CHAPTER VI

HARDY'S TREATMENT OF TRAGEDY

IN

JUDE THE OBSCURE

(1895)

I

Hardy's aims in writing Jude are clearly given in his preface to the novel. He tells us that he had attempted "to deal un-
affectedly with the fret and fever, derision and disaster, that
may press in the wake of the strongest passion known to humanity;
to tell without mincing of words, of a deadly war waged between
flesh and spirit, and to point the tragedy of unfulfilled aims".1

Jude was to be a tragedy "of the WORTHY encompassed by the
INEVITABLE".2

1 Thomas Hardy: Jude the Obscure, London, Macmillan & Co. Ltd.,
1966, p. v. All further page references will be to this book.
2 F. S. Hardy: The Life of Thomas Hardy, p. 251.
About his idea in *Jude*, Hardy was quite explicit: *Jude* was to "show the contrast between the ideal life a man wished to lead and the squalid real life he was fated to lead ..... The idea was meant to run all through the novel". 3

In another letter Hardy says: "Of course the book is all contrasts — or was meant to be in its original conception ........ Sue and her heathen gods set against Jude's reading the Greek Testament; Christminster academical, Christminster in the slums; Jude the saint, Jude the sinner; Sue, the Pagan, Sue, the saint; marriage, no marriage, &c; &c; &c; ...." 4

A.G. Swinburne, in a letter to Hardy, said: "The tragedy — if I may venture an opinion — is equally beautiful and terrible in its pathos" 5. He also called Hardy "the most tragic of authors" 6.

*Jude* is the grimpest of Hardy's tragedies — the gloom is all unrelieved — the sky is pitch dark with no stars twinkling — terrible in its plan, ruthless in its execution. No such enchantment of Nature as suffused *Tess*, relieves and irradiaes its grimness, and the difference between the two may seem as wide as their distance from the others.

3 F.E. Hardy: *The Life of Thomas Hardy*, p. 272.
II

Some critics have seen parallels between Tess and Jude. We may say that the pattern of Jude is that of Tess reversed. The sensuous Arabella with her temporary religious conversion, is a female Alec; the fastidious Sue with her moral questioning and her admiration for Pagan gods and philosophy, a female Angel, and Jude himself, while not necessarily resembling Tess in character, is destroyed by two women of opposite natures, as Tess was between two men. Phillotson, despite his open-mindedness and generosity, is too much of a lay figure to count as anything more than a useful fourth to complicate the plot with its dual mismatchings. He has no counterpart in Tess, 8

Jude the Obscure is in sense and sound, the most impressive of Hardy's titles; but the earlier names of the book — The Simpletons and the admirable Hearts Insurgent — indicated better that there was a dual tragedy.

Two aspiring, rather child-like, vulnerable natures are

8 "It is a kind of Anna Karenina from the male point of view. Where Anna moves from Karenin to Vronsky, from dissimulation to partial satisfaction, Jude swinging from Arabella to Sue does the opposite."
wrecked on the shoals of life, Sue's fate is piteous, but the
resounding fall is Jude's, nonetheless crushing when it comes,
for being the end of a sequence in which dreams and realities
have been taken from him one by one. He is hardly more than a
boy when Arabella snare's him into marriage and breaks off his
efforts to make himself a scholar. Then the bitter episode is
over and he lays siege to Christminster, he is chilled into
realizing that his ambition was folly. The altruistic aim which
he conceives, instead, of becoming a clergyman in the humblest
way and doing good to his kind, breaks down when he finds himself
desperately in love with Sue, who is married to another. With
Sue, when she leaves Phillotson, he enjoys some real though
chequered happiness, which fades with his loss of health and
the difficulties brought on him by Sue's unwillingness to marry.
Then comes the appalling disaster of the children; Father Time,
Jude's gloomy child by Arabella hange Sue's infants and himself.
Sue, agonized, reads it as a judgement and goes desperately back
to Phillotson; Jude falls a victim to Arabella again, is remarried
while he is drunk and finally dies alone, with Job's despairing
words on his lips, in the city which has ignored his longings.

Albert Guerard, in his study on Thomas Hardy, points out that
"Jude is an impressive tragedy, in spite of its multiplicity of
separate and detachable problems".

The problems are:
1. The socio-economic problems of educational opportunity for the poor and of class deracination.

2. The social problems of marriage, divorce, and repressive moral censorship by public opinion.

3. The psychological problems of Jude's sexuality and his urge to self-destruction, and of Sue's epicene temperament and her moral masochism.

4. The religious problem of church reforms.

5. The ethical problems of naturalistic morality and of moral sanction independent of dogma.

6. The biographical problems of inherited family characteristics and the new will-not-to-live.

7. The spiritual problems of modern unrest, modern introspectiveness and modern melancholy, and spiritual isolation.

III

Jude the Obscure is a tragedy of unfulfilled ambitions because of the deadly war waged between the flesh and spirit, the contrast

9 A.J. Guerard: Thomas Hardy; The Novels and the Stories, p. 48.
between the real and the ideal.

Part I of the novel deals with Jude's youth up to the moment he departs for Christminster in search of learning. So long as Jude's education is incomplete, Hardy uses him to demonstrate the consequences of innocent ignorance of "Nature's logic" (p. 23). In Part I of the novel this is largely a matter of sex. Nature entangles Jude with Arabella, who turns out to be something his idealism is not prepared for. The meeting of Arabella and Jude is brought about by Arabella's hitting Jude with a pig's pizzle which hangs on the bridge between them throughout this first meeting. The effect of this meeting on Jude is disastrous: "The intentions as to reading, working, and learning, which he had so precisely formulated only a few minutes earlier, were suffering a curious collapse into a corner, he knew not how. . . . . . . Jude was lost to all conditions of things in the advent of a fresh and wild pleasure, that of having found a new channel for emotional interest hitherto unsuspected, though it had lain close beside him" (p. 47).

Jude cannot get on with his re-reading of the Greek Testament: "A compelling arm of extraordinary muscular power seized hold of him — . . . . . . This seemed to care little for his reason and his will — . . . . . . . and moved him along — . . . . . . in a direction which

10 A. Alvarez calls Jude's tragedy "the tragedy of loneliness . He is isolated from society because his ambitions, abilities and sensibility separate him from his own class while winning him no place in any other". A. Alvarez: "Jude the Obscure: Afterword," p. 120.
tended towards the embrace of a woman for whom he had no respect, and whose life had nothing in common with his own except locality" (p. 49).

Jude's dream of an education that will take him through Christminster to a career as a philanthropic bishop is associated with a vision of Christminster as seen from the roof of the old Brown House against the blaze of the setting sun "like the heavenly Jerusalem" (p. 25), as the child Jude says solemnly to the tiler.

With Arabella, Jude revisits the rise on which old Brown House stands, from which he had once seen his vision of the heavenly Jerusalem and where under the influence of an impulse, rather awkwardly motivated, he had also knelt and prayed to Apollo and Diana, the god and goddess of learning and chastity. But under the influence of Arabella Jude "passed the spot where he had knelt to Diana and Phoebus without remembering that there were any such people in the mythology, or that the sun was anything else than a useful lamp to illuminate Arabella's face" (p. 51). And when the lovers stop at a tavern, Hardy notes that a picture of Samson and Delilah hangs on the wall; they stop for tea but, instead, partly at Arabella's suggestion, he drinks beer (p. 52). Thus Hardy links Arabella to Jude's "two Arch Enemies—my weakness for women, my impulse to strong liquor" (p. 356).
Under the influence of Arabella, his point of view changes: "What were his books to him? What were his intentions hitherto adhered to strictly, as to not wasting a single minute of time day by day? ....... It was better to love a woman than to be a graduate, or a parson; nay, or a Pope!" (p. 54).

And before long he is trapped by Arabella's vulgar designs, and all his dreams are shattered: "It is a complete smashing up of his plans ........ Dreams about books, and degrees and impossible scholarships" (p. 63).

Here, early in the novel, Hardy takes pains to show us the contrast between the ideal life that Jude wished to live and the squalid real life he is fated to lead. He will make only a slight modification by saying that this squalid real life is of Jude's own making.

Here again we have a foretaste of the deadly war between flesh and spirit that is to be waged within Jude.

After their marriage Hardy takes every opportunity of supporting Jude's idea of sexual relations (ideal) and condemning that of Arabella's (real): "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 ...... 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 life-time?
There was perhaps something fortunate in the fact that the
immediate reason of his marriage had proved to be non-existant.
But the marriage remained" (pp.68-69).

With such divergent natures, Jude, the day dreamer,
Arabella, the realist, the marriage goes to the rocks very soon
and it does not take Jude long to realise that "their lives were
ruined, ruined by the fundamental error of their matrimonial
union; that of having based a permanent contract on a temporary
feeling which had no necessary connection with affinities that
alone render a life-long comradeship tolerable" (p 76).

To some extent Hardy seems to locate the fault in heredity.
As Jude's great-aunt points out: "The Fawleys were not made
for wedlock: it never seemed to sit 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" (p.77).

Jude's attempted suicide fails: "He supposed he was not a
sufficiently dignified person for suicide. Peaceful death
abhorred him as a subject and would not take him" (p.77). In a
"mood of self-debasement" he takes to drink: "What could he do

II Cf. Henchard of *The Mayor*. Like Henchard and Clym and Giles, Jude
also manifests self-destroying impulses.
of a lower kind than self-extermination; what was there less noble, more in keeping with his present degraded position? He could get drunk ....... Drinking was the regular stereotype resource of the despairing worthless" (p. 78).

In Part II we see Jude in Christminster. He had always dreamed of coming to this city of learning but the "ultimate impulse" which prompts him shows a weakness in his character — the way in which the heart rules over the head in Jude, the battle between the flesh and the spirit: "The ultimate impulse to come had had a curious origin — one more nearly related to the emotional side of him than to the intellectual as is often the case with young men. One day while in lodgings at Alfredston he had gone to Marygreen to see his old aunt and had observed the photograph of a pretty girlish face, in a broad hat with radiating folds under the brim like the rays of a halo" (p. 84). He had asked who she was. His grand aunt had gruffly replied that she was his cousin, Sue Bridehead ....... and on further questioning the old woman had replied that the girl lived in Christminster.

"His aunt would not give him the photograph. But it haunted him; and ultimately formed a quickening ingredient in his latent intent.

12 "Hardy always keeps Sue before the reader as Jude first saw her at the picture at Marygreen ......... not only because she remains always for Jude a saint but because, by a terrible irony, she literally becomes one at the end of the book". Arthur Mizener: "Jude the Obscure as a Tragedy", Reprinted in Modern British Fiction ed. by Mark Schorer, p. 57.
of following his friend, the schoolmaster thither" (p. 84).

Here in Christminster he is taught that his desire for learning had been only "a social unrest which had no foundation in nobler instincts; which was purely an artificial product of civilisation" (p. 135).

But even here in Christminster, though he has come to pursue the path of learning, his susceptibility to women remains. Hardy himself admits it when he calls him a "ridiculously affectionate fellow . . . . (he) put the photograph (of Sue) on the mantelpiece, kissed it —he did not know why —and felt more at home. She seemed to look down and preside over his tea. It was charming — the one thing uniting him to the emotions of the living city" (p. 92).

Soon there develops a self-destructive love between the Christian and passionate Jude and the Pagan and undersexed Sue, and it is from this love that much of the tragedy derives.

From the moment he sees her "..... the emotion which had been accumulating in his breast as the bottled-up effect of solitude and the poetized locality he dwelt in, insensibly began to precipitate itself on this half-visionary form; and he perceived that, whatever his obedient wish in a contrary direction, he would soon be unable to resist the desire to make himself known to her" (p. 97).
Though he decides "he would have to think of Sue with only a relation's mutual interest, ...... his interest in her had shown itself to be unmistakably of a sexual kind ...... It was quite impossible he found, to be asked to be delivered from temptation when your heart's desire was to be tempted unto seventy times seven" (p. 105).  

After they have met ...... "he loved her more than before becoming acquainted with her; and the gloom of the walk home lay not in the night, overhead, but in the thought of her departure" (p. 110).

His desire for Sue is so strong that when he sees that she is to be Phillotson's and not his, his grief knows no bounds. To this is added his failure to get into the University and so he takes to "drinking and blaspheming" and in this state he flies to Sue, "one being in the world to whom it seemed possible to fly — an unreasoning desire whose ill judgment was not apparent to him now" (p. 131).

But he does not want to face her in the bright light of the day and noiselessly slips out, goes to Marygreen, sleeps and wakes up in "the hell of conscious failure, both in ambition and in love" (p. 133).

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13 Here once again Hardy stresses the clash in Jude between the ideal and the real.
For a time he toys with the idea of becoming a clergymen but finally decides to go to Melchester, partly because it is "a spot where worldly learning and intellectual smartness had no establishment" (p. 136), partly because Sue is there.

It is here that he meets Arabella a second time and they spend a night together. For all his — and Hardy's — superficial disgust, Jude and Arabella are physically very much married : their night at Aldbrickham after years apart is made to seem the most natural thing in the world. Jude's subsequent shame is prompted less by the act itself than by his anger at missing Sue, and the fear that somehow she will find out.

It is to the credit of Jude that he is not blind to his faults and is capable of a critical analysis of his character: "..... he perceived with despondency that taken all round, he was a man of too many passions to make a good clergymen: the utmost he could hope for was that in a life of constant internal warfare between flesh and spirit, the former might not always be victorious" (p. 202). Hardy is back here to the very heart of the tragedy, as it were.

Sue also with her typical feminine intuition, is quick to see through Jude's weaknesses of character: "You are Joseph, the

14 Cf. The relation between Tess and Alec in Tess "Jude's spending the night with Arabella when they met unexpectedly in Melchester was a demonstration of how powerfully sheer physical desire was fighting against suppression in him". Arthur Mizener: The Sense of Life in the Modern Novel, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1964.
dreamer of dreams, dear Jude. And a tragic Don Quixote. And
sometimes you are St. Stephen, who, while they were stoning him,
could see heaven opened. Oh, my poor friend and comrade, you'll
suffer yet!" (p. 214).

There ever rages a battle in Jude between the flesh and the
spirit, and very often the flesh has an upperhand because the
spirit is weak. At Shaston he accepts Sue's invitation to meet
her, knowing well that 'those earnest men he read of, the saints,
whom Sue, with gentle irreverence, called his demi-gods, would
have shunned such encounters if they doubted their own strength.
But he could not. He might fast and pray during the whole interval,
but the human was more powerful in him than the Divine" (p. 215).

In Part IV of the novel, though Sue and Jude make up their minds
to sacrifice their love to right conduct, their meeting at Marygreen,
when their aunt dies, finally forces Jude to see that the church's
marriage system is evil, and Sue to recognize that she must leave
Phillotson for Jude.

Hardy stresses the contrast between the real and the ideal
in Jude's life through the kiss given to Sue after aunt
Brusilla's death, the impassioned kiss which seems to seal their
fates: "The kiss was a turning-point in Jude's career. Back again in
the cottage, and left to reflection, he saw one thing: that though
his kiss of that aerial being had seemed the purest moment of
his faultful life, as long as he nourished this unlicensed tenderness it was glaringly inconsistent for him to pursue the idea of becoming the soldier and servant of a religion in which sexual love was regarded as at its best a frailty, and at its worst damnation ......... He was as unfit, obviously, by nature, as he had been by social position, to fill the part of a propounder of accredited dogma.

"Strange that his first aspiration — towards academical proficiency — had been checked by a woman, and that his second aspiration — towards apostleship — had also been checked by a woman. 'Is it,' he said, 'that the women are to blame; or is it the artificial system of things, under which the normal sex-impulses are turned into devilish domestic gins and springes to noose and hold back those who want to progress?' " (pp. 225-226).

Part V begins with a period when "the twain were happy between their times of sadness ......." (p. 298). We see them as devoted lovers at the Great Wessex Agricultural Show, where they are carefully contrasted with Arabella and Cartlett, the conventional married couple. But the conventional world's disapproval of them as unmarried lovers forces them down until Jude, "still haunted by his dream" brings Sue and the children to a depressing purgatory of Christminster.

Here in Part V, Jude gives us one more insight into his true self: "'I have the germs of every human infirmity in me, I verily
believe — that was why I saw it was so preposterous of me to think of being a curate. I have cured myself of drunkenness I think; but I never know what new form a suppressed vice will break out in me!" (p. 275).

And this is how Arabella sums up his character: "Never such a tender fool as Jude is, if a woman seems in trouble, and coaxes him a bit! Just as he used to be about birds and things" (p. 279).

Jude and Sue go on postponing their marriage because of a fault in their mental make-up. Jude sees the truth: "We are horribly sensitive; that's really what's the matter with us, Sue!" ....... The intention of the contract is good, and right for many, no doubt, but in our case it may defeat its own ends because we are the queer sort of people we are — folk in whom domestic ties of a forced kind snuff out cordiality and spontaneoussness" (p. 296).

Even when they have been ostracised by society, Jude's life is ruled by one passion of his life — Christminster. This is evident in the cakes made by him. As Arabella (now in widow's weeds) says: "Still harping on Christminster — even in his cakes!" laughed Arabella. 'Just like Jude. A ruling passion. What a queer fellow he is and always will be" (p. 323).

Sue seems to know the truth about Christminster: "'Of course Christminster is a sort of fixed vision with him, which I suppose he'll never be cured of believing in. He still thinks it a great
centre of high and fearless thought, instead of what it is, a nest of commonplace schoolmasters whose characteristic is a timid obsequiousness to tradition." (p. 323).

Jude still dreams his dreams about Christminster, though he too, by now, seems to know the truth about the place: "I love the place — although I know how it 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! ...... Nevertheless, it is the centre of the universe to me, because of my early dream: and nothing can alter it." (p. 331).

Part VI sees Jude back at Christminster on the "Remembrance Day." But seems to be "Humiliation" day for Jude. And here through Jude's lips Hardy tells us about the tragic machinery that has almost mowed him down: weaknesses of character and economic circumstances have conspired to bring about Jude's fall: "....... My impulses — affections — vices, perhaps they should be called — were too strong not to hamper a man without advantages." (p. 337).

The effect of the tragedy of Father Time killing him and Sue's children is to place Jude and Sue in the same position from which they started at the beginning of the book. 15 Jude now considers

15 "One thing troubled him more than any other; that Sue and himself had mentally travelled in opposite directions since the tragedy; events which had enlarged his own views of life, laws, customs and dogmas, had not operated in the same manner on Sue's." (p. 356).
himself a seducer: "'I have seemed to myself lately to belong to that vast band of men shunned by the virtuous—the men called seducers ....... I seduced you ....... you were a distinct type—a refined creature, intended by Nature to be left in tact. But I couldn't leave you alone!"'" (pp. 354-55).

As a consequence of this change, Sue returns to Phillotson and to conventional Christianity and Jude, partly out of stunned indifference (he takes to drink once again), and partly as a result of Arabella's predatory sexuality, return to his first wife.

It is significant that this time too he marries her to save her honour. This shows a fine but vulnerable trait in Jude's character: "'I have never behaved dishonourably to a woman or to any living thing. I am not a man who wants to save himself at the expense of the weaker among us'" (p. 395).

About Sue's firm decision of going back to Phillotson, Jude thinks that Sue has done an unforgivably inhuman thing to save an imaginary soul: "'Do not do an immoral thing for moral reasons', Jude says to her, 'You have been my social salvation. Stay with me for humanity's sake! You know what a weak fellow I am. My two Arch Enemies you know—my weakness for woman-kind and my impulse to strong liquor. Don't abandon me to them, Sue, to save your soul only!'" (p. 366).
Here once again we are back at the very core of Jude’s tragedy—a tragedy stemming from the weaknesses of character.

Jude goes to Sue for the last time to make a final appeal to her sense of proportion and to enable her to see the cold truth: but now conventionality keeps a firm hold on Sue, and, on his way home, Jude feels “the chilly fog from the meadows of Cardinal College, as if death claws were grabbing (him) through and through” (p. 407).

Back at Christminster Jude dies alone, uncared for. The immediate pathos of Jude’s death derives from Arabella’s callous neglect of him; but like the cheers of the Remembrance Day crowd which are counterpointed against Jude’s quotation from Job, this neglect illustrates the complete indifference of society to the ideal life Jude has dreamed of. This is the final and unequivocal shattering of his dreams of an ideal life. The harsh realities of life have silenced Jude with none of his aims realized. The contrast between the real life that he has to lead and the ideal life that he wished to lead has come full circle, and finds its culmination here. Jude’s tragedy is indeed a tragedy of unfulfilled aims, as Jude

16 “We’ve both re-married out of our senses —..... I was gin drunk; you were creed drunk. Either form of intoxication takes away the nobler vision —..... Let us then shake off our mistakes, and run away together!” (p. 404).

17 A. Alvarez rightly says: “Despite the social criticism it involves, the tragedy of Jude is not one of missed chances but of missed fulfilment, of frustration”.

A. Alvarez: "Jude the Obscure: Afterword", p. 113.
himself says: "Every man has some little power in some one direction ........... I felt I could do one thing if I had the opportunity. I could accumulate ideas, and impart them to others, I wonder if the Founders had such as I in their minds — a fellow good for nothing else but that particular thing? ...... I hear that soon there is going to be a better chance for such helpless students as I was ...... And it is too late, too late, for me!"
(p. 413).

Albert Guerard in his study of Thomas Hardy thinks that Jude the Obscure is not tragic. This is the reason that he gives: "The tragic attitude lays the blame not on the stars but on ourselves; it sees fate in character, its pessimism is grounded on the insufficiency of human endowment; it insists, with Conrad's Marlow, 'nobody is good enough'."

But it has been shown that Hardy lays the blame on Jude's shoulders — on his innate weaknesses of character. Jude himself attributes his failures to his 'impulses', 'affections', 'vices' and 'inclinations', as he variously calls them.

Albert Guerard maintains that Jude is not a tragic hero. He draws a comparison between Henchard and Jude and points out that in Jude's case there is no self-knowledge: "Henchard's will is a final condemnation of self and of the 'old mankind'; it is an achievement

18 Albert J. Guerard: Thomas Hardy: The Novels and Stories, p. 152.
of the self-knowledge that tragedy compels. Jude's dying words are instead a condemnation of the cosmos in its dark and at last recognized absurdity. Not Jude but cosmos is to blame.19

It seems to me that this view is not quite correct. There is self-knowledge in Jude too, though it has come slowly and hard. This self-knowledge dawns in the latter pages of the novel:

"I am in a chaos of principles — groping in the dark — acting by instinct and not after example ...... I doubt if I have anything more for my present rule of life than following inclinations which do me and nobody else any harm, and actually give pleasure to those I love best". (pp 337-38).20

V

It has been pointed at the outset that Jude the Obscure is a dual tragedy. It is Jude's tragedy as well as Sue's. There are critics who seem to feel it is more Sue's tragedy than

19 Albert J. Guerard: Thomas Hardy: The Novels and Stories, p. 152.
20 "So Jude's tragedy, like every true tragedy, comes from inner tension which shape the action, not from any haphazard or indifferent force of circumstance".
Jude's. 21 For, though Jude finds peace in death, there is no peace for Sue, till, as Arabella points out, "She's as he is now" (p. 423).

Sue takes the book away from the title character, because she is stronger, more complex and more significant and because her contradictory impulses, creating a spontaneous air of the inexplicable and even the mysterious, are dramatized with extraordinary fullness and concreteness and with hardly a word of interpretation or admonishment by the author.

This is what Hardy himself thought of Sue's character: "....... there is nothing perverted or depraved in Sue's nature. The abnormalism consists in disproportion, not in inversion, her sexual instinct being healthy, as far as it goes, but unusually weak and fastidious. Her sensibilities remain painfully alert notwithstanding, as they do in nature with such women". 22

Sue's original role is, of course, as a counterpoint to Arabella, the spirit against flesh. Sue and Arabella represent different sides of Jude, who consistently thinks of them together,

21 Robert B Heilman, in an interesting article on Sue Bridehead, says: "....... One might entitle an essay on Sue "The Coquette as Tragic heroine". Because she has a stronger personality than Jude, has more initiative, endeavors more to impose her will, is closer to tragic stature than he." Robert B. Heilman: "Hardy's Sue Bridehead", NCF, Vol. 20, March 1966, No. 4, p. 315.

22 F.E. Hardy: The Life of Thomas Hardy, p. 272.
contrasts them, regards them as mutually exclusive opposites. 23

Sue is a bundle of contradictions, the very apotheosis of teasing inconsistency. Repeatedly Hardy uses such words as 'perverseness', 'riddle' (pp. 140-41), 'unreasonable', 'capricious' (p. 166), 'pervasive, colossal inconsistency' (p. 183), 'elusiveness of her curious double nature', 'ridiculously inconsistent' (p. 217), 'logic .... extraordinarily compounded', 'puzzling, unpredictable' (p. 227), 'that mystery, her heart' (p. 249), 'ever evasive' (p. 307).

From the beginning, in major actions and lesser ones, Sue is consistently one thing, then another: reckless, then diffident; independent, then needing support, severe and then kindly; inviting and then offish. From the beginning her inconsistency has a pattern which teases us with obscure hints of an elusive meaningfulness. Here are a few examples of her inconsistency:

- She buys nude statues of Classical Divinities, but 'trembled', almost repented, concealed them, misrepresented them to her landlady and kept waking up anxiously at night (pp. 101-103). She reads Gibbon but is superstitious about the scene of her first meeting with Jude (p. 107). She criticizes unrestrainedly the beliefs

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23 "Looking at his loved one as she appeared to him now ..... living largely in vivid imaginings, so ethereal a creature that her spirit could be seen trembling through her limbs, he felt heartily ashamed of his earthliness in spending the hours he had spent in Arabella's company", (p. 195).

As A. Alvarez says: "Sue and Arabella are in fact, like the white and black horses, the noble and base instincts, which drew Plato's chariot of the soul".

of Jude and Phillotson; but is wounded by any kind of retort (p. 115); repeatedly she can challenge, censure and deride others but be hypersensitive to even mild replies as if expecting immunity from the normal reciprocities of argument and emotion (p. 150, p. 250, p. 362, p. 373, p. 403). She reacts excessively to the unexpected visit of the School Inspector, snaps at Phillotson 'potently' and then 'regretted that she had upbraided him' (p. 116). Aunt Drusilla reports that as a girl Sue was 'pert .... too often with her tight-strained nerves' and an inclination to scoff at the by-laws of modesty,'she was a tomboy who would suddenly run away from the boys' (pp. 118-20).

This inconsistency manifests itself with its tragic consequences in her sexual relations. For as Albert Guerard has pointed out: "Sue combines with her sexlessness and even repugnance to the gross sexual act, a very strong impulse to arouse sexual desire in men."

She never outgrows her childhood oscillations between the tomboy and the coquette. She re-enacts them with a Christminster undergraduate when she is eighteen, and later with Phillotson and

24 A.J. Guerard : Thomas Hardy. The Novels and Stories, p. 111.
25 "He said I was breaking his heart by holding out against him so long at such close quarters; he could never believe it of women. I may play that game once too often, he said" , p. 155.
Jude, and wrecks the nerves of all three. Jealousy prompts her
to marry Phillotson and almost to marry Jude. She wants Jude to
avoid Arabella not merely because sexuality is gross, but
because she wants Jude to desire only herself. Her own happiness,
as she half-realizes at last, depends on the re-enactment of this
pattern: to live with a man in an ostensibly sexless, fraternal
intimacy, arouse his sexual desire, lead him on, reject him and
then do penance for the suffering she thus has caused. She
marries Phillotson not merely to spite Jude but to punish
herself for having made the schoolmaster suffer. She marries him
a second time, when her self-punishing has become almost hysterical.
Like all such persons she wants to subject herself to punishment
and horror; her religious and social scruples are the most
transparent of disguises.

Sue herself sums up this side of her character very well:
"When I first knew you (Jude) I merely wanted you to love me,
I did not exactly flirt with you; but that inborn craving which
undermines some women's morals almost more than unbridled passion —
the craving to attract and captivate, regardless of the injury it
may do the man — was in me; and when I found I had caught you,
I was frightened. And then — I don't know how it was — I couldn't
bear to let you go — possibly to Arabella again — and so I got to love

26 "'I cannot humiliate myself too much. I should like to prick
myself all over with pins and bleed out the badness that's in
me' " (p. 351). This reminds one of Lizzie's self-lacerations in
Dostoevski's Brothers Karamazov.
you, Jude. But you see, however fondly it ended, it began in the selfish and cruel wish to make your heart ache for me without letting mine ache for you' " (p. 365).

For, though an intellectual (she reads Gibbon and Mill and Shelley), she is an 'epicure in emotions' (p. 181). In her 'curiosity to hunt up new sensations' (p. 181), she rehearses the marriage ceremony with Jude without Phillotson. Hardy calls it "Sue's nature of tempting Providence at critical times" (p. 180).

Like Henchard, Sue suffers from self-destroying impulses. This self-punishing impulse first reveals itself sharply when she demands that Jude give her away in marriage and that they rehearse the ceremony without Phillotson: "Was Sue simply so perverse that she wilfully gave herself and him (Jude) 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 practise it?" ..... Possibly she would go on inflicting such pains again and again and grieving for the sufferer again and again in her colossal inconsistency" "(p. 183).

This colossal inconsistency in her sexual behaviour reveals itself not merely in her relations with Jude but with Phillotson as well. Sometimes she blows hot, and sometimes she blows cold; sometimes she shows all the fervour of her love for him, sometimes she behaves as if he is only an acquaintance. This is evident from the letters that she has written to Phillotson. As he reads one of
her letters, Phillotson muses: "What precise shade of satisfaction was to be gathered from a woman's gratitude that the man who loved her had not been often to see her" (p. 169)?

For, the trouble with Sue is that "her love of being loved is insatiable" (p. 213). Robert Hailman and Albert Guerard call her a coquette and Jude calls her a flirt, but here is her own diagnosis of her case: "I am very much the reverse of what you say so cruelly (a flirt) ..... I should shock you by letting you know how I give way to my impulses, and how much I feel that I shouldn't have been provided with attractiveness unless it were meant to be exercised" (p. 213).

And when Jude tells her that "Under the affectation of independent views you are as enslaved to the social code as any woman I know!" (p. 251), she replies: "Sometimes a woman's love of being loved gets the better of her conscience and though she is agonized at the thought of treating a man cruelly, she encourages him to love her while she doesn't love him at all. Then, when she sees him suffering, her remorse sets in and she does what she can to repair the wrong" (pp. 251-252).

That she has a disgust for the gross sexual act will be evident from the following passages:

Speaking about the attitude of the Training School authorities she says:
"Their views of the relations of man and woman are limited as is proved by their expelling me from the school. Their philosophy only recognizes relations based on animal desires. The wide field of strong attachment where desire plays at least only a secondary part is ignored by them...." (p. 175).

Again it is because of this disgust of sharing Phillotson’s bed (she calls it 'a physical objection — a fastidiousness', p 219) that she decides to leave him.

This is how she analyses herself: "'........ there is nothing wrong except my own wickedness. I suppose you'd call it — a recusance on my part, for a reason I cannot disclose, and what would not be admitted as one by the world in general!'" (p. 221).

With her morbid attitude towards sex, Sue just cannot be happy, either with Phillotson or Jude and this is the very crux of her tragedy: "'it is none of the natural tragedies of love that's love's usual tragedy in civilized life, but a tragedy artificially manufactured for people who in a natural state would find relief in parting'" (p. 224).

Again, after leaving Phillotson and going away with Jude, she refuses to share his bed at the Temperance hotel. And she explains her peculiar sexual behaviour thus: "'Put it down to my timidity,' she said with hurried evasiveness; 'to a woman's natural timidity when the crisis comes. I may feel as well as you that I have a perfect right to live with you as you thought — from this
moment. I _may_ hold the opinion that, in a proper state of society, the father of a woman's child will be as much a private matter of hers as the cut of her under-linen, on whom nobody will have any right to question her. "But partly, perhaps, because it is by his generosity that I am now free, I would rather not be other than a little rigid. If there had been a rope-ladder, and he had run after us with pistols, it would have seemed different, and I may have acted otherwise........ Asume that I haven't the courage of my opinions. I know I am a poor miserable creature. My nature is not so passionate as yours!" (pp. 249-250).

That is the truth about Sue: She is not a passionate woman, she is a cold, sexless creature. This is another reason why she dreads marriage with Jude. Though Hardy says: "She fears she will not be able to withhold herself at liberty after the marriage," Sue gives a different reason (Part V, 1, p. 257) which does not ring true: "I have just the same dread lest an iron contract should extinguish your tenderness for me, and mine for you as it did between our unfortunate parents".

When she does finally give herself to Jude it is out of jealousy - jealousy arising out of Arabella's search for Jude. For weeks Jude has practised self-control, he has been in a 'tantalising' position and now Sue prevents him from going to see Arabella by saying that "If she (Arabella) were yours it would be different".

27 F.E. Hardy: _The Life of Thomas Hardy_, p. 272.
Jude is quick to retort, "or if you were". This breaks down her defences entirely: "Very well then - if I must, I must .... Only I didn't mean to, and I didn't want to marry again either! ... I am not a cold-natured, sexless creature, am I, for keeping you at such a distance?" (pp. 275-276). She has given herself to Jude at long last but we know that she still retains her aversion for the gross sexual act. As she herself admits: "Love has its own dark morality when rivalry enters in" (p. 276).

The colossal inconsistency of her nature shows itself very well when, even after having given herself to Jude, she refuses to get married. The institution of marriage, according to her, is "a sort of trap to catch a man" (p. 280). She dreads "the attitude that insensibly arises out of legal obligation" (p. 291). She thinks "it is destructive to a passion whose essence is its gratuitousness" (p. 291).

Neither a church marriage nor marriage at a Registrar's office seems to suit her temperament. The Registrar's office "gives(her) the horrors: it seems so unnatural as the climax of (their) love!" (p. 294). But the church is no better: "Having

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28 From this speech it is clear that Sue does not want to marry Jude because, as Hardy says, "Uncontracted she can withhold herself at pleasure"—she need not go to bed with him as often as he wishes. Op. cit., p. 272.

It also shows a wild romantic desire for freedom that fears any kind of bond.
been awakened to its awful solemnity as ... I have, by experience, and to my own squeamish feelings perhaps sometimes, it really does seem immoral in me to go and undertake the same thing again with open eyes. Coming in here and seeing this has frightened me from a church wedding as much as the other did from a registry one." (p. 295).

And this is how Sue, the intellectual, Sue, the emancipated, Sue, the modern, sums up their (hers and Jude's) attitude to marriage: "'We are a little before hand, that's all. In fifty, a hundred years the descendants of these two will act and feel worse than we. They will see waltering humanity still more vividly than we do now, as

"'Shapes like our own selves hideously multiplied', and will be afraid to reproduce them." (p. 296).

The trouble is, both of them are too thin-skinned, too weak, too sensitive; they are idealists and the harsh reality of marriage is too much for them. Counterpointed against their idealistic view, there is the realistic view of Widow Edlin: "'Nobody thought o' being afeard o' matrimony in my time, nor of much else but a cannonball or empty cupboard! Why when I and my poor man were married we thought no more o't than of a game o' dibs!" (p. 297).

In her impulsive nature, Sue carries the seeds of her own
destruction. This self-destroying impulse asserts itself when she tells the landlady at Christminster that she is not legally married. 29 Here a lie would have been perfectly alright and she would thus have saved her children and the subsequent tragedy of her own life. For, a failure to find another lodging and the lack of room in this house for his father makes a deep impression on Little Father Time, and after his conversation with Sue, 31 he comes to the conclusion: "'If we children was gone there'd be no trouble at all'" (p. 345). And taking this cue, he hangs the children and himself pinning this note:
"'Done because we are too many'" (p. 347).

Sue considers her discourse with the boy the chief cause of this tragedy: "'It was my want of self-control, so that I could neither conceal things nor reveal them!'" (p. 350). All her happiness with Jude is thus cruelly shattered and she wakes to the harsh reality of life: "'I said it was Nature's intention, Nature's law and raison d'être that we should be joyful in what instincts she afforded us — instincts which civilization had taken

29 "Sue impulsively told the woman that her husband and herself had each been unhappy in their first marriages, after which, terrified at the thought of a second irrevocable union and lest the conditions of the contract should kill their love, yet wishing to be together, they had literally not found the courage to repeat it, though they had attempted it two or three times" (p. 342).
30 ".....a brooding undemonstrative horror seemed to have seized him" (p. 345).
31 Here again Sue does not try to conceal anything where concealment would have served better,
upon itself to thwart .... And now Fate has given us this stab in the back for being such fools as to take Nature at her word!" (p. 350).

Sue is, indeed, a changed woman now — the rebel has now become a conformist: "Vague and quaint imaginings had haunted Sue in the days when her intellect scintillated like a star .... it was wonderfully excellent to the half-awoken intelligence .... that the First Cause worked automatically like a somnambulist .... But affliction makes opposing forces loom anthropomorphous; and those ideas were now exchanged for a sense of Jude and herself fleeing from a persecutor" (pp. 353-54).

But the persecutor in question is her own perverse impulse to self-destruction, 'self-abnegation', 'self-renunciation', as she variously calls it: "Our life has been a vain attempt at self-delight. But self-abnegation is the higher road. We should mortify the flesh — the terrible flesh — the curse of Adam!" (p. 356).

"'Self-renunciation — that's everything. I cannot humiliate myself too much!'" (p. 357). 33

32 Arthur Mizener remarks: "When she discovers that Nature has no raison d'être and that paganism is as false as Christianity, she does not have the strength to face it and retreats into conventional wifehood and conventional Christianity? Arthur Mizener: 'Jude the Obscure as a Tragedy'. p. 57.

33 About Sue's self-mortification Robert Heilman in his article on Sue in NCF remarks: "Sue not only judges her ignoble deeds but indiscriminately condemns a whole life; she converts
Just as Tess came to believe that in a physical sense Alec alone is her husband, Sue thinks that she belongs to Phillotson: "I have had dreadful fears, a dreadful sense of my own insolence of action. I have thought—that I am still his wife" (p. 362).

This is Sue's tragedy—affliction has sucked up all her dignity, has put her under the thrall of convention and Christianity. Jude is only too aware of this tragedy: "Affliction has brought you to this unreasonable state. After converting me to your views on so many things, to find you suddenly turn to the right—about like this—for no reason whatever, confounding all you have formerly said through sentiment merely. You root out of me what little affection and reverence I had left in me for the Church as an old acquaintance" (p. 363).

Eventually, Sue forces herself to go back to Phillotson and Jude rightly calls it "fanatic prostitution" (p. 373), for she goes back to a loveless marriage with all the horror of sharing Phillotson's bed.

Jude's last appeal to her finer instincts fails but a conflict rages in Sue—"a conflict between her affection for Jude and her religious belief" (p. 404). But Hardy leaves us in all her deeds into vice, and crowds into an everlasting hell on earth. Robert Hailman: "Hardy's Sue Bridehead", NCF, Vol. 20, March 1966, No. 4, p. 316.
no doubt that Sue's religious beliefs is a delusion of weakness that makes her act inhuman. Thus when Jude departs from their last meeting, to which he has gone knowing that in his condition he will probably be killed by the trip, "(Sue), in a last instinct of human affection, even now unsubdued by her fetters, she sprang up as if to go and succour him. But she knelt down again, and stopped her ears with her hands till all possible sound of him had passed away" (p. 404).

Sue, next, makes her supreme sacrifice, she decides to share Phillotson's bed. She says: "'It is my duty. I will drink my cup to the dregs!' (p. 409). But even at this moment she cannot help thinking of Jude. She wants to astone for kissing Jude. But when Phillotson lifts her up she shrinks from him, and when he kisses her, "a quick look of aversion passed over her face, but clenching her teeth, she uttered no cry" (p. 412). The Widow Edlin sees the cruelty of the situation: "'Ah! poor soul! Weddings be funerals 'a believe nowadays. Forty-five years ago, come fall, since my man and I married, Times have changed since then!'" (p. 412).

Sue's penance, her self-immolation is complete. She has joined the ranks of martyrs—a martyr at the marital bed.

34 Her guilt works itself out in the very characteristic gesture of unnecessary housework. This, as André Gide was later to remark of his wife, is a typical feminine effort to destroy the hated self. Albert Guérard: "Thomas Hardy: The Novels and Stories, p. 113.
The best summing up of Sue’s tragedy comes from the lips of Jude: "... she was once a woman whose intellect was to mine like a star to a benzoline lamp; who saw all my superstitions as cobwebs that she could brush away with a word. Then bitter affliction came to us, and her intellect broke and she veered round to darkness. Strange differences of sex, that time and circumstance, which enlarge the views of most men, narrow the views of women almost invariably. And now the ultimate horror has come — her giving herself like this to what she loathes, in her enslavement to forms! — she, so sensitive, so shrinking, that the very wind seemed to blow on her with a touch of deference.... Our ideas were fifty years too soon to be any good to us. And so the resistance they met with brought reaction in her, and recklessness and ruin on me!" (p. 414).

Sue’s is a triumph of psychological portraiture. She does not strike us in the end as of narrow significance. She is the rather familiar being whose resources are not up to the demands made upon them. She works partly from an unrecognized egotism, sometimes from an open desire to wound and conquer; her aggressiveness leads her into injuring actions not unlike those of tragic protagonists.

This is how Irving Howe sums up Sue’s character and her

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35 Irving Howe: *Thomas Hardy*, pp. 142-43.
tragedy: "Sue is promethean in mind but masochist in character; and the division destroys her, making a shambles of her mind and a mere sterile discipline of her character. She is all intellectual seriousness, but without that security of will which enables one to live out the consequences of an idea to their limit. She is all feminine charm, but without body, without flesh or smell, without femaleness. Lacking focused sexuality she casts a vaguely sexual aura over everything she touches. Her sensibility is kindled but her senses are mute. Quite without pride in status or self, she is consumed by vanity, the vanity of the sufferer as a mark of distinction, and bears a cross heavier than even fate might demand. Sue cannot leave anything alone, neither her men nor herself: she needs always to be tampering and testing, communicating and quivering."

D.H. Lawrence, quick to see in Sue Bridehead the antithesis of his idea of the woman, writes of her with a fascinated loathing: "Sue is the production of the long selection by men of the woman in whom the female is subordinate to the male principle....

"Her female spirit did not wed with the male spirit..... Her spirit submitted to the male spirit, owned the priority of the male spirit, wished to become the male spirit.....

"One of the supreme products of our civilization is Sue, and a product that will frighten us .........
"She must by the constitution of her nature, remain quite physically intact, for the female was atrophied in her, yet she wanted some quickening for this atrophied female. She wanted even kisses. That the new rousing might give her a sense of life. But she could live only in the mind.

"Here then was her difficulty: to find a man whose vitality could infuse her and make her live, and who would not, at the same time, demand of her a return of the female impulse into him. What man could receive this drainage, receiving nothing back again? He must either die or revolt."36

But after all this has been said, Sue remains an utterly charming and vibrant creature, "a type of woman which has always had an attraction for me (Hardy)."37

According to a German reviewer, "In Bridehead was the first delineation in fiction of the woman who was coming into notice in her thousands every year — the woman of the feminine movement — the slight, pale, 'bachelor girl', the intellectualized emancipated bundle of nerves that modern conditions were producing, mainly in cities as yet, who does not recognize the necessity for most of her sex to follow marriage as a profession, and boast themselves


37 F.E. Hardy : The Life of Thomas Hardy, pp 272.
as superior people because they are licensed to be loved on
the premises. 38

In other words, Sue is the very apotheosis of the 'New
Woman' that Ibsen was to familiarize in his plays. As a modern,
Sue is ahead of her time and that is partly responsible for her
tragedy.

VI

The tragic machinery of the novel has been accentuated by
the introduction of Jude's child by Arabella — the union of
the ideal with the gross. This is how Hardy describes him:

"He was age masquerading as Juvenility, and doing it so badly
that his real self showed through crevices. A ground swell from
ancient years or night seemed now and then to lift in this his
morning-life, when his face took a back view over some great
Atlantic of Time, and appeared not to care about what it saw"
(p. 285).

He is too gloomy for his age and seems to be haunted by the
Freudian death-wish. He has no capacity for enjoying and even at

38 Thomas Hardy: Jude the Obscure, Postscript to the Preface
(1912 ed.), p. VIII.
the Fair at Aldbrickham, where both Jude and Sue seem th
to be happy, his habitual gloom spreads a grey blanket
over everything: "I am very sorry, father and mother," he
said. "But please don't mind! — I can't help it. I should like
the flowers very very much, if I did not keep on thinking
they'd be all withered in a few days" (p. 307).

It appears Hardy has used Little Father Time as a symbol.
Arthur Mizener calls it his most extravagant symbolic gesture,39
whereas A. Alvarez thinks Father Time fails as a symbol.40

Nevertheless Hardy tries hard to make him a historically
probable character. Just as Sue and Jude are ahead of their time,
Father Time too is a product of modern civilization. As Jude says:
"The doctor says there are such boys springing up amongst us —
boys of a sort unknown in the last generation — the outcome
of new views of life. They seem to see all its terror before
they are old enough to have staying power to resist it. He says
it is the beginning of the coming universal wish not to live" *(p. 348).*

All through Part V, Father Time's gloomy presence is used
to remind us that Sue's and Jude's moderate happiness is a snare

40 A. Alvarez : "Jude the Obscure : Afterword", p. 121.
and a delusion.

In Part VI Father Time misinterprets something Sue says and kills all the children, including himself, the repercussions of which on Sue and Jude have already been discussed. Hardy has made Father Time the son of Jude and Arabella and had him brought up by Sue and Jude in order that he might say: "On that little shape had converged all the inauspiciousness and shadow which had darkened the first union of Jude, and all the accidents, mistakes, fears and errors of the last. He was their nodal point, their focus, their expression in a single term. For the rashness of those parents he had groaned, for their ill assortment he had quaked and for the misfortunes of these he had died" (p. 343).

VII

In Jude Arabella is the gross symbol of sex in contradistinction to Sue, who is cold and sexless. In the form of Arabella, the power of sex runs through the whole book from her first deliberate seduction of a grave and artistic youth, to the deceit which compels him into marriage, then to a common insensitive existence, as seen in the hideous pig-sticking episode, so to Jude's futile attempt at suicide.

Arabella exudes sex as is evident from the following
description: "She had a round and prominent bosom, full lips, perfect teeth, and the rich complexion of a Cochin hen's egg. She was a complete and substantial female animal—no more, no less" (p. 44).

At the beginning of the novel, her only desire is to trap Jude into marriage. And for achieving her end she throws all scruples to the wind. For a time Jude is simply infatuated but soon reality dawns with terrible revelations. Her hair is not her own, she has been a barmaid and instead of being fascinated by the dimples she produces, he simply loathes them: "I don't care about dimples. I don't think they improve a woman—particularly a married woman, and of full-sized figure like you" (p. 67).

The pig-sticking episode brings out much that is gross in Arabella. The incident is also significant in the sense it is a symbolic anticipation of Jude's last days. Jude will then be the pig whom Jude now shows some mercy to, but Arabella will show no mercy to Jude. "The dying animal's cry assumed its third and final tone, the shriek of agony; his glazing eyes riveting themselves on Arabella with the keen reproach of a creature recognizing at last the treachery of those who had seemed his only friends" (p. 71).

41 "He's the sort of man I long for, I shall go mad if I can't give myself to him altogether!" (p. 55).
Arabella's whole approach to life is grossly materialistic. While Jude looks at the pig-sticking from an idealistic point of view, she looks at its practical, economic side: "What's God to do with such a messy job as a pig-killing, I should like to know!" She said scornfully, "Poor folks must live" (p. 72).

It has been said that Hardy is not good at portraying odious characters. But it appears he has succeeded at last in Arabella Donn. She is so heartless that she even auctions the photo given to her by Jude, along with other household goods: "The utter death of every tender sentiment in his wife, as brought home to him by this mute and undesignèd evidence of her sale of his portrait and gift, was the conclusive little stroke required to demolish all sentiment in him" (p. 80).

Arabella's return from Australia and her chance meeting with Jude at a popular tavern in Christminster is one of those coincidences for which Hardy is notorious. But it should not be forgotten that Hardy has modelled his tragedies on Greek masters and such returns (the reappearance of key characters) play an important role there. Here at this meeting Arabella seemed to be "very much removed from his life" (p. 138). It "was a rude flounce into the pellucid sentimentality of his sad attachment to Sue" (p. 190).

"There was something particularly uncongenial in the idea of Arabella, who had no more sympathy than a tigress with his relations or him ........." (p. 192).

She is only a sex pot and after Jude has spent a night with her, he is filled with remorse, "a sense of degradation at his revived experiences with her" (p. 194).

But it is strange that what Jude feels for her is not loathing but pity. For example, when Arabella comes to Aldbrickham seeking Jude's help (p. 272), Jude remarks: "She seems much the same as ever, an erring, careless, unreflecting fellow-creature" (p. 272). Arabella succeeds in doing what Jude has failed to do for weeks and weeks: She forces Sue to share his bed and Arabella can only taunt Sue when she goes to see her. When Sue says: "He is mine, if you come to that!"

Arabella replies, 'He wasn't yesterday' ....... Well, my dear, you've been quick about it and I expect my visit last night helped him'" (p. 273).

Her view of matrimony is practical and business-like and in sharp contrast to Sue's.43

43 "... how hopelessly vulgar an institution legal marriage is — a sort of trap to catch a man!" (p. 280).
"Life with a man is more business-like after it (marriage), and money matters work better, and then, you see, if you have rows and he turns you out of doors, you can get the law to protect you......And if he bolts away from you......you'll have the sticks o'furniture, and won't be looked upon as a thief" (p. 279).

When Arabella sees Sue and Jude happy in each other's company at the Great Wessex Fair (iv. 5, p. 300), she burns with jealousy and all the old fire for Jude is rekindled - "always wanting another man than your own" (p. 303), as Anny points out the truth about Arabella's sexual behaviour.

Just as the sensual Alec's transformation into a spiritual Revivalist preacher strains our credulity, similarly "female animal" Arabella's religiosity after Cartlett's death does the same and could be explained as a sublimation of her sexual needs. As Arabella herself says: "After Cartlett's death I was passing the chapel in the street next ours, and went into it for shelter from a shower of rain. I felt a need of some sort of support under my loss, and as it was righter than gin, I took to going there regular, and found it a great comfort" (p. 324).

But this is only a pseudo-support, for no sooner has she seen Sue and heard of Jude her mind starts wandering, her sexual needs get the upper hand. 44 "And ever since, do what I

44 This is reminiscent of Alec D'Urberville, who gives up preaching after he has seen Tess a second time and all the old lust is rekindled.
will, and though I sung the hymns wi' all my strength, I have not been able to help thinking about 'n; which I have no right to do as a chapel member ....... After all that's said about comforts of religion, I wish I had Jude back again ....... Feelings are feelings! I won't be a hypocrite any longer!" (pp. 325-26).

When Arabella meets Phillotson, she, in a fiendish mood, puts all sorts of ideas into him: "'There's nothing like bondage and a stone-deaf taskmaster for taming us women'" (p. 329).

Arabella quoting the Bible is like the Devil quoting the Scriptures and Phillotson is almost won over. He seems to agree with Arabella when he says: "'Cruelty is the law pervading all nature and society, and we can't get out of it, if we would!'" (p. 329).

To get Jude back, the fiendish Arabella leaves no stone unturned and the sooner Phillotson gets Sue back the better it is for her. Thus at a subsequent meeting Phillotson receives the further intelligence from Arabella that Jude and Sue were never married and Sue now believes she rightfully belongs to him (Phillotson).

After Sue has gone back to Phillotson, Arabella is at her old trick again to trap Jude. And she does trap Jude in the old way: "The circumstances were not altogether unlike those
of their entry into the cottage at Crosscombe, such a long time before. Nor were perhaps Arabella's motives" (p. 389).

Though her strategy succeeds and she gets Jude back — married and all — Jude's ill-health is something she has not bargained for. For Arabella has not only to look after the business but also her invalid husband. They have sunk once again to the bitter depths of conventional marriage and Hardy draws an ironical picture of the situation: "The landlord of the lodging, who had heard that they were a queer couple, had doubted if they were married at all, especially as he had seen Arabella kiss Jude one evening when she had taken a little cordial; and he was about to give them notice to quit, till by chance over-hearing her one night haranguing Jude in rattling terms and ultimately flinging a shoe at his head, he recognized the note of genuine wedlock" (p. 399).

In the later stages of the novel, it appears the novelist has lost his grasp of Arabella's character, and she gets more and more fiendish, the very apotheosis of cruelty. She does not post the letter she has written to Sue under Jude's plaintive request: "Arabella, like some other nurses, thought that you duty towards your invalid was to pacify him by any means, short of really acting upon his fancies" (p. 401).

In her predatory sexuality, Arabella next fixes her sexual
needs on the physician Vilbert and gives him his own preparation of love-philtre: "Weak women must provide for a rainy day . . . . 
And I can't pick and choose now, as I could when I was younger.
And one must take the old if one can't get the young" (p. 416).

She has no tender feelings left for Jude now, and as Jude lies on his death bed she "makes up" with great care: "It was afternoon and Arabella was at the looking glass curling her hair . . . . when she had finished this, she practised a dimple and put on her things" (p. 416).

She leaves the house to participate in the gay revelry of the Remembrance Day while Jude dies alone, uncared for. The gross animal that Arabella is, knowing well that Jude is dead, she goes out to see the "boat bumping" and then flirts with Vilbert, with the shadow of death hanging about her.

Her callous neglect of Jude at his hour of death makes her a very odious character indeed. Arthur Mizener seems to be right when he says: When Hardy comes to Jude's actual death, he presents Arabella with a choice, the choice of staying with the dying Jude or going to the Remembrance Games. There is not the slightest sign of hesitation in Arabella over the choice, she goes without question to the games, flirts with the quack physician, and is upset only by the thought that if "Jude were discovered to have died alone an inquest might be deemed necessary" (p. 421).
As in the pig-killing scene Arabella is shown as feeling only brute passion and fear of convention; she is the parody villainess of melodrama; not the mighty opposite of tragedy.

Where Hardy thought Arabella "the villain of the piece", Lawrence tried to make her out the heroine: "He insists that she is a pig-killer's daughter; he insists that she dragged Jude into pig-killing; he lays stress on her false tail of hair. That is not the point at all. This is only Hardy's bad art. He himself as an artist, manages in the whole picture of Arabella almost to make insignificant in her these pig-sticking, false hair co crudities. But he must have his personal revenge on her for her coarseness, which offends him, because he is something of an Angel Clare."

VIII

Here, in Jude the Obscure, there is no chorus as has been noted in The Mayor, no rustic folks ushering in mirth and jollity

45 Arthur Mizener: "Jude the Obscure as a Tragedy", Reprinted in Modern British Fiction, ed. Mark Schorer, p. 60.

and commenting on the action of the tragedy. There is only
widow Edlin, a practical, worldly-wise woman, a perfect foil
to the idealists, Sue and Jude.

But Jude is patterned on the Greek tragedies in the sense
that it has elements of pity and terror and the protagonists
come to their tragic doom through a flaw in their character.
Whether these elements affect catharsis is a different matter,
though Hardy seemed to think they did.47

The pity of Jude lies in the fact that in spite of some
sterling qualities, his idealism, his thirst for knowledge, his
sincerity, his unselfishness, in short, his innate goodness of
soul, he has been an utter failure in life; both in ambition
and in love.

After his application to one of the masters of a college in
Christminster has been rejected and the realization that Sue is
not to be his but Phillotson's has dawned on him, he is
weighed down by remorse: "If he had been a woman he must
have screamed under the nervous tension which he was
now undergoing. But that relief being denied to his virility,
he clenched his teeth in misery, bringing lines about his

47 In his postscript to the 1912 edition of Jude, he writes of
the book as a "...fable of a tragedy, told for its own sake
as a presentation of particulars explaining a good deal that
was universal and not without a hope that certain cathartic,
Aristotelian qualities might be found therein."

Thomas Hardy: Jude the Obscure, p. vii.
mouth like those in Laocoon, and corrugations between his brows" (p. 133).

He realizes that he is "a fellow gone to the bad; though I had the best intentions in the world at one time. Now I am melancholy mad...." (p. 133).

The whole history of Jude arouses pity, beginning with the beating that he receives at the hands of Farmer Troutham because he is too tender-hearted and ending with his death in callous neglect. Hardy sounds the note of pity quite early in the book: ".... he was a boy who could not himself bear to hurt anything.... 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).

The pity of Sue lies in the fact that she cannot reconcile physical love with Platonic love. She has much that is fine in her, specially her intellect which dazzles, but affliction enslaves her to convention and Christianity, against which she had rebelled.48

With deep love for Jude still burning in her heart and with a real horror of the sexual act, she demands to share Phillotson's bed: "My children—are dead—and it is right they should be!

48 "What began as intellectual freedom ends as prostitution to an idea".

A. Alvarez: "Jude the Obscure: Afterword", p. 119.
...... They were sin begotten. They were sacrificed to teach me how to live! — their death was the first stage of my purification — You'll take me back?" (p. 376).

She personifies these lines (which she herself quotes) from Shelley's "Epipsychidion":

"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 . . . ." (p. 255).

But her own weaknesses of character and the circumstances of her life prove too strong for her and she becomes a martyr at the marital bed.

Sue arouses the feeling that something fine — her radiant spirit — has been broken.

_Jude the Obscure_ has elements of terror as well; there is a recognition that both Sue and Jude are caught up in a vast scheme of things — call it the meshes of fate or circumstances, what you will. With every stroke of chance in _Jude_, we are face to face with terror.

First, the chance meeting between the idealist Jude and Arabella, with its disastrous consequences (p. 76).

Second, the chance meeting of Jude, with his weakness for women, and Sue, with her epicene tenderness, "in love with boxing
loved*, an epicure in emotions, yet cold and sexless, with real horror of the sexual act.

Third, the chance meeting between Sue and Jude and Phillotson, ending with Sue marrying Phillotson.

Fourth, the chance meeting between Arabella and Sue, and the green-eyed monster forcing Sue to give herself to Jude's sexual desires at long last.

Fifth and final: The coincidence of Father Time killing Sue's children and himself with its tragic consequences: Sue getting fettered to convention and back to Phillotson and his bed, and Jude away from convention, trapped by Arabella once again, dying alone and uncared for.

When Sue has made up her mind to go back to Phillotson, Jude is only too aware of the danger of a life without her, for once Sue leaves, he will be caught once again in the meshes of his own weaknesses of character and the forces of fate from which Sue had rescued him: "I am in terror, if you leave me, it will be with me another case of the pig that was washed turning back to his wallowing in the mire" (p. 366).

Thus we see that *Jude the Obscure* arouses both the emotions of pity and terror, pity because something fine has been broken and bruised, terror because both Sue and Jude are caught up in the "artificial system of things" as Hardy himself puts it.
There is no doubt that Hardy considered *Jude the Obscure* to be a tragedy and wanted it to be treated as such. The earlier critics of Hardy are almost unanimous in their view that *Jude* fulfils the elements of a tragedy; but the modern critics of Hardy have pointed out the flaws in *Jude* as a tragedy. Notable among these critics are D.H. Lawrence, Albert Guerard and Arthur Mizener. In his essay on Thomas Hardy, D.H. Lawrence makes the trenchant comment that *Jude the Obscure* is not a true, an essential tragedy: "Necessarily painful it was, but they were not at war with God, only with society. Yet they were all cowed by the mere judgment of man upon them, and all the while by their own souls they were right. The judgment of man killed them, not the judgment of their own souls, or the judgment of eternal God!"

And he stresses that this is the weakness of *Jude* and of modern tragedy in which "transgression against the social code is made to bring destruction, as though the social code weakened our irrevocable fate".

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49 Abercrombie, MacDowall, Rutland, Duffin and David Cecil.
The real tragedy of the lives of Eustacia, Tess, Sue and Jude is, he suggests, that "they are unfaithful to the greater unwritten morality, which would have bidden Eustacia fight Clym for his own soul and Tess take and claim her Angel, since she had the greater light; would have bidden Jude and Sue endure for very honour's sake, since one must hide by the best that one has known and not succumb to lower good".

In other words, Sue's recantation and return to the husband whom she does not love and Jude's return to Arabella, who had merely trapped him sexually, were essentially false, and Hardy weakened the tragedy by not daring to write from his own inner belief that Sue and Jude should have remained faithful to one another and defied society, what Lawrence calls "the little human morality play, with its queer frame...... and mechanized movement (which goes on) seriously, portentously till some of the protagonists ...... weary of the stage and look into the wilderness raging round .... is (in this novel) the centre of the embittered action : the 'beauty and the wonder' of Hardy's other novels which set the morality play against the unexplored, eternally incomprehensible outer immorality of Nature, is nowhere visible here".50

50 D.H. Lawrence : "A Study of Thomas Hardy" from Phoenix, p 420.
Albert Guerard's objections to treating Jude as a tragic hero have already been noted, though elsewhere he says: "Jude the Obscure is not realism but tragedy and like all tragedy is symbolic; it is a vision of things and a reading of life, and according to that vision 'happiness is but an occasional episode in the general drama of pain'. 51

This is what Arthur Mizener says against Jude as a tragedy:
"Jude the Obscure is ..... not a tragedy, not a carefully devised representation of life, the purpose of which is to contrast at every turn, the permanently squalid real life of man, with the ideal life (or, if you will, man's dream of an ideal life) ..... Hardy says in the preface to Jude that it 'is simply an endeavour to give shape and coherence to a series of seemings, or personal impressions, the question of their consistency or their discordance ..... being regarded as not of the first moment'. But it is precisely because Hardy never really posed for himself the question of how the meaning of his impressions could be coherent without being consistent that Jude, for all the power of its presented life is not a tragedy." 52

Against such views could be placed the views of Abercrombie and MacDowall.

51 A.J. Guerard : Thomas Hardy : The Novels and Stories, p. 110.
52 Arthur Mizener : "Jude the Obscure as a Tragedy", pp. 60-61.
"It is profoundly right that the life of a man should figure as the special case of this essential tragedy—the courageous futility, not simply of resistance, but of aspiration, of the desire to make circumstance give way to, as well as allow, personal being."

"If finally we ask whether anything so near to pessimism, can be really tragic, the answer must be that the victims in it are never spurned or rejected. Although they falter, they are not demeaned. The fineness in them stands out amidst the ruin, and the tragedy wrung from these opposites has, for all its bias, a keener reality than that in any other of the novels."

Irving Howe in his study of Thomas Hardy says: "Their (Sue's and Jude's) predicament is tragic in that deeply serious and modern sense of the word which teaches us that human waste, the waste of spirit and potential is a terrible thing. Yet a tragedy in any Classical sense Jude is not, for it directs our attention not to the fateful action of a looming protagonist but the inner torments of familiar contemporaries. In Classical

55 Irving Howe: Thomas Hardy, p. 145.
56 "It is a tragedy whose unity is not Aristotelian but emotional." A. Alvarez: "Jude the Obscure: Afterword", p. 121.
tragedy, the hero realizes himself through an action. In the modern novel, the central action occurs within the psyche of the hero."

In my opinion, in *Jude*, Hardy has written a tragedy that partakes of the qualities of both Shakespearean and Sophoclean tragedy. Here are souls too fine and above the level of the world, tragedy is brought about by lack of will and through a combination of character and destiny.

57 Cf. Edmund Blunden's poem "Report on Experience" which is relevant to the idea of the "world's slow stain" corrupting the pure.