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Eustacia Vye: Muse-ings on the Unintended Feminist

Chelsea M. Slack[a],*

[a] Assistant Professor, Department of Communication and Media Studies, Southeastern Louisiana University, Hammond, LA, USA.[1]
* Corresponding author.

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Abstract

Eustacia Vye as a feminist figure is not exactly a new idea – a quick Google search of the topic brings up dozens of articles, blog posts, and essays on the subject. Rather than simply document Eustacia's feminist traits, this paper seeks to do two things. First, it examines Hardy's positioning of Eustacia as the other and considers her ensuing treatment by the novel's other characters through the lens of new wave feminism, specifically the work of Helene Cixous and Luce Irigaray. The second, yet equally important, purpose of this essay is to contemplate how Eustacia, a product of Hardy's phallocentric discourse, has become a feminist in the first place. Drawing on Heidegger's being of entities and Irigaray's teachings on visibility/invisibility of the female other, this article asserts Hardy's inability to see or access Eustacia's female being allowed him to unintentionally fashion a feminist character. Such rereading also opens up a vast number of male-created female characters to be analyzed as feminists.

Key words: Cixous (Helene); Irigaray (Luce); New wave feminism; Intention; The other

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"The question whether, in his logic, they can articulate anything at all, whether they can be heard, is not even raised. For raising it would mean granting that there may be some other logic, and one that upsets his own. That is, a logic that challenges mastery," (Irigaray,1985, p. 90).[2]

The realm of male-authored female characters is a nuanced one, and investigating the complexities of authors grappling with representations beyond their conscious control is no simple task. Indeed, female readers commonly experience distaste toward male-created female characters – not all, but some. Women are left thinking, how would a male author describe me? Would he pen lines like, "She was a demanding, obsessive, type-a perfectionist"? Or would he neglect intellect and personality all together to instead prattle on and on about the "green-eyed beauty" with "raven hair"? Either way, no dice. Cixous (1976) declares, "I write woman: woman must write woman. And man, man" (p. 877). Naturally, as women, female readers and writers are inclined to agree. But does that mean we discount every single female character that has been created by a man? No. A stopped clock is right twice a day, after all. We must concede that male authors sometimes inadvertently create female characters who exemplify feminism; although a product of un-intention, these accidental feminists are feminists

[1] Chelsea Slack holds a PhD in Rhetorics, Communication and Information Design from Clemson University. She is an assistant professor in the Department of Communication and Media Studies at Southeastern Louisiana University. Her research interests lie at the dynamic crossroads of media effects studies and the rich tapestry of feminism, particularly exploring the contours of New Wave Feminism. With a keen focus on how media shapes and reflects societal attitudes, she aims to uncover nuanced insights into gender representation, empowerment, and social change.

[2] Irigaray explores the ways in which male perception has dictated female sexuality; women as sexual beings are defined not in their own terms, but in that of the male. As a male-created female character, Eustacia is a product of the masculine, yet her femininity is a force to be reckoned with. Although Eustacia is Hardy's composition, she is not truly his. Instead, she defies her creator's intentions and his logic. Following Irigaray, we must instead seek to define Eustacia in female terms, to consider Eustacia the woman – separate, apart, divorced from her author.

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all the same. By examining Eustacia Vye as an unintended feminist, this essay will serve as a rereading of Thomas Hardy's The *Return of the Native*.[3] Throughout the novel, Eustacia is labeled as a wanton vixen with a tempestuous demeanor and, at times, a witch. These malevolent labels, with which feminism must regularly contend and negate, actually support the notion that despite Hardy's intentions, Eustacia has become a feminist figure.

GODDESS AND VIXEN

What is it about Eustacia that makes her seem so eccentric to the people of Egdon Heath? What makes her "different" in the first place? Why is she othered to such a great extent? Simone de Beauvoir argues in *The Second Sex* (1949) men situate women as "the other" – as the direct opposite of men, everything men are not. The other is viewed as alien, insignificant, and negative. That is not to say othering only takes place between men and women; de Beauvoir also notes, "Otherness is a fundamental category of human thought"[4] (p. 26). For Hardy, Eustacia is the other incarnate. He builds her character as that of a goddess-like vixen who frequently roams at night; because of his portrayal, Eustacia experiences othering from all sides in Egdon Heath.

The Goddess

To begin a study in Eustacia's female otherness, we must start with her personality. Chapter seven of book first begins, "Eustacia Vye was the raw material of a divinity. On Olympus she would have done well with a little preparation. She had the passions and instincts which make a model goddess, that is, those which make not quite a model woman" (1922, p. 75). Hardy then spends the rest of the chapter, a full 22 extended paragraphs, describing her, proposing the color of her soul to be "flamelike" (1922, p. 76). There is obviously much detail of her appearance – such as comparisons to the Sphinx, Artemis, Athena, and Hera – but there is also plenty to be gleaned about Eustacia the woman. Not only are Eustacia's eyes and hair reported as dark, but she is also described as inwardly dark – a result of her living in Hades, *a la* Egdon Heath. Hardy goes on, "Thus she was a girl of some forwardness of mind, indeed, weighed in relation to her situation among the very rearward of thinkers, very original. Her instincts towards social non-conformity were at the root of this" (1922, p. 80).

Based on Hardy's protracted and meticulous detail of Eustacia, we are left with the impression that she is nothing short of extraordinary, and nearly something otherworldly. She is beautiful, dark, and romantically idealistic, as she wants to be "loved to madness" (1922, p. 79). Her darkness and idealism are reinforced throughout the novel, as she frequently makes references to suicide and/or death. Eustacia's entire being sets her apart from everyone in Egdon Heath, which is also mirrored in her physical separation from the heath dwellers; she is consistently in a lonely setting, either at Rainbarrow or Mistover Knap.

The Vixen

Set in Southern England in the early 1840s, the heath dwellers adhere to traditional gender roles – women get married, work in the home, and raise children, while men are the breadwinners, or rather, furze cutters. As evidenced by Mrs. Yeobright's ardent efforts to finalize the marriage of Wildeve and Thomasin, marriage is of particular importance for the provincial heath. Despite the fact that he has already jilted Thomasin once at the altar, Mrs. Yeobright continually pressures Wildeve to go through with the marriage to avoid "scandal" (1922, p. 83-99). In this case, Thomasin submits to the patriarchal and societal norms of the heath; Eustacia, although she marries Clym, does not completely adhere to those norms. Instead, for the majority of the novel Eustacia is portrayed as a vampy temptress.

As we learn from chapter six of book first, Eustacia has a secret relationship with Wildeve. They meet on the fifth of November, on what is supposed to be Wildeve and Thomasin's wedding night. Aside from a couple of Eustacia's asides to Wildeve, one in which she says she will not give herself to him anymore and another later in the novel when she says they were once "hot lovers" (1922, p. 338), we never definitively learn if Eustacia and Wildeve have consummated their relationship. Whether they have actually had sex or not, Eustacia has an undeniable power over Wildeve, and nearly all men in general. Her influence over Wildeve is exemplified in his first words after being summoned to her bonfire: "You give me no peace. Why do you not leave me alone?" (1922, p. 69). Even in scenes which do not involve Eustacia's two lovers, Wildeve and Clym, Hardy consistently illustrates her in vixen-like terms.

In the chapter "Queen of the Night" Hardy (1922) elaborates that Eustacia's "Pagan eyes" are full of "nocturnal mysteries" – directly designating Eustacia as a creature of the night (p. 76). She has a "smouldering rebelliousness" and "Tartarean dignity" linking her

[3] This rereading is inspired by the second volume of Derrida's The Beast and the Sovereign, specifically his rereading of Robinson Crusoe, in which he brings Dafoe's novel "closer to Heidegger" (2010, p.46). Derrida also entreats readers to consider the possibility that the novel's "compositional artifices" are due to, "[...] something other than the intentional and conscious decision of an author, but also to something other than pure insignificant chance" (p. 88). Reading, he says, can cause and must cause, "[...] anachrony, non-self-contemporaneity, dislocation in the taking-place of the text" (p. 87). The intentions of the author do not necessarily reign supreme; the text is not the sovereign, and is open to new (de)constructions.

4 de Beauvoir further explains that although othering is instinctive, women are at a greater disadvantage than men. Men see women as wholly foreign beings; women, however, do not automatically view men as foreign. They instead yield to men's treatment of them as the other.

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persona to hell and fire (p. 77). Later, when Eustacia finally comes face to face with Clym, their meeting is compared to when the "Queen of Love appeared before Aeneas" (p. 167). The night Clym pops the question, we are also left with the impression Eustacia manipulated the proposal. She brings up her former lover, allows Clym to kiss her and rests her head on his chest, but then threatens to end their relationship. "Kiss me, and go away forever. Forever—do you hear? —forever!" (p. 232) she exclaims.

Eustacia as a creature of the night is firmly cemented upon her death – she commits suicide on the night of November the sixth. This allows her nocturnal romantic life to come full circle, as all of the major romantic events she experiences happen under the cloak of darkness. Eustacia's secret trysts with Wildeve as well as her romance with Clym and his proposal happen at night; with her leap into Shadewater Weir, Eustacia becomes a noceur in death, as she was in life.

THREATS, LABELS, AND A PINPRICK

Hardy's positioning of Eustacia as the other means the treatment of Eustacia by the characters in the book is consistently negative. She is unkindly labeled, directly and indirectly, by Diggory Venn, Mrs. Yeobright, Clym and the heath dwellers in general. However, their opinions and treatment of her serve as support for regarding Eustacia as a feminist when considered through the lens of modern feminism.

Diggory Venn

Morgan (1988) suggests the most insolent treatment of Eustacia is by Venn. Indeed, he does frequently scheme to keep Wildeve and Eustacia apart in order to preserve Thomasin's honor. Early in the novel, Venn approaches Eustacia, saying, "The woman that stands between Wildeve and Thomasin is yourself" (1922, p. 103). Later in the conversation, he threatens her: "People will say bad things if they find out that a lady secretly meets a man who has ill-used another woman" (p. 106). Although the townspeople suspected some involvement between Eustacia and Wildeve, it is Venn who first attempts to manipulate her by leveraging his knowledge of the affair – knowledge he indirectly passes along to Mrs. Yeobright (p. 112). Venn later admits to watching Wildeve and Eustacia's movements in an effort to make sure they do not meet. Even once Wildeve and Thomasin are married, Venn continues to intervene. Thomasin's request, "Help me to keep him home in the evenings" (p. 317) encourages Venn's continued meddling.

With his threats, spying, and ever-presence, Venn is the main character in the novel who is clearly trying to exert patriarchal rule over Eustacia. Cixous asserts fiction is frequently the stomping grounds for patriarchal domination, cautioning against, "A locus where the repression of women has been perpetuated, over and over, more or less consciously, and in a manner that's frightening since it's often hidden or adorned with the mystifying charms of fiction"[5] (1976, p. 879). Venn's attempted repression of Eustacia via the threat of exposing her as a sexual being was without a doubt a powerful one during the Victorian era. In his actions, Venn becomes what Cixous would term a "sex cop" (p. 877) – a male determined to stifle female sexuality, doggedly working to get Eustacia back in line with the male order.

Mrs. Yeobright

When it comes to name calling and outright slut shaming, Mrs. Yeobright no doubt takes the cake. Men and women perpetuate the novel's patriarchal society, and Mrs. Yeobright's treatment of Eustacia reinforces that women are expected to act a certain way and meet the expectations of the group. In her first reference to Eustacia, Mrs. Yeobright calls her "proud" and says Eustacia is, "Not much to my liking. People say she's a witch, but of course that's absurd" (1922, p. 192). This initial statement is curious, considering Eustacia is someone she likely does not know well, as Eustacia said earlier in the book she'd never stepped foot in Mrs. Yeobright's house. Furthermore, if Mrs. Yeobright actually thought the witch rumor to be nonsense, why would she repeat it?

"She is lazy and dissatisfied" (1922, p. 226) is Mrs. Yeobright's initial response upon hearing of Clym's serious intentions concerning Eustacia. This leads to Clym fighting with his mother, with her degrading comments about Eustacia intensifying throughout the argument. She proceeds to tell Clym, "It was a bad day for you when you first set eyes on her" (227) and later calls Eustacia a "hussy" (p. 228). She then badmouths her to Thomasin, hinting Wildeve's reluctance to marry her was due to Eustacia (p. 251). During her confrontation with Eustacia in book four, Mrs. Yeobright accuses Eustacia directly of improper relations with Wildeve (p. 289).

Though she is not the only woman in the novel to ill-treat Eustacia, Mrs. Yeobright's negative attitude toward her seems far more pronounced than her attitude toward Wildeve. Why does Mrs. Yeobright attack Eustacia so vehemently for not strictly adhering to the patriarchal order? Irigaray (1985) points out women who are mothers have been given "a certain social power" (p. 30). "As long as she remains within the scope of these roles, her activity is tolerated and essential to the maintenance of patriarchy" Gaudelius elaborates, stipulating not all women in this role are complicit in perpetuating the social order (1994, p. 73). Irigaray (1985) also notes, "Female sexuality has always been conceptualized on the basis of masculine parameters" (p. 23). Mrs. Yeobright's elevated status as a mother in

[5] There is no broad consensus as to whether Hardy condoned Venn's attempts to repress Eustacia. Did he create Venn to reinforce the patriarchal order or critique it? See Thurley (1975), Sumner (1981), and Morgan (1988) for varying views on Hardy's use and treatment of Venn.

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Egdon Heath society seems to make her more reverent to the system which put her there, which explains, although does not excuse, her behavior toward Eustacia.

Clym

Eustacia was essentially Clym's forbidden fruit – he saw the signs she was wrong for him but pursued the relationship anyway. When he first returns to Egdon Heath, all Clym knows of her is secondhand knowledge passed to him from either the heath folk or his mother. She mystifies him in her performance as the Turkish Knight, with the, "Sparkle of her eyes being visible between the ribbons which covered her face" (p. 1922, 166). From that moment, the two seem to be fated as star-crossed lovers. Even on the night of their betrothal, Clym has reservations about Eustacia. Hardy narrates, "He could not but perceive at moments that she loved him rather as a visitant from a gay world to which she rightly belonged than as a man with a purpose opposed to that recent past of his which so interested her" (p. 236).

Despite his misgivings, Clym is convinced Eustacia would make a good schoolmarm; he is oblivious to the fact she is the type of woman who would be least likely to settle for a quiet life in academia. Eustacia's reluctance to join in on his plans to build a school for the local children coupled with her role in the breakdown of Clym and his mother's relationship contributes to early cracks in their relationship. Both Eustacia and Clym thought they could manipulate the other into pursuing their respective interests in marriage. For Eustacia, it was Paris – for Clym, teaching. However, Clym's patriarchal power is realized, ironically, upon his blindness. It is only at this point Eustacia realizes her, "Dream of beautiful Paris was not likely to cohere into substance in the presence of this misfortune" (1922, p. 295).

Morgan (1988) writes Eustacia is "first goddess then whore" (p. 81) in the mind of Clym. His infatuation with her fades as he realizes he cannot fit her into his ideological box. After finding out the truth about the death of his mother, Clym begins to verbally abuse Eustacia. Like Mrs. Yeobright, Clym believes the worst of his wife; he fumes, "I mean that it is extraordinary that you should be alone in my absence. Tell me, now, where is he who was with you on the afternoon of the thirty-first of August? Under the bed? Up the chimney?" (1922, p. 387).

Clym subsequently tells Eustacia she does not know what is best for herself and accuses her of killing his mother and cursing him. This massive blowup is likely partly fueled by the anguish Clym feels because of Eustacia's rendezvous with Wildeve, but also because reality has come crashing down around his ears – Clym finally gets it. Eustacia cannot be controlled, and she will never be the wife he'd conjured in his mind. To Clym, Eustacia's "…Right to herself has been extorted at the same time as her name"[6] (Cixous, 1976, p. 888).

The Heath Folk

The heath dwellers, especially Susan Nunsuch, are suspicious of Eustacia, partially because of her demeanor, partially because of her looks, and partially because of her aloofness. Early in the novel, Susan Nunsuch declares, "She is very strange in her ways, living up there by herself" (1922, p. 32). Timothy Fairway refers to her as the, "Lonesome dark-eyed creature up there that some say is a witch" (p. 56). Eustacia is regularly referred to by the townspeople as melancholy, moping, too idle, conceited, and possibly wicked. She is a foreigner to both the heath itself and its people, so they view her as depressed and possibly of unsound mind. Because Eustacia refuses to, in the words of Luce Irigaray (1974, p. 125), "mimic" what is considered to be the appropriate behavior for the heath, she may well be hysterical.[7]

Central to the heath folk's beliefs about Eustacia is that she might be a witch; Susan Nunsuch stokes the proverbial fires of Eustacia's alleged witchery because she believes Eustacia has some sort of control over her son Johnny. In reality, Eustacia was simply nice to Johnny and he probably had a crush on her. Susan goes so far as to prick Eustacia with a needle in church, "So as to draw her blood and put an end to the bewitching of Susan's children that has been carried on so long" (1922, p. 209). Toward the end of the novel, Susan actually creates a wax figure of Eustacia, stabs it with pins, and while melting it over a fire murmurs a curse. Hardy says, "It was a strange jargon—the Lord's Prayer repeated backwards—the incantation usual in proceedings for obtaining unhallowed assistance against an enemy" (p. 425).

"For centuries, the word witch has been used to punish women and to police female sexuality" states Sollee; she also notes sexism's "brutal origins" which contributed to the witch hunts of early modern history[8] (2017, p.5). The backward heath dwellers, Susan in particular, term Eustacia as a witch as punishment for her non-adherence

[6] Cixous goes on to say the act of a woman losing herself is a conscious female sacrifice made within the masculine system. Woman, "[...} has constituted herself necessarily as that 'person' capable of losing a part of herself without losing her integrity". Eustacia was what Cixous would call the "giver" (888). She acquiesced – Clym just didn't appreciate it.

[7] Irigaray's (1974) description of the repercussions woman faces when she does not imitate the behavior of the group falls directly in line with Eustacia's treatment in the novel. Irigaray maintains woman "[...] must be curbed, humiliated, brought back to chastity, whether she likes it or not" (p. 125).

[8] The allegation of witchcraft was a powerful and dangerous threat throughout the 15th – 18th centuries. It was not until the late 18th century that witch-hunting was widely discredited and witches and witchcraft were proclaimed nonexistent. However, some areas took decades longer to disavow witchcraft's existence. The rural heath and its bucolic dwellers were clearly behind the times and clung to the idea that witches were real. See The Penguin Book of Witches (Howe 2014) for an extensive list of witches and witch persecutions throughout history.

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to social norms, her beauty, and conceivably because of her proclivity for nighttime meanderings. And, as Cixous says, "Dark is dangerous. You can't see anything in the dark, you're afraid. Don't move, you might fall. Most of all, don't go into the forest" (p. 878). In these lines, she is scoffing at the patriarchal teaching that anything unknown is treacherous. This statement very well could have been muttered by one of the heath dwellers, because in their view, Eustacia is the embodiment of the idea "dark is dangerous".

THE QUESTION OF (UN) INTENTION

Throughout this essay, the goal has not been to just approach Eustacia Vye as a character – as a man's creation – but as a woman. Yes, she is fictional. Yes, Thomas Hardy dreamed her up, took pen to paper, and brought her to life. For a man to unintentionally conjure up a woman who shirks patriarchal norms would seemingly be the antithesis of a male author's very psyche. Hardy's handiwork, on its face, appears to present a glowing portrayal of Eustacia. He seems to revere her, using more eloquent language to narrate the solely Eustacia-focused sections of the novel. Remarkably, Hardy even manages to avoid mansplaining[9] Eustacia – there is certainly no effort to simplify her, as she is clearly the novel's most complicated character. Nevertheless, Hardy still cleaves her from Egdon Heath's herd, because, as Boumelha (1982) contends, that was the only way he could reconcile Eustacia's wanton ways. She is the quintessential wild woman who mystifies and intrigues but meets a sticky end because the male order will allow her to do nothing else. Eustacia cannot be tamed, therefore she necessarily becomes a pariah. She necessarily becomes the other.

Considering his designation of Eustacia as the other, it seems a stretch to believe Hardy meant for her to be viewed as a strong woman, as a feminist. Did he simply mean for her to be viewed as a hopeless romantic, obsessed with finding a husband? Or, did he intend for Eustacia's story to be a cautionary tale of a siren run amok? Perhaps the question of Hardy's intentions is the wrong one entirely. Instead, the question is what has Eustacia Vye become, and how does she demand to be understood?

Writing circa 1878, as an author Hardy was naturally coming from a phallocentric perspective, thereby making Eustacia a product of phallocentric discourse. Considering Hardy's motivations for why he wrote her the way he did merely brings us back to questioning patriarchal order. And, the vast majority of Eustacia's critical interpretation is indeed written from a masculinist perspective, with a few exceptions[10] (Elvy, 2016, p. 21). Rather than continuing to flog the dead horse, to debate Hardy's intentions, this essay's objective has been to deliberate the feminist, albeit unintended, underpinnings of Eustacia's character. The phallocentrism that belies her treatment by most of the other people in the novel works to support Eustacia's place in modern feminism – she wouldn't have been raked over the coals if she were just another sheep in the patriarchal herd.

Realistically, readers of today encounter a very different Eustacia Vye than readers of the past because viewpoints have changed and female awareness has increased. Hardy may have controlled Eustacia's character and actions when he authored *The Return of the Native*, but he has no agency over what she has become in modern day. Heidegger's being-in-the-world asserts the world in which an entity exists in part and parcel to that entity's being (1962). Eustacia exists in the world within the book, but by viewing her through a feminist lens, she exists in a new context, in a new world. This new context affects her being; the world has changed, and so has she.[11]

Moreover, the Eustacia of today demands to be understood as a feminist, as the polar opposite of how she was previously perceived. In the novel, Eustacia is Egdon Heath's Medusa – so beautiful, powerful, and mysterious that she must be deemed a dangerous, whoring witch. To non-feminist critics, she is an overly romantic character who is solely concerned with finding a husband. Her eschewing of conventional behavior in heath society is judged as inconsequential because it was driven by a desire for love. But, these two perceptions fail because

[9] Oxford defines mansplaining as, "to explain something to someone, typically a man to a woman, in a manner regarded as condescending or patronizing." See Wilhelm (2017) for a brief history on mansplaining and the term's origination.

[10] Notable feminist analyses of Eustacia include Boumelha (1982), Ingham (1989), Morgan (1988), Rogers (1975), Stubbs (1979), Sumner (1981), and especially Higonnet (1993).

[11] Post-Heideggerians dispute the effect of time and context on being in literature, art, etc. Levinas (1987) asserts time does not truly affect characters in the "non-plastic" arts, stating, "That the characters in a book are committed to the infinite repetition of the same acts and the same thoughts is not simply due to the contingent fact of the narrative, which is exterior to those characters. They can be narrated because their being resembles itself, doubles itself and immobilizes [...] By its reflection in a narrative, being has a non-dialectical fixity, stops dialectics and time" (p. 10). On the other hand, Derrida (2010) rereads Robinson Crusoe using Heidegger, noting that the new context in which he presents the classic travel novel alters its meaning. He says, "Do you find it interesting to listen to what I am saying and then to read Robinson Crusoe differently?" (p. 87).

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they don't understand Eustacia's very being[12] in the first place. Heidegger's The Basic Problems of Phenomenology (1988) explains, "An entity can be uncovered, whether by way of perception or some other mode of access, only if the being of this entity is already disclosed – only if I already understand it" (p. 72). Without a prior understanding of Eustacia as a woman, there can be no meaningful access to her as an entity.

This brings up the obvious question of whether Hardy, as Eustacia's creator, ever truly understood her. Irigaray (2002) provides the best answer – she asserts women, whose sexual difference situates them as the other, are "[...] constrained to conform to so-called universal norms or forms" (p. 148). This renders the other invisible because women, essentially, must assimilate to survive; their difference exists, just unseen. But Eustacia does not assimilate. She refuses to conform. Her difference is visible both to the residents of the heath and readers of the novel. And yet, a wealth of her character was undoubtedly invisible to Hardy because her feminine strength is portrayed as her downfall, as a warning to all other women willing to swim against the patriarchal stream. Irigaray emphasizes women are not only more attuned to seeing the invisible, but are also skilled in their "[...] ability to create the invisible" (p. 147). Quite simply, women's power to quell and outright hide parts of themselves to exist in society means male authors who create female characters are basing them on what is already an incomplete understanding of the woman. This makes Eustacia a conglomerate of partial truths. What Hardy portrays is but a single side of the coin – the flip side also exists for those able (and willing) to turn it over.

To take the tack that Eustacia as a character can be understood many different ways by many different people, including Hardy, is plausible. In *The History of the Concept of Time* (1992), Heidegger points out more than one person can come in contact with an entity, but have totally different understandings of that entity's being depending on context in which the entity is encountered. With his stone-ax example, Heidegger explains the way a "chance stone" would be understood by a farmer as simply an obstacle; the farmer does not recognize what the stone "actually was and still is" (p. 211) – an ax. An archaeologist, on the other hand, would recognize the stone as a relic of the past, as a tool. Ultimately different times and situations equal different understandings, which is the case with Eustacia. Up until the mid-twentieth century, she was as foreign to readers and critics as the stone-ax was to the farmer.

[12] Much like the role of time and context, Levinas (1987) and Derrida (2010) also diverge in their treatment of characters in books and being. Levinas contends, "The characters of a novel are beings that are shut up, prisoners. Their history is never finished, it still goes on, but makes no headway" (p. 10). Derrida (2010, p.131) says books are a form of trace, calling them: "[...] a living-dead machine, sur-viving, the body of a thing buried in a library, in cellars, urns, drowned in the worldwide waves of the Web, etc., but a dead thing that resuscitates each time a breath of living reading, each time the breath of the other or the other breath, each time an intentionality intends it and makes it live again by animating it, like . . . a body, a spiritual corporeality, a body proper (Leib and not Koerper), a body proper animated, activated, traversed, shot through with intentional spirituality."

CONCLUSION

To end, let us return to Cixous – "Woman must write woman. And man, man" (p. 877). Women may not like it when men write women, and rightfully so. But, we also must face that men have written women since the beginning of time and probably will, regrettably, continue to do so. In terms of Hardy, despite having created her, we will never really know if he truly understood Eustacia's being as a woman, which is why this paper titles her an "unintended feminist". As modern readers, we must instead utilize our prior and ever-expanding understanding of the female experience in order to cultivate a greater appreciation of Eustacia and all female characters – there are likely hundreds, if not thousands, of unintended feminists ripe for analysis.

For eons, men and women have had traditional gender roles beaten into our brains. We are taught, implicitly and explicitly, that gender is an essential part of a person's cultural identity; toe the line or become a pariah. Eustacia Vye did not toe that line, and in doing so, clearly upstaged Clym – the native upon which the whole book was supposed to be focused. Her brave and renegade actions throughout the novel, including her suicide, illustrate her drive to define her own destiny at all costs and constitute her rejection of the patriarchal order. Choosing to value what she has become, especially in light of modern feminism, allows us to appreciate and analyze the woman rather than perpetuating the phallocentric discourse of the man behind the woman.

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