



Lamenting the Idyllic--Thomas Hardy's Nostalgia in *Far from the Madding Crowd*

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Abstract

*The useful conceptions of nostalgia are instrumental for a close look at Thomas Hardy's pastoral sentiment towards the vanishing rustic life, which is disturbed by the abrupt intrusion of industrialization in the country. Hardy's pastoral nostalgia finds its refuge in the partly real, partly dreamlike Wessex, in which a self-contained atmosphere of idyllic contentment remains. Through a nostalgic interpretation of Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd*, the essay explores Hardy's nostalgic construction of a fraternal Weatherbury community, including the incarnation of his idealized peasant type Shepherd Oak and the desirably pastoral romance. Through a collection of Hardy's imaginations, the research aims to probe into the individual's ambiguous psychology and complicated perception when confronting with the social and cultural transitions in the late nineteenth century England.*

Keywords: *Far from the Madding Crowd*; Nostalgia; Pastoral; Social Transition; Thomas Hardy

INTRODUCTION

As a sensitive writer living in late-Victorian age, Thomas Hardy has witnessed a turbulent period of social transition from an agricultural society to industrial civilization, during which traditional values and economic structures are disintegrated. Threatened by the loss of pastoral tradition that is part of the genuine Englishness, not only does Hardy who possesses certain nostalgia towards the rustic past, but also his contemporaries as D.H. Lawrence and George Eliot has also expressed their sentimental emotions against the erosion of modernity. As Bate maintains, "together they stand for the imagined better life in a world where there is no place for the motor car. They represent the spirit of Philip Larkin's England of shadows, meadows, and lanes that are gone" (541). A reminiscence for an idealized time and space consists of the nostalgic sentiment in their literary creation. Hence, both as a participant and chronicler of the 20th century Britain, Hardy rivets his eyes on rural areas in the period of social upheavals, and further revives the idyllic romance in his Wessex series through strategies of nostalgia.

Apart from eliminating the negative effect of modernity, nostalgia also turns out to be a way for Hardy to explore the possibilities of an authentic existence in a universe which seems to be apathetic to the well-being of human beings. While Hardy seems to consistently in favor of the harmony between human and nature, he also identifies himself with Darwinism. His novels of character and environment is a reflection on how nature manipulates the helpless man. In this way, Hardy's idealized construction of a harmonious pastoral idyllic resonant between both man and nature is a spontaneous response of individuals who subject to

the malevolence and indifference of the universe. Beneath Hardy's literary nostalgia lies in his deepest longing for an essential community, in which multifold relations between man and man, man and nature are in concordance with each other. Consequently, he makes idols of the lovers and idealizes a happy ending of a tranquil county life in *Far from the Madding Crowd*. On the one hand, Hardy is well-aware of the intrinsic apathetic quality of nature; on the other hand, he could not resist the lure regarding the prospect of a community characterized by compassion and charity. The ambiguous outlook serves as a key clue which witnesses the evolving tone of Hardy's literary creation in a turbulent period.

Since nostalgia originally has a utopian dimension which directs towards a lost time and lost home, conventional nostalgia often carries a cultural reminiscence to the image like "past time" and a spatial reference to the "hometown". As what is widely believed that the primary meaning of nostalgia is "homesickness", and the traditional "geographical hometown" always delivers a sense of belonging for people living in diaspora. Spending most of his lifetime in the homeland Dorset, Thomas Hardy is sentimental about the disappearing country houses which stands for a typical rural Englishness. He is suspicious of the mobile urbanization, and further sympathizes with the plight of peasants who subject to the corruption of modernity. It drives Hardy to make a literary construction of "Wessex" to carry his reminiscence of a bygone pastoral age in his subsequent works. It was in 1874, on the publication of his fourth major novel *Far from the Madding Crowd*, that Hardy revived the regional term "Wessex", which added a strong environmental basis

to his literary writing. As the title of the novel implies, *Far from the Madding Crowd* conveys Hardy's nostalgia for a simple, honest and rustic life against the hustles and bustles brought by urbanization. Moreover, through a nostalgic characterization, Hardy expresses his cherishment about the rural virtue incarnated in the farmer Oak who is truly a man of integrity. In addition, the idyllic romance between him and Bathsheba has formed a contrast to the materialized relations in the tide of industrialization. Employing strategies of nostalgia, Hardy contrasts the indifference of nature with man's compassion to reveal his identification with the virtues of humanist sympathy and fraternity.

As a classical British writer, Hardy's novels have received worldwide interest and attention. The richness of his works invites numerous reviews, essays from various perspectives, including an existentialist perspective, a feminist point of view and some other studies on its cultural ecology, etc. Among these, a major critical concern is focused on Hardy's Character and Environment Series, which generally expounds on individual's tragic fate, as well as its complicated relation to the social cultural context. In his essay "Culture and Environment: From Austen to Hardy", Bate contends that, with an acknowledgment of the prevailing Social Darwinism, Hardy places mobile new men and advanced ideas in opposition to rooted types and traditional ways, which further indicates that the irreconcilable clash between the forces of tradition and of innovation is at the core of his tragic vision. Other critics also pay attention to Hardy's revival of the partly imaginary Wessex. In his essay "Wessex, Hardy and the Nature Novelists Author(s)", Birch (1981) probes into the intriguing theme of Hardy's reconstruction of Wessex and his imaginative use of the landscapes of south-central England. Besides, in "Narrative, Gender, and Power in *Far from the Madding Crowd*", Linda (1991) offers a feminist reading to expose some of the ruptures and excesses which continually destabilize power and gender in terms of a psychoanalysis and semiotics (163). As for domestic research, Hu Baoping (2005) illustrates the nostalgia complex in Hardy's poetic creations, pointing out that nostalgia is not only an individual strategy to reconstruct a poetic life, but also a social critique to reflect upon the deteriorating spiritual crisis brought by the technological revolution.

All of the above-mentioned research have paid attention to Hardy's Wessex creation. The imaginary Wessex attracts attention of critics worldwide with its rich cultural connotations, yet few of them have dealt it from a nostalgic perspective. The theory of contemporary nostalgia adopts a sociological and a psychological perspective to investigate the vicissitude generated in the progression of modernization as well as individuals' treatment to it. With Boym's (2011) definition, nostalgia is a "psychological defense mechanism inevitably appeared in a time of accelerated rhythms of life and historical upheavals" (279). Confronting with the first wave of modernity, Hardy's nostalgic sentiment turns out to be both subtle and intense, which also infuses with a

reflection on the poetic existence of individual. His Wessex construction is worthy of an in-depth academic attention, which not only conducive to illuminate Hardy's cultural identification during social transitions, but also resorts to an examination of the overall national psychology when ushering in an age of industrialization. "Hardy's works often contain a finely adjusted interplay between his knowledge of region and folkways, on the one hand, and his educated perspective, on the other, or between what Samuel Hynes calls "the pastoral and the historical." (Brown 98) Besides, as an early work of Hardy, it also conveys the writer's natural outlook with a slight emphasis on an optimistic spirit before it turns into a gloomy tone in his later creation. It indeed displays a cultural landscape, with half of them inside of a stabilized rural tradition and the other half beyond it tinged by an intrusion of the roaring modernity.

HISTORICIZING NOSTALGIA

The conception of nostalgia has undergone a progressive modern diversion. While in the 17th century, nostalgia was treated as an eminently curable disease, and was defined as "the sad mood originating from the desire for return to one's native land" (Bauman 7). For the next two hundred years or so, nostalgia was tended to be recognized as a mental disease, something similar to melancholy. With the theoretical progression in terms of sociology and psychology, nostalgia has been endowed with some new connotation and was often examined in the cultural context of modernity. It no longer referred to an individual sickness but becomes a symptom of certain age, even as a historical emotion. Thus, for most of the 20th century, nostalgia was generally perceived as an emotional fluctuation when it came to the lost happiness and the distant hometown. Scholars believes that the basic orientation of nostalgia is the connection between human beings and the admirable past (Levine 78). While in terms of philosophy, nostalgia is also engaged with the identity relationship, including the symmetrical continuity, uniformity and the integrity between individual and community. Since nostalgia grows more common in the fluid modern age, it will appeal to scholars of multiple disciplines to dig further its rich implication.

In contemporary cultural context, nostalgia arises from a longing for home that no longer exists or has never existed. In modern age, the tide of urbanization and industrialization has destroyed people's traditional homeland, making them subject to certain modern diaspora. The context of social transformation, the destructive force of modernization has dissolved traditional communal life as well as its once cherished rural values. While the pastoral idyllic no longer exists, all that is solid has melted into air, such as the intimate social ties between neighborhoods, the security endowed by a fraternal community, as well as the coherence and continuity of individual life. "It is no longer a corporate space of repeated interaction, but a fragmented and scattered space" (Bauman 34). Consequently, people were suddenly trapped into a state of anomie.

The negative side of modernity throws modern people into a world of chaos in a way that they subject to a fragmentation of values. It seems to be a common belief that the old traditional world is replaced by a more ruthless one, in which a highly materialistic and individualized social value rules; as scholar points out: "one in which bonds of group loyalties and emotional attachment gave way to the rationalistic ties of utilitarian interests and uniform law" (Gusfield 5). The estrangement among modern men and indifferent interpersonal relations renders individuals in an isolation that "they establish contact only when they can use each other as means to particular ends" (Pappenheim 81). Boym gives a typical conclusion of this modern condition: "modern society appears as a foreign country, public life as emigration from the family idyll, urban existence as a permanent exile" (34). Industrialization and urbanization impact traditional values and morality in a way that modern citizens are reminiscent towards the vanishing rural past. Moreover, they are critical about the consequences of modernization, the alienated social bonds and the growing bureaucratization of daily life through the forces of capitalism.

As the rapid pace of modernization has intensified people's longing for the slower rhythms of the past, as well as for continuity and social cohesion, nostalgic sentiment spontaneously emerges as a response to the social progress. Boym vividly depicts the relations between nostalgia and social progress: "the 'global epidemic of nostalgia' took over the baton from the (gradually yet unstoppably globalizing) 'epidemic of progress frenzy' in the relay race of history" (87). Hence, in a broader sense, nostalgia reacts as a rebellion against modernization. People yearn for a community with a collective memory and intimate ties. In modern age, the rampancy of nostalgia has become an inevitable historical consequence; meanwhile, a retrospect of the idyllic past seems to be a consoling strategy for the majorities. With the main tune of celebrating the glorious Great Britain, the ambivalent sentiment still permeates in the 20th century literature.

Nostalgia is deeply rooted in British culture, ranging from Thomas Hardy, D.H Lawrence, Kazuo Ishiguro and Evelyn Waugh, to name a few. Some of them resort to an imperial nostalgia, while the others are reminiscent of a bygone age when machines haven't invaded the rurality of pre-modern England. The industrial revolution, serves as a great turning point in Britain's history, has accelerated Britain's process of modernization. The country thus changed from a feudal agricultural society into a modern industrial one, in which villagers no longer took delight in leading a peaceful, self-sufficient rural life, thus jeopardizing a harmonious relationship with nature. Moreover, new ideologies and lifestyles have altered the rhythms of British countryside and posed a threat to the traditional social routine, deconstructing the stability and tranquility of the rural community. With its mighty power, modernity encroached on the countryside and left its traces everywhere. As a witness of the radical social transformation, Hardy was uneasy about the chaos

and lamented on the elapse of the idyllic world. Nostalgia's capacity to render a disappointing present enabled the artist to articulate more precisely in their literary fantasies. As critics once commented, "the nostalgia for the southern shires is a cultural disease" (Bate 542). The longing for an imagined past is indeed a sign of sickness about the present. In a nostalgic context, Hardy constructed his Wessex series to release his modern anxiety and to yearn for a pastoral rural community.

HARDY'S NOSTALGIA IN THE NOVEL

It was in his fourth major novel, *Far from the Madding Crowd* that Hardy first constructed the "Wessex" as an imaginary region related to his hometown Dorset, and used it as the geographical context for his literary creation. As the title implies, the setting of this novel is a secluded area remote from the urban uproar. In the novel, a young female-farmer, an unpretentious peasant and the quiet Weatherbury together consist of a partly real, partly dream wonderland. As a rural elegist, Hardy's Wessex serves as an authentic counterbalance to the corrupted modernity.

Wessex as an Idyllic Wonderland

Hardy's nostalgic construction of Wessex is a representation of an immutable idyllic wonderland with its pastoral and quaint nature, which further serves as exemplar of Hardy's idealized ancient England counties. In Hardy's literary construction, rural Wessex was still "feudal and pre-industrial...its whole habit of mind moulded by the traditions of the past" (Cecil 148). As an emblem of vanishing pastoralism, Wessex is a microcosm of the divinely ordered world.

Far from the Madding Crowd, the title itself evokes a vision of a peaceful wonderland far away from the hustles and bustles of the metropolis, where human co-exist harmoniously with nature and to each other. The pastoral elements in *Far from the Madding Crowd* frequently appear, which create an idyllic atmosphere lingering in the whole novel. As Henry James observes, the atmosphere of which is the result of "a certain aroma of the meadows and lanes, and a natural relish for harvestings and sheep-shearings" (29). In an ancient agricultural society, the harmony and intimacy between man and nature is thus manifested through the communal engagement in the farm work. Hardy's treatment of the rural task, such as labming, grinding the shears, hiding storms, harvesting the crops and other labor spontaneously render the readers to immerse themselves in a pastoral romance. As Squires maintains: "the dominant impression of the scene is one of merry but serene harmony. The shearers are caught during a time of relaxed enjoyment and good-natured fun" (317). Hardy gives an elaborate description of the beautiful natural environment, both in visual and aural aspects, revealing the compatible integration of human and nature.

In the novel, the nostalgic construction of Weatherbury displays a utopian vision of the rural community. Residents in Weatherbury lead a regular country life with slow rhythm, and time seems to leave no trace whether on their occupation,

traditions or customs. A rather ancient occupation of sheep-raising and farming are still pursued in this remote setting. In Hardy's depiction, farmers maintain their traditional entertainment and hold the annual sheep fair by routine; also, peasants celebrate their harvest supper and dance together. Between the lines, the mood is overall tranquil, warm, and gently idealized, making the portrait seemingly nostalgic. Hardy's frequent depiction of those traditional pastoral scenes has formed a rural order which preserves both ancient customs and the traditional agricultural way of life. It is a way of life, Hardy wrote, for which "the indispensable conditions of existence are attachment to the soil of one particular spot by generation after generation" (xxii). Through both a nostalgic portrayal and a realistic account of a coarse rustic life, Hardy conveys his yearning for a self-contained life free of vulgar materialism and alienated relations. The nostalgic construction of Wessex implies Hardy's withdrawal from a sophisticated urban space to a simple rustic world. Wessex as a nostalgically idealized pastoral wonderland is characterized by the harmony between man and nature in a self-sufficient atmosphere of idyllic contentment.

Peasants in Weatherbury are also closely connected within a small-scale network of personal ties, through which they obtain a sense of belonging and security. In the novel, the partnership among farmers is vividly presented when they shear sheep and enjoy feasts together. Leading a communal idyllic life free from dramatic changes in the outer world, villagers often shelter in the Malthouse of Weatherbury at evening to kill time, drink beer and talk by the fire. When Gabriel Oak loses his farm by accident and sought for somewhere to stay, he is advised to go straight to the Malthouse, a warm shelter for all. In this tiny community, people are enthusiastic about others' affair and are also familiar with each other. Upon entering the house, Oak is warmly welcomed and invited to dine and drink. The maltster asks his companion to take hot wine for Oak and one man encourages Oak to taste some food, creating a warm and friendly atmosphere. This community is also linked by collective memory, which turns out to be a source of intimacy. Oak's first name reminds the old maltster of his acquaintances, that is, Oak's grandfather: "Gabriel Oak of Norcombe! I knew your grandparents well! My boy Jacob and his young son Billy know your family too" (Hardy 18). The ancestral connection instantly made Oak, and the old man bound together. The Malthouse serves as a warm community where workers gather together to share their stories, talk about their ancestors, and gossip about neighbors. The ancient friendly folk custom seemingly to make time stop passing by in Weatherbury.

In fact, apart from the county's outsider Sergeant Troy, there are nearly no evil men in Hardy's depiction of Weatherbury, whose villagers all seem to possess certain qualities as unsophistication and enthusiasm. Hardy sees those virtues as the most significant loss in the transitions from rural to urban way of life. Through the nostalgic strategies of idealization, Hardy makes an account of rural society with a touch of sentimentality. However, his purpose is not to give a precise

transcript of a real rural life, but rather to select and heighten those features which is pivotal in the comprehension of an organic pre-modern community.

Shepherd Oak as an Idealized "Pastoral King"

In *Far from the Madding Crowd*, Hardy not only constructs the idealized place Wessex to carry his pastoral nostalgia, but also projects his reminiscence for the vanishing virtues which are embodied in the idealized protagonist Gabriel Oak. Oak is recognized as an incarnation of Hardy's idyllic nostalgia with virtues of industriousness, agility, loyalty and selflessness. He is the son of nature, who has a strong connection with the rural land, the sheep and the wheat. As a shepherd, Oak's melodious flute also gets connected with the pastoral tradition: "at nearly midnight on the longest night of the year, Gabriel Oak could be heard playing his flute on Norcombe Hill...In that cold, hard air the sweet notes of the flute rang out" (Hardy 3). With a pleasant and self-content shepherd playing the flute on the hill, Hardy thus creates a chilly and isolated atmosphere detached from the chaos of metropolis. A given traditional pastoral happiness is modified through Oak's undisturbed connection with nature.

The center of Hardy's nostalgic pastoral world is Gabriel Oak, who possesses virtues of peasants as integrity and endurance, as well as sympathy with nature. Oak has approached nature from his childhood, he "assisted his father in tending the flocks of large proprietors" (Hardy 10); since sheep-tending was Gabriel's specialty, he is both knowledgeable and skillful in handling them. Oak enjoys an intimate relationship with nature and are experienced in nursing animals and comprehending natural phenomena. He can read nature accurately. The echo with nature also carries Hardy's idealized unity between man and the universe. When Oak sensed the approach of the powerful August storm, he was determined to prevent the storm from damaging the whole harvest of the farm, though "this was a long and difficult job to do alone" (Hardy 67). Apart from a strong sense of responsibility, Oak is distinguished owing to qualities as bravery and unselfishness. As scholar argues, "the nature of the power that controls the world or thwarts the aspiration of men is variously cited or portrayed in Hardy's works: fate, nature, chance, mechanistic determinism" (Brown 85). In spite of a discordant note in the pastoral composition, the protagonist is always capable of dealing with the eccentric nature. While Oak was fully aware of his dangerous position under the threatening of storm, he insisted on seeing about the pile of rick covered properly, and finally obtained help from his surroundings. Oak is the representative of the flawless and ideal peasants in Hardy's works. His tenacity animates him to confront those unexpected misfortunes with unbeaten calm, and finally captured the heart of his dream lover with diligence, honesty and uprightness. Step by step, he lived a leisure rural life that Hardy aspired for in a modern age. The nostalgic construction of Oak has conveyed Hardy's identification and reminiscence towards the rural virtues lost in the social transformation. Thus, *Far from*

the Madding Crowd at its best creates an idealized pastoral world of antique simplicity of rural life, thus to carry Hardy's prevailing nostalgic sentiment.

A fundamental pastoral nostalgia is mainly embodied in the rural-urban contrast, with the former being characterized by simplicity and innocence, while the latter is typical of its refinement and complexity. In the novel, Hardy's pastoral nostalgia is further manifested through the confrontation of the rural Shepherd Oak and the urbanized Sergeant Troy. In contrast to Oak who is dedicated in protecting the rustic life, Troy seems to be more like an urban plunder. When the storm was about to come, Oak hurried to warn Troy the possible damage to the ricks only to find that he incited the other peasants to get indulged in excessive drinking: "Troy was enjoying himself too much to listen to Gabriel's message" (Hardy 79). To some extent, Troy bore resemblance to the seductive Satan, who lured the Adams to be expelled from Eden. Compared to the other peasants who looked ashamed for a hangover, Troy was selfishly at ease for Oak's all-night labor, and "whistling cheerfully as he entered the farmhouse" (Hardy 80). He is the representative of hedonism, who are more interested in the harvest entertainment than in protecting the crops from the storm; Troy has no understanding of the agricultural lifestyle because he is essentially an outsider who intends to exploit the rural world. Whereas Troy's egoistic urban deformities are uncovered, Oak's county virtues are gradually revealed. Mikhail Bakhtin describes Troy's egotism as "the destruction of an idyll" (19), which also symbolizes the outsider's urban invasion towards a self-contained rural life. Hardy's nostalgic constructions of Gabriel Oak convey his nostalgia towards the Victorian virtues of endurance, bravery and integrity, which forms a sharp contrast with the hollowness and irresponsibility of Troy representative of the urban erosion.

Pastoral Romance

In a fast-paced urban society, love relationship tends to be fickle and transient. Distinguished from the common material-oriented love relationship in a secular age, what Hardy constructs in *Far from the Madding Crowd* is a simple idyllic romance based on mutual trust and sincerity. The pastoral love between Gabriel Oak and Bathsheba is a nostalgic expression towards a long-lost yet desirable sentiment in the modern age.

The pastoral love between Oak and Bathsheba has undergone a series of tests, especially in its confrontation with the urban impulse embodied in Troy. The novel's tension between city and county is exemplified mostly in Bathsheba's shifting love choices. As scholar contends: "Bathsheba provides a link between rural and urban worlds, as her affection alternates between Oak and Boldwood on the one hand and Troy on the other" (Squires 306). In essence, it is by the temptation of urban world that Bathsheba moves from one suitor to the other.

At the opening of the novel, Gabriel Oak fell in love with

Bathsheba; however, the latter rejected his hasty proposal of marriage only to find herself the heir to her uncle's large farm in Weatherbury. Due to her refined education and plenty of unexpected inheritances, Bathsheba believed that she was far superior to the humble shepherd Oak. She began to act as a proud and even supercilious mistress. A little bit depressed for being ignored by the "wealthiest and most important man in the area" (Hardy 27), Bathsheba was driven by her girlish vanity to make a frivolous joke with the rich bachelor Mr. Boldwood—she sent him a Valentine card written "MARRY ME". Shortly after, Bathsheba by accident met a handsome soldier Sergeant Troy on her farm, thus a passionate affection aroused between them. She was blinded by the sweet talk of Troy, and even conquered by his pompous masculinity presented in the sword practice. As an inexperienced woman fall in love, she failed to recognize, even if being warned by Oak and Boldwood, that Troy's complex urban qualities were both alluring and deceiving. Not until a hasty marriage with Troy did Bathsheba find out Troy's seduce of her youngest servant Fanny Robin.

Unlike the relationship between Bathsheba and Troy, the love between Bathsheba and Oak is established on mutual understanding and trust after they experienced loads of challenges and hardships together. Bathsheba is conscious of the fact that Oak is the one who has consistently been in her company, providing support in her every case of emergency. The rural nature has also witnessed their communal labor. Their love grows out of an increasingly stable camaraderie deeply rooted in this land, which is a slow-rhythmed idyllic romance unique of an agricultural society. Bathsheba appreciates Oak's honesty and trusts him more than herself. In a storm-coming night, the two protected the harvest together, and their qualities have undergone the trial of predicament. Their fraternity also strengthened through mutual work, in which the mundane turns to be poetic. As Squires comments: "the emergence of friendship into love between Bathsheba and Oak occurs within the pastoral order" (320). Besides, Oak's integrity, diligence and thoughtfulness, forming a contrast to her torturous associations with Troy and Boldwood, which make Bathsheba to reconsider what is the most significant quality of an admirable man and what a qualified husband should be look like. The idyllic love romance between Bathsheba and Oak is viewed as a true connection of emotion far above the above-mentioned superficial tie out of rage impulse. According to Bate, "Only gradually does she learn to throw off fabricated tastes and return 'fresh as spring' to her affection for Gabriel, the rural world is conceived by Hardy to be both innocent and good" (357). Bathsheba's pride has been humbled through a series of conflicts, hence embracing a happy ending of a quiet marriage with Oak, which reasserts the order and harmony of a pastoral life.

CONCLUSION

Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd* belongs to the early published novel in the Wessex series, through which a general

mood of purity and freshness is touched. Through a nostalgic rendering of the rural past, including the construction of Weatherbury as a simple, uncontaminated community, the idealized protagonist countryman Oak who is endowed with the flawless nature of honesty and selflessness, as well as the desirable pastoral romance based on mutual trust and sincerity, Hardy conveys his lamentation on the vanishing rural orders against the backdrop of modernity. In addition to the erosion of modernity, Hardy's nostalgia can essentially trace its root in his outlook of nature, the reason for which he tries to present the reader with a harmonious scene between human and nature.

Not only does Hardy's idyllic nostalgia be deemed as a withdrawal from the sophisticated modern life, but it is a reassessment of values and reorientation toward a dreaming love romance. It was quite natural for Hardy to incorporate an idyllic nostalgia in his literary writing, since he is a man integrating both the traits of an optimist and pessimist. In terms of the former, he argued that he "appears to be one who cannot bear the world as it is, and is forced by his nature to picture it as it ought to be; and for the latter, he cannot only bear the world as it is, but love it well enough to draw it faithfully" (Neiman 20). Though Hardy is conscious of that nature is often run counter to man's best aspirations, he still believes in human possibility and harbors a philosophical concern on an authentic existence of man. Negotiating with reality, Hardy follows the inner call for beauty to make an idyllic romance in his Wessex Series, so as to display an idealized landscape to make up for the anxiety generated in the process of modernization. Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd* is the epitome of his pastoral utopia, and the increasingly tragic tone gradually reveals itself in his later novels as the raging of modernity constantly jeopardizes the vanishing rural community of the county and beyond.

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