by interrupting the inevitable histrionic fight between the hero and villain to quote I Kings 22:25:

Manston was on his legs again in an instant. A fiery glance on the one side, a glance of pitiless justice on the other, passed between them. It was again the meeting in the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite: "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found thee: because thou has sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord" (p. 427).

Similar stylistic crudity is also obvious elsewhere in the novel, for Hardy is sometimes too erudite or obscure for all but a very select part of his already segregated audience: there are five Latin digressions, and only extensive research, or chance knowledge of bootless information would elucidate Manston's

5 Robert Hume, "Gothic Versus Romantic: A Reevaluation of the Gothic Novel," *PMLA*, LXXXIV (March 1969), 286.

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mention of "the Flying Isle of San Borandan" as an allusion to the voyages of the sixth-century Saint Brendan to find the terrestrial paradise.

But even though Hardy occasionally stumbled, the successes achieved here, i.e., the foreshadowing and the ironic comments on character, are devices which become permanent, and extremely useful, aspects of his later style. An allusive chapter title in *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, for example, foreshadows with startling exactness Stephen's entire relationship with Elfride; the heading "How should I greet thee," is a line from Byron's "When We Two Parted," a poem which must have been the outline for this strain of the plot. The allusive manipulation of villainy initiated with Manston is again applied to Troy in *Far From the Madding Crowd*, and with much greater incisiveness. With Troy, Hardy once again walks that fine, difficult line between an elevated anti-hero and an unregenerate villain — a distinction so important that he completely discarded an entire section of the manuscript which describes a monster-Troy deliberately infecting sheep with disease so that they will fatten more quickly and bring a higher price. Like Manston, the demon changed to desperado, Troy must be a realistic contender for Bathsheba yet a man evil enough to drive one woman-with-child to her death, another woman to distraction, and a man to murder. Again Hardy accomplishes this formidable feat partially through allusions, first by inversely applying them: while the dashing Troy is entangling the enamored Bathsheba in a Freudian net, the allusions are cutting away at him. But, when Troy repents, the assaulting allusions give way to neutral ones. Though Troy, like Manston, never receives the allusive accolades finally earned by Hardy heroes, Troy's final allusive connection is indicative of the adroit intricacies of technique Hardy began with Manston. In the last allusion connected with him, Troy described himself as an Alonzo the Brave, then recounts the story of Monk Lewis' ballad "Alonzo the Brave and the Fair Imogene" (p. 422). The allusion shows Troy to be disdainfully honest now about the perversity of his actions; it forecasts his death by comparing him with a ghost; it has the Hardian irony, for Troy is the opposite of the wronged suitor; and finally, it does all this while still letting the comparison be a complimentary one, for as with Alonzo, we have some sympathy

for Fanny's lover despite his deeds.

Hardy's allusive skill keeps pace with his experience, and his allusions become increasingly important to total concept, as the Hellenic-Hebraic dichotomy allusively outlined in *Jude the Obscure* conclusively illustrates. It is in *Desperate Remedies*, however, that Hardy begins the exploration that is to end so fruitfully, and it is as early as this first public attempt that Hardy illustrates his willingness to discard convention and carve new wood. *Desperate Remedies* is a sensation novel, with most of the trappings — but it gives the reader the added pleasure of scholarly adventure by having ingenious clues imbedded in its narration. And more important in terms of craft, the novel gains through Hardy's allusive method a consistency of character that it lacks if such stylistic subtleties are ignored. Neither Hardy nor current critics pretend that *Desperate Remedies* is a major Hardy novel, or that it is as important to the canon as is, say, *Adam Bede* to George Eliot. Hardy is still a long way from *The Return of the Native*, and Michael Millgate (*Thomas Hardy: His Career as a Novelist*, 1971) is correct, for example, when he contends that Hardy does not even take advantage of all the possibilities of point of view in the story.⁶ Nonetheless, the novel does have strengths that have been largely neglected, does contain innovations, the importance of which are clear in critical retrospect. The reviewer of *Desperate Remedies* in *The Athenaeum* (April 1871), met the spirit of Hardy's foreshadowing and predicted the results of Hardy's complex manipulation of character when he admitted to seeing "no reason why he should not write novels only a little, if at all, inferior to the best of the present generation."

⁶ Michael Millgate, *Thomas Hardy: His Career as a Novelist* (New York, 1971), 34.

