

MORAL IMPLICATIONS IN JUDE THE OBSCURE

THESIS

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## P R E F A C E

During the last several years, critics and scholars have become increasingly aware of the significance of Thomas Hardy's Jude the Obscure. Critical studies of Hardy's novels were, until about a decade ago, primarily concerned with six of his most popular novels. A recent flood of articles and books has attempted to interpret the overall meaning of Jude. Ward Hellstom sees Jude the Obscure; Hardy's last novel, as the most explicit, the final and definitive, expression of his earlier views, and regards his other books as converging upon it.<sup>1</sup> In contrast to this view, John Holloway, in his critical work The Victorian Sage, calls Jude an anomaly among Hardy's tragic novels.<sup>2</sup>

Primarily, I propose in this study to make a close analysis of Jude the Obscure and draw whatever conclusions that can reasonably be inferred from this book alone. Briefly, I shall try to ascertain just what moral ideas are implied in the novel. Though the question of whether Jude is an anomaly or a summation of Hardy's ideas implied in

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<sup>1</sup>Ward Hellstrom, "A Study of Jude the Obscure," p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>John Holloway, The Victorian Sage, p. 165.

his earlier works will be of major importance in this study, it is only secondary. To reach a more satisfactory answer to the question of Jude's significance and the question of what Hardy is really trying to say in this book, it will be necessary to explore some themes of social criticism which Hardy treated more openly in Jude than in his earlier fiction. The chief topics of concern will be sex, marriage, divorce, education, religion, and the role of the church. Among the minor themes to be treated are Hardy's views on Nature, human nature, commercialism, and love. These topics will be discussed from the standpoint of their moral implications. The term moral will be used in its broadest significance--that is, indicating standards of right conduct or ideals of good behavior.

Although frequent comparisons will be made with incidents and ideas in Hardy's other principal novels, the chief purpose of this study is to determine what Hardy says or unmistakably implies in Jude the Obscure. In the second place will come examination of the hypothesis that moral ideas implied in Jude are prepared for and anticipated in Hardy's previous fictional works. The scope of this study excludes the author's poetry and short fiction.

The writer wishes to express his sincere appreciation and thanks to the supervising professor, Dr. A. L. Bennett,

for his generous gift of time and patience so necessary to the completion of this work. Dr. Bennett's enthusiasm for reading Hardy has both added to my own enjoyment and helped sustain my interest in studying Jude.

The writer wishes, also, to express appreciation to the members of his committee, Dr. Vernon Lynch and Dr. Lynn H. Tulloch. Dr. Lynch gave unflagging assistance in reading this thesis in its rough draft and in helping me to say more clearly what I intended. The influence of our lengthy discussions on family tragedy as the highest form of tragedy is apparent in the ideas presented in this study. I am grateful, also, to Dr. Tulloch, whose encouragement rendered this work possible.

Thanks are also due to Bobbie, the author's wife, for her optimism and encouragement when they were greatly needed.

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## C H A P T E R I

### THE HOUSE OF ATREUS: JUDE AS A MORAL WORK

It seems a bit ironic that Thomas Hardy was born into the Victorian Age. Condemned by the public for his attacks on social institutions, Hardy wrote for a generation to which he did not intellectually belong. Between 1871 and 1896 he wrote fourteen novels, of which Jude the Obscure is the last and possibly the greatest--certainly the most notorious, because of the freedom which Hardy exercised in the treatment of such subjects as divorce and sex. Other writers handled the same topics in their writings, but Hardy affronted his readers' sense of ethics more than most novelists. The didactic impulse in Hardy was too strong to be ignored; hence he was both admired and criticized for his writings.

The student of Victorian literature becomes aware of the fact that during the long reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901) the major writers of England saw things which they thought seriously amiss. One of the problems was the existence of a settled, rigid class structure. Another was the gradual weakening of the commitment of many educated and thoughtful people to the teachings of orthodox

Christianity; coupled with this was a pessimism about the nature and destiny of man, due primarily to the discoveries of the developing physical and biological sciences. At mid-century Darwin's Origin of the Species shocked many religious people with its emphasis on the cruel and competitive struggle for existence resulting in natural selection, or the survival of the fittest. How could God allow such cruelty, or as Hardy frames the question in Jude the Obscure: "Why should Nature's law be mutual butchery?"<sup>1</sup> This question is asked in one way or another by Tennyson (especially in In Memoriam), Arnold, Meredith, Browning, Dickens, George Eliot, Carlyle, John Stuart Mill, and Cardinal Newman, all of whom find it absolutely necessary to answer the question to their own satisfaction. And while Browning concludes in Christian optimism, Newman in a more orthodox manner in the acceptance of the teaching of Roman Catholicism, and Mill in a philosophical utilitarianism emphasizing the necessity of the material betterment of man's life in this world, here and now, Hardy seems driven to pessimism.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas Hardy, Jude the Obscure, p. 376. This idea is implied, also, in the pig-killing scene, pp. 71-78. All textual quotations from Jude are from the Modern Library Edition of 1923 unless otherwise noted.

<sup>2</sup>Jerome Hamilton Buckley, "Victorianism," in Austin Wright (ed.), Victorian Literature: Modern Essays in Criticism, pp. 3-15.

Another question raised in Hardy's age involved the nature and status of women. For while the ruler of England was a woman, this did not mean that women had anything like equal rights under the law or equal status with men in society. Even marriage, in Hardy's view, could victimize women and men. Hardy found much to criticize in the four major and interrelated areas of his concern in Jude the Obscure: the English educational system, the Church and organized religion, marriage, and the status of women.

A distinction should be made between the reception of Jude the Obscure upon its publication in 1895 and its critical reputation today. In general, it was believed that Hardy had gone too far in his questioning of Victorian social standards. In Tess of the D'Urbervilles (1891) Hardy had "faithfully presented" a "fallen woman," showing that Tess was essentially guiltless, that she had been sinned against, that a woman in her circumstances may not have deserved the opprobrium visited by society upon one who transgressed a cruelly rigid moral code. But in Jude the Obscure, the flouting of the conventional moral code, is continuous; there is concubinage, bigamy, illegitimacy, entrapment into marriage, divorce--nor is the central character, Jude, really remorseful, even at his death, for what he has done. This led to a stormy reception for the

book; that it could have been published at all in England showed that by 1895 the peak of Victorianism had passed, and matters of sexual morality could be discussed with somewhat more freedom than previously. But Hardy did not write another novel, and this was certainly due in part to his disappointment at the reception of Jude, although it is possible that he had said all he really had to say.<sup>3</sup>

That Jude the Obscure is a moral work there can be little doubt. Hardy himself defends his book in his preface written in 1912. He says:

Then somebody discovered that Jude was a moral work--austere in its treatment of a difficult subject--as if the writer had not all the time said in the Preface that it was meant to be so. Thereupon many uncursed me, and the matter ended, the only effect of it on human conduct that I could discover being its effect on myself--the experience completely curing me of further interest in novel-writing.<sup>4</sup>

The question with which we are faced, however, is that of answering whether Jude succeeds or fails as a moral work. Can Jude the Obscure be accepted as "a religious and ethical treatise"<sup>5</sup> when Hardy goes to extremes in showing men

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<sup>3</sup>A. Alvarez, "Jude the Obscure," in Albert J. Guerard (ed.), Hardy: A Collection of Critical Essays, p. 122.

<sup>4</sup>Thomas Hardy, Jude the Obscure (New York, 1961), Preface of April, 1912, p. vi. This preface is not found in the Modern Library Edition.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. vii.

and women pursued relentlessly by a cruel "Universe" through no fault of their own? Can the didactic elements of a novel be accepted when the examples given to support a thesis are so unusual as to be out of the ordinary? Donald Davidson says that

the high degree of coincidence in the typical Hardy narrative has been noted by all observers, often unfavorably. Mr. Samuel Chew explains it as partly a result of the influence of the "sensation novelists," and partly as deliberate emphasis on "the persistence of the unforeseen"--hence grim, if exaggerated, evidence of the sardonic humor of the purblind Doomsters . . . The logic of the traditional story is not the logic of modern literary fiction. The traditional story admits, and even cherishes, the improbable and unpredictable. The miraculous, or nearly miraculous, is what makes a story a story in the old way. Unless a story has some strange and unusual features it will hardly be told and will not be remembered.<sup>6</sup>

Although these remarks concerning the Victorian ideas of how a story should be written seem valid, we still have the following remarks written by Hardy about the necessity for creating a realistic impression. He wrote:

The writer's problem is, how to strike a balance between the uncommon and the ordinary, so as on the one hand to give interest, on the other to give reality.

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<sup>6</sup>Donald Davidson, "The Traditional Basis of Thomas Hardy's Fiction," in Albert J. Guerard (ed.), Hardy: A Collection of Critical Essays, p. 17.

In working out this problem, human nature must never be abnormal, which is introducing incredibility. The uncommonness must be in the events, not in the characters . . . (July, 1881).<sup>7</sup>

This raises a question about Hardy's fictional technique in Jude. The social issues he develops for criticism seemed to be of such moment that Hardy may have failed, at least partially, to create absolutely plausible characters. This is glaringly perceptible in the case of the fantastic boy, Little Father Time. He was probably never even intended by Hardy to be in any degree believable, for he is a symbol, an embodiment of a pessimistic idea. Moreover, Jude himself, as well as Sue, at times lacks reality--Sue, of course, more than Jude. Even in Sue's moments of greatest suffering one does not unreservedly sympathize with her, because it is too hard to believe in her. Jude himself is a pleasant young man, with some minor faults but without deep corruption, and with many virtues. A normal sensuality is his downfall, and we can believe in this--but somehow, at times, he seems almost unreal.

If Hardy thought to make Jude and Sue great romantic rebels against society, he did not succeed entirely, because

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<sup>7</sup>Florence Emily Hardy, The Early Life of Thomas Hardy, p. 194.

some of the ideas they embody, especially in the case of Sue, are manifestly self-contradictory and weaken whatever case Hardy seems to want to make: Sue shrinks from a normal marriage relationship with Phillotson, but she is almost equally as cold towards Jude, and we learn that she destroyed another man, the Christminster undergraduate with whom she had lived on a strictly "don't-touch-me-basis."

John Holloway remarks in his book The Victorian Sage that Jude does not represent Hardy. He says:

Hardy portrays a whole world of déracinés--a neurotic woman intellectual who paints ecclesiastical figures, an artisan who aspires to learning, a barmaid, an eccentric schoolmaster--who hurry from town to town in trains, or live isolated in inns and extemporized lodgings. It is this very restriction of scope that makes the book so much more agitated and bitter than Hardy's others. All rectifying stabilities have dropped out of sight; and nothing is left but a frustrated aggregate of querulous and disorientated individuals.<sup>8</sup>

The preceding comments on characterization lead to one point that presents a problem in this study. If these personages are not representative of the universal man or realistic in their portrayal as human beings, can what they say to the reader be accepted as applying to people in general?

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<sup>8</sup>John Holloway, The Victorian Sage, pp. 288-289.

Even as a family, Jude, Sue, and Little Father Time suffer from a curse that is not common to the average family. Marriage, as Mrs. Edlin warns in Jude, is not an institution in which any member of the Fawley clan will ever find happiness. She tells Jude:

The Fawleys were not made for wedlock: it never seemed to set well upon us. There's sommat in our blood that won't take kindly to the notion of being bound to do what we do readily enough if not bound. That's why you ought to have hearkened to me, and not ha' married. (p. 81)

This warning comes a little late for Jude, since he has already married, and Arabella has left him. Mrs. Edlin also cautions him to stay away from his cousin, Sue, because she belongs to "the inimical branch of the family" (p. 88). Jude takes the warning seriously but is, nevertheless, attracted to Sue during his lonely stay at Christminster. He thinks of reasons for not becoming romantically attached to her when he begins to feel more than a relation's mutual interest. Hardy tells us:

The first reason was that he was married, and it would be wrong. The second was that they were cousins. It was not well for cousins to fall in love even when circumstances seemed to favor the passion. The third: even were he free, in a family like his own where marriage usually meant a tragic sadness, marriage with a blood-relation would duplicate the adverse conditions, and a tragic sadness might be intensified to a tragic horror. (p. 105)

Both Jude and Sue are aware of the history behind the Fawley name, and Sue says at one point that she feels "as if a tragic doom overhung our family, as it did the house of Atreus" (p. 345). As a brief reminder to the reader, the story of the house of Atreus is as follows:

It was an ill-fated house. The cause of all the misfortunes was held to be an ancestor, a King of Lydia named Tantalus, who brought upon himself a most terrible punishment by a most wicked deed. That was not the end of the matter. The evil he started went on after his death. His descendants also did wickedly and were punished. A curse seemed to hang over the family, making men sin in spite of themselves and bringing suffering and death down upon the innocent as well as the guilty.<sup>9</sup>

Hardy may have added the idea of a family curse to Jude to give this novel a Greek tragedy effect. Whatever his motive, the curse idea may have limited the moral lessons concerning marriage to exclude the average family.

One of the problems in interpreting Jude the Obscure is whether the novel contains a protest against the accepted view of Christian morality. Tending in that direction is the implied criticism of the general acceptance of the second marriages in Jude, that of Sue with Phillotson and that of Arabella with Jude. The community accepts

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<sup>9</sup>Edith Hamilton, Mythology, p. 237.

them as lawful; yet they are anything but moral according to Hardy. They are, in Hardy's view, hideously cruel.

Hardy seems to think that his controversial books on immorality "make most" for morality. He says that "Jude (though a book quite without 'a purpose' as it is called) makes for morality more than any book I have written,"<sup>10</sup> and he says, "I am fully aware of one thing, that the ethical teaching of the novel, even if somewhat crudely put, was as high as that of any bishop's sermons."<sup>11</sup> Jude rather convinces us of this view when he says, "I may do some good before I am dead--be a sort of success as a frightful example of what not to do; and so illustrate a moral story" (p. 398).

From his first attempt at novel writing, The Poor Man and the Lady, to his last great novel, Jude the Obscure, "where he flung down . . . an intense, vibrant arraignment of the whole system of conventions of his time,"<sup>12</sup> we see

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<sup>10</sup>Florence Emily Hardy, The Later Years of Thomas Hardy, p. 51. This quotation is from Thomas Hardy's letter to Miss Jeannette Gilder on July 16, 1896. Miss Gilder had given Jude an unfavorable review in the New York World and had written to Hardy asking for an interview.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>12</sup>William James Dawson, The Makers of English Fiction, p. 201.

a manifestation of Hardy's revolt. He is against any system of regulations hostile and burdensome to man, whether it be the inherent abuses in the conventions of class distinction, religion, marriage, ethical ideas, education, or law. He sees the utter uselessness of the "irritating necessity of conforming to rules which in themselves have no virtue."<sup>13</sup>

In Jude Hardy tacitly suggests that, since society is a man-made structure to which have accrued useless rules and conventions during the centuries, there is hope of change in the future. If fate is the culprit, as in Far from the Madding Crowd and The Return of the Native, there is no possibility of melioration. Fate and chance seem usually to work against man, and he is powerless to prevent this influence over his life. But if it is man who works against man, then, as Hardy espouses in the later novels, particularly in Jude, abolishing the many man-made social obstacles can contribute to man's happiness. Hardy does not believe that man's character and his responses have been wholly predetermined or that society is an unalterably determined product; he admits the possibility

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<sup>13</sup>Florence Emily Hardy, The Early Life of Thomas Hardy, p. 146.

of melioration. He says as the omniscient author in Return of the Native that "a man should be only partially before his time: to be completely to the vanward in aspirations is fatal to fame"<sup>14</sup> and to happiness. Sue declares at one time:

When people of a later age look back upon the barbarous customs and superstitions of the times that we have the unhappiness to live in, what will they say! (p. 213)

Jude later adds, "Our ideas were fifty years too soon to be any good to us" (p. 492). At another time he says:

I perceive there is something wrong somewhere in our social formulas: what it is can only be discovered by men or women with greater insight than mine. (p. 399)

But, he implies, that insight can be found, and, if man can recognize social wrong, he can attempt to change it.

Jude's estimate of the number of years his ideas may be ahead of his time has probably fallen short of the actual figure. He is quite possibly ahead even of this present decade. Phillotson, Sue's first and last husband, writes to Sue expressing his 'enlightened' attitude after having endured ostracism. He says:

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<sup>14</sup>Thomas Hardy, The Return of the Native, p. 176.

To indulge one's instinctive and uncontrolled sense of justice and right, was not . . . permitted with impunity in an old civilization like ours. It was necessary to act under an acquired and cultivated sense of the same, if you wished to enjoy an average share of comfort and honour; and to let crude loving kindness take care of itself. (p. 440)

Phillotson has been unable to withstand the pressures put on him for allowing Sue to go to Jude. He has come to realize that what he has thought to be morally right, a kindness to Sue, is in actuality intolerable to the people with whom he lives and works. Phillotson, Sue, and Jude suffer poverty and deprivation because of their actions, and it may be that Hardy wants us to see society as the moral offender by its rejection of these three. "Perhaps the world," says Sue, "is not illuminated enough for such experiments as ours" (p. 431)! Perhaps Hardy wants us to see that some transgressors of a strict moral code may be, in a later judgment, the instigators of a much better code under which mankind will find happiness.

Though Hardy chose the "fated" house of Fawley, I think it will emerge in the following chapters that he had an interest in every house, and that he had a nobler vision for the generality of mankind. It is the purpose of this study to determine just what the ethical implications of Jude the Obscure are.

## C H A P T E R   I I

### THE THEME OF EDUCATION

Hardy chose three interrelated social institutions for the objects of his satire in Jude: education, marriage, and religion. The fact that Jude and Sue belong to a fated family in no way obviates the general application of Hardy's ideas about education in Jude. In this chapter, I propose to show Hardy's ideas pertaining to education and educational institutions. Some background material will be necessary to show why Hardy felt the way he did about this subject. It will be necessary, also, to look at some of his earlier novels, for it was in these works that Hardy developed notions about the influence of education, or the lack of education, on the lives of his characters. Thus we shall be able to understand Hardy's meanings in Jude the Obscure.

From Hardy's notes one may gather the impression that perhaps he aspired at one time to attend a university. Although he denies being thwarted in this intent, it seems plausible that this might be only a rationalizing defense he builds for himself. Regarding this early ambition, he notes in his journal:

A short story of a young man who could not go to Oxford--His struggle and ultimate failure. Suicide [probably the germ of Jude the Obscure]. There is something [in this] the world ought to be shown, and I am the one to show it to them--though I was not altogether hindered going, at least to Cambridge, and could have gone up easily at five-and-twenty.<sup>1</sup>

Instead of obtaining a college education, Hardy virtually educated himself after leaving grade school. At age sixteen, though he had just begun to be interested in French and the Latin classics, the question arose as to whether he should enter into a profession or business. His father, as a builder, had become associated with Mr. John Hicks, an architect and church-restorer in practice in Dorchester. Hicks offered to train Hardy, offering to take him into apprenticeship for somewhat less than the usual premium. Florence Hardy says that

Hardy was a born bookworm, that and that alone was unchanging in him; he had sometimes, too, wished to enter the church; but he cheerfully agreed to go to Mr. Hicks.<sup>2</sup>

It was while in training at the architect's office that Hardy became a self-educated man, the same type of man he was to write about in his novels some years later.

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<sup>1</sup>Florence Emily Hardy, The Early Life of Thomas Hardy, p. 272. The brackets are probably Mrs. Hardy's.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

Under John Hicks' tutelage, Hardy began to learn about the technical details of architecture, about stones and brick, about stresses and strains, and about drainage and roofing. Without knowing what 'fate' had in store for him, Hardy was engaged in equipping himself for creating one of the marked features of the novels he was to write. John Hicks was particularly well qualified for teaching Hardy about church buildings, for he was an ecclesiastical architect. His specialty was Gothic churches. Many of them, in locations scattered all over Southern England, were sadly in need of repair, and Hicks was often called upon to design and supervise the repairs. The training Hardy received while with Hicks proved invaluable when he wrote Jude. Hardy must have thought the restoration of old churches a noble profession; there is a passage in Jude the Obscure worth noting wherein Jude arrives in Christminster seeking employment. Jude finds<sup>s</sup> his way to the workyard of a stonemason whose name has been given to him at Alfredston; "the yard was a little centre of regeneration" (p. 97). Then, we are told:

He asked for the foreman, and looked round among the new traceries, mullions, transoms, shafts, pinnacles, and battlements standing on the bankers half worked, or waiting to be removed. They were marked by precision, mathematical straightness, smoothness, exactitude: there in the old walls were the broken lines of the original idea; jagged curves, disdain of precision, irregularity, disarray.

For a moment there fell on Jude a true illumination; that here in the stone yard was a centre of effort as worthy as that dignified by the name of scholarly study within the noblest of the colleges. But he lost it under the stress of his old idea. (p. 97)

This observation by Jude, "lost under the stress of his old ideas," must have been similar to the one made by Thomas Hardy, architectural assistant, who was to recall this "illumination" after becoming an established novelist.

The hours spent in Hicks' office were not all devoted to architecture or to Gothic churches. Hardy found a young man there, Henry Bastow, who made a deep and permanent impression upon him. Bastow was interested in Latin and Greek; and, having been brought up in a Baptist home, he was prepared to question many of the Church of England dogmas which Hardy had come to accept at Stinsford Church without having given them much thought. For both these reasons, Bastow's presence in Hicks' office had important results in the development of Hardy's mind.<sup>3</sup>

Bastow had studied Greek and Latin at a good school in or near London and came to Dorchester equipped with a knowledge of the classics that excelled Hardy's. Hardy had done well with Latin under Isaac Last, but he had not

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 37-40.

gone far enough to reach Virgil, Horace, or Ovid. Of Greek he knew nothing. Challenged by Bastow's attainments, Hardy set himself to try to catch up. By getting up at five o'clock in the morning, or (in the summer) even as early as four o'clock, he managed to work his way through several books of the Aeneid. Then, with a determination that called for even greater fortitude, he set about teaching himself Greek. It is a mark of the quickness of his mind that, in a short while, he and Bastow were able to read Greek together. In later years Hardy was inclined to think that the two pupils "often gave more time to books than to drawing."<sup>4</sup> Carl Weber notes that Bastow's influence on Hardy was to play a minor part in the characterization of Jude:

Jude Fawley's "earnestly reading from his Griesbach's text" recalls Hardy's own purchase of Griesbach's Greek New Testament in 1859--"his new one, with better type . . . and with variorum readings in the margin"--and the passages which Jude reads in the Iliad are the same as those that Hardy read and marked as his favourites in the Clarke edition of Homer (1818) when he was reading the Iliad with Robert Bastow.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Florence Emily Hardy, The Later Years of Thomas Hardy, p. 267.

<sup>5</sup>Carl Jefferson Weber, Hardy of Wessex; His Life and Literary Career, p. 24.

Hardy was to recall to mind his dear friend Bastow only two months before his own death many years later. Mrs. Hardy says:

November 19. To-day T. H. was speaking, and evidently thinking a great deal, about a friend . . . I felt, as he talked, that he would like to meet this man again more than anyone in the world. He is in Australia now, if alive, and must be nearly ninety.<sup>6</sup>

After Bastow's departure from Hicks' office, Hardy came more under the influence of another man who was to aid in his education. Horace Moule, son of the vicar of Fordington Church, Dorchester, was to become Hardy's closest friend. Moule was an excellent Greek scholar, and from him Hardy learned about Aeschylus and Sophocles. Moule went from Dorchester to Queen's College, Cambridge, and after graduation embarked on a literary career. He and Hardy saw each other from time to time in London. Something went wrong, however, and at the age of forty-one Horace Moule committed suicide. Hardy never forgot the shock of this event in 1873, and one might wonder whether this suicide had any suggestive influence on Hardy when he created Jude.

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<sup>6</sup>Florence Emily Hardy, The Later Years of Thomas Hardy, p. 262.

Carl Weber says that Horace Moule brought to Hardy's attention the notorious Essays and Reviews of 1860:

--that volume by Archbishop Temple, Benjamin Jowett, and others, which led to their being accused of heresy. They were tried and found guilty, as Hardy well remembered when he referred to the authors of the Essays as "The Seven against Christ."<sup>7</sup>

In whatever way Hardy may have been influenced by the Esays, his talks with Moule were as good as a course in philosophy. Weber says that because of Moule's companionship, "Hardy's mind expanded, his alertness to logical analysis improved, and his intellectual horizons widened."<sup>8</sup>

The epoch-making Origin of the Species first appeared on November 24, 1859. Weber says, "Hardy was one of the first to read it."<sup>9</sup> Between 1863 and 1872 three more editions of the Origin were published. Concerning this matter, Harvey Curtis Webster says:

Early in 1861 Dean Church, writing to the American scientist, Asa Gray, remarked that the Origin of the Species "would be the subject still of a great row, if there were not a much greater row going on about Essays and Reviews." After having been temperately reviewed by the Spectator for April 7, 1860, the latter volume was the subject of a sensational article

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<sup>7</sup>Carl Weber, Hardy of Wessex; His Life and Literary Career, p. 27.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

in the Westminster Review for October. The critic urged that the Essayists were hopelessly muddling conservative and progressive principles, that the tendency to their writing was definitely toward atheism, and that the authors were probably among the number of timid antitheists who abounded at Oxford and Cambridge. It concluded with the challenging statement: "Our account of this book would be incomplete unless we were to point to the reception it has received. It has passed through two editions. The authorities of the Universities are paralyzed."<sup>10</sup> .

Hardy must have become thoroughly acquainted with these contemporary writings and the controversies that they evoked. The discussions and debates certainly became an important part of his education and were to influence his thinking as a part of his preparation in writing Jude.

Probably of equal importance in Hardy's education prior to Jude was his careful study of John Stuart Mill's "On Liberty." This treatise made a great impression upon Hardy and remained a potent influence on his mind. Weber says:

Hardy came to regard Mill as "one of the profoundest thinkers of the century," and when Mill became a candidate for election to Parliament, Hardy went to hear him speak.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Harvey Curtis Webster, On a Darkling Plain: The Art and Thought of Thomas Hardy, p. 31.

<sup>11</sup>Carl Jefferson Weber, Hardy of Wessex; His Life and Literary Career, p. 40.

Hardy was to comment later that he knew Mill's treatise "almost by heart."<sup>12</sup> Mill had said in his chapter on "Liberty of Thought" that

No one can be a great thinker who does not recognize that as a thinker it is his duty to follow his intellect to whatever conclusions it may lead. Truth gains . . . more by the errors of one who . . . thinks for himself, than by the true opinions of those who . . . do not suffer themselves to think.<sup>13</sup>

These ideas by Mill caused Hardy to stop and to evaluate his own plan for educating himself. Mill made him wonder whether he had been reading the right sort of books:

Thirty years later Hardy transferred these thoughts to another puzzled young man. In the fifth chapter of Jude the Obscure, Jude "began to wonder whether he could be reading quite the right books for his object in life." The more he thought about it the more convinced he was of his inconsistency.<sup>14</sup>

Hardy does not state what he himself read after he decided which would be the "right books for his object in life." Mr. Weber notes four writers who influenced his mind the most: Shakespeare, Browning, Swinburne, and Shelley. Weber says that Hardy

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

got into the habit of shutting himself up in his room at Westbourne Park Villas night after night and reading poetry there from six p.m. till midnight, every evening . . . , reading incessantly.<sup>15</sup>

In creating Jude, Hardy was to draw from his own educational experiences. Jude is not as fortunate as Hardy to have a Horace Moule or a Robert Bastow to make him inquisitive, but he does have Richard Phillotson to inspire him. Phillotson and Jude had a close relationship prior to the teacher's departure for Christminster. Jude felt a great sense of loss:

"Sorry I am going, Jude?" asked the latter kindly. Tears rose into the boy's eyes, for he was not among the regular day scholars, who came unromantically close to the schoolmaster's life, but one who had attended the night school only during the present teacher's term of office.

The boy awkwardly opened the book he held in his hand, which Mr. Phillotson had bestowed on him as a parting gift, and admitted that he was sorry. (p. 14)

Before Phillotson left Marygreen for Christminster, Jude had looked on him as a father as well as a teacher. Jude's father and mother were dead, and his aunt with whom he was living had not shown much love for him. Perhaps the most important thing Jude had learned from Phillotson was

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 52.

to treat all creatures with kindness and love. His parting words made a lasting impression on Jude. They serve, also, to characterize Phillotson and to give us some insight as to what kind of an education he has given Jude: "Be a good boy, remember; and be kind to animals and birds, and read all you can" (p. 15). Jude acts on his friend's advice the same afternoon that Phillotson leaves. Jude goes out to a large corn field which belongs to Farmer Troutham. His job is to rattle a "clacker" to scare away birds so that they will not eat the corn. Then, feeling sorry for the birds, he stops frightening them:

They seemed, like himself, to be living in a world which did not want them. Why should he frighten them away: They took upon more and more the aspect of gentle friends and pensioners--the only friends he could claim as being in the least degree interested in him, for his aunt had often told him that she was not. He ceased his rattling, and they alighted anew. (p. 19)

Just as Jude allows the birds to eat again, Farmer Troutham appears, seizes Jude's rattle, and beats him with it. When Jude leaves he avoids stepping on a number of earthworms.

Hardy says:

This weakness of character, as it may be called, suggested that he was the sort of man who was born to ache a good deal before the fall of the curtain upon his unnecessary life should signify that all was well with him again. (p. 21)

With this event of seemingly minor importance, Hardy presents an idea that is central to the meaning of his education theme in Jude the Obscure. Phillotson has taught Jude something higher than what Hardy considers just intellectual or professional training. Yet Jude finds that when he tries to practice what he has learned, he meets with opposition. When Jude and Phillotson apply their ideas about kindness and sympathy to their marital situations, they meet even greater rebuke from society. Just as important, this opening scene gives us a clue to what Jude's motivation will be throughout his life. He is inspired by the schoolmaster Phillotson to seek a kind of life which he believes is better than he can have at Marygreen. Because of his respect and admiration for Phillotson, Jude decides to follow his friend to Christminster. The university becomes Jude's ideal and his goal.

Toward the realization of his aspiration Jude sets to work. Although he is frustrated in his attempts to obtain books through Vilbert, a quack physician, he eventually manages to secure some worn-out texts from Phillotson. Jude is amazed and discouraged to find that, far from there being any general law for translation, each word of Greek and Latin must be individually committed to memory. Jude uses much the same methods of study that

Hardy used while he was at Hicks' office:

As Jude had to get up at three o'clock in the morning to heat the oven, and mix and set the bread that he distributed later in the day, he was obliged to go to bed at night immediately after laying the sponge; so that if he could not read his classics on the high-ways he could hardly study at all. (p. 37)

It was at this important time in his preparation for the university that Jude could have used a tutor. He would

plunge into the simpler passages from Caesar, Virgil, or Horace, as the case might be, in his purblind stumbling way, and with an expenditure of labour that would have made a tender hearted pedagogue shed tears; yet somehow [he got] at the meaning of what he read.  
. . . (p. 36)

Later, after he has reached Christminster, he is to feel the need for help:

He felt that he wanted a coach--a friend at his elbow to tell him in a moment what sometimes would occupy him a weary month in extracting from unanticipative books. (p. 116)

He needs a Bastow or a Moule; yet there is no one but himself.

Hardy uses Jude as a defense for his own self-education, although he realizes the need for guidance of the kind he has received from his friends. He believes that the world places too much emphasis on a university education. Hardy speaks through Jude when he says:

I know how it [Christminster] hates all men like me--the so-called self-taught,--how it scorns our laboured acquisitions, when it should be the first to respect them; how it sneers at our false quantities and mispronunciations, when it should say, I see you want help, my poor friend! (pp. 315-316)

Hardy implies that the universities are morally wrong in condemning the self-educated. The real purpose of the university is to seek truths and to impart knowledge. Instead, we find in Jude a snobbish institution that pokes fun at those who are unable to enter its gates and that serves as a status symbol for those who are fortunate enough to attend. Society, in Jude, has made a misuse of something good. It has lost the real purpose of a university education and has decided that education should be something reserved for a wealthy minority. The self-educated are inferior beings made ridiculous because they try to imitate but can never be truly educated. As the graduates-to-be are gathering in front of a college at Christminster, Hardy finds occasion for some biting satire:

Crowds of pretty sisters in airy costumes, and meekly ignorant parents who had known no college in their youth, were under convoy in the same direction by brothers and sons bearing the opinion written large on them that no properly qualified human beings had lived on earth till they came to grace it here and now. (p. 318)

Hardy does not show animosity to the parents for feeling pride in their sons, but he does rebel against these same sons who feel that they have now become superior human beings. As compared to Jude, who has had to struggle for an education, these graduates have not accomplished anything in which to feel self-pride. Perhaps Hardy shows the influence of his reading Browning's ideas about success coming from failure in Jude's speech to the Christminster crowd:

I tried . . . and I failed. . . . If I had ended by becoming like one of these gentlemen in red and black that we saw dropping in here by now, everybody would have said: "See how wise that young man was, to follow the bent of his nature!" But having ended no better than I began they say: "See what a fool that fellow was in following a freak of his fancy!"  
 However it was my poverty and not my will that consented to be beaten. It takes two or three generations to do what I tried to do in one. (pp. 320-321)

Sue adds, "You struggled nobly to acquire knowledge, and only the meanest souls in the world would blame you" (p. 321). Hardy wants us to see that though Jude suffers a tragedy of a sort by not being able to fulfill his ambition of attending Christminster, he has had the satisfaction of knowing some measure of success in his attempt. Jude has made an honest effort without committing moral wrongs to accomplish his goal. To have attended

Christminster he would have had to be, as he says, "as cold-blooded as a fish and as selfish as a pig to have a really good chance of being one of his country's worthies" (p. 321). Hardy might be implying here that many of the university graduates have done just what Jude refuses to do.

Jude suffers ridicule from two sources; he is criticized by the uneducated, as we see during the Christminster celebration, and he is taunted by the Christminster students, as we see in a tavern scene. The undergraduate, who "had not the slightest conception of a single word," compliments Jude on his "excellent Latin" (pp. 123-124). Jude finally becomes insulted, however, after money is thrown to him, and he realizes what has happened to him:

"You pack of fools!" he cried. "Which one of you knows whether I have said it or no? It might have been the Ratcatcher's Daughter in double Dutch for all your besotted heads can tell! See what I have brought myself to--the crew I have come among!" (p. 124)

Jude does not place himself in a position again to be ridiculed for his self-acquired knowledge until years later when he returns to Christminster, where he is remembered as "Tutor of St. Slums" (p. 319). Though he is always aware of the attitude that society and the university have toward the self-educated, Jude stands firm in his

belief that the university does not have the only key to understanding. Jude, in frustration, chalks a message on the college wall:

I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you: Yea, who knoweth not such things as these?--Job xii. 3. (p. 121)

Knowing that Jude is aware of Christminster's indifference to him and is critical of the self-taught, we might ask, why does Jude insist on becoming a part of the university? He realizes its flaws. He is himself contemptuous of the pseudoscholars who attend Christminster as a means for social advancement. At the same time, he admits that one reason he wants an education is for his own social advancement. At one particularly frustrating moment he confesses:

I don't regret the collapse of my university hopes one jot. I wouldn't begin again if I were sure to succeed. I don't care for social success any more at all. (p. 128)

We cannot really believe that Jude has no regrets. Christminster has been in his dreams for too many years. Alone and dejected, with no one to love or to be loved by, Jude has made Christminster a symbol to love. Christminster takes the place of his father and mother; he associates

it with his only friend, the only person who has shown him kindness and sympathy, Richard Phillotson. With Phillotson in Christminster, Jude has to transfer his thoughts to a new object:

It had been the yearning of his heart to find something to anchor on, to cling to--for some place he could call admirable. (p. 29)

He says, "Christminster will be my Alma Mater; and I'll be her beloved son, in whom she shall be well pleased" (p. 42). Jude goes on several occasions to a hill outside Marygreen where he prays for a glimpse of the distant Christminster. Through the mist he beholds "varied outlines" that are "faintly revealed" (p. 25). The city never really becomes tangible to Jude by sight. One may wonder why he never goes to the city of light before he does, since the distance was only about twenty miles. Hardy may have wanted Christminster to remain something foreign and unobtainable to Jude. Jude knows only what he hears others say about his beloved city, and, gradually, Christminster takes on a mystical quality. On one visit to the hill, he imagines the wind carries a message to him,

from some soul residing there, it seemed. Surely it was the sound of bells, the voice of the city, faint and musical, calling to him, "We are happy here!" (p. 27)

Happiness is an emotion that Jude desires as much as love. He decides that the only way of obtaining either is for him to go to Christminster himself. Love was waiting at Christminster; happiness was Christminster's message; Phillotson could be found at Christminster; finally,

. . . the city acquired a tranquility, a permanence, a hold on his life, mainly from the one nucleus of fact that the man for whose knowledge and purposes he had so much reverence was actually living there; not only so, but living among the more thoughtful and mentally shining ones therein. (p. 26)

It is perhaps central to Hardy's educational theme in Jude that the turning away of Jude by Christminster is a tragedy because it becomes a lack of fulfillment in his life.

Hardy's treatment of conventional education gives us the idea that he is greatly concerned with it, and oftentimes he seems to revolt against the existing system. Perhaps this attitude may be accounted for by the fact that he did not receive the education usually given to one of his particular station, although, as was pointed out, it was from choice that he did not. If Jude is seen as a novel that has as its purpose the reformation of the universities in England, then this novel has, largely, achieved that purpose, though there is much more said in Jude than that colleges must change. Actually, some reform was already taking place. Jude says:

I hear that soon there is going to be a better chance for such helpless students as I was. There are schemes afloat for making the university less exclusive, and extending its influence. (p. 393)

Hardy must have felt, however, that Jude had some influence in aiding the reform. In his postscript of 1912 he writes that "some readers thought . . . that when Ruskin College was subsequently founded it should have been called the College of Jude the Obscure."<sup>16</sup> Ruskin, Oxford, was the first college designed to provide opportunities at the university for working-class men who, for one reason or another, had not had a chance to go to a university after leaving school; it has since been supplemented by a wide system of government and local grants.<sup>17</sup> Hardy suggests that reform has been too slow in coming, and that there is something tragic in situations that cause suffering and anger before change takes place. For people like Jude, reform does not come in time to help. Jude says, "It is too late, too late for me! Ah--and how many worthier ones before me" (p. 305)! Hardy is saying that society must realize that there is something tragically wrong in a

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<sup>16</sup>Florence Emily Hardy, The Later Years of Thomas Hardy, p. 42.

<sup>17</sup>A. Alvarez, "Jude the Obscure," in Albert J. Guerard (ed.), Hardy: A Collection of Critical Essays, pp. 114-115.

situation where reform is needed but comes too gradually, and that each day of delay can and does cause unhappiness for some individuals.

Hardy's revolt against the existing system of education was not confined to Jude alone. One significant idea had been expressed in Tess of the D'Urbervilles by Angel Clare:

He held that education had as yet but little affected the beats of emotion and impulse on which domestic happiness depends. It was probably that, in the lapse of the ages, improved systems of moral and intellectual training would appreciably . . . elevate the involuntary and even the unconscious instincts of human nature; but up to the present day culture, as far as he could see, might be said to have affected only the mental epiderm of those lives which had been brought under its influence.<sup>18</sup>

Because of the preceding comments we must conclude that Hardy thought that existing systems had not made much difference or caused much advance. Jude says with regard to the driver kicking the horse, "If that can be done . . . at the college gates in the most religious and educational city in the world, what shall we say as to how far we've got" (p. 322)? Hardy questions a system that has not influenced the people living right at the college doors.

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<sup>18</sup>Thomas Hardy, Tess of the D'Urbervilles, pp. 211-212.

As he implies in the statement made by Angel Clare, intellectual education should be a direct influence on moral education; therefore, the present system in Christminster is a failure.

A very noticeable idea that Hardy has about the result of education, or the effect that it has on his characters, is that education often leads to unhappiness.

Samuel Chew says concerning this idea:

Education, widening their mental horizons, has entered in greater or less degree into the lives and characters of most of the leading personages of the novels; and with knowledge come sorrow and complexity.<sup>19</sup>

This is true in the case of Grace Melbury in The Woodlanders. Educated above her station by a socially conscious father, she is not allowed to choose her own course. She loves Giles, but, because her father has incurred considerable expense to educate her, she is pressured by him to accept the attentions of a socially accepted but a morally corrupt doctor. When she realizes what has happened to her, she says in revolt:

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<sup>19</sup>Samuel Claggett Chew, Thomas Hardy, Poet and Novelist, p. 130.

I wish you had never, never thought of educating me. . . . I hate genteel life . . . because cultivation has only brought me inconveniences and troubles.<sup>20</sup>

Hardy seems to imply in The Woodlanders that the secret of happiness lies in limiting aspirations. Grace's aspirations were broadened by her education; therefore, Hardy does not allow her to achieve happiness. Something might be said here, too, about the misuse of education. Hardy thinks that when education is used to serve as a social stepping-stone, and that is usually its chief end, there is a moral wrong committed. Education should not be used as a snare to catch a mate who is higher in the social scale. To Hardy this is nothing less than chicanery. Another reason is that someone usually suffers when one member of a family is suddenly placed above the other members in a society that is class conscious. This is his major theme in The Hand of Ethelberta.

In another novel written prior to Jude, Hardy shows how education can bring unhappiness. Clym Yeobright, in The Return of the Native, is inspired to try to help his fellowmen, for he thinks that most men desire knowledge "of the sort which brings wisdom rather than affluence."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Thomas Hardy, The Woodlanders, pp. 226-227.

<sup>21</sup>Thomas Hardy, The Return of the Native, p. 176.

His desire is worthy, and he is willing to sacrifice his position, his marriage, and even his health in order to teach the peasants "how to breast the misery they are born to";<sup>22</sup> but Clym's plan has some flaws. The gap between knowledge and the peasants' ignorance is too great for them to span without social rise. Nevertheless, he thinks his plan is good. Like Jude, he says:

I want to do some worthy thing before I die. As a schoolmaster I think to do it--a schoolmaster to the poor and ignorant, to teach them what nobody else will.<sup>23</sup>

Mrs. Yeobright, Clym's mother, is very much like Grace Melbury's father. She wants her son to "keep straight on towards affluence."<sup>24</sup> It is their difference in ideas about education, almost as much as Clym's marriage to Eustacia, that causes the separation between mother and son. Hardy makes it very plain that parents who teach their children that education should be used only to gain affluence are committing a moral offence against society, and that the immediate result is unhappiness within the family.

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 179.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

The idea that education causes unhappiness, formulated by Hardy in his early novels, seems to crystallize in Jude the Obscure. No one can question the misery that Jude suffers in his struggle to become educated. He says, bitterly:

I was, perhaps, after all, a paltry victim to the spirit of mental and social restlessness that makes so many unhappy in these days! (p. 321)

This 'mental restlessness' of Jude's is brought about mainly by Sue. She influences Jude in his thinking by questioning the existing conventions of education and marriage. She has read more extensively than either Jude or Phillotson and can answer their questions and objections without hesitation. Hardy might be implying in Jude that a person's character is in part a product of what one reads. Sue has read "profane writers," whereas Jude has read the Church Fathers. Phillotson gives in to her desire to go to Jude because, as he tells his friend, Gillingham, "I can't answer her arguments--she has read ten times as much as I. Her intellect sparkles like diamonds . . ." (p. 228). Jude becomes so confounded by Sue that he finally burns all of his religious books (pp. 215-216). He loses his trust in the opinions of others through Sue's incessant questioning of what he reads. He becomes

involved "in a chaos of principles--groping in the dark--acting by instinct and not after example" (p. 321). It might be said, then, that because of Sue's broader, more extensive education and her questioning influence on Jude, he suffers a 'mental restlessness' and seldom has peace of mind. But his search does lead to wisdom and "the nobler vision."

Phillotson suffers, too, from Sue's influence. He is disturbed because he, like Jude, does not have a sufficient educational background to answer her questioning of the conventions of marriage. A more significant question that Hardy poses, however, is whether a man like Phillotson is morally suited for educating society's children. After Phillotson lets Sue leave him, the school administration asks for his resignation. Phillotson says that it is asked for "on account of my scandalous conduct in giving my tortured wife her liberty--or, as they call it, condoning her adultery" (p. 245). Gillingham had warned him of the consequences of his actions earlier. He now tells Phillotson:

You see, they have to consider what you did as done by a teacher of youth--and its effects as such upon the morals of the town; and, to ordinary opinion, your position is indefensible. (p. 245)

To ordinary opinion, yes. But Hardy has developed the character of Phillotson as a kind, compassionate, gentle man, and seems to build a case against society for its actions against Phillotson. Hardy's position concerning this question seems to be given through Phillotson's statement: "It doesn't affect me in my public capacity at all" (p. 245). That is, it should not. It did affect him, but here society is wrong.

The schools that are pictured in Jude show how the Victorian society carefully guarded the moral conduct of its teachers and students. When Sue goes to the same school to teach with Phillotson, there is a person present at the conferences after school, probably placed there to protect the reputation of the student-teacher. During the time that Sue attends the girl's school at Melchester, she develops ". . . the air of a woman clipped and pruned by severe discipline" (p. 132). More will be said about this school in Melchester in the following pages. What is important at this point is to realize that improper moral standards do affect the educational training of the characters in Jude.

It may be clear now why the theme of education is one of the most important themes presented in Jude. Hardy attempts to show us the moral significance of the complexities of the university, of the influence of education

on man in general, of the problems involved in educating the lower classes of a rigid class structure, and of the tragic consequences of a reform that comes too late for people like Jude. He shows how important a true education is in the raising of existing moral standards. We might recall the lines spoken by Clym Yeobright, who says what he thinks must be done if improvement is to come:

Their teachers [in the university] don't come in contact with the class which demands such a system--that is, those who have had no preliminary training. My plan is one for instilling high knowledge into empty minds without first cramming them with what has to be uncrammed again before true study begins.<sup>25</sup>

Sue suggests in her attack on the universities that the change must begin with the schoolmasters. She says, ". . . it [the university] is a nest of commonplace schoolmasters whose characteristic is timid obsequiousness to tradition" (p. 376). Both she and Jude conclude that the university is a place of "gloom, bigotry, and decay" (p. 327). Jude consoles himself by noting that life outside the university is more "palpitating, varied, and compendious than gown life" (p. 120); but Hardy does not let us forget that the turning away of Jude by the university

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 239.

causes a tragedy in his life. What reader could ever forget Jude's last spoken words when he hears the university bells ringing on Remembrance Day: "Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man-child conceived" (p. 398)?

## C H A P T E R   I I I

### THE THEMES OF LOVE, SEX, AND MARRIAGE

Jude the Obscure is clearly more than a criticism of the exclusiveness of the major English universities. Jude realizes surprisingly early in the book that his Christminster plans are futile. Though the university remains an obsession with him, it plays only one part in his personal tragedy. If the need for educational reform is a main theme, it must share much of Hardy's intended purpose with what many critics consider to be a more important aspect of this novel--the marriage theme. Christminster may drop out of the major action, but Jude's continuing obsession with Christminster repeats, in another tone of voice, his involvement with Arabella and with Sue. Arabella is his seducer who causes an awareness in him of the sexual instinct. She makes him feel that he is "just living for the first time," and that it is "better to love a woman than to be a graduate, or a parson; ay, or a pope" (p. 52)! Sue, on the other hand, becomes his ideal intellectual woman. He becomes as much frustrated by Sue as he does by the university. Sue holds for him a promise of intellectual fulfillment, but she withholds from him

the physical satisfaction he finds with Arabella. D. H. Lawrence interprets Jude as having no other theme beyond that of the sexual relations of Jude, Sue, Arabella, and Phillotson.<sup>1</sup> This is, of course, not true.

It has been suggested that with Jude Hardy decided to repeat, in general outline, the plot of Tess of the D'Urbervilles, and that Jude the Obscure is Tess turned roundabout. The same sort of triangle is presented, with the sexes reversed. In place of the two men, Alec and Clare, involved in relations with Tess, Hardy created two women, Arabella and Sue, involved in relations with Jude. Both novels present the same contrast between selfish sensuality and fastidious aloofness.<sup>2</sup> Hardy had shown in Tess how tragedy occurs as a result of the conventional view that Tess's involvement in her seduction by Alec, though involuntary on her part, should stigmatize her forever as unfit for marriage. This unjust moral code was deeply imbedded into Clare's thinking, probably by his minister father, and it was not until he had left her to

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<sup>1</sup>D. H. Lawrence, "Sue Bridehead," in Albert J. Guerard (ed.), Hardy: A Collection of Critical Essays, pp. 71-77.

<sup>2</sup>Carl Weber, Hardy of Wessex; His Life and Literary Career, pp. 203-204.

suffer a second seduction by Alec that he finally decided she was a "pure woman." What would happen if the situation were reversed, with a woman as the seducer? Hardy created this opposite situation in Jude.

The seduction of Jude by Arabella is handled by Hardy in a way that is clearly meant to exonerate Jude from any blame in the matter. Hardy applies in Jude what Darwin had shown to be a natural instinct in animals. Sex is a power that acts, according to Hardy, as "the unvoiced call of woman to man" (p. 44). Jude, "who had never looked at a woman to consider her as such" (p. 44), finds sex a new emotion, "a great hitch," that has not been considered as a part of his plans; it is a "new thing . . . in the gliding and noiseless current of his life" (p. 47). Sex becomes, "as if materially, a compelling arm of extraordinary muscular power" (p. 48). He is unprepared to cope with this new power in his life and is drawn "towards the embrace of a woman for whom he [has] no respect, and whose life [has] nothing in common with his own except locality" (p. 48).

To further exonerate Jude from blame in his seduction, Hardy contrasts Jude's inexperience in sexual matters with the sophistication of the more experienced Arabella. She learns from her friends how to produce artificial dimples

in her cheeks, how to put her mouth "demurely into shape," and how to add to her attractiveness by wearing false hair. More important, she learns from her friends how "to catch him [Jude] the right way." Hardy implies that these country girls have been influenced by having lived at one time among the morally corrupt townspeople. One of the girls tells Arabella that Jude, because he is from the country, can be trusted to be honorable, whereas the "sojer, or sailor, or commercial gent from the towns . . . [is] slippery with poor women" (p. 54). They tell Arabella that she can marry Jude if she becomes pregnant by him. She is told, "lots of girls do it; or do you think they'd get married at all" (p. 53). Arabella never considers the moral aspect of her friends' advice at all. She is incapable of sexual morality, because she is, according to Albert Guerard, a subhuman, a "female animal."<sup>3</sup> She tells her friends

in a curiously low, hungry tone of latent sensuousness: "I've got him to care for me: yes! But I want him to more than care for me; I want him to have me--to marry me! I must have him. I can't do without him. He's the sort of man I long for. I shall go mad if I can't give myself to him altogether! I felt I should when I first saw him!" (p. 54)

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<sup>3</sup>Albert J. Guerard, Thomas Hardy, p. 146.

Arabella lays her plans immediately to ensnare Jude the "right way."

It is significant that Hardy employs a third means of exonerating Jude, one that is closely related to his lack of experience. Arabella is unsuccessful in her first attempt to seduce him. They go for a walk into the country where they are "in absolute solitude--the most apparent of all solitudes, that of empty surrounding space. Nobody could be nearer than a mile . . ." (p. 57). It is a perfect situation for a man to take advantage of a woman. But, says Hardy, "Jude did not think of that then" (p. 57). It is Arabella who takes the initiative, and when Jude does not comprehend the meaning of her advances, she becomes angry with him and makes him take her home. It is not until later, when they are left alone in Arabella's house, that the seduction takes place. Even then, it is Arabella who performs the seduction by her clever trick with the Cochin's egg. She draws Jude's attention to her bosom, where she says she has placed the egg to be hatched. Symbolically, almost suggestively, she says, "It's an old custom. I suppose it is natural for a woman to want to bring live things into the world" (p. 59). Even after her love play, it is she who entices Jude up to the bedroom. Hardy places complete blame for Jude's seduction

on Arabella. The seduction of a man by a woman may happen only under rare circumstances; but, and this is the real significance of Jude's seduction, Hardy has created a situation that in every way is realistic, and that becomes his first objection to the marriage vows of the church and the laws concerned with marriage. To maintain the respect of the people in his community Jude has no choice but to marry Arabella, for

such [was] the custom of the rural districts among honourable young men who had drifted so far into intimacy with a woman as he unfortunately had done. (p. 61)

Arabella's parents' reaction to the marriage is worth noting: ". . . it was the sort of conduct they would have expected of an honest young man" (p. 61). Even the parson who performs the marriage seems to think it "satisfactory." Therefore, with society, family, and church agreeing that Jude does the morally right thing in marrying Arabella (and Hardy makes it clear that they all know the true situation), what objection could possibly be raised against such a marriage? Hardy answers this question by showing that a marriage which takes place by craft and deceit cannot long exist.

The scenes following the wedding are designed to show how conditions can exist which should give sufficient cause for divorce. Love is a word that is never used between Jude and Arabella. Jude immediately begins to learn things about his mate that he never suspected before the marriage. Arabella shocks Jude when she removes the long tail of hair that she is wearing. He discovers another falseness about her when he sees her attempting to produce a dimple in her cheek. Jude learns next that she worked at one time as a barmaid at Aldbrickham. She speaks against the town of Christminster, a town he dearly loves. When he finally learns that she actually tricked him into marriage, the realization of what has happened is almost unbearable to him:

There seemed to him, vaguely and dimly, something wrong in a social ritual which made necessary a cancelling of well-formed schemes involving years of thought and labour, of foregoing a man's one opportunity of showing himself superior to the lower animals, and of contributing his units of work to the general progress of his generation, because of a momentary surprise by a new and transitory instinct which had nothing in it of the nature of vice, and could be only at the most called weakness. He was inclined to inquire what he had done, or she lost, for that matter, that he deserved to be caught in a gin which would cripple him, if not her also, for the rest of a lifetime? There was something fortunate in the fact that the immediate reason of his marriage had proved to be non-existent. But the marriage remained. (p. 66)

The preceding lengthy quotation deserves some comment. Hardy says through Jude's thoughts what he has been leading up to from the introduction of Arabella into the action of the novel. He presents here what he will repeatedly demonstrate throughout the novel--that marriage should be a dissolvable union. He will provide another argument in favor of this opinion when he shows the circumstances under which Phillotson and Sue separate. With both of these marriages Hardy forwards the same idea, that one natural law--the sex instinct--is not in accord with society's cruel conventions. He seems to imply that the law of Nature is supreme law, that its force is compelling, and that a law made by society which is contradictory to Nature is unjust. Jude's giving in to his natural instinct is at worst only a "weakness." The consequence of his weakness should be no more than a lesson in better judgment if social law were not so harsh. It is a false standard of morality, enforced on the individual by society, that pressures Jude into an unhappy marriage. Through Jude's thoughts Hardy discredits the old appraisements of morality, and he preaches a superior moral law to society--natural morality.

It should in no way be assumed that Hardy believes in the idea of free-love or sexual promiscuity. Hardy

never says or implies anything of this sort. He merely makes use of facts presented by Darwin. Sex is a natural instinct and has to be taken into account as a very powerful force acting on the human race as well as on the lower animals. By never having Jude or Arabella speak of love, Hardy makes clear that, although love and marriage should be synonymous, love and sexual gratification are not. Marriage cannot be based on sexual attraction alone, an attraction that Jude concludes is the "fundamental error" in his union with Arabella, a union

based [on] a permanent contract [and] on a temporary feeling which had no necessary connection with affinities that alone render a lifelong comradeship tolerable. (p. 73)

The sexual attraction is a tie between man and woman that should not be forever binding, as in the form of a marriage contract, because an attraction of this nature may be only temporary, whereas society insists that the marriage contract be permanent. Hardy considers sex a powerful force impinging on the actions of his characters, a force that is often used as a means of attaining one's own ends.

Arabella serves Hardy's purpose in demonstrating the way that sex can be used unethically as a power. He characterizes her as a woman endowed by Nature with the physical attributes necessary to attract a male's attention.

Hardy describes her as having "a round and prominent bosom, full lips, perfect teeth, and a rich complexion of a Cochin hen's egg. She [is] a complete and substantial female animal . . ." (p. 43). Hardy uses symbolism to show how coarse and sexual she is by having her throw the sex organ of a barrow pig at Jude to attract his attention when she first sees him. Although her friends suggest the method that she eventually uses to force Jude into marriage, she shows her control of both her natural instincts and his in the way she seduces him. She expresses no guilty feelings for having used sex to trap Jude; she says, matter-of-factly, "That was nothing . . . . Every woman has a right to do such as that. The risk is hers" (p. 71). She expresses almost the same idea years later when she tells Jude why she has taken a second husband while living in Australia. Jude calls her marriage a crime, and she answers, "Crime! Pooh! They don't think much of such as that over there! Lots of 'em do it . . ." (p. 185). She rationalizes that there is nothing immoral in her actions because others do the same things.

This reasoning is consistent with her thinking that other women have the same motives as she has. When she visits Jude and Sue at Aldbrickham, where they have been living together after Sue's departure from Phillotson's

house, she knows instinctively that Sue has not given herself physically to Jude. Upon her return the following day, she senses the radical change that has taken place. She tells Sue, "Well, my dear, you've been quick about it, and I expect my visit last night helped it on . . ." (p. 265). Arabella's visit to Jude's house plays a second purpose in Hardy's method of demonstrating the power of sex. The visit causes Arabella's second husband to have their own marriage performed in ceremony again because there was a "flaw" in the first ceremony. Jude had obtained a divorce in the meantime. The sexual aspect of Arabella is shown again when she and her friend Anny see Jude and Sue at the Great Wessex Agricultural Show. When Arabella expresses interest in Jude, Anny says, "That's you, Arabella! Always wanting another man than your own." Arabella's answer shows what she thinks love is and what her opinion is of Sue:

Well, and what woman don't I should like to know?  
As for that body with him--she don't know what love  
is--at least what I call love! I can see in her  
face she don't. (p. 289)

To Arabella love is purely physical. Sue expresses her opinions about Arabella at another time. Like Arabella, she has her own power of judging a woman by appearance.

She says, "Arabella is a low-passioned woman--I can see it in her shape, and hear it in her voice" (p. 261)! Sue sees Arabella as a "fleshy, coarse woman." Arabella plays her part as a woman who knows how to use sex as a force right to the end of the novel. When she realizes that Jude is dying, she makes advances toward [Dr.] Vilbert, who has sold her a love-potion. She tells him in answer to his question about the drink she gives him: "I poured your own love-philtre into it . . ." (p. 396). He understands her implication immediately and kisses her. As a final proof that love is only physical to Arabella, Hardy shows her utter indifference to Jude after he has become physically an invalid. The only regret she has about Jude's eventual death is that he so inconveniently dies when the games she wants to attend begin down by the river.

Arabella serves as the vehicle of Hardy's idea concerning the physical aspect of man's relation to woman. Hardy shows that sex is an important factor in some marriages, and that marriage vows and marriage laws do not provide for this factor.

If Hardy goes to an extreme in his creation of the overly sexual Arabella, he goes to the opposite extreme in creating the sexless Sue Bridehead. Sue is the vehicle of his ideas concerning a marriage in which sexual love

is almost completely absent. Curiously enough, however, Sue's antisexual feelings relate to the marriage vows and marriage laws. Therefore, Hardy uses Sue, just as he uses Arabella, as an example in his argument against existing social conventions concerning marriage.

Samuel Chew has noted that Sue possesses traits similar to those of some of the characters in Hardy's previous novels. Chew cites the following examples in his comparison. In Far from the Madding Crowd, published in 1874, Troy exhibits the oppressing guilt of the same intensity that later becomes a vital part of the religiously oriented Sue. After seeing Fanny in the coffin with her child, Troy says to Bathsheba:

If Satan had not tempted me with that face of yours, and those cursed coquetries, I should have married. . . . A ceremony before a priest doesn't make a marriage. I am not morally yours.<sup>4</sup>

In The Mayor of Casterbridge, Suzan Newson prefigures Sue when she rejects Newson after being told by a neighbor that the first marriage could not be annulled by the sale. In Jude, after Father Time hangs the other children and himself, and Sue's mind collapses, she tells Jude, "I am

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<sup>4</sup>Thomas Hardy, Far from the Madding Crowd, p. 265.

not your wife! I belong to him--I sacramentally joined myself to him for life. Nothing can alter it" (p. 345)! Elizabeth-Jane Newson exhibits the same strict adherence to what she thinks to be morally right when she tells Lucetta that Lucetta is morally obligated to marry Henchard because of their earlier relationship. Elizabeth-Jane, in her immaturity, says, "I won't be too gay on any account. . . . I would be tempting Providence to hurl Mother and me down, and afflict us again as He used to do."<sup>5</sup> Sue echoes her with deadly seriousness in Jude, saying that God punished her for her "marriage" to Jude by killing her babies.<sup>6</sup>

Besides showing certain traits that are common to some of Hardy's earlier women characters, the portrayal of Sue shows in some ways the influence of Hardy's familiarity with the works and the biographical data of two writers, Shelley and Swinburne. Harvey Webster says, ". . . there seems to me inadequate reason to suppose his [Shelley's] influence was substantial."<sup>7</sup> He goes on to

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<sup>5</sup>Thomas Hardy, The Mayor of Casterbridge, p. 175.

<sup>6</sup>Samuel Chew, Thomas Hardy, Poet and Novelist, pp. 135-140.

<sup>7</sup>Harvey Webster, On a Darkling Plain: The Art and Thought of Thomas Hardy, p. 223.

say that most of Hardy's allusions to Shelley are either to the unhappiness of his life--where he perhaps sees a parallel to his own--or to the poems written in a dejected mood. Webster says that this is altogether different from saying that Shelley helped shape the form or content of Hardy's thought.<sup>8</sup>

I do not agree with Webster's ideas concerning Shelley. Hardy shows real interest in Shelley by two direct references to this poet in Jude. The first reference concerns the relationship of Jude and Sue to one another. Phillotson is convinced that Jude and Sue have no sexual attraction for each other, only a "supreme desire to be together--to share each other's emotions, and fancies, and dreams" (p. 230). His friend Gillingham remarks that such a relationship is "Platonic," after which Phillotson says, "Well, no. Shelleyan would be nearer to it." In the very next chapter of Jude, Sue refuses to serve as Jude's mistress, and he replies: "Never mind. . . . So that I am near you, I am comparatively happy" (p. 243). Jude does not realize until after he has finally gained a physical relationship with her that the sexless type of relationship was not what he desired with Sue at all. He

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

says, "My God, how selfish I was! Perhaps--perhaps I spoiled one of the highest and purest loves that ever existed between man and woman" (p. 349)!

Hardy's second reference to Shelley perhaps indicates the source of his ideas for creating Sue as a distinct individual. Therefore, the following passage is quoted in its entirety, to demonstrate, I hope, Shelley's influence on Hardy. Sue is speaking:

"Say those pretty lines, then, from Shelley's 'Epipsychidion' as if they meant me!" she solicited, slanting up closer to him as they stood.  
 "Don't you know them?"  
 "I hardly know any poetry," he replied mournfully.  
 "Don't you? These lines are some of them:

There was a Being whom my spirit oft  
 Met on its visioned wanderings far aloft.

. . . . .

A seraph of Heaven, too gentle to be human,  
 Veiling beneath that radiant form of woman.

. . .

Oh it is too flattering, so I won't go on! But say it's me! Say it's me!" (p. 243)

In short, she wishes that Jude would be her Shelleyan soul-mate, but she shrinks from the physical relationship. She is more spirit than human.

The lines quoted by Sue from "Epipsychidion" are echoed throughout Jude and express one of her most distinguishing characteristics. From her first introduction

into the novel, Sue becomes something of an "ideality" to Jude. Hardy says that Jude kept watch over her when he first arrived in Christminster:

The consciousness of her living presence stimulated him. But she remained a less than ideal character [at this time], about whose form he began to weave curious and fantastic daydreams. (p. 92)

Instead of the physical attraction he experiences with Arabella, Jude experiences a desire to become acquainted with Sue because of his need for "intellectual sympathy" and "loving kindness" in his solitude. As his relationship progresses with Sue, Jude begins to see her as "almost a divinity." He tries to "get over the sense of her sex, as she seemed to be able to do so easily of his" (p. 153). It is almost ironic that a kiss (sometimes regarded as a sexual act in itself) becomes "the purest moment of his life and loses for Jude all sexual significance because Sue is an "aerial being." When Jude and Sue converse, it is often on "slight and ephemeral subjects"; and there is "ever a second silent conversation passing between their emotions . . ." (p. 202). Sue eventually becomes something other than a physical being to Jude. He tells her,

You, Sue, are such a phantasmal, bodiless creature, one who . . . has so little animal passion in you, that you can act upon reason in the matter [concerning marriage], when we poor unfortunate wretches of grosser substances can't. (p. 256)

At another time he tells her, "You are absolutely the most ethereal, least sensual woman I ever knew to exist without inhuman sexlessness" (p. 339), and again he tells her:

. . . you spirit, you disembodied creature, you dear sweet, tantalizing phantom--hardly flesh at all: so that when I put my arms round you I almost expect them to pass through you as through air! (p. 243)

Hardy draws a picture in words of a woman who is the negation of the physical in many ways--"bodiless," sexless--a striking contrast to the sensual, earthy Arabella.

The characterization of Sue as a sexless individual fits into Hardy's scheme of offering reasons for divorce. He even proposes that some people are not suited for marriage, and that it is for this reason particularly that divorce should be an available means of correcting what some people discover, often too late, to be a mistake. Sue expresses Hardy's views on divorce, but her reasons originate from her abhorrence of the sexual act itself. She seeks companionship but is forever on her guard against any sexual interest directed to her by her male companions. At the same time, she invites a show of affection

from the opposite sex, which leads to problems of her suitors' interpreting her intentions. Sue is destructive in her relationships with men, whether she is conscious of it or not. She apparently has no understanding of what her behavior does to Jude. In fact, Sue is a more destructive force, as far as Jude is concerned, than the frankly selfish and animalistic Arabella ever becomes; and no one can overlook the mental pain she causes Phillotson to suffer at the hands of society.

It is in this infliction of pain, and the delight Sue seems to experience from having caused pain, that Hardy shows evidence of his having read Swinburne. E. K. Brown says that when Swinburne was writing his greatest love-poems, "he associated in practice as well as in theory the emotion of love with the infliction of pain."<sup>9</sup> Brown cites Swinburne's "Anactoria," "Felise," "Faustine," and "Dolores" as poems in which "the picture of love is in the main a sadist's picture."<sup>10</sup>

Hardy creates through the characterization of Sue, by a careful handling of many incidents in which pain is

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<sup>9</sup>E. K. Brown, "Swinburne: A Centenary Estimate," in Austin Wright (ed.), Victorian Literature: Modern Essays in Criticism, p. 302.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

a conscious motivation, an amazing picture of the effects of perverted love. On one occasion Sue has Jude go through a trial enactment of her marriage ceremony with Phillotson by having Jude play the part of Phillotson. When Jude breaks down emotionally and tells her she is being merciless, she says, "I like doing things like this," and says it is a part "of my curiosity to hunt up a new sensation . . ." (pp. 172-173). When Jude later recalls this incident to mind, he thinks:

. . . was Sue simply so perverse that she wilfully gave herself and him pain for the odd and mournful luxury of practising long-suffering in her own person, and of being touched with tender pity for him at having made him practice it? . . . Possibly she would go on inflicting such pains again and again, and grieving for the sufferer again and again, in all her colossal inconsistency. (p. 174)

Sue then tells the bridegroom what she and Jude have done, almost as if to hurt Phillotson. Hardy says that Sue is "an epicure in emotions," but he constantly produces examples of her favorite emotion, and that is her love of inflicting pain. As another example, perhaps more obvious, the following passage shows Sue's perverted sense of love. She will not write to Jude anymore, because, she says:

" . . . I hope it will hurt him very much--expecting a letter to-morrow morning, and the next, and the next, and no letter coming. He'll suffer then

with suspense--won't he, that's all!--and I am very glad of it!"--Tears of pity for Jude's approaching sufferings at her hands mingled with those which had surged up in pity for herself. (p. 216)

If Sue can be called a sadist, how does her presence in Jude support Hardy's ideas concerning marriage? After all, as Webster notes, "The case of Jude and Sue can undoubtedly be paralleled, but it is not representative of normal human characters in a normal human situation."<sup>11</sup> The most logical answer to the proposed question, then, is that since such people as Sue do exist (though society is generally unaware of the existence of these perverts) the basic concepts of Christian morality about marriage need to become more flexible to allow for these exceptions to normal conditions.

Hardy makes use of a second abnormality in Sue, her aversion to the sex act, to serve as her motivation for speaking out against the conventions of marriage. Sue admits to Jude that she once lived with an undergraduate at Christminster, sharing a sitting-room with him for fifteen months. But in all that time she never submitted to becoming his mistress. She says:

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<sup>11</sup>Harvey Webster, On a Darkling Plain: The Art of Thomas Hardy, p. 186.

. . . he was taken ill, and had to go abroad. He said I was breaking his heart by holding out against him so long at such close quarters; he could never have believed it of a woman. (p. 148)

Hardy gives another example of Sue's aversion to the sex act in the scenes just before Sue's marriage to Phillotson. Jude begins to notice such things as "a frightened light in her eyes." He notices, also, that her manner becomes "something like that of a scared child." After Sue marries Phillotson, she tells Jude that she does not want to live with her new husband because she experiences a "physical objection" to him. The implication is clear when she says, "It is a torture to me to--live with him as a husband" (p. 210). Sue is so horrified by the thought that Phillotson wants to have intercourse with her that she jumps out of her bedroom window to get away from him. But her feelings about sexual intercourse are not confined to Phillotson alone. Even after leaving Phillotson and going to Jude, she does not change. Hardy says that after the passage of one year of living with Jude, they still live

in precisely the same relations that they had established between themselves when she left Shaston to join him the year before. (p. 253)

She finally gives in to Jude, but only because of Arabella's threatening presence and Jude's threat to visit his ex-wife. When Sue eventually returns to Phillotson, she has come to accept the sex act as a "duty," and rather than cause strife between her and Phillotson, she begs admittance to his bedroom, though it promises to be a horribly shattering experience. In Jude's words she becomes "defiled" though legally and sacramentally Phillotson is her husband. Moreover, Sue goes to Phillotson's bedroom because of her new desire to suffer pain. She tells Mrs. Edlin, "I am going to make my conscience right on my duty to Richard--by doing a penance--the ultimate thing. I must" (p. 389)! Hardy handles these scenes in a way to show that Sue never overcomes her fear of the sexual union. The sex act had become a duty while with Jude; it was an act that she could no longer avoid; and now this duty becomes a means of inflicting pain on herself. This interesting development in Sue's change of attitude about sexual conjunctivity--and this certainly is a new motivation on her part to become an active participant in intercourse--completely brings to an end her objections to marriage. But we are to understand that the tragedy of the children's death has deranged her mind.

The presence of the sexually abnormal Sue Bridehead in Jude the Obscure serves a definite purpose for Hardy in his argument for divorce. Not only does Hardy object to marriage laws that, by their very existence, allow women like Arabella to develop the attitude that "life with a man is more businesslike" when married; Hardy objects, also, to marriage laws which do not permit divorce on grounds of sexual incompatibility. Hardy seems to have created Sue Bridehead to serve as a shocking example to his Victorian readers of what some people actually encounter when they marry. Hardy looks at society as being entirely ignorant of the existence of people like Sue and of situations these people cause in which divorce becomes the morally humane answer. When told by Gillingham that he should not release Sue, Phillotson says:

I don't think you are in a position to give an answer. I have been that man, and it makes all the difference in the world. . . . I had not the remotest idea--living apart from women as I have done for so many years--that merely taking a woman to church and putting a ring upon her finger could by any possibility involve one in such a daily, continuous tragedy as that now shared by her and me! (. 229)

This speech to Gillingham, a character who serves in Jude as society's conventional spokesman, is applicable to society in general. Social conventions have been created

and enforced by an insulated majority who have not been made aware of situations different from their own, and who, therefore, fail to see the limitations of a strict marriage code. Hardy believes that society looks only at the surface of things. He remarks concerning the people who see Sue and Phillotson as they sit around the breakfast table the morning after Sue has jumped from her bedroom window, "They nodded down to the happy couple their morning greeting, as they went on" (p. 219). The irony in Hardy's use of the word "happy" is obvious.

Phillotson is much like Jude in his attitude towards Sue. One should recall that it was Phillotson who taught Jude as a child to be kind and sympathetic. It is this trait in Phillotson that causes him to question the existing conventions of marriage. Phillotson has been reared to accept the practiced conventions. He tells Gillingham,

. . . I know I can't logically, or religiously, defend my concession to such a wish of hers, or harmonize it with the doctrines I was brought up in.  
(p. 228)

Therefore, he finds himself faced with a dilemma. Should he act according to the accepted ethic set forth by society, that which is "essentially right, and proper, and honourable," or should he rebel against conventions as

being "contemptibly mean and selfish?" Before marrying Sue, he had never really concerned himself with thoughts that questioned existing moral standards. Concerning love and marriage he says:

I was, and am, the most old-fashioned man in the world on the question of marriage--in fact I had never thought critically about its ethics at all. But certain facts stared me in the face, and I couldn't go against them. (p. 234)

When Phillotson finally comes to the decision to let Sue go, his decision is based primarily on "instinct," and he believes "that it is wrong to so torture a fellow-creature any longer" (p. 228).

Phillotson regrets his kindness to Sue, however, after he suffers from social reactions. Hardy says that Phillotson "had been knocked about from pillar to post at the hands of the virtuous almost beyond endurance" (p. 352). The change that comes over him is an unpleasant one. He loses all concern for Sue's feelings and begins to use what he calls "a little judicious severity." He says, "Whatever justice there was in releasing her, there was little logic . . ." (p. 361). Phillotson's new sense of ethics is based on a different "instinct" from the one that once showed compassion for his fellow creatures. Society has taught him that to survive in a world in which

people are forced to practice conventional standards of morality one must at times be cruel. He tells Sue after they have remarried, "It is for our good socially to do this, and that's its justification, if it was not my reason" (p. 365).

Phyllotson, Jude, Sue, and Arabella are all motivated differently in reaching their individual conclusions concerning divorce. Since marriage to Arabella is merely a convenience, she sees the existing marriage laws as a way of making sexual involvement more "businesslike." Divorce presents no problems to her because she can just leave her husband and go find another. Civil laws mean nothing to her, and once she has trapped a man, his only recourse is to accept his position or to become just as immoral as Arabella. Jude finally becomes indifferent to the fact that Arabella is his wife, but this attitude is held only when he is drunk. (p. 180). Jude's feelings about divorce are more diverse than Arabella's. When he realizes the fact that his marriage to her is permanent, and that he has been tricked, his reasons for divorce are that marriage keeps him from going to Christminster, and that it acts as an unjust punishment for his "transitory instinct." He says it is an "artificial system of things, under which the normal sex-impulses are turned

into devilish domestic gins and springs to noose and hold back those who want to progress" (p. 215). Jude eventually questions the morality of loving one woman while being "licensed by the laws of his country" to love only Arabella" (p. 100). Hardy says that Jude,

. . . deprived of the object of both intellect and emotion . . . could not proceed to his work. . . . That the one affirmed soul he had ever met was lost to him through his marriage returned upon him with cruel persistency, till, unable to bear it longer, he again rushed for distraction to the real Christminster life. (pp. 121-122)

Jude tells the crowd attending graduation ceremonies that society's laws "make the best intentioned people reckless, and actually become immoral" (p. 299).

Sue gives as her reasons for believing as she does about marriage and divorce her having read "profane" works, such as John Stuart Mill's writings. She says:

She, or he, 'who lets the world, or his own portions of it, choose his plan of life for him, has no need of any other faculty than the apeline one of imitation.' J. S. Mill's words, those are. I have been reading it up. Why can't you act upon them? I wish to, always. (p. 221)

But Sue's reason is a false one; her reason comes from her desire to find something that will shield her from the horrors she experiences during sexual intercourse.

Marriage gives the husband a legal right to perform abuses to her "ethereal" body. She tells Jude:

What tortures me so much is the necessity of being responsive to [a] man whenever he wishes, good as he is morally. --the dreadful contract to feel in a particular way in a matter whose essence is its voluntariness! (p. 211)

It is Sue's vanity and her need to be loved that causes her to come into contact with men and to be faced with the problem of defending herself against proposals for marriage. She says, "I feel that I shouldn't have been provided with attractiveness unless it were not meant to be exercised! Some women's love of being loved is insatiable" (p. 203). Her idea of love, although she admits that she enjoys being admired for her beauty, has nothing to do with sexual love at all. When she visits Phillotson during his illness, she tells him, ". . . as I know you recognize other feelings between man and woman than physical love, I have come" (p. 248). At another time she says, society's "views of the relations of man and woman are limited. . . . Their philosophy only recognizes relations based on animal desire" (p. 167). She admits to Jude that she sometimes feels inclined to encourage a man to love her although she feels no love at all for the man. Sue even admits that, for her, "Love

has its own dark morality when rivalry enters in . . ." (pp. 263-264). She can be as possessive of her lover as any other woman, and eventually finds that her "love of being loved" places her in a position either to marry or let her lover go. She stalls for as long as possible, and, when nothing else works, she comes out with the shocking remark: "I at least don't regard marriage as a sacrament" (p. 166). Although marriage is not (before the death of her children) a sacrament to her, Sue still has the idea that a marriage is more than a legal contract. It is for this reason that she can say to Phillotson, "Why can't we agree to free each other? We made a compact, and surely we can cancel it--not legally of course; but we can morally . . ." (p. 221). Sue bases her own standards of morality on her belief that "If we are happy as we are, what does it matter to anybody" (p. 284)? She says at another time, ". . . why should I suffer what I was born to be, if it doesn't hurt other people" (p. 221)? Since a legal marriage would cause her physical pain, she prefers to live with Jude under what she calls a "natural marriage." It is only after the death of her children that she objects almost violently to what Jude refers to as "Nature's own marriage." Divorce to Sue, beginning at this time and continuing to the end of the novel, is

completely out of the question. Marriage becomes to her a pact made in Heaven and "ratified eternally in the church" (p. 345). Phillotson's ideas about marriage and divorce change during the course of the novel, also. He is motivated by his sense of survival in a society that demands conformity. Hardy uses Phillotson's situation during his questioning of the moral aspects of divorce to present two interesting sidelines worth consideration. First of all, Hardy goes into detail about the events which happen at the school when the citizens of the town meet to decide Phillotson's fate. Those citizens who agree with the Board that Phillotson's handling of his marital situation will affect the students are "respectable inhabitants and well-to-do fellow-natives of the town" (p. 246), while the citizens who side with Phillotson are as follows:

. . . two cheap Jacks, a shooting-gallery proprietor and the ladies who loaded the guns, a pair of boxing-masters, a steam-roundabout manager, two travelling broom-makers, who called themselves widows, a gingerbread-stall keeper, a swing-boat owner, and a "test-your-strength" man. (p. 246)

Hardy may be implying that a person who seeks divorce is, according to society, placing himself in a class with the lowest on the social scale. He may be implying, also,

that divorce is objected to by those in society who are concerned chiefly with the way it would affect their social standing and not from a moral objection as they may pretend.

The second development of interest in Phillotson's questioning about divorce is one that tends to be ambiguous. Gillingham tells Phillotson, "But if people did as you want to do, there'd be a general domestic disintegration. The family would no longer be the social unit." Phillotson's answer is, "And yet, I don't see why the woman and the children should not be the unit without the man" (p. 230). The conversation ceases on this subject, and one is left to wonder whether Hardy really means what he has Phillotson say. The only time Hardy even approaches this idea of the family again is in Jude's words to Sue about the question of their rearing his and Arabella's son. Jude says:

The beggarly question of parentage--what is it, after all? What does it matter, when you come to think of it, whether a child is yours by blood or not? All the little ones of our time are collectively the children of us adults of the time, and entitled to our general care. (p. 270)

Whatever Hardy had in mind, he chose not to clarify his comment on the family unit without the man.

Phillotson and Jude both face the problems of living with Sue and of deciding how to handle the questions of marriage and divorce. It is interesting to see how they react to the pressures, insults, and deprivations they suffer from a moral-conscious society. It should be worth noting that although Phillotson bows to a cruel, bitter acceptance of society's moral standards, Jude retains his sympathy for mankind and never loses his love for the woman who causes his war with society.

## C H A P T E R   I V

### THE THEME OF RELIGION

The age in which Hardy lived, sometimes called the late Victorian period, was one of great change and scientific progress. In fact, in the Victorian period we can see the beginnings of many of the spiritual problems of our own time. English society was experiencing severe strains in its attempts to adjust to vast alterations in its structure, and Jude the Obscure reflects its author's concern with some of most pressing social problems of his time. In Tess of the D'Urbervilles Hardy had depicted the effects of the pressure of the new, urban, and industrial civilization on the old, rural, and agricultural life of Wessex. He exposed in Tess the hypocrisy of the rules that govern sexual behavior and the position of women in society. Another theme in this novel written shortly before the writing of Jude was the question of how to live in a time when instituted religion no longer provided acceptable rules of conduct. Tess was Hardy's first novel in which he seriously set out to examine the effects of spiritual and moral isolation in modern society. Much of what he said in Tess about religion he repeated in Jude.

One reason for the questioning of the proper role of religion in life was the controversy that centered around discoveries in the scientific world. In 1859 Charles Darwin had published The Origin of Species, in which he had announced that all forms of life as we know them today have evolved from other, lower forms of life over millions of years. This concept of development by evolution did not agree with the account of the creation of life given in the Bible, and thinking people immediately began to feel the difficulties of living in a world without God. Many felt that if the Bible was the word of God, and if it was now in conflict with what science showed to be true, then belief in the Bible and in God became impossible. Tess of the D'Urbervilles became Hardy's first attempt to examine the effects of living in a society influenced by Darwin. But the same questions still remained unanswered to Hardy's satisfaction when he wrote Jude.

Another reason for Hardy's and society's questioning of the proper role of religion was the way in which the ministry delivered God's message. Hardy says nothing good about ministers in Jude, but in Tess, Reverend James Clare is the only religious person who has Hardy's respect and admiration. Reverend Clare is a good man, wholly dedicated and sincere in his (mistaken) beliefs. But Reverend Clare

has not been successful in spreading the word of God. Perhaps an explanation for this failure may be found in his evangelistic theology. His Christianity is the kind that emphasizes man's sinful nature. He preaches that man is a creature who is always ready and willing to sin, and, therefore, he requires a great deal of correction in order to be saved. This correction is not easy to achieve because man's erring impulses are strong. Therefore, a Christian, according to these ideas, should inspect all his natural impulses and repress most of them. The result of these sermons emphasizing the sinful nature of man was that many began to leave the unpleasant realm of the Church in search for better answers concerning the meaning of life.

Hardy suggests another reason for the disintegration of the Church in the preface to Under the Greenwood Tree. He speaks of the replacement of the Mellstock choir by an organist:

One is inclined to regret the displacement of these ecclesiastical bandsmen by an isolated organist (often at first a barrel-organist) or harmonium player; and despite certain advantages in point of control and accomplishment which were, no doubt, secured by installing the single artist, the change has tended to stultify the professed aims of the clergy, its direct result being to curtail and extinguish the interest of parishioners in church doings . . . With a musical executive limited, as it mostly is limited

now, to the parson's wife or daughter and the school-children, an important union of interests has disappeared.<sup>1</sup>

Hardy is saying that the Church has lost one of its better qualities, that of serving as a gathering place where the individual can actively participate in friendly singing with his neighbors. Under the old system one could enjoy being a part of the Church. But when the old customs were pushed aside for new trends, the "important union of interests" no longer existed.

To the poor people who could not afford entertainment, the social activities connected with the Church were an inducement to attend its functions. Hardy shows in his description of Shaston what happens to a community when the inhabitants become too poor to support the ministers of the Church. He says:

. . . in former times the town passed through a curious period of corruption, conventual and domestic, [which] gave rise to the saying that Shaston was remarkable for three consolations to man, such as the world afforded not elsewhere. It was a place where the churchyard lay nearer heaven than the church steeple, where beer was more plentiful than water, and where there were more wanton women than honest wives and maids.

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas Hardy, Under the Greenwood Tree, p. 7.

It was also said that after the Middle Ages the inhabitants were too poor to pay their priests, and hence were compelled to pull down their churches, and refrain altogether from the public worship of God. (p. 198)

Another implication in what Hardy says about Shaston may be that the Church serves a good purpose in elevating the moral standards of a society that is, by nature, corrupt. Then too, Hardy may be implying that religion costs money; therefore, the Church exists to serve only those who can afford the price of religion. One may be inclined to see only Shaston, however, because, on the whole, Hardy has only satirical comments to make about the Church, ministers, or religion.

Hardy shows in Jude that the Church has helped to establish certain standards of conduct that cause unhappiness when followed to the letter, and, of course, "The letter killeth."<sup>2</sup> For example, when Jude arrives in Aldbrickham, he joins an "Artizans' Mutual Improvement Society." Its members are men of "all creeds and denominations, including Churchmen, Congregationalists, Baptists, Unitarians, Positivists and others . . ." (p. 300). The truth about Jude's relationship with Sue becomes known

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<sup>2</sup>This phrase is found on the title page of Jude the Obscure.

to some of the members of the Society, and at one meeting the question is raised as to why the number of subscriptions had fallen off for that quarter. Hardy says:

One member--a really well-meaning and upright man--began speaking in enigmas about certain possible causes: that it behoved them to look well into their constitution; for if the committee were not respected, and had not at least, in their differences, a common standard of conduct, they would bring the institution to the ground. Nothing further was said in Jude's presence, but he knew what this meant; and turning to the table wrote a note resigning his office there and then. (pp. 300-301)

By beginning this scene with the note concerning the religious background of the members of the Society, Hardy is placing blame on the teachings of the Church. The Church has taught its members that a rigid moral code must be followed if it (or the Society) is to survive as an institution.

Hardy sees no future in the "new" Church that has replaced the simple (but certainly the more acceptable to Hardy) Church of the past. The Church is transient because creeds are transient, and buildings housing the Church are transient. Hardy describes in Jude many churches that are being torn down and, in many cases, new buildings do not replace the old ones. But even the fine new structures will not last long. At one time Jude hears sounds coming from a churchyard near by:

A mournful wind blew through the trees, and sounded in the chimney like the pedal notes of an organ [one might be reminded of the organ that replaces the Mellstock choir]. Each ivy leaf overgrowing the wall of the churchless churchyard hard by, now abandoned, pecked its neighbor smartly, and the vane on the new Victorian-Gothic church in the new spot had already begun to creak. (p. 127)

The creaking of the weathervane indicates a short life for the new building, and perhaps Hardy is suggesting that the Church, in all its fine new architecture, will eventually become "abandoned" also. Hardy uses Sue as his spokesman against religion; therefore, the following statement by Sue in answer to Jude's question as to whether or not they should rest in a cathedral seems expressive of Hardy's thoughts about the Church. Sue answers:

Cathedral? Yes. Though I think I'd rather sit in the railway station . . . That's the centre of the town life now. The cathedral has had its day! (p. 135)

Sue, in her early enthusiasm for Greek statuettes and ancient Greek ideas, says:

I fancy we have had enough of Jerusalem . . . considering we are not descended from the Jews. There was nothing first-rate about the place, or people, after all--as there was about Athens, Rome, Alexandria, and other old cities. (p. 109)

Sue feels that the Church has nothing to offer a modern society (a society that would rather congregate in railway stations and talk on current topics).

Even Jude, who early in the novel wants to become a bishop, eventually turns away from the Church. After he experiences the effects of the moral standards that have come from the Church, he says:

The Church is no more to me. Let it lie! I am not to be one of

The soldier-saints who, row on row,  
Burn upward each to his point of bliss,

if any such there be! My point of bliss is not upward, but here. (p. 235)

Jude admits early in the novel that his ambitions of becoming a bishop ended with his failure to get into Christminster. When he decides to enter the Church as a licentiate, his reason is that this would be "a purgatorial course worthy of being followed by a remorseful man" (p. 129). His original purpose in becoming a bishop was partly selfish, the main reason being his desire for social success. Hardy says concerning this matter:

The first old fancy which had led on to the culminating vision of the bishopric had not been an ethical or theological enthusiasm at all, but a mundane ambition masquerading in a surplice. He feared that his whole scheme had degenerated to, even though it might not have originated in, a social unrest which had no foundation in the nobler instincts; which was purely an artificial product of civilization. (p. 129)

Jude's dismissal of the Church as an institution in which he was to better his own social position marks the beginning of his eventual indifference to the teachings of Christianity. The moral standards set by the Church, particularly those concerning marriage, cause him to suffer at the hands of society, and he loses all respect for this set of standards. He is angered by the change in Sue after the death of their children and believes that the accepted teachings of the Church may have effected the change. He says to her bitterly, "You make me hate Christianity, or mysticism, or Sacerdotalism, or whatever it may be called, if it's that which has caused this deterioration in you" (p. 345).

Jude becomes skeptical of religion as it is being taught at Christminster and practiced by society. It is the ideas given to him by Sue that cause much of his skepticism. Her estimate of Oxford is that, "At present intellect . . . is pushing one way, and religion the other; and so they stand stock-still, like two rams butting each other" (p. 151). Her final judgment (before the breakdown of her mind) is that supernatural religion has become obsolete:

I have no respect for Christminster whatever, except, in a qualified degree, on its intellectual side. . . .

My friend I spoke of took that out of me. He was the most irreligious man I ever knew, and the most moral. And intellect at Christminster is new wine in old bottles. The mediaevalism of Christminster must go, be sloughed off, or Christminster itself will have to go. (p. 150)

Jude realizes that what Sue says about Christminster is true, but he is never able to put the university out of his thoughts.

Jude's, Sue's, and Phillotson's main involvement with the Church is its teachings concerning marriage. Hardy is satirical of the ministry in his report on each of the parsons' comments after they perform the marriage ceremonies. The parson who marries Jude and Arabella knows why they are getting married. Yet Hardy says that this parson "seemed to think it satisfactory" (p. 61). When Phillotson is about to remarry Sue, he tells his friend Gillingham, "Apart from being what she is, of course, a luxury for a fogy like me, it will set me right in the eyes of the clergy and orthodox laity, who have never forgiven me for letting her go" (p. 360). Hardy is even more satirical when he has the vicar comment on the remarriage of Sue and Phillotson:

When the books were signed the vicar congratulated the husband and wife on having performed a noble, and righteous, and mutually forgiving act. "All's well that ends well," he said smiling.

But the reader feels that all is wrong. The vicar is not at all concerned with the tragedy that comes to Jude and Sue or to Phillotson through society's forcing this marriage. The vicar does not realize that it is the teachings by the Church that have influenced society into forcing Sue to leave Jude and Phillotson into taking her back. The irony of the immoral phrase from Shakespeare adds to the immorality of the situation.

Hardy is satirical in his comments, also, on the remarriage of Jude to Arabella. Since Jude was drunk during the ceremony, Arabella reports the clergyman's comments:

"Mrs. Fawley, I congratulate you heartily," he says. "For having heard your history, and that of your husband, I think you have both done the right and proper thing. And for your past errors as a wife, and his as a husband, I think you ought now to be forgiven by the world." (p. 378)

Arabella has used the teachings of the Church to get Jude back. She says, "All right. I've married you. . . . It is true religion! Ha--ha--ha" (p. 379)! Sue had once told Jude that he could take something worse than Christianity, and at that time he had "thought of Arabella" (p. 153). It seems ironic that, because of the teachings of Christianity, Jude is forced back to Arabella. She had turned to the Church for comfort after the death of her second

husband, but her new sanctified life was unsatisfactory to her. Upon seeing Jude with Sue, Arabella had said, "After all that's said about the comforts of this religion, I wish I had Jude back again" (p. 310).

Hardy uses Arabella to show that sex and religion come into conflict and sex is usually this winner. Jude questions his desire to become a minister when he feels sexually attracted to Arabella. Hardy satirizes the confrontation of the priests of the early church with the temptations caused by sexual instinct:

. . . the priests and virgins of the early church . . . disdaining an ignominious flight from temptation, became even chamber-partners with impunity. Jude did not pause to remember that, in the laconic words of the historian, "insulted Nature sometimes vindicated her rights" in such circumstances. (p. 192)

Hardy attempts to show in Jude how unrealistic the social conventions are, as set by Church doctrine, under real life conditions. His main objection to religion is that it does not offer an adequate explanation for the facts of existence. He shows how some people misuse a strict moral code, and how the enforcement of such a code causes anger, unhappiness, and an injustice to some people. Hardy feels that the clergymen have placed emphasis on the wrong things in their teaching. Perhaps the best statement that sums up what Hardy thinks about the Church

is made by Jude while he is grieving over the death of his children. He hears two persons in conversation outside the room and says:

They are two clergymen of different views, arguing about the eastward position. Good God--the eastward position, and all creation groaning! (p. 332)

## C H A P T E R V

### CONCLUSION: "THE NOBLER VISION"

Few critics and reviewers in the eighteen-nineties were able to grasp Hardy's idealistic vision of the possibilities of human life. That vision had beckoned to Hardy just as the gleaming "city of light," Christminster, had beckoned to Jude in his youth. It was a vision of a society in which laws and conventions would more nearly coincide with individual human needs.

It is perhaps superfluous to say that Jude the Obscure embodies a critical attitude toward the society in which its action takes place. Hardy especially singled out the moral aspects of marriage, the Church and orthodox Christianity, and the English universities for his social commentary and criticism. Jude is involved in all three, as aspirant, and ultimately as victim.

As to marriage, whether legal or common-law, Jude becomes associated with two women who complement each other. He sees different things in Arabella and in Sue. What Hardy means to satirize is the outmoded laws and concepts of the marriage relationship. It is true that women had few legal rights in marriage, even as late as Hardy's time.

The husband was the master, and the wife was to bend to his will. Church and state together promoted this concept of marriage as domination, not as partnership. Sue fully subscribes to this view at the end of the novel, but her instinct at the deepest level makes her know that she is doing wrong, even as she swears on the Bible never to see Jude again. Divorce is argued to be the humane answer to some marital problems, but it is not a solution to anything in terms of this book; the clearest evidence of this is the remarriage of Jude to Arabella and Sue to Phillotson. The essence of Sue's complaint against the institution of marriage is that it converts into a legal obligation that which should be sacred and entirely of free will, the mutual love of husband and wife. But the state she would substitute for marriage does not seem to be any more attractive. Although Hardy shows Jude and Sue being persecuted by society, they, basically, persecute themselves--especially through Sue's shrinking from the physical part of marriage, which is an aspect of her character, not the institution of marriage. Hardy's main argument for divorce is that love may be transient emotion, and that it is unrealistic for one person to promise to love another for the remainder of one's life. Hardy makes this statement about the marriage vows between Jude and Arabella:

And so, standing before the aforesaid officiator, the two swore that at every other time of their lives till death took them, they would assuredly believe, feel, and desire precisely as they had believed, felt, and desired during the few preceding weeks. What was as remarkable as the undertaking itself was the fact that nobody seemed at all surprised at what they swore. (p. 62)

Hardy's criticism of the Church and orthodox Christianity may be considered as his criticism of an institution which has become formalized and therefore, in his view, somewhat lacking in relevance to life. By dwelling on the external, physical, and moral aspects of Shaston, past and present, Hardy without a doubt meant to symbolize what he considers to be the decadence of the formal religion of his age. Shaston becomes more than simply a city of churches and other ecclesiastical structures made of stone which Jude spends part of his life repairing. Shaston is the church, at least as Hardy sees it: an institution with all the life gone.

Other symbols of the Church in Jude the Obscure are the theological library which Jude studies but finally burns, and also the stones of the churches which Jude repairs. But it will take more than the physical repair of stones of the structures to rejuvenate the Church, in Hardy's view.

Basically, Hardy's main objection to religion is that it does not offer adequate explanation for the facts of existence. In terms of human behavior, religion for most persons has a bad effect because it tends to screen out unpleasant aspects of reality. Because people feel that religion has given them answers to certain questions of social relationships, it is no longer necessary for them to question these things. Therefore, it provides them with a set of ready-made attitudes and, like any prejudice, acts to prevent people from confronting life squarely. And, at worst, religion can be a respectable cloak that can be used to hide all sorts of moral deception.

Finally, his criticism of the universities is related to what he implies about the Church, since the universities were, at the time the novel was written, the training grounds for careers in the Church and were originally a part of the foundations of the Church. Again, Hardy presents the spectacle of institutions grown old and solidified.

The question was raised in the preface of this study as to whether Jude is an anomaly among Hardy's novels. The frequent use of quotations from Hardy's other novels, most of which pertain to some question of morality, is an indication in itself that Hardy questioned social conventions

long before the writing of Jude. Jude the Obscure is clearly a moral work, but, then, so is Tess of the D'Urbervilles. Hardy deals with the themes of marriage and sex in Jude, but these themes are common to several of his novels. The theme of education is treated in Jude, but Hardy shows an interest in the moral aspects of education in even his earliest novels; he treats this theme with heavy emphasis in Return of the Native. Rather than call Jude an anomaly, I believe this book should be seen as one in which many of Hardy's ideas have become fully developed.

The chief purpose of this study has been to learn what Hardy really says in Jude. The following statement by John Holloway is one with which I was in complete agreement before undertaking this study. Holloway says:

The single abstraction which does most to summarize Hardy's view is simple enough: It is right to live naturally. But this is the abstraction central to any number of moralities; Hardy glosses it by showing how to live naturally is to live in continuity with one's whole biological and geographical environment.<sup>1</sup>

Hardy's view must not be too "simple" because Holloway completely overlooks the restrictions Hardy places on

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<sup>1</sup>John Holloway, The Victorian Sage, p. 281.

living "naturally." Hardy qualified this statement by showing that man must treat his fellow human beings with compassion and understanding. "Kindness" is the key word in understanding Hardy's ideas on morality. It is in the many applications of this word that Hardy shows his readers the "nobler vision."

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