Thomas Hardy's Architecture: Fragments of a Lost Aesthetic

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Thomas Hardy's Architecture: Fragments of a Lost Aesthetic

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1. Introduction

Thomas Hardy abandoned his career as a draughtsman and assistant architect (1856–1873) in order to become a professional writer. This paper attempts to trace some aspects of architectural sensibility in his literary work. We do not suggest a causal relationship between the biographical element and writing; it is simply a way to ask how one loses one art in another, a way to say "and" between architecture and literature. Here, "and" is meant in the sense that Gilles Deleuze accords it to English-language literature: not a specific relation, but a possibility of a relation which makes its elements "shoot outside their terms and outside the set of their terms, and outside everything which could be determined as Being, One, or Whole. The AND as extra-being, inter-being" (Deleuze and Parnet 57). To traverse this interspace, we shall spill out from architecture into literature and vice versa, move by resonances from select scenes of Hardy's biography to those of his novels. We focus on Hardy's late literary work because it follows in the wake of an implicit critical re-evaluation of his architectural career in 1881, when he joined the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, a group oriented against architectural restoration.

Working as an assistant architect, Hardy took part in a number of restoration projects, about which he later expressed misgivings in his (auto)biography (written in the third person because it was edited by and published under the name of Florence Hardy):

> Church 'restoration' was at this time in full cry in Dorsetshire and the neighbouring counties, and young Hardy found himself making many surveys, measurements, and sketches of old churches with a view to such changes. Much beautiful ancient Gothic, as well as Jacobean and Georgian work, he was passively instrumental in destroying or in altering beyond identification; a matter for his deep regret in later years (*Life* 31).

His novel *A Laodicean* was completed the same year he joined the SPAB and is also notable because he mostly dictated it to his wife Emma due to a "tedious illness of five months" (*L*, Preface). Michael Millgate suggests that this period of compulsory passivity provided Hardy with an opportunity to reflect upon his life, career and art: he rose from the sickbed having arrived,

"once and for all, at a personal position on some of the central questions he saw as confronting him as a man and as an artist" (204) and we construe it as a provisional biographical break as well.

The aesthetic conflict regarding modernity's relationship with the past, between restoration and preservation of old buildings, shall be explored through the contrast of architectural theories of Eugène Viollet-le-Duc and John Ruskin and then brought to bear on Hardy's novels *A Laodicean*, explicitly portraying a restoration project aimed at a Gothic castle, and *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, which presents a dilapidated town of ancient origin as its setting. The two spaces—De Stancy castle and Casterbridge—exemplify restorationism and preservationism respectively, one undergoing a process of modernization and the other left to accretions of time. *Jude the Obscure* presents something of a synthesis: its protagonist—a stonemason with a passion for dead languages—is made to enact restorations in and around the city of Christminster, which transform old buildings, identified with a certain type of permissiveness, as we will show, into more formal and rigid places that reinforce extant social divisions, and especially the one between manual and intellectual labor which Jude Fawley seeks to overcome and fails to do so.

The strain between restoration and preservation serves as one way to articulate the issue of remembrance, which has an important place in Hardy's work. J. Hillis Miller argued that Hardy "in his function as artist-preserver … is the closest thing to a deity his universe has" (268); for us, this deity is something like a god of dust, who lifts up absent and forgotten figures from as little as their co-presence with places of his fiction or traces they left behind on the surfaces of the world. Hardy's writing makes up an aesthetic of preservation, which knows how to stop on the surface and find there an unexpected abundance of emotion and memory, destabilizing restoration's drive to reconnect with the past, affirming its distance, configuring absences and thus creating a world ever more layered, fragmented and incomplete.

2. The Gap in Time

2.1. The Claim of the Past

In the autumn of 1866, the churchyard with a notable Catholic burial ground, belonging to the reputedly ancient London church of St Pancras, found itself in the way of a new railway line. A decision was made to disinter the remains from one part of the cemetery and move the tombstones. The architect who obtained the commission, worried about the human remains being misplaced, as it had occurred during a similar prior project, tasked his assistant to supervise the works. The assistant was young Thomas Hardy. He oversaw "these mournful processions" (*Life* 45) each evening for a couple of months, sometimes after nightfall, in flare-lamp light: tombstones were plucked from the ground, the coffins ripped from the earth. Some broke, the bones spilling out. Collected and reassembled, the skeletons were transported to a new resting place on bare wooden boards. The works rendered many tombstones in the churchyard superfluous; so, they were set in a decorative circular pattern around an ash tree. Hardy's involvement with it is uncertain, but he left an invisible trace by simply being present: the tree now bears his name – "the Hardy tree". This act of naming can serve as an interpretation of Hardy's oeuvre by way of popular tradition and we take it as an aegis of his poetics: burgeoning life caught by tombstones as signs of the dead without the dead, a map abstracted from the territory, signifiers in partial emancipation from the signified that nevertheless capture something real.

Hardy's *A Laodicean* presents a similar situation: the ancient De Stancy castle, in a "clash between the ancient and the modern" (*L*, B.1, IV), finds itself in the way of a railway line. Here the modern subsides or mutates: the railway is diverted; its owner, John Power, buys the dilapidated castle. His daughter Paula inherits it and decides to restore it. A physical process of reconnecting with the past—the restoration of De Stancy castle—requires an erudite architect and Paula finds him in George Somerset, who has never built anything, but merely observed, studied and acquired a detailed knowledge of architectural styles; he can transform fragments to signs and read the unwritten past that undermines the hold of history and genealogy. As a member of the

newly rich, Paula is very interested in "an art which makes one so independent of written history" (B.1, VIII). Preserving the castle's non-historical past, the secrets of those who "passed into the unseen" (B.1, I) while making the ruin inhabitable is what determines the success of the restoration. The question is whether the past can be coherently integrated into modern life or whether it collapses under the weight of its own amassing. For De Stancy castle is a place where one forgets the century. Somerset finds newspapers, magazines, satirical papers, French and Italian paperbacks, and the telegraph in Paula's room. "These things, ensconced amid so much of the old and hoary, were as if a stray hour from the nineteenth century had wandered like a butterfly into the thirteenth, and lost itself there" (B.1, IV). The past does not accommodate, the present loathes being incommoded.

Two architectural projects emerge. Paula's is to "mend and enlarge" the castle while adding a Greek court with "a Greek colonnade all round … a peristyle … a fountain in the middle, and statues like those in the British Museum" (B.1, X). In accord with the retrofitting that she has already begun (Somerset first finds the castle by following a telegraph line), she seeks to enhance the castle both functionally and aesthetically. This fervid eclecticism (an enlarged Gothic castle with a Greek courtyard) shocks even by 19th-century standards of restoration and Paula eventually drops it after reading an open letter in the local newspaper against her lack of "respect for the tradition of the county, or any feeling whatever for history in stone" (B.1, XIV), opting for Somerset's project, which seamlessly integrates the modern and the ancient, without modernizing or enhancing the latter:

> It was original; and it was fascinating. Its originality lay partly in the circumstance that Somerset had not attempted to adapt an old building to the wants of the new civilization. He had placed his new erection beside it as a slightly attached structure, harmonizing with the old; heightening and beautifying, rather than subduing it. His work formed a palace, with a ruinous castle annexed as a curiosity (B.2, II).

A strange relationship between the vestige of the past and the possibility of artistic creation is concealed in this harmony: it is the idea that the absolute past can determine the present, a religious idea in the sense of *religare* – to bind together the disparate. The past ceases being absolute, absolved, detached. The new cannot appear independently from the aesthetic of the past, a religious idea in the sense of *relegere* – to rethink or to reread. To approach restoration artistically and creatively is to render the past readable and complete what its fragments suggest.

2.2. Parts and Wholes

Restoration was conceived as a thoroughly modern procedure at the time, symptomatic of an emerging "complex and unstable relation to the historical past" (Spurr 142), but its 19th-century conception was very different to the meaning the word might have today. In the words of one of its most fervent practitioners, the French architect Eugène Viollet-le-Duc: "To restore an edifice means neither to maintain it nor to repair it, nor to rebuild it; it means to reestablish it in a finished state, which may in fact never have actually existed in any given time" (Bergdoll 167). Following the technological advances of the 19th century, Viollet-le-Duc came to think that only in his own time had it become possible to execute the original visions for some buildings. Restoration had its enthusiastic champions in Britain as well, the most prominent being G. E. Street and G. G. Scott, and its scope was very extensive: more than 7,000 British churches were restored between 1840 and 1873 (Cannon 201). These projects became controversial by the end of the century, testified by the formation of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, founded by William Morris and Philip Webb, whose stated opponent was precisely restoration, which their manifesto calls "a strange and most fatal idea, which by its very name implies that it is possible to strip from a building this, that, and the other part of history – of its life that is ... and leave it still historical, living, and even as it once was". For the Society, which became known as "Anti-Scrape", restoration was conceptually and ethically unacceptable; the process of enhancement, refurbishment, enlargement, regularization, perfecting ornaments and homogenizing the style of buildings, they saw as erasure, destruction, and even death.

Hubert Damisch argued that Viollet-le-Duc's approach to restoration, as presented in the *Dictionnaire raisonné de l'architecture française du XIe au XVIe siècle*, outlined a precursor to structuralism in linguistics; this work in 10 books, the result of intense research and a variety of projects aligns architecture with language in its dictionary form and implies an exhaustive scope, through which the author develops a rigorous, almost scientific system:

> Each architectonic style is articulated according to a set of constructional principles—a structural system constituting a specific logical framework that analysis must bring to light ... An architectural style that possesses its rigor, its own "truth," lies in the extent to which the hidden order of relationships responsible for the structural equilibrium of the architectonic whole is manifest, right down to the smallest structural details (Damisch, Ch. 5).

Style determines "the intimate role between the structure and the form, the form and what adorns it" (Viollet-le-Duc VIII: 491), but this relationship is hierarchical: "Style resides much more in main lines, and in the harmonious unity of proportions than in the adornments with which an architectural work is covered (VIII: 494). The works of theoretical architecture and natural formations have in common that they *lack structure*, although in different ways:

> Construction is the means, architecture the result, and yet, there are works of architecture that cannot be considered constructions and there are certain constructions that we cannot classify as works of architecture. Certain animals build, some build cells, others nests, mounds, tunnels, sort of huts, networks of threads; these are indeed constructions, they are not architecture (IV:1).

Style being defined as "the manifestation of an ideal established upon a principle" (VIII:474), theoretical works lack in manifestation, and natural in ideal.

Ultimately, because style regulates the relationship between the parts and the whole so methodically and organically, buildings that survive only in fragments can be made complete: "'Just as when one sees the shape of a leaf, or an animal's bone, the whole plant or creature can

be inferred, so on seeing a section one can infer architectural features' and from a single feature, one can infer the whole building" (Damisch, Ch. 5, Note 11). These almost unthinkably large "conjectural supplements" (*Seven Lamps* 185), as John Ruskin called them, are the basic model of restoration.

Architectural elements and style begin to correspond to paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations in linguistics when seen through this lens, which merely returns the notion of structure to its source (Lat. *struere*, to build). A peculiar type of "reading" and interpreting happens as a result. The relationship between the part and the whole is organic, the reader's progress certain, the results unmistakable. What naturalist cannot see the oak tree in the shape of its leaf, or a tiger in the shape of its fibula? To carry out a restoration, architects should become impersonators and "take the place of the original architect and suppose what he would do if, *coming back to the world*, he were faced with the program [they] have made for [themselves]" (Viollet-le-Duc VIII:31, my emphasis). Architects should become points of absorption and adjustable reproduction of old styles, they should "be permeated [*se pénétrer*] with the style belonging to the period of the building whose restoration they were charged with" (VIII:25). No different than a building to be restored, "architect is not and cannot be anything but a part of a whole" (I:xiii), a fragment, a mold that gives shape to the present having been shaped by the past.

Having stayed the night in the Norman wing of Wenlock Abbey in 1890s, Thomas Hardy remarked that "he felt quite mouldy at sleeping within walls of such high antiquity" (*Life* 258), conflating molding and moldering, structure and decay. It so happens that decay, ruins and fragments provided a contrasting model of thought about how modernity should orient itself toward the past, the one championed by the SPAB, and in explicit opposition to the restorative model and its integrations.

2.3. Preservation of Ancient Buildings

The Society's conceptual impetus was defined by the writings of John Ruskin. He, too, saw something readable in architecture and expressed explicit "insistence on the reading of

architectural detail, [according to which] the criticism of a building is to be conducted 'on the same principles as that of a book,' so that its appreciation will depend on the 'knowledge, feeling, and not a little on the industry and perseverance of the reader' (10:269)" (Spurr 117). Ruskin's mode of perception directed at old architecture was not only undertaken along the lines of a book, but shares a similar intensity with the technique of close reading in the 20th century literary criticism.

Despite his reputation as a champion of the ornament, in *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, Ruskin does not demand ornamentation for its own sake, sometimes recommending to avoid it altogether (54). For him, the real appeal and significance of ornamentation lies in its function as trace: "… all our interest in the carved work … results from our consciousness of its being the work of poor, clumsy, toilsome man" (56). He preferred Gothic architecture, which, with its proliferation of tracery, abounds in the signs of long-dead craftsmen and thus "admits of a richness of record altogether unlimited" (174), the aesthetic value thus overlapping with the memorial function. The quality of execution is secondary; in fact, pretty much an inevitable consequence of handiwork, imperfection renders buildings priceless: "it matters not how bad workmen they may be, there will be that in the handling which is above all price," (162) for imperfection distinguishes human from machine work. In "The Nature of Gothic", Ruskin develops this idea further: "… accurately speaking, no good work whatever can be perfect, and the demand for perfection is always a sign of a misunderstanding of the ends of art" (170). The real ends of art consist in exhausting the possible and reaching one's limitations: "… no great man ever stops working till he has reached his point of failure" (170). So, the ornament is apprehended with unusual intensity, not as a comforting or kitschy addition to a building, but as a space that challenges the craftsmen to reach their limit in a visible form and bequeath it, failing to execute some finer and unmanifested design; in this way, the record that Gothic tracery bears in such abundance comprises a texture of failures and endpoints of each craftsman's skill; not in full control of their art, minor artists capture, precisely through failure and loss of control, something of the real; they infuse stone with the life of a trace.

Ruskin's critique in *Seven Lamps* demonstrates also almost a modernist tendency, especially in the chapter on the power of architecture, where he demands "wide, bold and unbroken" (77) surfaces emphasized by light and mass. He ascribes ornamental qualities to the light distribution, geometry and materials' texture as though, rather than an architectural element, the ornament is an emergent principle of perception to Ruskin. Examination of surfaces in sufficient detail bestows the intensity of an ornament to any number of features: "the relative majesty of buildings depends more on the weight and vigor of their masses than on any other attribute of their design: mass of everything, of bulk, of light, of darkness, of color, not mere sum of any of these, but breadth of them; not broken light, nor scattered darkness, nor divided weight, but solid stone, broad sunshine, starless shade" (97). The majesty of a building ensures its longevity, which is crucial since Ruskin thought that "a building cannot be considered as in its prime until four or five centuries have passed over it" (183) – until it has acquired something that goes beyond "mere sensible beauty" (183) and been transformed by what he calls the parasitical sublime, manifested on its surfaces: "it is in that golden stain of time, that we are to look for the real light, and color, and preciousness of architecture" (177). This stain is why the living "have no right whatever to touch [ruins]" (186); it represents the stake of the dead in their world.

Ruskin was extremely opposed to restoration, claiming it destroys a building "more totally and mercilessly than if it had sunk into a heap of dust" (185). He consistently preferred total absence to any pretense of replacement. The ruins for Ruskin took on a quality of a different world, held at a distance, always in a tenuous relationship with the present. As David Spurr comments: "The monument does not claim to evoke the totality of what it commemorates. It signifies its object only allegorically, and by convention; it presents itself as the dead letter of a departed spirit, and its affective power resides precisely in this irreconcilable ontological difference" (160). The power of ruins and monuments is *affective* and this allegorical distance emerges precisely through affection by way of absence in Ruskin. He claims that upon "all of material things that they had loved" people "set the stamp of themselves" (*Seven Lamps* 170); the parasitical sublime is felt

through affects, which were of enormous importance to his conception of architecture: "Ruskin understood architecture as an art … and … emotion was central in both its creation and its reception. Each of Ruskin's seven lamps held a quality that could either hinder or facilitate the architecture's emotional impact" (Wheeler 8). He stressed the importance of "affectionate design" (*Seven Lamps* 28) and the enjoyment of the workmen as they executed it (165), as well as the "affectionate admiration" (70) and "natural affection" (170) that need to be felt in order to understand that more than the immediately visible is lost in destroying old buildings, or that anything at all is lost in restoring them.

2.4. Thwarting restoration

Restoration is thwarted in *A Laodicean* when De Stancy castle is set on fire and burns so that only its oldest, Norman portion remains intact – it is consigned to the absolute past and the status of a ruin. Somerset's approach, which, reminiscent of Viollet-le-Duc's, seeks to bring forth and complete the structural "truth" of the building is done away with in favor of Ruskin's ruin-affirmative aesthetic that knows how to linger on surfaces and find a richness stemming from their incompleteness and distance of origin:

> … restoration belongs to the form of nostalgia that dreams of the timeless unity of the object with its ideal origins—the unity of the symbol—whereas the ruin … expresses the temporal disunity proper to allegory. In the sense that the nineteenth century gave to these terms, restoration is symbolic, whereas ruins are allegorical (Spurr 146).

The fire destroys enough layers of the past that the symbolic integration with the present along the syntagmatic axis becomes too difficult; the castle is consigned to the absolute past after all, becoming the domain of "imaginative reason" (B. 5, V). The allegorical distance is untraversable and the ruin cannot be inhabited; it serves as the ground of reason from which surges the imagination, and around which various possibilities of wholeness ceaselessly pulsate and perturb modernity's attitude to space, resisting its deterritorializations and testifying to irreparable decay;

in other words, a ruin enables one to remember forgetting and having forgotten: it is a reminder, a place where a mind is re-minded of the past, remade, externalized.

2.5. The Indistinct Dead

The past in Hardy has a dual existence, physical and linguistic; it is strongly territorial, but only coagulates in reference to the symbolic order; it endures, but its coherence is fragile to the extreme. In the poem "The Levelled Churchyard", the dead bewail lying beneath "wrenched memorial stones" (141). The destruction of the churchyard by "restorations" and "smoothings" (142) ground the memories to an indistinct mass of "human jam" (141) and tore their bodies apart. Their lament is almost played for laughs, there is a scene of great confusion among the corpses underground:

Where we are huddled none can trace,

And if our names remain,

They pave some path or porch or place,

Where we have never lain! (141).

A loss of coherence follows modernity's transformations: the symbolic order on the surface changes, not the real underground, and yet, under a changed symbolic arrangement, the dead cease to exist and become homogeneous matter, a mass of "human jam". Hardy gives the past a longer claim on places than modernity can abide. He insists on traces to which society no longer attributes their proper signs and this symbolic nudity of the trace often serves as the point of departure for the imaginative processes around it, through which the coherence of the past is momentarily reestablished, not as a thread, but as a set of lacunary resonances between disparate instances, enacted by remembrance, holding together on the basis of almost nothing – bodies turned to dust and half-forgotten names. The resonances are lacunary as they traverse the gap between the fragments which spark intense imaginative thinking and the wholes—figures and lives—which they suggest. Remembrance works as a creative process, which, nevertheless, preserves the fragmentariness of its origin. Like Angel Clare in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, who "… rises out of

the past not altogether as a distinct figure, but as an appreciative voice, a long regard of fixed, abstracted eyes, and a mobility of mouth …" (*Td* 130), the figures of the dead surge in privileged places only ever as fragments, within conjectural gaps between what remains in various forms of recollection and what the past might have been.

2.6. Remembering forgetting

Not unlike Paula Power, Michael Henchard in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* seeks a dwelling, or better yet, a place in the world at all: the story begins with him and his family on the road, looking for a house to let. It begins in perfect silence as Henchard is "reading, or pretending to read" (MC 5) poetry. Unplaced, silent and reading in the beginning, he ends up displaced, silent and writing before he dies. Between these two silences, there is an interlude during which he gains a place in the world as a corn trader and Casterbridge's mayor, but not before drunkenly selling his wife (Susan) and daughter (Elizabeth-Jane) to another man (Newsom). This taboo scene of subjecting family ties to commercial exchange haunts Henchard (he swears off alcohol) and the possibility of its discovery threatens him with potential ostracization or self-exile. Hardy, in true spirit of an architect, designs a fitting site for the drama of a man who dreads the return of his past, as though Henchard were his client: the latter is to preside over a town where the past constantly surges but is never truly interpreted or understood.

In 1883, Hardy began to build the Dorchester house, named Max Gate, where he would die 45 years later. As the ground was being prepared to lay the foundations, three oval graves were discovered and in them three skeletons buried in the fetal position, with some artefacts that identified them as Roman: a bottle, a bronze fibula, two metal crowns, some urns – not unusual since Dorchester had developed from the Roman town of Durnovaria and was a site to many similar discoveries. In fiction, Hardy sometimes took the Roman invasion of Britain as the origin point that serves to orient the rest of history: his earlier novel *The Return of the Native* features a description of the fictional Egdon Heath, where "everything around and underneath had been from prehistoric times as unaltered as the stars overhead" (Ch. 1), the only mark of humanity being a

highway that traverses it, partly overlaying the old Roman *via*. Human transformation of nature was an important theme: "An object or mark raised or made by man on a scene is worth ten times any such formed by unconscious Nature. Hence clouds, mists, and mountains are unimportant beside the wear on a threshold, or the print of a hand" (*Life* 116); the vestiges of human work are charged with meaning because they point at something beyond themselves.

Hardy liked to evoke a layered past in his descriptions of spaces, the stories preceding the stories he told. The result was the invention of Wessex: he took the name of a medieval Anglo-Saxon kingdom to designate the space of southwest England, where his contemporary stories were set. With every novel or story, Wessex became more defined and detailed. Already by the mid-1890s, maps appeared with the novels (Millgate 332). Hardy came up with fictional names to denote manmade structures while mostly using real names for natural formations. Within "the horizons and landscapes of [this] partly-real, partly-dream country" (Orel 9), Dorchester—with its Iron Age hill forts of Maiden Castle, henge earthwork of Maumbury Rings and earthwork fort of Poundbury Hill, with its Roman coins, rings, fibulae, walls and aqueducts—became Casterbridge:

> Casterbridge announced old Rome in every street, alley, and precinct. It looked Roman, bespoke the art of Rome, concealed dead men of Rome. It was impossible to dig more than a foot or two deep about the town fields and gardens without coming upon some tall soldier or other of the Empire, who had lain there in his silent unobtrusive rest for a space of fifteen hundred years (*MC* 67).

Henchard's backstory is coded as Roman, not only because it begins on a sole road in an undefined landscape and demonstrates the overbearing power and potential cruelty of a *pater familias*, but also because it is subsequently followed up in a Roman amphitheater, a space modeled after Maumbury Rings and charged with the spectral presence of "a gazing legion of Hadrian's soldiery" (68) in the stands, where he meets with Susan for the first time after the sale. Later, he rents for her a cottage "near the Roman wall" (77) and when she dies, "[her] dust mingle[s] with the dust of women who lay ornamented with glass hairpins and amber necklaces, and men who held in

their mouths coins of Hadrian, Posthumus, and the Constantines" (125). Soon after her mother's death, the second Elizabeth-Jane takes up the study of Latin, "incited by the Roman characteristics of the town she lived in" (124), as if to reflect on ancient history that forms the ground of family history in order to give it the coherence that it lacks.

Hillis Miller's remark about *Tess*, that "[t]he spatial design of the novel diagrams its temporal structure" (202), works just as well here – on a larger scale, in the structure of the unplaced–placed–displaced protagonist, but also on a minor one, when we consider the details of spatial descriptions of Casterbridge. Henchard observes Casterbridge from the Georgian windows of his house (82); Lucetta Templeman's (the relationship with whom he also considers one of the "blunders" (74) from his past) villa is Palladian (131) whereas the "Three Mariners" inn, through which pass all characters that disturb Henchard's position (Susan, Elizabeth-Jane, Farfrae, Lucetta), boasts "two prominent Elizabethan gables" (39) and a "four-centred Tudor arch … over the entrance" (40), Renaissance and late-medieval elements. Georgian architecture was a reappraisal of Renaissance and Palladian styles, which, of course, took Roman antiquity as their primary model. So, in a sense, all these make for aesthetic returns to Rome, they are "compilation rather than a design" (131), as the narrator remarks; they are not original, but reconnect with an origin, like restoration architecture. These repetitions of the Roman architectural aesthetic seem to configure the possibility and fear of Henchard's past coming to haunt him.

Yet it never does. Lucetta is happy to start a relationship with Farfrae and demands no marriage from him. Henchard's daughter dies immediately after the sale, and when Susan comes to Casterbridge with Elizabeth-Jane (who shares her half-sister's name, but whose father is Newsom) almost 20 years later, she dies so soon that there is no illusion of having made amends. There is no redemption, no restoration. Time is reasserted and the taboo scene remains irreparable. Susan leaves Henchard with the purely symbolic fatherhood that he once renounced, established only through language and naming. But since he knows "no moderation in his requests and impulses" (72)—since "character is fate" (107)—Henchard, in his animal-like impulsiveness and

ineptitude with words, is unable to maintain the symbolic relationship and ends up alienating Elizabeth-Jane. Having been displaced in business and politics by Farfrae, and by the returning Newsom as a father, he deems himself superfluous and self-exiles from civilization, fleeing out of Casterbridge, along the Roman *via*, across the fallow land of Egdon Heath, "bowling across that ancient country whose surface never had been stirred to a finger's depth" (306) into a timeless, barely standing cottage, with walls of kneaded clay and ruined thatched roof (307). Prehistoric associations abound at the end of the novel: the earliest tribes, the tumuli, Diana Multimammia (306). Here, in a place older than Rome, he is ready to die.

Hardy's other novels create similar motifs of small, hollowed-out, temporary residences created in flight: Giles Winterborne in *The Woodlanders*, a taciturn character so tied to the natural world that he is referred to as "a fruit-god and a wood-god" (249), similarly dies from inhabiting "a wretched little shelter of the roughest kind" (276) after being cast out of his cottage and hut; the potentially scandalous marriage in *Two on a Tower* must be hidden and can only be avowed within the titular dilapidated astronomical tower; finally, Tess Durbeyfield's initial "indoor fears" (Td 139) are overturned in flight after committing murder, when she learns to appropriate inner spaces: "All is trouble outside there: inside here content" (412), even appropriating Stonehenge as residence for one night, a place important because it is "older than the centuries; older than the d'Urbervilles" (416) and so offers a sort of catharsis, a site where the d'Urberville name loosens its claim, comparable to the relationship of Egdon Heath and Roman history for Henchard.

It is in situations of flight and displacement, at their most animal-like, when Hardy's characters seem most capable of reimagining and transforming spaces, which is to say when they seem most like architects. As Samantha Briggs remarks: "Hardy's characters … are essentially building structures as animals build them, building crude enclosures by utilizing nature's surrounding resources and thus returning to an existence that reflects the living conditions of the lower animal orders" (33). But these haphazard moments of building or appropriation are also linked with death in all novels listed above, as is architecture in poems like "Heiress and Architect"

and "The Church-Builder", where the newly built structures are immediately envisioned as places to die in.

There is more fate for Hardy's characters than just the one of character; there is also such a thing as the fate of placement if space diagrams the plot: "To see time as a pattern in space is to see it as determined to follow just the sequence it does follow. Space fatalizes. From the perspective of any moment in time chosen as the present, the past and the future seem to exist still and already" (200). Tess arriving at Stonehenge coincidentally in the dead of night and laying to sleep on the sacrificial altar is one such fated placement, not coincidental at all, but promised in the opening chapters of the novel where Tess is participating in a May dance, announcing her sacrifice. Casterbridge, a town of amassed Roman history, is a site made for its mayor, where his personal past also amasses and tangles until he is left with nothing but a homonym sedimented with losses of two daughters. Then, the historical tabula rasa of Egdon Heath is given to him to write himself out of history.

Hillis Miller's argument, that Hardy's plots are laid out in spatial patterns, is tied up with the claim that Hardy's narrator fulfills the function of a minor god through narration, finding meaning to things when the characters cannot: "He saves them by giving them clarity, pattern and meaning … His writing, to give it a final definition, is a resurrection and safeguarding of the dead within the fictive language of literature" (268-9). Even though he writes "& that no man remember me. To this I put my name." (MC 309) in his will, Henchard is made to rise from the past— "before the nineteenth century reached one third of its span" (5)—in order to be brought to the moment of self-erasure. The apparent strain between narrating a life that the character wants deleted is repeated in miniature when Henchard leaves a trace across the untouched space of Egdon Heath in order to struggle with writing at the end of it – when he puts his name to blot out his name.

There is no simple, non-paradoxical way to consider this will-to-be-erased through trace; it resembles to an extent what Jacques Derrida wrote happens to the name of God in apophatic theology: "… to lose the name is not to attack it, to destroy it or wound it. On the contrary, to lose

the name is quite simply to respect it: as name … To pronounce it without pronouncing it. To forget it by calling it, by recalling it (to oneself), which comes down to calling or recalling the other . . ." (58). To risk collapsing a part of Derrida's polysemy, Henchard's instance of writing does not erase him from memory (how could it?), but frees up the possibilities of remembrance by negating its ritualized, official mode of commemoration. Henchard craves the status of Roman skeletons in Casterbridge, between whom and the living "there [seems] to stretch a gulf too wide for even a spirit to pass" (*MC* 67): the possibility to be anyone, a recognition that he may have been more than he said or did. Like Tess in "Tess's Lament", he cannot bear his life "as writ" (CP 158), which implies something that has remained unwritten and unspoken, which might emerge in personal and affective modes of remembrance.

Remember me enough to forget me, not to mourn me, to leave my grave without a sign; remember me as I blot out my name, now symbolically nude, a creature riddled with gaps, a "dark ruin" (MC 302) not to be restored but kept at a distance and ever reimagined as more than what was – as something else. Remember me as someone else: such were Michael Henchard's words to Elizabeth-Jane Farfrae, who was not his daughter.

3. "Thee, too, the years shall cover": Time as Sediment

3.1 Losing the Place

Thomas Hardy met Emma Lavinia Gifford in 1870, in a small church in Cornwall, colloquially called St Juliot, during what turned out to be the last restoration project he undertook (*Life* 65). Bearded and in a shabby greatcoat, with a blue paper sticking out of his pocket, he initially left the impression of a business-minded older man that he was not: he had already written a novel by then and the blue architect's paper in his pocket was a manuscript of a poem. He found the church, originally dating from "Norman or even earlier times" (79), in the state of "picturesque neglect" (79) and was struck by the scene, as his notes testify: "Went with E. L. G. to Beeny Cliff. She on horseback. . . . On the cliff. . . . 'The tender grace of a day'" (75). The sequence of poetry which he wrote after Emma's death, *Poems of 1912-1913*, uses the memories of this first encounter as its vocabulary of images. The poems often read like a catalogue of places where Emma no longer was: "At the end of the alley of bending boughs" (CP 307); "by the moorway" (308); "… the hill-top tree/ By the gated ways" (309). The poem "Places" treats this type of memory explicitly, showing how ordinary places are transformed into scenes of high affective resonance for the poet: "Nobody thinks: There, there she lay / In a room by the Hoe, like the bud of a flower" (321). Only the lover's gaze transforms these places, seeing there, as it were, time replayed. The subtitle of "Beeny Cliff" suggests as much, "March 1870 – March 1913", and the scenes of initial seduction play out once again across its five stanzas, but its final lines pitilessly reassert the passing of time and the reality of death: "The woman now is – elsewhere – whom the ambling pony bore/ And nor knows nor cares for Beeny, and will laugh there never more" (319). Barbara Hardy analyzed these poems as poetry of place; they are of-place by way of being of-memory, for "memories, true or false, were for [Hardy] a primary source of emotion" (Millgate 520) and here, it is as if a cast of the place had been taken, carried for decades and overlapped with its source upon revisit, this instance of repetition allowing memories to flow with a special intensity. But the distance between the memory and place is reasserted in the final lines; the fact of Emma's death

breaks the romantic mold. The places are observed too closely to maintain the fantasy: "Imagination may seem to be in the foreground, scrupulous honesty of imagination, with the recognition that the anthropocentric view is not inevitable" (B. Hardy 153). Among these poems of place and memory, "A Dream or No" seemingly questions the very possibility of a conjunction between the two:

> Why go to Saint-Juliot? What's Juliot to me?
>
> Some strange necromancy
>
> But charmed me to fancy
>
> That much of my life claims the spot as its key (CP 316).

The enshrined memories have taken on such a crystalline form that they have come to seem too perfect, dreamlike and thus unreal. "Does there even a place like Saint-Juliot exist?" (317) the last stanza asks and we can answer yes, in the sense that the village, the Beeny cliff, the Atlantic and the wood are still there, or no, in the sense that the idealized places of memory are no more real in Hardy's case than in anyone's, but the question could also be taken in strictly physical terms, as in: have the material elements that made up that world in 1870 been preserved through the years? The natural world certainly changed; nature "is always discarding the matter, while retaining the form" (Orel 214), Hardy wrote in a speech to be read under the auspices of the SPAB, with the title "Memories of Church Restoration". The remark implies other forms, manmade, in whose discarding Hardy's role in Cornwall, the role of a restoration architect, was not irrelevant but "instrumental" (*Life* 79). The autobiographical sketch in which he describes meeting Emma does not end with an image of her on horseback as she "Draws reins and sings to the swing of the tide" (CP 322); rather, it and the entire first part of the book (titled "Early Life and Architecture") ends by describing the restoration, i.e., the losses of the old walls, the nave, the door and the chancel-screen. Decades later, Hardy described the procedure of restoration as "active destruction under saving names" (Orel 203), answering, as it were, that question from "A Dream or No". Does there even a place like Saint Juliot exist? No. Only the name remains.

Only the name remains of the village of Fawley, as well; it is the name given to the protagonist of *Jude the Obscure*, Jude Fawley. As a boy, he lives in Marygreen, an ancient village whose past was erased in a series of transformations: "Old as it was, however, the well-shaft was probably the only relic of the local history that remained absolutely unchanged" (*JO* 5). The loss of the local church is especially devastating:

> Above all the original church, hump-backed, wood-turreted, and quaintly hipped, had been taken down … 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 immemorially been the churchyard, the obliterated graves being commemorated by eighteenpenny cast-iron crosses warranted to last five years (5–6).

Hardy "marks [an] absence, giving the vanished church a memorial place in the text" (Cannon 217), but also raises the issue of the (im)possibility of remembrance in the industrial society: the insipid neo-Gothic replacement church ensures its own substitution by equally disposable objects and structures in the future. How to remember Jude Fawley when his world is ceaselessly being swept away with no trace left behind? Who is going to remember generations of inhabitants of the real village of Fawley, whose church was demolished and replaced with a neo-Gothic design by G. E. Street (Cannon 216) in one of his minor projects? Nowhere in Marygreen can one say "here was…" because "here" tends to disappear; nowhere except next to the old well: it is no coincidence that Jude's tear, as he watches his teacher leave him behind, drops down into the shaft.

3.2. Creation as Perception

Hardy performed the St Juliot restoration for the office of the late John Hicks, who first employed him as a teenager. Hicks was on his mind almost 60 years later, weeks before he would die: "He said that if he had his life over again he would prefer to be a small architect in a country town, like Mr. Hicks at Dorchester, to whom he was articled" (*Life* 443), showing how much he appreciated the idea, the reality and the fantasy of a minor craftsman that loses himself in his work.

In the ballad "The Abbey Mason", dedicated to the memory of Hicks, Hardy fictionalizes the construction of Gloucester Cathedral, which is traditionally taken as the origin of the Perpendicular style of Gothic architecture. The poem focuses on the inventor of the style, a master builder whose name has not been passed down. Hardy takes advantage of the historical gap to tell a story of renunciation and oblivion.

The dedicated medieval master builder ponders the problem of the new transept fruitlessly until icicled drops of rain on his drafting-board deform the lines of his design and provide a coincidental solution to the problem:

> So that they streamed in small white threads
>
> From the upper segment to the heads
>
> Of arcs below, uniting them
>
> Each by a stalactitic stem (CP 370-1).

The apprehension of nature's architectonics constitutes the original architectural act – creation through recognition. The abbot interprets it as the work of God: "You merely copied, and did not create" (372), chastising the mason for pride. The latter abides the censure and renounces the fame of creation. His name "fade[s] out of mind" (374) after his death; on the other hand, the abbots' are neatly listed in one stanza. Yet the end of the poem seems to condemn those who "upon nothing rear a name" (375), not only justifying artistic creation grounded in what comes before, but almost demanding it. As another abbot says: "Things fail to spring from naught at call. / And art-beginnings most of all" (374); indeed, the cathedral itself did not form as a unified object but is layered and "rose roundabout a Norman core" (368). Furthermore, in the image of many anonymous medieval craftsmen who worked on the cathedral, among them the titular mason, architecture is conceived as a means to remember those unrecorded by history, presently absent as an intangible aspect of the tangible works that survived until the present. Hardy's absences tend to be partial (missing a person, place, name) and not absolute (God). Once again, there is an insistence on the territoriality of the past; the names of the dead need to be somewhere, reared on some-thing.

But when a name is lacking, there is in work a vestige of life to be felt: "like a living thing" (373), the cathedral changes and develops; and this development does not end at completion.

3.3. To Perceive the Invisible

In Rome in 1887, Hardy often remarked that he felt "its measureless layers of history to lie upon him like a physical weight" while still regretting the lack of "vast accumulations of parasitic growths" (*Life* 188) that had been removed from ancient buildings. For Hardy, an incidental crack or parasitic growth become a part of the building by adding texture to its surface, similarly as the dead beloved becomes the "sweet heart" (CP 310) of the flowers on her grave and how, in "Transformations", "Portion of this yew / Is a man my grandsire knew / Bosomed here at its foot" (CP 432). Plants and flowers are the past pressed outward, ex-pressed into the surface that signifies everything under it.

Hardy called buildings like the Colosseum, covered in evidence of time, "dead art" (Orel 216) since they have passed out of fashion or use and they would never have been constructed in his day. In dead art, one foregoes the aesthetic for the "memorial sense" (216); one values material continuity over formal perfection and, in fact, identifies the two; the surface of dead art remained very alive to Hardy and, in a sense, still under construction: "The life of a building involves construction, reconstruction, decay and destruction – all of which have their analogues in the natural world. Hardy's figures inhabit and travel across landscapes that encourage 'long views' – views in which the evidence of deep evolutionary time is inscribed in stone" (Briggs 32). And this inscription can be more valuable than the building itself. For instance, he was disappointed by the architectural features of St Mark's Basilica in Venice but found ravishing how "[t]hat floor, of every colour and rich device, is worn into undulations by the infinite multitudes of feet that have trodden it" (*Life* 193). Such imprints can be very personal and even more ethereal, like the one on Christminster in *Jude the Obscure*. The city that to Jude initially elicited a strong desire for learning and carried associations of old writers, eventually begins to signify the absence of Sue Bridehead: "The city of learning wore an estranged look, and he had lost all feeling for its associations … He

came to the street in which he had first beheld Sue . . . Hers was now the city phantom, while those of the intellectual and devotional worthies who had once moved him to emotion were no longer able to assert their presence there" (170–71). Hardy explicitly wrote about the ability of places to "record" time (*Life* 352) and of stones in church walls to witness the scenes of history (Orel 215). In "At Castle Boterel", the primeval rocks "record in color and cast" (CP 320) the passage of two lovers next to them. Apprehended in and through the memorial sense, old churches become "chronicles in stone" (Orel 204). Days and lives slip into the surface of what surrounds them: "To-day has length, breadth, thickness, colour, smell, voice. As soon as it becomes yesterday it is a thin layer among many layers, without substance, colour, or articulate sound" (*Life* 285). Layers of yesterdays constantly settle on top of Hardy's world, forming the invisible sediment from which surges the thought of the past, a resurgence framed by a detailed gaze which obtains its intensity from the affect that motivates it. Galia Benziman's study on the elegiac aspects of Hardy's writing shows in great detail how he "often stages the presence of the dead as inscribed in the landscape or in actual writing, visually denoted by epitaphs, family vaults, natural corners filled with associations, wills and testaments or posthumous letters" (150). What-is is treated as a sign of what-is-not; the latter has "a presence more than the actual brings" ("Places," CP 320); the visible is used as a net to catch bits of the invisible, similar to how Maurice Merleau-Ponty conceived this relationship:

> It is according to the intrinsic sense and structure that the sensible world is "older" than the universe of thought because the former is visible and relatively continuous while the second, invisible and lacunary, at first glance does not constitute a whole and contains its truth only on the condition that it leans on [*s'appuyer*] on the canonical structures of the sensible. If we reconstruct the way our experiences depend on one another following their innermost sense and if, in order to better lay bare the relations of essential dependency, we try to break them up in thought, we perceive that everything that bears the name of thought

demands this distance from oneself, this initial opening that the field of vision and the field

of future and past are for us… (27-8).

Just as Ruskin's examination of architectural details configures the absent hands that produced

them, to Merleau-Ponty, what we see are the things themselves: in seeing them with precision,

exactly as they appear, the visible also articulates our perception of the invisible, it conditions what

we do not see, it defines the partial absence that we notice, a small part of a significantly larger

absence. As Swithin St. Cleeve explains on the cosmic scale in *Two on a Tower*: "there are things

much more terrible than monsters of shape, namely, monsters of magnitude without known shape.

Such monsters are the voids and waste places of the sky" (Ch. IV). Those void spaces are only

perceived because stars provide orientation to perceive them. As above, so below. Architecture is

an art of shaping the void by enclosing it, rendering it perceptible, but not visible. Emptiness is the

substance of a building's content, but emptiness preceded the building; though imperceptible, the

space was already there.

Hardy often conceived the space of poetic thought as a perceptible void; many of his

memorial poems, like "The Self-Unseeing", follow from an absence given personal shape:

Here is the ancient floor,

Footworn and hollowed and thin,

Here was the former door

Where the dead feet walked in (CP 150).

There are smaller spaces around every object within the perceptible void of the house; they define

their own perceptible absences; there are "hands behind hands, growing paler and paler" ("Old

Furniture", 446) that have left indentations in a multigenerational house's old furniture. We can

say with Dennis Taylor: "No analogy for Hardy is more powerful than this: the poem as a series

of marks carved in material, the fossil remains of a personal indent" (xxv). The affectionate

disposition toward places makes marks intelligible, which enables the poet to imagine stepping

into the same river twice for a brief moment. Places *present* the past and Hardy derived

inexhaustible pleasure in writing from finding ways to announce "here was…" by directing a reader's intensity to the marks born by places. The world is imagined as a parchment covered in pre-linguistic signs. From tiny visible traces, Hardy often accesses the comprehensive memory of the world that Hillis Miller discusses:

> Just as in de Quincey's vision of life every thought, every experience, every emotion a man
> has had remains in layers with the others indelibly recorded on the palimpsest of his brain,
> ready to be resurrected in certain privileged moments, so for Hardy, a man's life has always
> been written out from all time and remains even after his death recorded on the coiled
> parchment which inscribes his fate down to the last detail (231).

The invisible that Hardy evokes always teeters at the edge of the visible, almost palpable on its surface: architecture testifies to absent hands that have made it and the invisible feet that have trod upon it, major and minor names cling to it: names recorded in history, names remembered by some, or names engulfed by oblivion whose absence from memory is marked by the presence of old buildings. The sense of death on their surfaces makes old buildings attractive: "… if there is any way of getting a melancholy satisfaction out of life it lies in dying, so to speak, before one is out of the flesh; by which I mean putting on the manners of ghosts, wandering in their haunts, and taking their views of surrounding things. To think of life as passing away is a sadness; to think of it as past is at least tolerable" (*Life* 209-10). Wessex is made up of such imprints of past lives; it is a world that ever imprints itself upon itself. That the process is imagined as universal reaffirms our focus because a world of imprints made by co-presences accords a special status to architecture: "All men must live out their lives in a place full of houses, roads, and tools. The parts of nature which man has reshaped in this way are the sedimentation of history" (Hillis Miller 96). If a path cut across the untouched land bears a spectral record of the person who passed, the place where it intersects with another path is doubly as meaningful; easy, then, to imagine the escalation of this process in old houses, ancient roads, villages, towns, cities, Christminster's college buildings, Venice, Rome. The more a place is frequented, the more sediment it has, so that the crossroads in

Christminster is the place richest in history, "teeming, stratified, with the shades of human groups" (*JO* 111). As if the past had a gravity of its own, places dense in sediment have an irresistible attraction in Hardy's world. Henchard, on his first escape from Casterbridge, swerves little by little, affected by the "centripetal influence of his love for [Elizabeth-Jane]" until "his wandering [becomes] a part of a circle, of which Casterbridge formed the centre" (*MC* 296); on his second escape he goes in a straight line out, without return, thus outlining something similar to the first and second cosmic speeds. Jude calls Christminster his "centre of the universe" (308) because it is the place of his old desires.

Oftentimes, architecture is a testament to power—over the environment, over people—but to Hardy it also bore record of those trampled by power, the forgotten, the unavowed. In one of the last articles that he wrote, he argued for the need to preserve ancient English cottages. In Italy, "probably from a surviving architectural instinct, he made a few measurements in the Via Appia Antica, where he was obsessed by a vision of a chained file of prisoners plodding wearily along towards Rome …" (*Life* 189). A more personal version of the same tendency to recover the forgotten figures finds its expression in "At Middle-Field Gate in February" (CP 441) where, upon revisiting the titular place, he recalls the beauty of a bevy of long-dead field-women whom he admired as a boy. On the page 223 of *The Life of Thomas Hardy*, their names are preserved, too.

3.4. The Haptic View of Gothic Tracery

Like John Ruskin and Hardy in poems, Jude Fawley in *Jude the Obscure* knows how to read the trace of the dead in the world around him. When he first visits Christminster (Oxford) at night, he hears the voices of the historical greats whose likenesses adorn the walls of college buildings and city streets. The sun rises and these specters disappear, giving way to those whose names have not been carved in stone, but whose present absence can be read on it:

> The numberless architectural pages around him he read, naturally, less as an artist-critic of their forms than as an artizan and comrade of the dead handicraftsmen whose muscles had actually executed those forms. He examined the mouldings, stroked them as one who knew

their beginning, said they were difficult or easy in the working, had taken little or much

time, were trying to the arm, or convenient to the tool (78).

Architectural forms communicate an order of absence that history often forgets: in their visible forms, invisible gestures performed by a multitude of absent hands can be construed. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari developed a useful concept called "the haptic view" in *A Thousand Plateaus* that can work as a shorthand for this mode of perception. The haptic (close) view stands in opposition to the optic (distant) view and "invites the assumption that the eye itself may fulfill [a] nonoptical function" (492); we might say that the haptic view gives intimations of other senses through the eye.

In Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy, the haptic view is tied to the concept of smooth space: in opposition to striated ones, smooth spaces are domains of sliding between categories and specializations, resisting universal norms; characterized by local intensities, they are domains that slip away from central control. "Smooth space is filled by events or haecceities, far more than by formed and perceived things. It is a space of affects, more than of properties…Perception in it is based on symptoms and evaluations rather than measures and properties" (479). As we have seen, it is as *a space of affects* that the sediment of time can be perceived and read: Jude's comradeship with dead craftsmen is what allows him to imagine the movements of their muscles and the invisible distant work; Ruskin's emphasis on affects allows him to closely read Gothic ornaments, seeing in them the points of exhaustion of anonymous craftsmen's skill; Hardy's personal associations of spaces with the departed allows him to reconstruct their presence in his poetry.

Dennis Taylor, quoting Hardy's "Memories of Church Restoration", identified this spectral presence as an intrinsic formal feature of Gothic architecture that Hardy carried over into his poetry: "The Gothic form, Hardy said, was an 'aesthetic phantom' (Orel 214). It was a style of the past, its origins were obscure, it had developed by imperceptible stages, its monuments were subject to decay" (56). When Hardy engaged in a brief self-analysis of his poetry in *Life*, he wrote:

He knew that in architecture cunning irregularity is of enormous worth, and it is obvious that he carried on into his verse…the Gothic art-principle in which he had been trained – the principle of spontaneity, found in mouldings, tracery, and such like – resulting in the 'unforeseen' … character of his metres and stanzas, that of stress rather than of syllable, poetic texture rather than poetic veneer; the latter kind of thing, under the name of 'constructed ornament' … he had been taught to avoid as the plague. He shaped his poetry accordingly, introducing metrical pauses, and reversed beats … (301)

The architectural training is carried over into poetry through a lack of refinement and a proliferation of poetic forms: according to Taylor's count, there are 742 metrical patterns in Hardy's poetry, in just under one thousand poems (CP xxi). Hardy, reminiscent of Ruskin, shunned perfection: not overly concerned that some of his lines "do not make for immortality" (*Life* 301), he allowed his poetry to comprise a texture of artistic limits and failures.

The construction sites of Gothic architecture, as imagined by Deleuze and Guattari, enact a comparable formal proliferation: "The vault is no longer a form but the line of continuous variation of the stones" (364). In Gothic art, one loses the total structure for the joy of rendering the detail: "Contrary to what is sometimes said, one never sees from a distance in a space of this kind, nor does one see it from a distance; one is never 'in front of,' any more than one is 'in' (one is 'on' ...)" (493). Gothic's drive to build ever farther and higher enacts a qualitative change in the relationship between the abstract and the concrete: "the static relation, form-matter, tends to fade into the background in favor of a dynamic relation, material-forces" (364), and this is to say that the Gothic proliferation of forms comes because it disregards the idea of form, or rather finds it where architecture used to deny it – in the material: "Thus matter, in nomad science, is never prepared and therefore homogenized matter, but is essentially laden with singularities" (369). In Ruskin's writing, this comes through as the idea of "respect for material" (*Seven Lamps* 81) where each material requires different handling and is appropriate for different forms.

To follow up, we could offer here a simplified mold paradigm and say that Ruskin the Gothic specialist trains his perception by the smooth-space features of Gothic art and in second degree applies that perception to every detail of buildings he examines. As a result, architecture is emancipated from the ornament and the ornament itself from the conventional notions of what it is: in human associations and material features there is already an abundance of traces to perceive; the ornament, record and singularity are already there in the material.

Hardy found an eloquent way to express this idea in *Jude the Obscure*, once again through an analogy of architecture and literature, when Jude enters a masonry yard that reproduces the time-stained statues on the walls of Christminster:

> The yard was a little centre of regeneration. Here, with keen edges and smooth curves were forms in the exact likeness of those he had seen abraded and time-eaten on the walls. These were the ideas in modern prose which the lichened colleges presented in old poetry. Even some of those antiques might have been called prose when they were new. They had done nothing but wait, and had become poetical. How easy to the smallest building; how impossible to most men (78-9).

This transformation by time is architecture's greatest aesthetic strength, but it still pales in comparison with timescales and transformations in nature: "… this shortcoming of the most ancient architecture by comparison with geology was a consideration that frequently troubled Hardy's mind when measuring and drawing old Norman and other early buildings …" (*Life* 93-4). The concern may seem strange, but within the model of sedimentation as construction, we can apprehend the processes of geology as effecting the most detailed type of architectonics, composed fully of singularities, composed of time itself so that its layers emerge conditionally upon the scale of observation and barely exist in themselves, each particle with its own past and in tension with others, matter thus free of any homogeneity. In contrast, no such sedimentation happens in metals; cast iron crosses are wrought into a symbol of planned obsolescence in Jude the Obscure and

Ruskin recommends to avoid cast iron ornaments since they "stand only for what they are" (*Seven Lamps* 58) – since they do not, in time, become more.

Typically, fragments are thought of as parts of ruins, but before the time when the ruin was a whole, the primary fragmentation had happened: the fragmentation of natural formations that transforms matter into material or, we might say, the materialization of the material. Deleuze and Guattari discuss the implications of two types of this first fragmentation when it comes to cutting stone: the first, following a template and the second, cutting by squaring. When stones are cut according to a template, they are rendered into pre-determined block shapes within a model intended for easy reproduction, with the inner tensions and singularities of the stones disregarded. On the other hand, cutting the stones by squaring, as in Gothic architecture, demands "a series of successive approximations … or placings-in-variation of voluminous stones" (364), meaning that the inner tensions of the material are respected and that no universal, reproductible paradigm is possible. And since there is no universal paradigm to render the building blocks, ceaseless formal variation of the Gothic seems almost inevitable. Stone-squaring is an example of a nomad science, a set of procedures which is "an art as much as a technique" (369) and which abuts the limits of accepted knowledge. Nomad science "follows the connections between singularities of matter and traits of expression, and lodges on the level of these connections, whether they be natural or forced. This is another organization of work and of the social field through work" (369). Deleuze and Guattari imagined the construction sites of Gothic architecture spread across the land as constituting problem domains that demanded "qualified labor" (368) and so mobilized a considerable flow of itinerant workers, or journeymen, who established a network of movement and labor that tended to slip away from the state's capture apparatus. The state's response to this is a dequalification of work, journeymen being replaced by a distinction between architects and workers: "the ground-level plane of the Gothic journeyman is opposed to the metric plane of the architect, which is on paper and off site" (368). Strict hylomorphic paradigm, which demands both

cutting and building through a template, is imposed as a result: the state splits work into intellectual and manual, or theoretical and practical.

These considerations are pertinent to Ruskin's political imagination: through lectures on art and architecture, he aimed to resuscitate the idea of artisanship as the point where craft and art fuse into meaningful work, which then enacts a continuous and ceaseless transformation of society rather than seeks the single event of a revolution. To see how this applies to Hardy, we go back to Jude Fawley, a stonemason who reads Greek and Latin – a space of sliding between classical learning and craftsmanship, or in some sense, a smooth space between scholarship and craft, writing and masonry, reading from paper and reading stone, major and minor art.

In the novel, the work of restoration serves to neuter the evolutionary artistic and social impulse of Gothic art, functioning as a type of capture apparatus: the stonemason's yard in Christminster performs "at best only copying, patching, and imitating" (*JO* 79). Restoration determines the degree zero of the original buildings; it then demands reproduction by unqualified manual labor which treats material as homogeneous throughout. Restoration also scrapes the sediment of time from buildings, and creates edifices that have no life – the degree zero determined by the first restoration ensures returns to it in the future. It is not the permissive and dynamic world of journeymen, but the squalor and reproductive monotony of the working class.

Jude and Sue run counter to the world around them, having imagination, seeing "things in the air" (105), arguably making up a guild of two journeymen: it is easy to see them in this light at Aldbrickham as they work together on the church wall and its frescoes; there is a nomadic, itinerant quality to their life as well. However, their guild ends in loss; the self-effacing life of their children seems to double the self-effacing work of restoration they are forced to perform, which, erasing communal pasts in the architectural sediment, demands its own future erasure. And there are other losses: given Jude's imagination, the unrealized Christminster career could have easily led into literature; the loss of one art is pressed outward (ex-pressed) onto the other: Christminster becomes the subject of stonemasonry. Following loss of employment due to Jude and Sue's taboo

relationship, stonemasonry becomes the subject of their pastry-making in "Christminster cakes" (301), made in the form of traceried windows and cloisters. Desire to create escapes into ever minor forms of art, its losses imprinted on surfaces in its wake. A texture of failure and thwarted desire: this is one significance of the sediment.

3.5. Jude, Restoration and Remembrance

Benjamin Cannon analyzed *Jude the Obscure* through the lens of the contrast between the restorationist and preservationist paradigms: "Restoration … casts history as a traumatic process that must be undone in order to reestablish an originary practice, while preservation understands history as an open-ended production of meaning, one whose very unpredictability means that it can only be made sense of through the traces it leaves upon the material world" (202). Cannon connects restoration with a sense of ritualistic circularity while preservation creates an ambient where new experiences can take place – unique, unfounded and utterly personal experiences that come out of nowhere. The whimsical mock-wedding that Sue performs with Jude in St Thomas à Beckett at Melchester shows that events interesting "because they have never been done before" (*JO* 165) can take place in ancient buildings, made possible as they become imperceptible, one event among many in the dense layer of the past on the walls.

The past held together by sedimentation barely holds together at all. It is mere amassment, a permissive smooth space. A thin layer on the surface of the world which holds its entire past, a three-dimensional object with two degrees of freedom, without vertical ordering, hierarchy, subsummation. The past laid out spatially admits no causality and no linearity between its constituents; the sediment presents the entire past at once, producing images and mirages to Hardy's characters; it is a vision of the past as a disorganized because living plane. The shape of Christminster's walls reinforces the idea: when Jude takes a stroll through the city at night, its great alumni whose names are carved into the stone speak to him in distinct voices derived from their writings, as Patricia Ingham traced in annotations to the text, adding that "[t]here is no meaningful sequence in the listing of authors, no linked theme for quotations" (403). What presents

itself as a harmonious eternity of historical greats is in fact a series of departures, fits and starts; literary tradition proceeds through amassment and gaining erudition means traversing a texture fraught with many inner tensions and misunderstandings, even mutual incomprehensibility, since each writer creates (in) a language of their own. Creating art seems a small thing in the face of this multitude, but then also possible because small, because any voice is one among many.

In contrast, restoration demands repetition: "… while the historical building provides a site for novelty, the new or restored building compels a ritual 're-enactment'" (Cannon 215). Restoration proceeds by choice and exclusion, it collapses inherent multiplicity of the sediment in the places which it transforms into one privileged meaning and form, disregarding the material. Cannon shows how the sites of Sue's prostrations (St. Silas in Christminster) and her second marriage ceremony with Phillotson (the neo-Gothic church in Marygreen) connect with the contemporary ecclesiastical concerns raised by the Tractarians and the adjacent Ecclesiological Society at Oxford. The latter even championed what they called the "destructive" system of restoration "in which a building's extant style or styles were to be jettisoned in favor of rebuilding in the purest High Gothic style" (212) and this was done for the purposes of ritualistic rigor:

> "… this intensive linking of action and space is essentially an antihistorical initiative; it attempts to limit the variety of potential events that could happen in any given space. Restoration is antithetical, then, not only to history understood as an unaltered account of past events, but also to history understood as non-repeating narrative—that is, in effect, to futurity" (213).

Sue's sacrifice in reaffirming her first marriage, this "enslavement to forms" (*JO* 388), which counters her previous insistence on sensual pleasures (286; 328), can double as a way that restoration handles material and the way 19th-century ecclesiastical architecture treated space.

Ruskin extolled architecture's memorial function over that of any other art going so far as to say that "we cannot remember without her" (*Seven Lamps* 169). History is cold, images are lifeless, written records uncertain; architecture's reassuring physical quality trumps all because it

bears trace of "not only what men have thought and felt, but what their hands have handled, and their strength wrought, and their eyes beheld, all the days of their life" (169). Hardy found in this material co-presence a way to evoke the sense of the past which falls upon the world and catches one by surprise. For instance, Tess Durbeyfield is caught by surprise to learn that "a strange rude monolith, from a stratum unknown in any local quarry, on which was roughly carved a human hand" (*Td* 330) and which she thinks might be a remnant of the holy cross, is in fact the spot of ancient torture and execution. It was here, but it comes out of nowhere – a story's ethereality settled upon architecture.

There is a symmetry enacted in this line of thought because Hardy also insists on the physicality of the book itself: "Printed text becomes subject to a very different kind of 'imprint': altered by domestic work as by professional work, printed matter becomes material … that … memorializes the marks of its users" (Cannon 220). As Jude dies in Christminster, the narrator directs attention at his old books:

> … there seemed to be a smile of some sort upon the marble features of Jude; while the old, superseded, Delphin editions of Virgil and Horace and the dog-eared Greek Testament on the neighbouring shelf, and the few other volumes of the sort that he had not parted with, roughened with stone-dust where he had been in the habit of catching them up for a few minutes between his labours, seemed to pale to a sickly cast at the sounds (*JO* 396).

By emphasizing the books' materiality, Hardy shows that no two copies of the same book are interchangeable; they all have an "unrepeatable object history" (Cannon 222), which adds something parasitical and arguably transformative to every text. Even though books are a proto-industrial commodity, each copy becomes different from the physical marks reading inevitably leaves on them: the creases, the notes, the frays, the yellowing of paper, the dust gathered on books lying untouched for a long time. It is as though these physical signs are superimposed onto that which is without substance, the text itself – a multiplicity of traces that designate the difference in each act of reading: close, impassioned, superficial, interrupted, intermittent, abandoned readings

which are the life, transformation and ceaseless construction of every text. The layer of stone dust on Jude's obsolete books intertwines reading and work, bearing a mark of the singular perspective that he might have brought to them while also giving them a similar texture to his marble features, so that the two come to seem as a Gothic relief impressed onto Christminster, an image representing one craftsman's point of failure, or rather, an image staging the pattern that is "a basic underthought in Hardy's poetry" (Taylor 59), the Gothic in decay: "The Gothic pattern … could thus be associated with the larger pattern of life and mind … seen in its full import when its substance has begun to decay, retrieved only in belated re-creation …" (59). It is the fullness of life that can only be apprehended at the moment of death, when the diachrony of time passes into the synchrony of the sediment.

Jude entertains such thoughts himself: by the end of the novel, he imagines his life passing into the phantasmatic past that he read on the surfaces of the city: "As Antigone said, I am neither a dweller among men nor ghosts. But, Arabella, when I am dead, you'll see my spirit flitting up and down here among these" (381). Perhaps Arabella would not, but Sue almost certainly would, and even more than her, the reader of *Jude the Obscure*. Indeed, what is "Christminster" for the reader but the city of Jude Fawley—his sign, his tomb—made his precisely by the overwhelming losses that grind him down to a dusty death? His death is a scene of remembrance staged as a scene of forgetting; the last words of the novel, Arabella's inept eulogy, are one pass of erasure which challenges the readers' experience, prodding them to remember. Jude dies obscurely during Christminster's Remembrance Day celebration not having left behind any signed trace, nothing that would allow anyone to remember his name or imagine his life and thought; only the movements of his muscles in the work he performed remain to be haptically read and to be inevitably scraped off in the future. It is a scene which recalls, perhaps more than any other in Hardy, a line of Swinburne's (adapted from a fragment of Sappho) which he appreciated so much that he called it "the finest drama of Death and Oblivion … in our tongue" (*Life* 287): "Thee, too, the years shall cover".

3.6. The Name that Covers the Years

Jude's death recontextualizes his life and the novel (as a story of his life). Initial scenes and Jude's hopes suggest that we are reading a *Bildungsroman*; but this expectation of a novel that narrates a story of intellectual development, which reaches a point of final edification and the protagonist's integration into society, is constantly being frustrated and swept away in the end. Hardy preferred to present his characters in moments of crisis and transformation, giving them a life of becoming that ends but is never fully formed. It was this quality that made him the *cas exemplaire* of the superiority of English literature to Gilles Deleuze, who described the process underlying his characters as

> Individuation without a subject. And these packets of sensations in the raw, these collections or combinations, run along the lines of chance, or mischance, where their encounters take place – if need be, their bad encounters which lead to death, to murder … Individuals, packets of sensations, run over the heath like a line of flight or a line of deterritorialization of the earth (Deleuze and Parnet 40).

Deleuze treats the characters' minds as a surface collecting the imprint of sensations, emotions and experience – a surface because there is no subject, nothing is thrown underneath; instead, unexpected elements are thrown together in a tenuous arrangement, oriented by desire. Within our framework, we can say that the characters and the plots they enact are developed along the sedimentary model as well: Tess's face is not a stable object but a surface expressing her mind, "continually fluctuating between beauty and ordinariness" (Td 119) and bearing record of her life so that one can see "her twelfth year in her cheeks, or her ninth sparkling from her eyes; and even her fifth … flit over the curves of her mouth" (21); it is one of Hardy's places of "here was…".

Jude the Obscure opposes the living, sedimentary quality of the serialized novel to the ever-restored letter of the law. The epigraph polysemously announces that "the letter killeth": the letter can be the letter of learning, the letter as flesh as opposed to the spirit which "giveth life" (2 Cor 2:3), or the intransigent letter of the law. Jude uses it in this last sense when he quotes it to

Sue to educe the insufficiency of contracts to regulate personal relationships. If Christminster's buildings become poetry from prose, time enacts similar qualitative changes in characters. Time opens up, like elsewhere in Hardy, and the past is always held at an allegorical distance: every feeling of "I was here when…" indicates a change in the "I" since the memory is proof of further sedimentation and development. Stepping into the same river, Jude is not the same man, but he is expected to act as if he were, held by the letter of the law and by the letters of his name on the marriage contract, in ritual re-enactment for which, as we have seen, restored architecture provides a backdrop. These themes intersect in Aldbrickham, as Jude and Sue reletter the Ten Commandments on the church wall, restoring the letter of one of the earliest laws.

John Ruskin expressed profound distaste for letters in figurative arts: he wrote that "of all things unlike nature, the forms of letters are, perhaps, the most so" (*Seven Lamps* 106) and considered them shapes which cannot ever be thought of as ornamental. The surfaces that imply writing—sheets, tablets, ribands, scrolls—are all to be excised, if possible, from figurative representation (108). Understandable, given Ruskin's aesthetic priorities: letters are forms which the human hand has learned to reproduce most perfectly. As a result, their shapes carry minimal visible human imprint, which is made manifest in the imperfections and overambitions of other shapes. They invite relettering and copying: a certain type of restorability conditions legibility itself; after all, the majority of earliest texts, chiseled into stone or clay, were rendered for administrative and legal purposes. Ruskin's idea that an analysis of a building should proceed similarly to an analysis of a book had nothing to do with legible inscriptions on walls. It proposed something conjectural, uncertain, prelinguistic and hieroglyphic because affectionate, as if he covered the surfaces and filled out the crevices of buildings that he loved with a layer of text, so that there would be no need to restore the symbolic order within them, and, in the event that the necessity for restoration, which is a "necessity for destruction" (185), does arise, so that something of them remains afterwards, at least this layer of text derived from the markings of work and time, the pale cast of thought that once leaned on the canonical structures in the world.

We can think of Hardy's texts as a type of letter oriented against the letter of the law that restores and kills – letter that sediments and preserves. He never tired of pointing out in the prefaces of his novels and poetry collections that they are conceived as incomplete, as "a series … of personal impressions" (*JO* xiii). He went on to repeat in the general preface to the Wessex edition of his poetry and novels that all his works move through "impressions of the moment, and not convictions or arguments" (Orel 49). Hardy's poems are short and momentary and in the case of his (serialized) novels, the idea of a series of impressions can be taken in the literal, material sense: they open up to additions, welcoming their dust as they create changing protagonists in a changing world which imprints itself upon itself through the impressions of new installments. There is no absolute ground here, one installment's dust is another's ground; Hardy added events rather freely and thought of novel-writing as "mere journeywork" (*Life* 179). The journeyman-author moves through the country of Wessex, a space which only concretizes in the myriad lines, dwellings, and resting places that his characters' life-patterns trace, non-existent outside his writing, and yet covering real roads, places, expanses and buildings, revivifying forgotten times they store and creating the fictional sense of "here was…".

Despite his regret over having to abandon architecture (Taylor 52), Hardy returned to it only in brief instances, designing Max Gate and tombs for the members of his family. He lost architecture in literature, and kept ex-pressing this loss as the very surface of his literary world, tugging at something of the real in the process: regret, necessity to choose, limitations of life. It may be that every transfer of one art into another expresses something similar, and that this is how writing becomes "the means to a more than personal life, instead of life being a poor secret for a writing which has no end other than itself" (Deleuze and Parnet 51). It is possible that what Hardy and Ruskin appreciated about architecture can only be apprehended once one loses it within literature, perhaps any act of remembering or perceiving the past of a space, place or material is indistinguishable from creation of it, being parasitical and belonging to the observer as much as the observed. But since the plane of the architect is the same as the plane of the writer—the page—

and since, to speak metaphorically, arts often enact a mutual imaginative fragmentation into dust which they inhale as inspiration, an argument can be made, like Kester Rattenbury's in her study *The Wessex Project*, that Hardy's novels dissimulate an architectural project "in their rich, detailed, technical, and unusually analytical descriptions; in their content, vision, and polemic; in the architectural theories within and surrounding Hardy's work; and in the intriguing, accretive qualities of his buildings." She finds the novels comparable to the speculative works of architecture in the 20th century, like *Delirious New York* by Rem Koolhaas – books which were written to change the perception of already built spaces.

If restoration destroyed ancient buildings in the name of saving them and destroyed them in order to save their names, Hardy's novels and poems rename in order to save: they, too, can be read as texts which transform the perception of the spaces they cover by holding together the impossible unity of life-patterns which they trace. Even the contractual letter which kills demonstrated the tendency of names to designate otherwise impossible wholes in a world of imprints – to hold onto a Jude or a Tess that do not exist anymore. Names and vestiges reconnect to the most powerful sense of "here was…" – the instant of death or passage, the sense of "here suddenly was not…". What we have been calling the sediment is merely a compound of the two, a way to say "and" between the historical and the affectionate past. The sense of death settles as dust on top of Hardy's world, recasting it, saturating its surfaces with meaning, words, names, life-patterns, imaginary dwellings and resting places; all these are imprinted around his place-names which fall upon places out of nowhere to claim the absent presence of an invisible, adjacent world that changes how the visible is seen and inhabited.

As stone dust settles on Jude's books, as Jude settles on a return to Christminster, as "Christminster" settles on Oxford, as Henchard and Winterborne settle in their burrows, as Tess settles herself on a Stonehenge altar, as "St Juliot" settles on the non-existent place where Hardy met Emma… so the country of Wessex settles on southwest England.

4. Conclusion

If there is but one element in which Hardy's career as an architect intersects with his writing, it is preoccupation with fragments of the past. As a restoration architect, Hardy performed symbolic integrations of old buildings with modern spaces following what seems like a proto-structuralist procedure of building up wholes from fragments regulated by the idea of architectural style. Having denounced this process as at once uncreative and destructive of what is most valuable in ruins, he imagined them differently in his writing – uninhabitable and always at a distance which can only be traversed in imagination. Ruins resist inhabitation and everything habitual, usual and expected, becoming symbolically nude places that indicate the possibility of another world, which does not belong to the present. Hardy moves his characters not into but onto old buildings and spaces—Tess on the Stonehenge altar, Jude on Christminster walls, Henchard on the Roman road and the Roman soil of Casterbridge—so that they do not inhabit them but reside in the invisible sediment of their surfaces composed of co-presences and associations that his writing creates. In this, Hardy echoes John Ruskin's architectural theory, which proposes the traces on the surfaces of old buildings, whether those of their initial form or of the decay that testifies to the passage of time, as the memory of the world.

We have called this superficial trace of the past *the sediment of time* and linked it to the image of settling dust in order to underline that it is never complete and that it is universal, not distinguishing between major and minor pasts: in the synchrony of the sediment, all types of past are imagined as co-present: historical, intimate, associative, alternative etc. Such a vision of the past is fundamentally open to new experiences because it is a space of amassment held together by the additive logic of "and". It is a view of the past as a Deleuze-Guattarian smooth space in which the observer only obtains orientation by affects and this is how all types of past finally become personal in Hardy, which is to say construed by a long, lingering, haptic view that transforms clumsy ornaments, incidental cracks and marks of decay into prelinguistic signs of absence. The most beautiful passages of Hardy's prose and poetry are often found in scenes

examining the hieroglyphic traces of lives of others on the surfaces of the world that become almost readable. But he also internalized this logic and treated his own writing at times as a haphazard trace of his own life and aesthetic and human limits, similar to a Gothic journeyman whose presence one can infer in imperfect ornaments. Thus, his literature takes as its intensities the type of marks that his architecture erased and these fragments come to compose one meaning of the fictional space of Wessex: an invisible narrative layer on top of the world which preserves its substance but changes its essence.

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6. Abstract

The paper examines the ways in which Thomas Hardy's abandoned career as a draughtsman and assistant architect (1856-1873) carries over into his literary work. Taking as its case study Hardy's late works, the poetry and the novels written in 1880s and 1890s, it focuses on the role descriptions of spaces play in his writing. The aesthetic tension between architectural restoration and preservation in the 19th century, as exemplified by theoretical writings of Viollet-le-Duc and John Ruskin, is used to consider the role of the past in novels like *A Laodicean*, *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and *Jude the Obscure*, as well as Hardy's poetry. Destabilizing restoration's structural and symbolic integrations, creating a poetics of fragments, distance and absence, Hardy's writing can be seen as a literary endeavor that not only proclaims, but performs preservation. Places of his fictional world *present* the past. The surfaces work as records; on them, the entire past is held in synchrony and orientation requires affective resonances between disparate moments that render any past potentially personal and any sedimentation of human history meaningful. The country of Wessex, the integrated space of many Hardy's works, can thus be imagined as an infinitely thin layer of narrative situated in space, guarding against modernity's transformations by claiming the absent co-presence of another, invisible world.

Key words: Thomas Hardy, architecture, restoration, John Ruskin, smooth space