

Proper Names and Improper Meanings in Thomas Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd*

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In *Far from the Madding Crowd*, Thomas Hardy gave his characters names which strengthen the novel's implicit challenge to Victorian morality. In particular, the names *Bathsheba Everdene*, *Francis Troy*, and *Fanny Robin* make multiple references to people, places, objects, and events in pagan Britain, ancient Greece, and Old Testament Israel, raising the Wessex characters to the level of the figures to whom their names allude and tending to make readers judge them by the standards they would use for characters in folk, classical, or biblical narratives. The names Hardy chose help to make Wessex seem not only a part of the world stage rather than a backwater but to turn it into a pagan country, despite its veneer of Christianity.

When Thomas Hardy published *Far from the Madding Crowd* in the *Cornhill* magazine in 1873-74, he was eager to buttress his reputation as a novelist, establish himself financially, and marry his fiancée, Emma Lavinia Gifford. Yet his prospects of success were lessened by the fact that his vision of life, particularly his ideas about gender roles and sexuality, were at odds with most Victorian thinking. They certainly conflicted with those of his editor Leslie Stephen and those of the owners and customers of the lending libraries in which he hoped his book would have a second life.¹ To avoid offending his editor and readers yet remain true to his vision, Hardy gave many of his characters allusive names to provide them with a glamor, a physicality, and a sexuality not strictly justified by their thoughts or deeds.² Hardy thus wrote *Far from the Madding Crowd* on two levels, a literal one which is "proper" and a suggested one which is not. Most often, the names link Hardy's Wessex characters to well-known Old Testament³ and ancient Greek⁴ figures, but they also have other associations, notably with the English countryside.

Whatever the source, they nearly all carry a subtext which would have offended his original readers had they been conscious of it. According to Rosemarie Morgan, Hardy must have been successful in concealing his subversive ideas, for critics attributed what "unsuitable elements" they found in the novel to "the ineptitude of the chronicler, to his infidelity to the [pastoral] genre" (31), not to an attack on Victorian morality.

Yet if Hardy camouflaged his ideas by expressing them allusively, in at least three places he pointed to what he was doing. First, he indicated his technique of using names to turn seemingly unexceptionable situations into sexually charged ones through Jan Coggan's story about Bathsheba's father. Coggan says that Levi Everdene⁵ managed to be faithful to his wife only by "making her take off her wedding-ring and calling her by her maiden name" in private, and as soon as he could imagine that they were not married, "'a got to like her as well as ever, and they lived on a perfect picture of mutel love'" (11).⁶ This imagined fornication let Everdene combine the safety of marital fidelity with the excitement of forbidden sex in much the same way that Hardy combined the propriety of the story he tells (where miscreants repent and crimes are punished) with the improprieties in the stories he alludes to (where the misdeeds are greater and repentance is largely absent).

Second, Hardy used the title of *Far from the Madding Crowd* to say that he had encoded the adventures of the great and the greatly notorious into the actions of his characters. That title, from Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," insists on the resemblance between ordinary rural English people and the famous dead. The graveyard is full of those who could have done great deeds:

Some village Hampden that with dauntless breast
The little Tyrant of his fields withstood,
Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,
Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood. (518)

Though Hardy's characters live on a small scale, the novel uses their names to make one feel that they belong to the world of the great and famous.

As if the Levi Everdene story and the allusion to Gray's poem were not enough, Hardy inserts a third clue to his technique, the sad but funny story of Cain Ball's name. Because Cain's mother did not know the Bible well, she named her son "Cain, meaning Abel all the time" (130). The best Cain's neighbors can do for him is to call him "Cainy" to lessen his name's negative import. Names do mean something in Wessex, so the novel's readers should carefully consider their implications. Of all the names in *Far from the Madding Crowd*, the three richest and most important are "Bathsheba Everdene," "Francis Troy," and "Fanny Robin." Each name can be taken apart, a layer at a time, to reveal its meanings.

Bathsheba Everdene

Bathsheba. This is the most heavily charged name. Bathsheba's given name associates her with one of the most famous and alluring women in the Old Testament. Her story begins when King David, looking down over Jerusalem from the roof of his palace, sees her bathing, summons her, lies with her, and then sends her home (2 Sam. 11:2-4). The Bible does not reveal Bathsheba's feelings, but she is compliant, and therefore an image of submission and an occasion of sin.⁷ This part of the biblical Bathsheba's story is echoed in *Far from the Madding Crowd* when Gabriel Oak (a musician and a shepherd, like David before he became king of Israel) similarly spies on Bathsheba from above, first as she rides in a wagon (53) and later when she tends sick cows (62-63). Gabriel soon hopes that she will marry him. His spying is merely questionable manners, but the biblical subtext leads us to judge him as voyeuristic and lecherous, like David, and the blameless marriage proposal he soon makes seems almost wicked because we associate it with David's summoning Bathsheba to his bed. Bathsheba Everdene, too, though only a little reckless and flighty, is rendered morally suspect by her association with the biblical Bathsheba, who is not only adulterous but also tainted by her gender. She is ritually impure when David first sees her (that is why she is bathing), though when she appears at his bidding "she [is] purified of her uncleanness" (2 Sam. 11:4), which is probably due to menstruation (see Lev. 16:19-30).⁸ The Old Testament classification of nubile women as impure two weeks each month—during menstruation and

for seven days afterwards—spills over into the novel's distrust of women, where it is shown by the narrator's frequent negative comments about them.⁹

Hardy also encodes into his narrative the illegitimacy and murder which follow the adultery in the Bible, displacing them from Bathsheba Everdene and Gabriel Oak onto Troy, Boldwood, and Fanny. The Hebrew Bathsheba becomes pregnant by David, and when David fails to persuade her husband, Uriah, to have sexual relations with her so Uriah will think the unborn child is his, David arranges for Uriah to be killed in battle (2 Sam. 11:15) and marries Bathsheba. David is later denounced by Nathan the Prophet, who compares Uriah to a man "who had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up" (2 Sam. 12:3). In several ways, Sergeant Troy is like Uriah. Not only are both men soldiers, but Troy explicitly identifies himself with Uriah when, quoting Nathan, he tells Bathsheba that she is his "one little ewe-lamb" (228). At this point we probably distrust Troy's self-identification with Uriah, but events show that Troy *is* rather like him—a foreigner (Uriah was a Hittite; Troy is half French), a man more interested in soldiering than in domestic life, and a husband who does not impregnate his wife but leaves her to fend for herself against a determined suitor. When Troy marries Bathsheba and thus steps fully into Uriah's role, he is pitted against Boldwood, Bathsheba's suitor both before she marries Troy and after he vanishes. Thus, though Gabriel Oak earlier acts like David in spying on Bathsheba, Boldwood performs the more reprehensible part of David's role, pursuing a married Bathsheba whose husband is absent and, later, killing her husband when he returns.¹⁰

When Troy casts himself as Uriah by marrying Bathsheba, he makes his murder by Boldwood seem inevitable to anyone aware of the biblical subtext: much as David arranges Uriah's death so he can have Bathsheba, Boldwood murders Troy as the result of jealous possessiveness. Yet if Hardy had allowed his story to follow the biblical one, letting Boldwood marry Bathsheba as King David marries *his* Bathsheba, readers would have been shocked. The comparatively innocent Gabriel, however, can marry her, resuming the role of King David he had played at the start. This sleight of hand works because of the increasingly pointed

similarities between Boldwood and Gabriel. Boldwood functions as Gabriel's shadow, first performing the deeds which Hardy could not have had his hero perform and then being executed at the end for Troy's murder. (The Bible is less absolute, for King David acts wickedly but largely avoids punishment.¹¹) Similarly, Fanny Robin acts as Bathsheba's shadow so that, like Gabriel's honor, Bathsheba's virtue is preserved. Queen Bathsheba bears her lover an illegitimate child who dies shortly after birth (2 Sam. 12:15-19), but in the novel it is Fanny who does so and who then dies herself. Fanny incarnates the negative side of Queen Bathsheba, while Bathsheba Everdene takes on her namesake's positive qualities of beauty, self-confidence, sensuality, even regalness. Hardy manages to have things two ways: Bathsheba and Gabriel are linked to Queen Bathsheba and King David but remain essentially good, moral people, while their doubles, Fanny and Boldwood, commit and are punished for the acts which parallel the major misdeeds of the biblical lovers.

Bathsheba has a positive shadow figure as well, Susan Tall, the only other married woman in the novel. The name *Susan* is a version of *Susannah*, and Susannah, whose story is told in the book of Daniel in the Apocrypha, like Bathsheba is spied on lustfully while she is bathing. She rejects the advances of the voyeurs, who then accuse her of adultery, but Daniel proves her innocence. Her story shows that a chaste woman can defeat slander, as Bathsheba does by the novel's end, when she marries Gabriel. Bathsheba and Gabriel's connection to Susan and her husband Laban¹² is brought out first when Gabriel has to get a key from Susan as he and Bathsheba work to save the ricks in the storm (303-04), and later when Gabriel must go to the Talls's house the night before his wedding (460). In both cases, Susan and Laban are associated with the positive sides of Bathsheba and Gabriel's relationship — useful cooperation, socially-approved marriage — and counteract the negative "Bathsheba" associations.

Bath. The Hebrew name "Bathsheba" means "daughter of an oath" ("Bathsheba") or "daughter of abundance" (Yee 627) and is respectable.¹³ However, to an English-speaking reader the first syllable of Queen Bathsheba's name must evoke the bath at the start of her story. Readers of *Far from the Madding Crowd* are thus likely to associate Bathsheba

throughout the novel with the image of a naked and desirable woman washing away female "impurity" (read "sexuality") in a way which actually flaunts it. The sheep-washing scene reinforces this image (176), especially as shearing the sheep is compared to undressing women: "[Gabriel] lopped off the tresses about its head, and opened up the neck and collar," after which a "pink flush . . . arose and overspread the neck and shoulders of the ewe" (197). Bathsheba reinforces the association by observing, "She blushes at the insult" (197). These "undressed" and freshly washed sheep symbolize Bathsheba with special force because Troy has already called her a "ewe-lamb." The "bath" in Bathsheba's name also underscores her impulsiveness; it is in the city of Bath that she marries Troy.

Sheba. Bathsheba's name also links her with the Queen of Sheba, who visits Solomon (a legitimate son of David and Bathsheba) with gifts and is rewarded with valuable presents (1 Kings 10:1-13). It is usual to think of her as beautiful and desirable. The Kingdom of Sheba in question was probably the one in southern Arabia, or *Arabia Felix* ("Sheba" 629), so this woman would suggest an Arabian Nights richness and sensuality. Bathsheba Everdene's stately figure and rich dark hair assert her sisterhood with the Queen of Sheba as well as with Queen Bathsheba. The allusions to these two queens show Bathsheba Everdene as not merely sensual and desirable, which she is on any reading, but also as regal, which she is not literally, although Troy does call her the "Queen of the Corn-market" (223). This reading also elevates the yeomen who desire her (Boldwood, a tenant farmer; Gabriel, a shepherd; and Troy, a noncommissioned officer) to the status of kings and generals.

She. What else lies at the heart of Bathsheba's mystery—or, rather, at the heart of her given name? Another mystery: *she* the middle syllable of her name, stressed in the usual American pronunciation. For Bathsheba functions as the mysteriously other, the encrypted feminine, to the male narrator. The narrator often says she is less tainted than most women by the faults he ascribes to her sex, but those differences only make her more formidable without taking away the fascination which is her power. Her refusal to confine herself to traditional gender roles makes her hard to

control, but without Gabriel's help she could not manage the farm.

Bath' -she -ba Ev' - er -dene. Bathsheba does not care for her name, which she thinks "sounds odd and disagreeable" (72). Perhaps it is because few names are double dactyls, as hers is in the normal British pronunciation. There is too much, so she must replace the feminine trisyllabic with a *male* monosyllable, whether "Troy" or "Oak." On a private note, Hardy the poet gave his heroine a name whose rhythm was the same as his fiancée's—*Em' -ma La-vin' -i-a*. Bathsheba's indebtedness to Miss Gifford is encoded in their names' metrics.

Everdene. "Everdene" suggests "evergreen;" seen first in December, Bathsheba brings spring (53-54). According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a "dene" is a dunelike stretch or a "bare sandy tract by the sea; a low sand-hill" ("dene," def. 2.1), a part of nature but not alive, shifting and perhaps treacherous; it is also a variant of "dean," "a wooded vale" ("dene," def. 1), a more inviting prospect. Bathsheba may be suggestive of both landscapes.¹⁴

In short, the primary allusion provided by Bathsheba Everdene's name, to Queen Bathsheba, gives the heroine's story an implicit subtext of adultery and rehabilitation and helps prepare the reader for her husband's murder and her subsequent remarriage, while her name's other implications stress her sensuality, desirability, and availability, and they also connect her to royalty and nature, making her seem both more attractive and more dangerous than the novel's events and descriptions would strictly justify. They also help to elevate the men closest to her—Gabriel, Troy, Boldwood—to a state commensurate to hers.

Francis Troy

Troy. It seems likely that Sergeant Troy's name was suggested by Troy Town, a village near Dorchester which probably also inspired the name *Roy-Town* for the place where Joseph Poorgrass stops with Fanny's coffin (Skilling). But for most readers, just as "Bathsheba" calls up the Old Testament, Francis Troy's last name evokes the Trojan War.¹⁵ As he did by using the story of David and Bathsheba, Hardy again, through alluding to the legend of Helen of Troy, smuggles in sexuality

in a way unlikely to offend readers because it is presented so indirectly. If Sergeant Troy is a Trojan horse—you take him into your home and he devastates you—, he primarily suggests Paris, kidnapper or seducer of Helen. They share several striking similarities. Both Troy and Paris have upbringings lower than their births. Paris was a son of Priam and Hecuba, but he was raised by a shepherd after they abandoned him because of a prophecy that he would destroy Troy. Similarly, Sergeant Troy is said to be the illegitimate son of Lord Severn (161, 217), though his mother's husband was a "poor medical man" (161). Paris is a rather unsoldierly soldier, all show and little action, who kills Achilles only with Apollo's aid and who has to be rescued from Menelaus by Aphrodite. Troy never has his soldierly mettle tested, but one suspects that he, too, is more show than substance. Both men are unfaithful to their first loves. Paris deserts (Enone, his rustic wife or lover, for Helen,¹⁶ much as Troy deserts his "spiritual" wife, Fanny, for the more prosperous Bathsheba. In this reading, Bathsheba corresponds to Helen, a beautiful adulteress like the biblical Bathsheba. Bathsheba's submission to Troy in the hollow among the ferns is like Helen's seduction by Paris: after watching Troy's swordplay, Bathsheba "felt like one who has sinned a great sin"—and it is not just receiving Troy's kiss (242). He has symbolically seduced her.

The role of Menelaus, a weak king who cannot keep his wife, is split between Gabriel and Boldwood, much as they shared King David's role in the Bathsheba subtext. Gabriel's fidelity gives him rights which parallel Menelaus' rights over Helen, and Gabriel forgives Bathsheba's "infidelity" as Menelaus forgives Helen's straying. The fact that Bathsheba is not married or even officially engaged makes her infatuation with Troy more acceptable than Helen's elopement with Paris, but the Greek pretext adds a taste of adultery to the English story; one feels that Bathsheba is being unfaithful to both Boldwood and Gabriel by marrying Troy. Boldwood, who is almost engaged to Bathsheba when she marries Troy, is at first more like Menelaus than Gabriel is, and his weakness and public humiliation are similar to Menelaus's. As in the Bathsheba reading, Boldwood is associated with the more negative sides of his precursor's story (Menelaus as helpless

fool and cuckold) and Gabriel with the more positive ones (Menelaus as faithful and forgiving husband).

Although the allusions to the Trojan War reinforce Bathsheba's hidden identity as adulteress and queen, echoing the David-and-Bathsheba subtext, the men's roles are different, for now Troy is associated with the seducer and Gabriel and Boldwood with the rightful husband. Troy does not literally seduce Bathsheba, of course, but he takes her away from men with a greater claim to her—Gabriel, who is earning her through his fidelity and practical help, and Boldwood, a man of appropriate probity, rank, and occupation to marry her. Boldwood even says that Troy "stole in in my absence and robbed me" (261)—words which could have been spoken by Menelaus, who unwisely left Paris and Helen alone in Sparta. On a literal reading, Troy is not much of a seducer: though he has seduced Fanny, he is ready to marry her and even waits for her at the church (164-66), and he does not attempt literally to seduce Bathsheba, but marries her. We also never hear about any earlier sexual adventures he may have had, only that he has a bad reputation. At least partly through the subtext of the Trojan War encoded in his name, however, the novel manages to suggest that he is much more dangerous and experienced sexually than his history indicates, so that we feel that he has seduced many women, including Bathsheba, even though we know that this is not literally true.

Paris, France. Another implication of the name "Troy" is that the sergeant is a lightweight, as a troy weight is lighter than an avoirdupois weight of the same name.¹⁷ Both words come from French, *avoirdupois* meaning "having weight" (*avoir du poids*) and the name of the troy measure deriving from the French market city of Troyes. But France is implied even without this connection, because to consider Troy as "Paris" is to evoke the capital of France—a pun but a fertile one, because Paris connotes sensuality and sexuality to the English-speaking reader. And Troy is half French, for his mother was a French governess (161).

For many English readers in Hardy's day, French sensuality would have been associated with Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, which had appeared just eighteen years earlier¹⁸ and had been the object of government prosecution for offense to morality.¹⁹ In telling his own tale of provincial passion, Hardy

took a more conservative path than Flaubert, but he included several situations which evoke *Madame Bovary*, setting some of the parallel events one generation earlier. Like Emma Bovary's husband, Troy's mother's husband was a poor village doctor, and like Emma, who was the mistress of the aristocratic and sensual Rodolphe, Mrs. Troy had an aristocratic lover, Lord Severn. Troy has been a provincial lawyer's clerk (161) like Emma's other lover, Léon. And, beyond those specific resemblances, like Flaubert, Hardy tells a tale of a passionate and romantic country woman who aspires to more in life than conventional marriage and child-rearing. Yet through his allusive approach, Hardy keeps the taint of *Madame Bovary* at arms' length even while capitalizing on his novel's connections to it in order to imply yet more sexual irregularity.

The novel does not insist on Troy's "Frenchness" (unless we think that his indolence, gracefulness, shallowness, and glibness are stereotypically French), but it is referred to when he tells Bathsheba that his "mother was a Parisienne" (227) and asks her if she reads French. This is to ask if she can read *him*. Alas, she cannot or, rather, as she says, "I began, but when I got to the verbs, father died" (227). That is a curious way to study a language, for what good are nouns without verbs or, to put it in terms more closely related to Bathsheba's situation, how can she know a man if she does not know his actions? This is her problem with Troy. She must suspect that he is inconstant (for she marries him quickly for fear of losing him [311]), but she cannot read him.

Frank. Francis Troy is usually known as "Frank." The name may be ironic, for he is often glib, but he is frank when he says that Fanny would make him a better wife than Bathsheba because he can control the former but not the latter (289), and he is outspoken again when he tells Bathsheba that Fanny has been more to him than Bathsheba could ever be (361). The word "frank" also means free, untrammeled, so it suggests what he would like to be. And, finally, his name refers to the Franks, for whom France was named.

Francis/Frances. Troy's given name, "Francis," also derives from the Franks; to be "Francis" is, in a sense, to be *français*, to be French. Further, the names "Francis" and "Frances" have the same origin, the Old French name *Franceis*

(*Webster's New World*), and this fact brings us to Fanny Robin, whose first name (though we are never told this) is surely "Frances"—different spelling, same pronunciation, another secret link between the lovers.

Fanny Robin

Fanny. Unlike Bathsheba's and Troy's names, Fanny Robin's names link her not to literature but to nature, the human body, and the English countryside. She is not elevated enough to be called "Frances," not even on the expensive tombstone Troy buys her (381), but must bear a name which was fashionable enough in the nineteenth century (one thinks of Fanny Brawne and Fanny Burney, and even Fannie Farmer) but which reduces her to her erogenous zones. To a contemporary, and especially American, reader it means the buttocks and may evoke the burlesque performer Fanne Foxe²⁰ of Washington Tidal Basin fame. Interestingly, "fanny" in this sense may be traceable to "fan" as "a device for winnowing grain" (*Webster's New World*), something Fanny might have used, since everyone on the Wessex farms seems to pitch in when work is heavy (393). Troy even calls her "Fan" at least twice (137, 286), reducing her to an implement. Mainly, though, Fanny's name associates her with the backside (to use a British expression) and thus the backdoor, the backstairs, and whatever else is lower, at the bottom (to use an American expression) and hidden.

Yet the *O.E.D.* records the first use of that meaning in 1928 ("fanny," def. 4.1), so perhaps it would not have been available to Hardy's readers. The less sheltered of them would, however, have been acquainted with a related meaning of "fanny": the female pudenda. According to the *O.E.D.*, this meaning was first recorded in 1879 ("fanny," def. 4.2), but Eric Partridge dates it as probably much earlier, citing the publication in 1749 of John Cleland's *Memoirs of Fanny Hill* ("fanny," n.). With her naughty first name reinforcing the sexual symbolism of her yellow hair, thin clothes, and pregnancy, Fanny Robin is practically reduced to a sign of female sexuality. Yet the novel manages to have it two ways at once, for she is also a trusting, essentially innocent, and exploited young girl. She is both like Bathsheba (an attractive country girl courted by Troy, someone about whom Boldwood

and Gabriel feel protective) and yet unlike her because she unwillingly represents a sexual availability that Bathsheba indignantly rejects. The fact that Fanny is a shadow to Bathsheba is additionally shown by her always appearing in shadow, or darkness; despite her yellow hair, she is a nighttime figure, while the black-haired Bathsheba is normally seen in light.²¹

Robin. Fanny's last name, "Robin," makes her seem to be a pretty and helpless bird—one cannot seem to avoid slang with Fanny—, and one which was celebrated in the nineteenth century for its presumed fidelity to its mate (Borenstein). Fanny is nothing if not faithful. As if to reinforce the symbolic link between Bathsheba and Fanny, the book twice compares Bathsheba to a helpless robin, both a "panting . . . robin" (77) and a "puls[ing]" "Christmas robin detained by a window-pane" (247). Fanny Robin, too, has a pulse which beats "with a throb of tragic intensity" (101). When Bathsheba sleeps outside after finding Fanny and her dead baby in the coffin, she is awakened the next morning by various birds, including robins (362).

In England, that bird is usually called a "robin redbreast," an expression which inevitably sounds sexual in the context of a woman, so that both of Fanny Robin's names evoke her external sexual attributes. It seems cruel to give her two names which imply a sexuality she wants to hide; she even wears her "real golden hair" cut short and usually hidden in a cap (339). She is not like the shameless, nameless hussies the men in the novel refer to from time to time, but having a name condemns rather than protects her, as it seems to make her a scarlet woman despite her innate modesty and even bodily shame. Ironically, Fanny does not wear red on her breast; it is Bathsheba (54) and Troy (164, 214) who wear red jackets. But Fanny's name emphasizes her connection to them (lover of one, rival and shadow of the other).

"Robin" is also traditionally a man's name and evokes Robin Hood and Robin Goodfellow, two English woodland figures harking back to a life close to nature and uncircumscribed by Victorian morality. And there is something masculine about Fanny, for all her shyness. The second time we see her, she is throwing snowballs at the barracks to attract Troy's attention: "The throw was the idea of

a man conjoined with the execution of a woman" (136). One might say the same of her heroic but pitiful walk to Casterbridge just before she dies; as a woman about to give birth she is too weak for this trial, but her will is unbending. The scene at the barracks, like Fanny's name "Robin," reverses traditional gender roles. It evokes the balcony scene of *Romeo and Juliet*, but whereas Juliet is penned up in her parents' house leaning from her balcony and longing for the unsupervised Romeo, in the novel it is the man, Troy, who is locked in. But if Fanny is like Romeo in her position (below, suppliant), she is like Juliet in her actions, though it is painful to her to take on the male role and propose. Juliet says impulsively, "If that thy bent of love be honourable, Thy purpose marriage, send me word" (2.2. 143-44), but Fanny must force herself to ask, "when shall we be married, Frank?" (137). One of the disorienting sexual elements in this novel is the feminizing of Troy, who seems to incarnate masculinity but who on closer inspection illustrates negative female stereotypes: he is vain, showy, superficial, incapable of supporting himself (or unwilling to do so), and inconstant. The feminizing of Troy is paralleled by the masculinizing of Fanny, who appears helpless and frail but is stronger than he.²² Bathsheba's "masculine" traits are more obvious than Fanny's, but Fanny, in this as in so many ways shadowing Bathsheba, is also a masculinized woman, as her last name suggests.

The Missing Names

Having looked at these names, we also note those that are *not* in this novel. There are no Catherines, Elizabeths, or Joans; no Peters, Thomases, Lukes, or Martins. There are almost no names, in short, one might associate primarily with the New Testament or with Christian saints, except perhaps *Francis*. An occasional name does have a primarily Christian association—*Mark Clark, Maryann*—and some are of old European origin—*William, Edward, Henery*. But the names have three main sources. Some, like *Bathsheba*, are primarily associated with the Old Testament: *Laban, Levi, Cain, Susan, Gabriel*. A few are suggestive of the ancient Greek world: *Troy* obviously but also *Liddy*, which stands for *Lydia* (254, 393), and *Lydia* was King Croesus's realm in Asia Minor. Since the

kingdom of Lydia replaced the Hittite kingdom, the name *Liddy* links Uriah the Hittite with the Greek world. We might also think that Temperance and Soberness Miller's names (129) reflect the Greek golden mean as much as a Calvinist influence. Finally, some names, like *Fanny Robin*, come from nature: *Oak*, *Everdene*, *Boldwood*, *Tall*. They link the characters with physical surroundings and natural life.

Realizing that Hardy takes most of his names from non-Christian sources leads one to see the lack of Christianity in the novel. True, the characters go to church and know only one religion (they are surprised to learn that there are both High Church and High Chapel [280]). They are married and buried by the Church of England, and they read the Bible. But what do they read? The Book of Ruth, and a New Testament with "nothing but Corinthians and Thessalonians" (187)—more Greeks. No wonder their vicar is Parson *Thirdly*. Christianity comes third, behind Jewish history and Greek myth, if it is present at all. No one is concerned with grace, redemption through faith, or atonement in a Christian sense; the characters' morality is that of the ancient world, whether Hebrew, Greek, or purely natural, and if they are redeemed, they do the redeeming themselves. Perhaps this is the real, scandalous subtext of the novel, not the characters' sexuality itself but the story's ignoring any Christian vision of the world, including a Christian view of sexuality. Hardy is not yet saying that the "President of the Immortals, in Aeschylean phrase" is playing with his characters, as he would fifteen years later in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (432), but his pastoral landscape and its inhabitants are not being watched over by a loving, forgiving, Christian deity—as their names help us to see.

Endnotes

¹Stephen watched Hardy's manuscript closely for impropriety. He was especially skittish about the Troy/Fanny story, as his letters in "Hardy's Correspondence with Leslie Stephen" show, and he allowed its sexual elements to be presented only in the most allusive form. As to Hardy's desire both to seem to accept but actually to subvert the prevailing standards, Penny Boumelha says that Hardy wanted both "to challenge and to keep within the demands of the dominant

form" the novel which appeared first in serial form to be read by the whole family, then in an expensive lending-library edition (29).

²Marlene Springer has pointed out that the best of Hardy's allusions allowed him indirectly to influence "tone, theme, and character development" (5) as well as letting him imply what he was unable to say more openly.

³Timothy Hands points out that "*Far from the Madding Crowd* contains no fewer than twenty-one allusions to Genesis and Exodus" (45) and sees them as functioning largely to draw parallels between the world of the Bible and Hardy's Wessex.

⁴Nehama Aschkenasy shows how Hardy used a biblical substructure combined with allusions to Greek literature to shape *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. Although the characters' names are not a part of her argument, her findings reinforce those of this paper.

⁵Oddly enough, Troy and Bathsheba's wedding notice in the newspaper calls him "John" (291); perhaps Troy never asked Bathsheba what her father's name was and made up a name for the registrar. Carroll Viera thinks that the name "Levi" implies that the Everdene's were originally city people.

⁶We are left to wonder if this role-playing also excited Mrs. Everdene—whose own first name we are never told.

⁷Gale A. Yee sums up two contrasting ways in which commentators have interpreted Queen Bathsheba, either as simply an agent of the story and not a developed character or as a conspirator with David in a plan for them to marry (627).

⁸David P. Wright and Richard N. Jones provide insight on ritual bathing in the Old Testament (205).

⁹Any reader will remember many such statements, but I furnish a few examples here: "Strange to say of a woman in full bloom and vigour, she always allowed her interlocutors to finish their statements before rejoining with hers" (140); "The facility with which even the most timid women sometimes acquire a relish for the dreadful when that is amalgamated with a little triumph, is marvellous" (211); "Perhaps in no minor point does woman astonish her helpmate more than in the strange power she possesses of believing cajoleries that she knows to be false_except, indeed, in that of being utterly sceptical on strictures that she knows to be true" (243).

¹⁰There are many parallels between Gabriel Oak and Boldwood beyond their rivalry for Bathsheba. Gabriel is a tenant farmer when he first sees Bathsheba (59) and is about to become one again at the end; Boldwood is a tenant farmer throughout the novel (170), though near the end he wants Gabriel to take over the tenancy (425), and Gabriel does (456). Both protect Fanny Robin; both try to look after Bathsheba; they become friends and allies near the end (421); Gabriel visits Boldwood in jail just before his execution (447). The names "Boldwood" and "Oak" are obviously related.

¹¹Many years later David suffers when Absalom, his favorite son, tries to make himself king, but the only connection between his adultery with Bathsheba and Absalom's rebellion is that Absalom is angry that Solomon, David and Bathsheba's oldest surviving son, is to inherit the kingdom.

¹²Laban in Genesis is Jacob's father-in-law, a wealthy shepherd; Gabriel Oak is a shepherd and becomes well-to-do.

¹³Bryn Caless lists the meaning "voluptuous" and "daughter of satiety" but does not give a source (10). Caless also briefly discusses parallels between the biblical Bathsheba and Bathsheba Everdene, focusing on Bathsheba as "one of Hardy's most physically sexual women" (11).

¹⁴Without giving a source, Caless says that the name "Everdene" means "wild one" or "wild boar" (10-11). I do not find this meaning helpful.

¹⁵Caless has listed some of the implications of Troy's names but without exploring their sexual overtones (11-12).

¹⁶Cenone was a nymph, daughter of a river god, but Helen was Zeus's daughter. It is true that nymphs are lesser deities and that, though Zeus was Helen's father, Helen herself was mortal (though there is one legend that she not only went to the Elysian Fields but also married Achilles there). Still, Helen was the most beautiful woman in the world, a queen and the daughter of a queen ("Nymphes" and "Hélène" in Schmidt).

¹⁷The *O.E.D.* gives a number of examples of the expression "troy weight" being used in this way ("troy," def. 2b).

¹⁸"Emma" being the first name of Hardy's fiancée, he may have been especially sensitive to connections between his book and the story of Emma Bovary.

¹⁹Flaubert first published *Madame Bovary* in 1856 in serial form, and his editors, like Leslie Stephen, were "effrayés des audaces du roman" and made major cuts in the text (Maynial xx). Those abridgments did not spare them legal problems; the review in which the novel appeared, as well as Flaubert himself, were accused in 1857 by the French government of "outrage à la morale" (Maynial xx). Though they were acquitted, there was a major scandal, and any literary figure in England would have been well aware of the possibilities of similar—but undoubtedly worse—scandal awaiting English authors, editors, and magazines that offended the public's or the government's sense of decency.

²⁰As Annabella Battistella cleverly called herself professionally.

²¹The importance of the contrast in their hair is shown by the facts that Troy has a lock of Fanny's hair in his watch (the same watch which he pretends he will give to Bathsheba when he is courting her [229]) and that he cuts a lock from Bathsheba's head during his sword-play in the ferns (240).

²²William Mistichelli has explored in detail issues of androgyny in this novel, focusing on Bathsheba, Fanny, and Troy.

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