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Sue Bridehead: A Rorschach Test

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy



Department of English Studies

University of Durham

2017

Abstract

This thesis is a metacritical survey of the criticism on Sue Bridehead's portrayal in Thomas Hardy's novel *Jude the Obscure*, from the time of its publication in 1895 to now, and is intended to be a comprehensive overview and analysis of the major critical lines of enquiry about Sue's characterisation. Since the scope of this thesis is to engage with over one hundred years of literary criticism, I keep the focus concentrated primarily on the critical responses to the depiction of Sue. I discuss the reasons behind the sustained critical interest in her; and show how she has global appeal in unifying as well as differentiating reader-responses, and opening up new modes of theoretical analysis surrounding the complexity of her representation.

The objective of this study is to demonstrate how Sue's enigmatic characterisation effectually serves the purpose of a Rorschach test. I display how analysing her representation makes readers and critics commit to certain positions. This leads to a plurality in the critical responses - a development that is facilitated by Hardy, who leaves deliberate narrative gaps in the novel. I discuss how this creates the space for the readers to fill the textual gaps with their own presuppositions, and cultural and theoretical beliefs, while analysing Sue's portrayal.

This thesis draws on Hardy's letters, literary notebooks, and biographies to contextualise the portrayal of Sue, as a supplement to the main body of analysis of the critical material on Sue that is available in book, essay and article forms. Finally, I suggest a way forward in critical studies of Hardy's works using Sue's portrayal as a case study through the application of the theoretical framework of 'transculturalism'.

This research seeks to contribute to the body of Hardy scholarship by providing an overview of the existing critical commentary on Sue, while emphasising the ongoing contemporaneity of his most controversial characterisation.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	12-32
I: THE CHAPTER BREAKDOWNS	21-24
II: <i>JUDE</i>: PLOT AND BACKGROUND	25-27
III: THE INTERWOVEN BIOGRAPHICAL STRANDS.....	28-32
CHAPTER 1: TO BE SUE BRIDEHEAD IN VICTORIAN BRITAIN	33-75
§1.1: THE PUBLICATION OF <i>JUDE</i> AND THE NINETEENTH CENTURY CRITICAL RECEPTION	40-75
CHAPTER 2: THE CRITICAL DILEMMA THAT IS SUE – CRITICISM RANGING FROM EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY TO THE 1970s	76-136
§2.1: SUE AND THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY CRITICS	79-86
§2.2: SUE BRIDEHEAD: A TRAGIC CHARACTER?	87-95

§2.3: “AND JUDE THE OBSCURE AND HIS BELOVED”96-114

§2.4: OTHER EARLY TO MID-TWENTIETH CENTURY CRITICISM ON SUE .. 115-136

CHAPTER 3: MODES OF CHANGING CRITICISM.....137-184

§3.1: HARDY’S REALISM.....138-143

§3.2: MARXIST/SOCIOLOGICAL/MATERIALIST CRITICISM144-158

§3.3: FEMINISM AND SUE159-184

CHAPTER 4: SUE THROUGH THE CRITICAL EYES OF THE LATE

TWENTIETH AND EARLY TWENTY-FIRST CENTURIES185-288

§4.1: PSYCHOANALYSIS AND SUE BRIDEHEAD187-205

§4.1A: MOTHERHOOD AND SUE206-218

§4.1B: IDENTITY POLITICS, GENDER, SEXUALITY AND SUE219-229

§4.2: THE NEW WOMAN, AESTHETICISM AND SUE230

§4.2A: THE NEW WOMAN REVISITED	230-243
§4.2B: AESTHETICISM AND SUE	244-247
§4.3: HYSTERIA, NEUROSIS, NEURASTHENIA AND SUE.....	248-270
§4.4: HOMOSOCIALITY, MASCULINITY, ‘SAPPHIC SPACES’ AND SUE ...	271-280
§4.5: IMPERIALISM AND SUE.....	281-288
CHAPTER 5: SUE, TRANSCULTURALISM AND DIVERSE IDENTITY	
FORMATION.....	289-315
§5.1: TRANSCULTURALISM	292-297
§5.2: MIGRATION, URBANISATION, DIVERSE IDENTITY FORMATION AND SUE.....	298-305
§5.3: TRANSCULTURALISM, INTERMEDIALITY AND SUE.....	306-315
CONCLUSION: PAST AND PRESENT	316-331

BIBLIOGRAPHY.....332-359

Statement of Copyright

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Introduction

Thomas Hardy's timeline (1840- 1928) lends itself nicely to him emerging as a transitional literary figure, rooted in the Victorian ethics and conventions of the world he grew up in but at the same time branching out towards a more modern sensibility, in keeping with the changes that the twentieth century and the modernist movement brought in its wake. He was active as a novelist from 1867, when he finished writing *The Poor Man and the Lady* (though it remained unpublished, his first publication being *Desperate Remedies* in 1871), to 1895, when he published *Jude the Obscure* (though an earlier work *The Well-Beloved*, which was first serialised in 1892, was revised and published in book form after *Jude* in 1897).

The characterisations in his novels, for which Hardy faced severe censorship and criticism in the late nineteenth century, continued to evoke critical interest in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and were scrutinized through newer modes of thinking and theoretical paradigms. The criticism over the decades became more complex, focussing on the intellectual, psychological, spiritual and emotional struggles of the characters alongside the external difficulties they faced from socio-cultural forces and expectations. Penny Boumelha writes in the Introduction to *Jude the Obscure: A Casebook* that *Jude*:

[...] is a novel whose scandalous challenge to its reader lies not in its plot of illicit sexuality or its lack of respect for social institutions, but in the resistance it offers to any given position of reading. It is a novel that draws a good deal of power from its emotional coherence, but which cannot be made to fit neatly into any set of arguments, views or generic conventions (Boumelha, 2000: 2).

A concerted effort to understand the self in relation to itself alongside the society around it is reflected in Hardy's focus on the interiority of the protagonists of *Jude*, particularly through the highly individualized presentation of Sue Bridehead. Kristin Brady writes in her seminal essay "Thomas Hardy and matters of gender":

From their first publication, the works of Thomas Hardy have been explicitly and obsessively associated with matters of gender. This is the case, not only because these texts confront and perpetuate ideas about sexual difference that were influential in Hardy's own time, but also because his vivid, contradictory, and often strange representations of sexual desire, like a series of cultural Rorschach tests, have continually elicited from his readers intense and revealing responses: the act of interpretation exposes unspoken assumptions that circulate in the historical moment of the interpreter, and Hardy's representations of sexuality are especially effective in making visible those particularized hermeneutical processes. Indeed, to study the changing responses to gender in Hardy's published works from 1871 to the present is, in effect, to trace a fairly detailed history of the ways in which sexuality has been constructed within the British Isles and North America since the late-Victorian period (Brady, 1999: 93).

As Brady highlights, Hardy's novels have been well studied for decades now, with a particular focus on his controversial female characterisations, and have yielded rich theoretical insights into the changing critical responses to gender through the assessment of his representations of sexuality. In this thesis, I undertake a more holistic approach and study the way the critical perception surrounding Hardy's most controversial female portrayal, Sue Bridehead, has consistently changed in keeping with the literary climate of the day, from the time of publication to now. The focus is not just on the changing critical perception from the vantage point of gender, but all the different dimensions of critical modes of thinking that have been, and continue to be applied to Hardy's works. I show the intellectual journey of Hardy studies, which critical literary theory has aided and informed, to shape the reader responses to Hardy's works, which in turn has been revelatory of the reader's cultural, emotional and intellectual suppositions and beliefs.

This thesis is both comprehensive and evaluative. The main thrust of the thesis, however, is to demonstrate the particular intensity of the range of criticism generated by the characterisation of Sue. This is ascertained by investigating the debates and responses from the different schools of literary criticism that the fictional portrayal of Sue has evoked over the decades. My purpose is to highlight and substantiate how *Jude* as a text, and Sue as a character, achieve the status of a Rorschach test; a vital observation that Brady makes in her essay, but does not engage with in depth. A Rorschach test is originally a psychological test in which subjects' perceptions of inkblots are recorded and then analysed using psychological interpretation and/or complex algorithms. I argue that in the case of Sue's characterisation, the critical analyses/understanding of her offer an unusually direct insight into the critics themselves and their conceptual, cultural and gender assumptions.

Critics have responded to Sue's characterisation with remarkable engagement and candour, her portrayal acting as a focal point for different critical debates, as readers and critics cannot remain neutral to her, leading to an unusual diversity of criticism. This in itself is a critical phenomenon that requires attention and investigation – the extent to which Sue engages critical attention and prompts varying readings. I show the intellectual journey of Hardy studies, with particular focus on Sue's critical reception, which critical literary theory has aided and informed, to shape the reader responses to Hardy's works, which in turn is revelatory of the changes in readers' cultural, emotional and intellectual suppositions and beliefs over the decades. This is a mostly chronological study of the changing critical responses to Sue that link the past to the present and help consider the future in theoretical criticism of Hardy's works. Sue's portrayal comes in a line of other controversial female representations by Hardy like Tess, Bathsheba and Eustacia but none

of the other female representations have divided critical opinion as much as Sue and generated such continual debate and commentary. Her provocative depiction makes people commit to certain positions, encouraging reactions. That is why this exercise becomes a powerful one in revealing how the reader responses to a text transcend the bounds of the text and become reflective of their own suppositions and pre-suppositions, born out of their own lived experiences and their socio-cultural context and setting.

Louise Rosenblatt offers a reader-centred theory of reading in *Literature as Exploration* (1938), stating:

A novel or poem or play remain *merely inkspots* on a paper until a reader transforms them into a set of *meaningful symbols*. The literary work exists in the live circuit set up between reader and text: the reader infuses intellectual and emotional meanings into the pattern of verbal symbols, and those symbols channel his thoughts and feelings. Out of this complex process emerges a more or less organized imaginative experience [my emphasis] (Rosenblatt, 1938: 25).

As explained by Jane Tompkins in the Introduction to *Reader-Response Criticism*, 'Reader-response criticism is not a conceptually unified critical position, but a term that has come to be associated with the work of critics who use the words reader, the reading process, and response to mark out an area for investigation' (Tompkins, 1980: ix). The overarching argument of my study broadly follows from Rosenblatt's transactional reader-response theory, which she develops more fully in *The Reader, The Text, The Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work*, published in 1978, that suggests that the reader and the text are joined through a transaction (Rosenblatt, 1978). Rosenblatt offers the framework of this transactional process between the text's inferred meaning and the individual interpretation by the reader, which is influenced by their social position, cultural assumptions, individuality and knowledge.

Richard Kerridge analyses a scene from Jude's childhood in detail in "Ecological Hardy":

Early in *Jude* [...] the working class boy Jude lies weeping by the roadside, having looked for the first time into a Latin grammar. "Somebody might have come along that way who would have asked him his trouble, and might have cheered him by saying that his notions were further advanced than those of his grammarian. But nobody did come, because nobody does." (55). This switch from past to present generalizes Jude's plight, undermining the sense of distance that absolves the reader of responsibility. Despite its fatalism, the present tense insists on a present need for remedy and on the reader's membership of the social system that has no use for Jude's desire to read [...] The idea of crossing the space that divides us from Jude is held out too late. Only in seeing that nobody did come do we recognise the possibility that somebody might have. And, of course none of us could have come upon Jude, because Jude is a fiction. The principal function of Jude's fictitiousness at this point is that it means we can do nothing to help him. He is in the novel and we are outside it. Hardy often forecloses abruptly this way, as if readers, because they are unable or unwilling to intervene, should forfeit the right to watch (Kerridge, 2001: 128-129).

Kerridge's analysis is fascinating as he highlights Hardy's demand from his readers to be aware of their presence in the narrative they are reading, thus turning them into active agents and participants in the text. Kerridge surmises that the readers 'should acknowledge that a visitor is not a ghostly, free-moving figure who watches and leaves no imprint but a bodily presence engaged in an act of consumption that will have material consequences' (Kerridge, 2001: 129-130). Kerridge emphasizes how Hardy successfully turns his readers into active participants in his texts by creating a narrative voice that is constantly shifting. Hardy does not leave the narrative in his texts to 'unreliable character narrators whose viewpoint is closed and clearly differentiated from that of the implied reader', instead retaining 'an impersonal narrative voice, but one that is constantly changing position, moving from one proxy observer to another' (Kerridge, 2001: 132). This imbues the reader's perspective with a sense of responsibility and creates the scope for Hardy to leave

narrative gaps, as he does in *Jude*, to allow the readers to fill the blanks, as they deem appropriate.

In tracing the varying critical responses to Sue over the decades, I examine all the major forms of theoretical analyses: Liberal Humanism, Formalism, New Criticism, Structuralism, Feminism, Marxism, Poststructuralism, Materialism, New Historicism and Psychoanalysis among others. In the course of the thesis, certain forms of analysis like feminist and psychoanalytic criticism emerge as leading theoretical modes of study of Sue, yielding a greater insight into her puzzling characterisation. Among the many important critical studies on Sue, the ones that especially stand out are D.H. Lawrence's *Study of Thomas Hardy* (1936), Mary Jacobus' "Sue the Obscure" (1975) and the feminist studies such as Penny Boumelha's *Thomas Hardy and Women: Sexual Ideology and Narrative Form* (1982), Rosemary Morgan's *Women and Sexuality in the Novels of Thomas Hardy* (1988) and Patricia Ingham's *Thomas Hardy* (1989). During the same decade there is a strong emergence of important cultural materialist, sociological and Marxist studies of Sue like George Wotton's *Thomas Hardy: Towards a Materialist Criticism* (1985), John Goode's *Thomas Hardy: The Offensive Truth* (1988) and Peter Widdowson's *Hardy in History: A Study in Literary Sociology* (1989). Kristin Brady's essay "Hardy and Matters of Gender" (1999) is a significant chronological study of the prominent gender and sexuality related criticism of Hardy's female representations like Sue from the late nineteenth century to the end of the twentieth century. Certain important psychoanalytic studies of Sue's portrayal are *Thomas Hardy: Psychological Novelist* (1981) where Rosemary Sumner uses Freud and Jung's theories to discuss Sue's neurosis, *Hardy's Fables of Integrity: Woman, Body, Text* (1991) where Marjorie Garson borrows from Lacanian theory to consider the dissolution of the body and the breaking down of language

as focal points of anxiety in *Jude*, and James Kincaid's "Girl-watching, Child-beating and Other Exercises for Readers of *Jude the Obscure*" (1993) where Kincaid studies the psychology behind the voyeurism and sadomasochism of the readers of *Jude*.

I argue that the varying criticisms on Sue's characterisation ultimately reflect that Sue is read, understood and analysed by critics and readers through their own contexts, their own socio-cultural setting, their past and present experiences and their cognitive and engaging abilities. It is an admixture of the socio-cultural context, the circumstances of publication and the nature of the readership that come together in the creation of a literary work which does 'not occur in a vacuum but in a certain time in its author's career and in cultural/literary history' (Kramer, 1999: 164). Similarly, the reaction and response to a literary work become symptomatic and indicative of the individual perceptions of the readers that stem from their own backgrounds. This makes it interesting to inspect, for instance, how changing perception surrounding the characterization of Sue can reflect the way feminism as a movement has evolved from the Victorian Age to now, as well as the changing attitudes to women in general over the decades. A central issue for feminism is its intimate relatedness to real life. The intellectual discussions surrounding it stem from, and are underscored by, lived experiences of women who become united in their status as 'other' in a patriarchal context.

While all scholarly and literary work can be construed to be at some level a reflection of ourselves, the way we read and analyse a text is also subject to our own individual experiences coming into it. We read ourselves in and through a text, which makes it dynamic. There is no refuting the idea that feminist issues are very close to life: women worldwide struggle with social constructions and conventions that limit the possibilities of female action, agency and choice. I personally became interested in

studying and researching women and feminism because lived experiences of women remain tainted with many instances of sexism, otherization and harassment; sexual, emotional or otherwise, even in the twenty first century. Sue's characterization has been especially fascinating for me since I read *Jude the Obscure* for the first time well over a decade ago. The pressures that Sue faces as a fictional representation of a non-conforming woman in nineteenth-century England to submit to marriage, motherhood and the dictates of 'normal' social and sexual behavior are still operative forces for the women of today's world and time, as I demonstrate in this thesis. The societal demand for female conformity to a broadly patriarchal structure is subtler in recent times, and operates in varying degrees, with worldwide changes in marriage laws and increasing research on female sexuality and changing cultural responses since 1895. However, the discrepancy in male and female freedom of movement and autonomy, and the double standards pertaining to male/female roles and places in society are still operative and visible. Hardy's female representations like Sue are particularly interesting to study, as they become a representation of Hardy's effort to reveal and break away from the gendered expectations of the Victorian readers. As Ellen L. Sprechman surmises in *Seeing Women as Men: Role Reversal in the Novels of Thomas Hardy*:

Although reared in the Victorian mentality, Hardy wrote at a time of great upheaval. [...] what Hardy did that was different from anyone before him was to fashion each of his novels around a strong, independent, charismatic woman at the same time that he painted weak, ineffectual men [...] (Sprechman, 1995: 4-5).

This thesis will be a useful resource for academics, researchers, students and the general readers and enthusiasts of Thomas Hardy as an overview as well as analysis of the

significant criticism on the compelling, engaging and challenging characterisation of Sue Bridehead, who has retained general and academic interest over the decades.¹

¹ I have used the Harvard system of referencing in this thesis, with the single exception of *Jude the Obscure*, Oxford World's Classic edition (1985), which is referred to as *Jude* parenthetically in the text.

I

The chapter breakdowns

In the course of this thesis, I outline the history of the reception of *Jude*, and Sue's portrayal within it. *Jude* has never been out of print since its first publication in the book form in 1895, and it has continued to be widely read, analysed, debated and adapted into other forms of mass consumption like films and television. Because of this continued general and critical interest in *Jude*, the scope of critical material to study and include is extensive, even when the focus is narrowly on Sue's portrayal. I have reviewed book length studies and monographs on Hardy's works, biographies, reviews, journal articles, collections of critical essays and companion texts. Drawing upon different sources, I have organised the existing critical material into thematically related sections.

The first chapter of this thesis provides a history of the atmosphere of censorship in the late nineteenth century, within which literary climate Hardy wrote and published the highly controversial *Jude*. I then address the critical reactions, the reasons that provoke and trigger these reactions, and the negative critical backlash aimed at Sue's portrayal from the readers and critics of the late nineteenth century. The chapter reveals how Hardy's contemporary reviewers and critics perceived his scathing indictment of the Victorian social law and order - conventions of marriage, institutionalised religion and class struggles in *Jude* - to be sensational, pagan, and unacceptable. His frank treatment of controversial topics like pre-marital sex, living together before marriage and female desire

for autonomy in both public and private spheres were considered controversial and a direct challenge to the existing social structure.

In the second chapter, I study and analyse the early twentieth-century responses to Sue, up to the 1970s. I focus particularly on the elaborate analysis of Hardy's works by D. H. Lawrence in the *Study of Thomas Hardy* (1936), as Lawrence's critique of Sue is especially significant in the history of the critical reception of her portrayal. This chapter analyses the way Sue is received by the critics of this period, with the central argument structured around the critical debate on whether Hardy can be read as a 'tragic' novelist, and Sue as a 'tragic' character. The main modes of theoretical criticism used in this period are liberal humanism, formalism, structuralism and New Criticism; hinged primarily on close reading, notions of tragedy and the human, to study Hardy's place within those tropes.

The third chapter is a discussion of the significant intellectual shift that comes over Hardy studies in the second half of the twentieth century, due mainly to the importance and momentum that theory in criticism gathers during this period, as is observable through the critical evaluations of Sue during this phase. The sections of this chapter provide discussions on Hardy's realism and the new modes of criticism that begin in earnest during this phase, such as poststructuralism, Marxism, materialism, New Historicism and, most importantly, sophisticated and advanced feminist and gender based criticism.

While the first three chapters follow a mostly chronological narrative, the fourth chapter is structured thematically to highlight the main theoretical modes of criticism as they appear through the reception history, the arguments and counter-arguments, which are substantiated by different critical voices spanning across the last three decades. The critical assessment of Sue's portrayal, from the 1980s to now, demonstrates greater emphasis being placed on theory in criticism, and the desire to adopt a more systematic mode of

analysing the way in which the readers and critics engage with, and respond to, the characterisation of Sue. The first section of this chapter demonstrates the influence of psychoanalytic theory in literary criticism and its application to reading Sue. I focus on assessing her portrayal as a mother, the identity and gender politics surrounding her representation, and the pathologization of her female body - a consequence of nineteenth-century medical discourse that fed the anxieties about the degeneration of the social body of which the deviant female body was considered a reflection. The next section branches out to study Sue as a 'New Woman', through the viewpoints of the late twentieth and early twenty first century critics to emphasize the regenerated academic interest in the 'New Woman' icon and 'her' place within the Aesthetic and Decadent movements. In the next section, I deliberate on the impact of masculinity studies upon Hardy's works and their effects on the criticism of Sue. In the final section, I signal the postcolonial direction of Hardy studies, which is still a relatively new field, by reviewing the critical stance on Sue when considered through a postcolonial perspective, placing Hardy within the imperialist context and timeline of his novelistic career.

The fifth and the final chapter is a departure from the ongoing examination of the reception-history of reading Sue to put forward an original analysis of Sue's portrayal from the theoretical lens of 'transculturalism', as an addition to the pre-existing modes of criticism on Hardy's works. I propose that assessing Sue's portrayal and her identity formation in *Jude* through the research paradigm of transculturalism offers new insights into her characterisation, and the reasons behind the sustained critical and reader interest in her. I situate the global appeal of Sue's portrayal in the inter-connectedness of cultures within an increasingly globalised world. This is demonstrated through a discussion of the film adaptations of Hardy's novels *Jude* and *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* by director Michael

Winterbottom; and a comparative study of *Jude* and the first Indian novel in English, *Rajmohan's Wife*.

II

Jude: Plot and background

Jude is often considered to be the high point of Hardy's novelistic career, for being his final novel as well as his strongest, most persistent protest against conservative Victorian social norms and regulations. Though *Jude* is structured as a *bildungsroman*; a novel that deals with one person's formative years - in this case Jude - the narrative following his academic and romantic pursuits: Sue Bridehead, the female protagonist has been hailed by many critics as arguably Hardy's most challenging character to understand and critically engage with. Sue's portrayal is at the crux of the discussion of this thesis and as the chapters of this study will indicate, she has been analysed from multiple critical and theoretical perspectives that have shifted and morphed in keeping with the changing times and literary climate of the critic/reader studying her portrayal. She has been variously read as a 'New Woman', coquette, flirt, neurotic, neurasthenic, frigid, asexual, liberated, and/or oppressed.² Her resistance to any one critical stance has made her a consistently interesting study from different literary and theoretical stances, as well as from the perspective of being a representation that throws light on an individual's relation to structures of power.

² The term 'New Woman' was coined by Sarah Grand in "The New Aspect of the Woman Question" (1894). Grand uses this term to refer to women who were non-conforming to societal, moral and sexual ideals, were politically astute and determined to claim educational and employment rights equal to those enjoyed by men.

The inception of the idea behind *Jude* can be traced back to an earlier work, Hardy's first novel, *The Poor Man and the Lady* that Hardy submitted to Macmillan in 1868, only to be rejected for publication because of his scathing criticism of the upper classes and depiction of characters who were 'wholly dark – not a ray of light visible to relieve the darkness', elements which were considered to be 'fatal drawbacks' (Graves, 1910: 290). A disheartened Hardy subsequently destroyed the draft, but his succeeding novels were strongly influenced by his unpublished work, as is observable from the way his interest in social issues kept manifesting itself with an 'element of circularity' (Millgate, 1971: 23). In *Thomas Hardy: His Career as a Novelist*, Michael Millgate highlights Hardy's use of parts of the plot of *The Poor Man and the Lady* in his other works like *Desperate Remedies* (1871), *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872), *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873), and *The Hand of Ethelberta* (1876); before embarking on his final work as a novelist; *Jude the Obscure*. Millgate argues that the subject matter as well as the title of *Jude* can be construed to be a 'deliberately embodied [...] private allusion to the abortive early manuscript' (Millgate, 1971: 23).

Hardy considered a few different titles before deciding on *Jude the Obscure* as the name of his final novel. It was first published in serialized form as *The Simpletons*, in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, from December 1894 to November 1895. The title was then changed to *Hearts Insurgent* in the second instalment as Hardy became aware of the similarity of the previous title to Charles Reade's novel, *A Simpleton*, published in 1872-3. Hardy's third suggested title, 'The Recalcitrants', reached New York after the second instalment had already gone to press.³ The common strand that runs through the previous titles before the name "Jude the Obscure" is arrived at and finalized is that all of them refer

³ See Purdy and Millgate, 1980.

to more than one protagonist, giving equal importance to both Jude *and* Sue. However, the final title, which was ultimately decided upon, focuses exclusively on the male protagonist Jude, leaving Sue out. This is a curious decision indeed, as Hardy was absorbed, engaged and challenged all through the inception and the subsequent fleshing out of the highly complex character of Sue.

After starting intensive work on *Jude* in December 1893, Hardy wrote to Mrs. Florence Henniker in the middle of 1894,⁴ to state that he was getting interested in his heroine, who was ‘very nebulous at present’ but gradually taking on ‘shape and reality’ (Purdy and Millgate, 1980: 48). It is this very ‘nebulosity’ surrounding Sue that makes her evasive, difficult to grasp. As a later critic Dale Kramer points out, the narrator presents Sue ‘almost entirely from external evidence – what she says and does and what people report about her’, in stark contrast to the presentation of Jude ‘from the inside’ (Kramer, 1999: 172). Hardy, in effect, creates a zone of obscurity surrounding Sue while positing the far more discernible Jude with the responsibility of being “Obscure” in his final choice of title for the novel. Sue escapes any kind of consistent ‘systemic analysis’ and acts as a case study for a ‘multiplicity of perspectives’, revealing through the reader responses a ‘readiness of the audience to see what is there combined with an insistence to see what they wish to see’ (Kramer, 1999: 172). This creates the basis for the study of her presentation as a Rorschach test, a catalyst that tests and provokes readers and critics in their attempts to analyse her portrayal over the decades in differing literary climates.

⁴ Florence Henniker, an aspiring author, was an admirer of Hardy's genius as a writer. Between 1893 and 1922, Hardy and Henniker wrote many letters to each other that bore testimony to an intimate friendship.

III

The interwoven biographical strands

Biographical readings of texts can be problematic as they bring the role of the author and the reader in the interpretation of texts into questionable terrain. Should a text be read and understood as an autonomous object, a sovereign whole, absolute and complete within itself? Or should it be decoded as a cultural artefact, locatable in the social, cultural, historical and literary context of the time of its creation? Though tracing the influence of biographical elements in Hardy's literary creations can be suspect, even reductive, it is difficult to keep his creative output absolutely separate from his personal life. Close readings of Hardy's texts reveal patterns and connections in his creation of characters and events that can be located in his personal experiences and the socio-cultural reality of his times, adding new dimensions of complexity to the reading and analysis of his texts. This is also due to the fact that there is an enormous amount of documentation of personal and social events from Hardy's life and time that have survived through the decades. Most of the principal manuscripts of his novels as well as poems have been found and preserved, some having been presented to selected institutional libraries in his lifetime. Due to the immense amount of scholarly interest he generated during and after his lifetime, a staggering amount of his personal correspondence has been unearthed and published in the seven volumes of *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy*, while his personal notebooks and journals have also seen the light of day (Millgate, 1999: 2-5). In recent

years, the supplementary volume to the previous seven volumes is published as *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy: Volume 8: Further Letters*, edited by Michael Millgate and Keith Wilson (2012). One can also have access to ‘supplementary material, largely unpublished – incoming correspondence [...] family letters, documents [...] oral and written testimony gathered from Hardy’s relatives and contemporaries by early scholars in the field’ that are preserved ‘in a number of libraries, museums and private collections in various parts of the world’ (Millgate, 1999: 5). Though Hardy’s creation of *Jude the Obscure* kept readers and critics conjecturing for decades about the many strands interwoven in the novel that could be read as parallels to Hardy’s own life and experiences, Hardy himself always denied this claim. Michael Millgate comments on this: ‘The problem, inherent in literary biography itself, is rather that the central events in the lives of creative figures, their acts of creativity, are precisely those most resistant to exploration and explication’ (Millgate, 1999: 16).

Jude started off as a study of ‘the labours of a poor student to get a University degree’ (F.E. Hardy, 1930: 40), his struggle, failure and subsequent tragic end. The subject later broadened considerably, as is evident through Hardy’s correspondence with Edmund Gosse in 1895, when he stated that a new subject has been added to the original topic, ‘the tragic issues of two bad marriages [...]’, which led to an increasing interest in the plot surrounding Sue (F.E. Hardy, 1930: 40). Hardy wrote to Florence Henniker in August 1895, stating: ‘Curiously enough, I am more interested in the Sue story than in any I have written. Sue is a type of woman which has always had an attraction for me, but the difficulty of drawing the type has kept me from attempting it till now’ (Hardy and Pinion, 1972: 43).

Hardy's letter to Mrs Henniker on August 12, 1895, indicates that he was heavily invested emotionally in *Jude*. Sue's characterization seems to have been inspired by a few women Hardy knew personally. During the drafting process of *Jude* in 1893, Hardy sought advice from Henniker on what name he should 'give to the heroine of my coming long story' (Hardy and Pinion, 1972: 31). After much deliberation, she was titled Susanna Florence Mary Bridehead; each one of the individual elements of the name bearing some special significance to Hardy. The middle names are self-evident: 'Florence' being a reference to Florence Henniker and 'Mary' to his sister, Mary Hardy. Hardy drew upon Mary's unhappy experiences at a teacher training college while depicting Sue's trials during her stint as a Queen's Scholar in Melchester Teacher Training College. Sue's full name, Susanna, is an ironic reference; Susanna is the name of the woman who famously resisted temptation in the Apocrypha tale of Susanna and the Elders. This theme is reflected in Sue's sexual fastidiousness and her final unnatural but 'Christian' surrender to her legally wedded husband Phillotson, whose legal yet lusty advances towards her are deliberately made to resemble the actions of the voyeuristic Elders. Her surname 'Bridehead', has dual signification. First, there is a geographical allusion as 'Bridehead' is the name of a place in Dorset. Second, Hardy uses it as a play on the words 'maidenhead' - a possible reference to hymen- and 'bride', to reflect upon Sue's emphatic desire to remain a virgin, even within a marital configuration, and her disinclination to fulfil the physical expectations she arouses, which ultimately gives way to a righteous surrender to the attentions of a man whom she physically abhors. Sue's resistance to being a 'bride' and her strong adherence to the dictates of her 'head' become recurring motifs throughout the novel. In his prefatory statement, Hardy mentions that 'the scheme was jotted down in

1890, from notes made in 1887 and onwards, some of the circumstances being suggested by the death of a woman in the former year' (Gittings, 1978: 73).

Though there is mention of only one woman in the statement, the deaths of three women in 1890 may have influenced Hardy's creation of Sue, the most obvious being that of his cousin Tryphena Sparks, as the protagonists Sue and Jude are cousins as well. The two other women who died, Helen Mathews and Mary Antell, are also noteworthy. Mathews was an actress who brought the character of Ida in *Two Roses* to life on the London stage by her very successful rendering of Ida's independent yet impulsive ways: a portrayal reminiscent of Sue's characterization. Mary Antell was married to Hardy's uncle 'John Antell, the Puddletown cobbler, with his self-taught Latin, Greek and Hebrew, his little school, his changeable, violent black despondencies, his untoward surrenders to drink' (Gittings 1978: 74), a man whom Hardy acknowledged to be in part the model for Jude. The inscription Hardy wrote for Antell's tombstone read: '[i]n Memory of John Antell. He was a man of considerable local repute as a self-made scholar, having acquired a varied knowledge of languages, literature and science by unaided study, & in the face of many untoward circumstances' (Gittings, 1975: 107), strongly evoking the life and death of Jude Fawley. The other influence for Jude was Horatio Mosley Moule (1832-1873), also known as Horace Moule, Hardy's best friend and mentor who was 'academically and musically gifted yet possessing a depressive tendency which blighted his existence' (Gittings, 1975: 38). His academic frustrations and alcoholism ultimately culminated in suicide, which had a massive impact on Hardy, who went on to immortalize him in his poetry and prose, and most significantly in the portrayal of Jude. Gittings surmises that Hardy models Jude on Moule in quite a significant way, in depicting his academic failures, his turn to drinking, his depression and virtual suicide.

Though Jude seemingly has obvious links biographically with Hardy, Sue's origins are not as clear. Hardy once acknowledged in conversation with Edward Clodd that Mrs. Henniker was the immediate 'model' for her, and her personality the key to the 'difficulty of drawing the type', which had deterred him from attempting it up to this time (Millgate, 1982: 354). There are also elements of his wife Emma Hardy and his cousin Tryphena noticeable in Sue, though she is not cut to a particular stock pattern. In fact, Emma's strong disgust towards *Jude* could be attributed to a theory that Millgate explores in his biography of Hardy; a speculation that 'Emma - with a sense of the deepest betrayal - recognized aspects of herself in the presentation both of Arabella and of Sue'; though more so in Sue, whose 'decline from brilliant independence to bleak religiosity in some measure reflected Hardy's sense of such a progression in his own wife' (Millgate, 1982: 354). Hardy's problematic relationship with Emma could be considered a contributing factor to his anti-marriage sentiments in *Jude*.

To be Sue Bridehead in Victorian Britain

*“Let us off and search, and find a place
Where yours and mine can be natural lives,
Where no one comes who dissects and dives
And proclaims that ours is a curious case,
That its touch of romance can scarcely grace.”*

*The Recalcitrants – Thomas Hardy, Satires of Circumstance (II. 107)*⁵

Hardy had assured Harper and Brothers, the potential publishers, at the initial stage of drafting *Jude the Obscure*, that the novel would not offend ‘the most fastidious maiden’, but by early April 1894, Hardy sensed that he was going ‘into unexpected fields and dared not predict its future trend’ (Millgate, 1982: 348). Michael Millgate points out Hardy’s magnanimity in giving the publisher J. Henry Harper the option of either cancelling their agreement, or reaching an understanding to make certain changes in his work to make it more acceptable to the general reading public (Millgate, 1982: 348). The serialized

⁵ ‘The Recalcitrants’ is one of the titles Hardy was considering before deciding upon *Jude the Obscure*. Hardy’s creation of a poem with the same title and theme suggests his continued interest in the characters portrayed and themes discussed in *Jude*.

versions were heavily bowdlerized accordingly, to meet the demands of Harper's editorial team. Jude's relations with Arabella and Sue were fundamentally altered and a number of passages were excised altogether, sometimes at the cost of both art and credibility. This is reflected in Hardy's frustrated letter to Gosse; 'You [Gosse] have hardly an idea how poor and feeble the book seems to me, as executed, beside the idea of it that I had formed in prospect' (Millgate, 1990: 109). Hardy's lament is not unfounded; as certain very important episodes were forcibly removed:

[...] the pig-killing and Arabella's seduction of Jude were either reworked or omitted altogether. Jude and Sue instead of living together lived "near" each other; and the one child (instead of two) that Father Time murdered was Sue's by adoption, not reproduction (Millgate, 1982: 349).

It is clear that significant thematic elements and crucial episodes had to be sacrificed to cater to the sensibilities of the Victorian society. The criterion on which the bowdlerizing was based is familiar enough as H. M Alden, the editor of Harper's *New Monthly Magazine*, confessed on August 29, 1894 that they could print 'nothing which could not be read aloud in any family circle'. Alden's letter to Hardy becomes symptomatic of the pressure that the publishers themselves faced to not antagonize their readers by printing literary works that were considered 'unacceptable'. He wrote to Hardy apologetically, stating, '[y]ou will see yourself our difficulty [...] and we fully appreciate the annoyance you must feel at being called upon to modify work conscientiously done, and which is best as it left your hands from an artist's point of view' (Purdy, 1912: 89-90).

T.R. Wright points out the conflicting forces that come into play in Hardy's novelistic practice by stressing 'the extent to which he [Hardy] was writing against his readership, deliberately attempting to shock and provoke them' on the one hand, and 'the compromises he was forced to make to meet the demands of editors and publishers' (Wright, 2003: 29, 81). This environment of censorship had a very strong influence on the

content of Hardy's fictional works and the way they were received. His cordial relationship with the influential publishers, editors and critics put him in a position of power in a certain way, where he could consciously try to manipulate the reception that his novels would face. But that did not make it any easier to make his novels more acceptable to the Victorian reading public as the Victorian household demanded that a novel have a pleasing quality and end happily, not to mention be devoid of any controversial or morally unacceptable content. These standards of household reading were considered to be the demands of the readers and were implemented by the circulating libraries, like Charles Edward Mudie's lending library, that influenced the reach and popularity of Victorian literature, particularly fiction, for more than half a century from 1842-1894.

The main way of exerting influence was by controlling the form of publication. All novels were published in three volumes which were uniformly priced at 31s 6d; a price that was kept artificially high and too expensive for individuals to afford, thus making the libraries the main source of these fictional works. This had some interesting counter-effects. As the first editions of books mainly appeared in three volumes, Mudie's and other libraries could circulate different volumes of the same novel to different readers, effectively censoring and controlling the subject matter to be disseminated among different reading groups (Griest, 1970: 138-139). This was aided by '[...] the demand for expurgated editions of English classics, the drawing up of indexes of books or authors not to be read, especially by girls, the powerful condemnation (and hence in effect prohibition) of any candid treatment of sex in literature [...]' (Houghton, 1957: 357).

Mudie's exerted an important influence upon the factors governing publishing, as the circulating libraries bought books in bulk, subsidizing publishers and playing a crucial role in deciding the availability and popularity of books, as long as their terms and

conditions were met. The circulating library in effect became the bridge between the author and the readers. Thus all of Hardy's novels, excepting *Desperate Remedies* and *Under the Greenwood Tree*, went through two phases of publication: serialization and book publication. The novels usually appeared in book form before the completion of the serialization. The readers of the serial versions bought the magazines, but book-readers normally borrowed books from the circulating libraries. The situation changed in 1895, around the time when *Jude* was published, when the new format for books was introduced that made books much cheaper and diminished the importance of the circulating libraries (Griest, 1970: 208). Hardy noticed the impact of this from the increase in the number of first edition copies of *Jude* that were printed and made accessible to the public, even after it was banned by the circulating libraries. The *St. James' Gazette* printed an article titled; "MR. HARDY'S NEW NOVEL TABOOED", and declared that '[...] The Handsworth Free Library Committee has withdrawn Mr. Thomas Hardy's novel "Jude the Obscure" from circulation [...] Owing to a remarkable run having been made on the work, the wife of a member of the committee read it and pronounced against it [...]' (1896: 6). The unfavourable reviews that *Jude* received after its publication inadvertently generated and aroused more curiosity, leading to greater sale. The ultimate market success of *Jude* evokes the idea that negative publicity and posing 'a direct challenge to [...] readers' (Lerner and Holmstrom, 1968: 189), might not necessarily have a pejorative impact on the selling of books. It is also interesting to note that the bowdlerizing was restricted to the serialized versions, with the intention of including the omitted parts in the book version. This offers an insight into the way 'Hardy began consciously to address a dual audience, revising the serial significantly for the more serious audience he clearly envisaged as reading the volume' (Lerner and Holmstrom, 1968: 16). Hardy had learnt to be compromising in these

situations, as can be observed from his comment to the editor of the *Pall Mall Magazine* where he stated that he was quite willing to delete an offending passage from his short story “An Imaginative Woman”, and give editors a free hand. It did not matter to him in this regard as he ‘invariably reprint[ed] from the original copy for the book form of [his] novels’ (Purdy and Millgate, 1980: 48). In the case of *Jude*, however, Hardy did not restore all the bowdlerizing changes from the serialized versions to the book form. The publication of *Jude* coincided with a time in Hardy’s personal life when his disillusionment with the novel-writer’s profession had reached its peak. Anticipating and dreading a hostile reader-reaction resulted in a curbing of literary autonomy and authorial integrity, which some critics believe ultimately led to his decision of never writing another novel. Set against this climate of readership and socio-cultural backdrop, *Jude the Obscure* received praise from certain quarters while being fiercely attacked and criticized by the majority. Instances of reader-displeasure at the banning of the book can be observed through newspaper reports of March, 1896. For example, in the *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle*:

Mr W. Alfred Parker, editor of *The Belgian Times* asks whether: “Shakespeare is also to be removed and whether, if the sporting columns of the newspapers are to be blackened out, the same will be done to certain parts of the works of Ouida, George Moore, and Zola?” If this is done, the libraries he thinks, might just as well be closed altogether, “for the purpose – that of diffusing a knowledge of modern literature – for which they were instituted would no longer exist (1896).

Another report appearing at around the same time in *The North-Eastern Daily Gazette* openly mocked the nature of the censorship that *Jude* was being subjected to: “[l]iterary censorship at Kingston Workhouse takes a more sensible form than at those other public institutions which have made themselves ridiculous by placing a ban on “*Jude the Obscure*”” (1896). These reports are in direct contrast to another newspaper article that appeared in the *Leicester Chronicle and the Leicestershire Mercury* a year later, in March

1897. This article is interesting to note as it makes it evident that *Jude* had found favour with the general reading public, which made the writer of the report feel obligated to vociferously condemn the taste of the readers:

In regard to later types of fiction, it is worthy of note that the popular taste is subject to some remarkable changes, the direction of which is not always calculated to prove edifying [...] favour of books like “*Jude the Obscure*” and “*The Sorrows of Satan*,” gives rise to the painful conviction that anything which is hideously sensual, intensely morbid, or grotesquely extravagant may still exercise a powerful influence with the reading public (1897).

The general discomfiture about the content of *Jude* was heightened by the contemporary popularity of what was nicknamed ‘the literature of prostitution’ (Houghton, 1957: 358). The works of French authors such as Balzac, George Sand, Eugene Sue, Gautier, Baudelaire and Zola were disparaged, revealing something much more than an outraged Puritanical conscience: a veritable fear of their influence (Decker, 1952).

Another source of anxiety was the philosophy and the practice of ‘Free Love’; a theory that protested against the institution of marriage as it then existed. Many of the reviews of *Jude* focused on the central issues of the novel, which they identified to be of marital problems and the ‘New Woman’ trope. Hardy wrote to Gosse to express his surprise at the ‘curious’ way in which the papers construed ‘the novel as a manifesto on “the marriage question”’, which according to him was a result of the ‘accident that, during the serial publication of my story, (*Jude*), a sheaf of “purpose” novels on the matter appeared’ (F.E. Hardy, 1962: 271). Hardy’s ‘surprise’ is not perfectly justifiable as the various narratives of the marital and non-marital liaisons that Sue finds herself to be part of (with Jude, Phillotson, and the university student) can be interpreted as Hardy’s contribution to and commentary on the ‘Marriage Question’, and to some extent the ‘Free Love’ debate that took centre stage in the discourses of the novelists and social

commentators of the 1880s and 1890s.⁶ As A.R. Cunningham observed, ‘the nerves of conservative readers and reviewers had been increasingly irritated by a series of novels’ that attacked the conventions of marriage and sexual repression, which quite possibly prompted the instant negative repercussions that *Jude the Obscure* generated (Cunningham, 1973: 177-178).

⁶ The Free Love movement emerged almost as a distinct reform tradition, a product of a time of flux, marked by upheavals of the traditional sexual conventions and emergence of radically different views of female sexuality as a means of restructuring and reconstructing the problematic zones of male/female relations that would allow women more autonomy over their lives and bodies.

§1.1

The publication of *Jude* and the nineteenth century critical reception

Jude the Obscure was published on November 1, 1895 as a volume and the critics almost formed a coalition in their severe condemnation of it:

The *Morning Post* could see no good in it, the *Pall Mall Gazette* found it full of “dirt, drivel, and damnation”, and coined the sneer “Jude the Obscene” [...] Puritan America was shocked to the extent that Hardy had the “ashes of his book sent to him in a parcel from America [...] and branded as an advocate of free love and immorality” (Seymour-Smith, 1994: 519).

Not to be outdone, the Bishop of Wakefield self-reportedly burnt a copy of *Jude* and rather emphatically instructed W. H. Smith not to stock the book in his lending library. Jeannette Gilder, a pioneering female journalist in the United States, made two notorious attacks on Hardy and *Jude* in the *New York World*, one entitled “Hardy the Degenerate” in 1895, where she made the cutting observation:

Jude the Obscure, says Mr. Hardy, is a novel ‘addressed by a man to men and women of full age,’ and, that being so, he holds himself exempted from the necessity of ‘mincing’ his words. Granted: but that is no excuse for demanding of his reader the gastric imperturbability of a well-seasoned pork-butcher (Gilder, 1895).

Hardy's graphic descriptions of the slaughter of the pig, or Arabella's hurling of a pig's pizzle at Jude to capture his attention, appalled Gilder's aesthetic sensibility to the extent that she commented that, '[h]umanity as envisaged by Mr. Hardy, is largely compounded of hoggishness and hysteria [...]' (Gilder, 1895). In reducing Hardy's humanity to 'hoggishness and hysteria', Gilder glazed over the zone of conflict segregating Hardy's realization as a realist that a Romantic like Jude would struggle in a strongly Darwinian universe, and his indignation as a Romantic at Jude's inability to succeed. This creates a contrast between Jude's Romanticism and Hardy the realist's attitude towards that Romanticism. Hardy had portrayed the use and abuse of pigs in a grisly manner in *Jude* to depict Arabella's coarse corporeality and cold-blooded practical sense; scenes that served important narrative functions, which Gilder's appalled sensibility overlooks. Edmund Gosse affirms that 'every impulse, every speech, which reveals to us the coarse and animal but not hateful Arabella, adds to the solidity of her portrait' (Gosse, 1896). She acts as a foil on dual counts; first as a contrast in all her libidinous glory to 'the ethereal, fine-nerved, sensitive' Sue (*Jude*: 210), and then as a contrast in her realistic practicality and general insensitivity to Jude's extreme tenderness towards all living things:

He (Jude) had never brought home a nest of young birds without lying awake in misery half the night after [...] He could scarcely bear to see trees being cut down or lopped [...] and late pruning when the sap was up and the tree bled profusely, had been a positive grief to him in his infancy (*Jude*: 11-12).

Jude is a romantic at heart, not practically so, and Hardy uses the pig imagery repeatedly to emphasize it. Gilder's critical vitriol towards *Jude* is echoed in an unsigned review in the *Athenaeum* in 1895, which rates Jude as a '[...] titanicly bad book by Mr. Hardy. We have had bad books from him before; but so far his bad books have been feeble rather than anything else. In *Jude* [...] we have Mr. Hardy running mad in right royal fashion' (1895).

In another review of *Jude* in *The Pall Mall Gazette*, a nineteenth-century critic comments in exasperation after reading *Jude* that the novel ends in:

[...] the re-marriage of all the divorcees, making to the best of our reckoning, a total of six marriages and two obscenities to the count of two couples [...] a record performance, we should think. And they all lived unhappily ever after, except Jude, who spat blood and died [...] (Lerner and Holmstrom, 1968: 111).

In the face of such strong, harsh criticism, the review by W.D. Howells in the *Harper's Weekly* (1895), is a refreshing change. Howells takes note of the unpleasant aspects in *Jude* not to condemn, but to recognize in them the true naked picture of the human condition:

[...] I allow that there are many displeasing things in the book [...] Arabella's dimple making, the pig-killing, the boy suicide and homicide; Jude's drunken second marriage; Sue's wilful self-surrender to Phillotson; [...] make us shiver with horror and grovel with shame, but we know that they are deeply founded in the condition, if not in the nature of humanity (Howells, 1895: 115).

Howells' analysis of *Jude* considers its carefully constructed subversive elements. He raises significant and controversial questions on the oppressiveness of the class structure of the Victorian Age, seen through the portrayal of the struggle, and ultimate thwarting, of the academic dreams of the autodidact Jude and the role that dominant social institutions like the Universities and the Church played. Howells locates the 'displeasing things' in the socio-cultural realities of the time which Jude and Sue could not conform to, resulting in the shattering of their ideals and dreams, and ultimately culminating in profound tragedy for both. Hardy wrote to Gosse in November 1895, stating '[o]f course the book is all contrasts [...] 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' (F.E. Hardy, 1930: 42). A rather anxiety ridden fixation on women and marriage is evident in *Jude* but it is stripped bare of any kind of sentimentality; the romance and innocence of first love is transformed into

Arabella's crude, calculated seduction of Jude, while the purity and spirituality of the Victorian angel figure is subverted through the unique and unusual presentation of Sue.

According to a review in *The Morning Post* in 1895:

The purpose of this work (*Jude*) [...] is apparently, in the first place to illustrate a highly original theory that if you marry the wrong person you will probably be unhappy in your married life, and in the second place to show how strong maybe the force of convention is in upsetting the plans even of those who fancy that they are most emancipated (1895).

Charles Lewis Hind's musings on his visit to Hardy's house shortly after the publication of *Jude* feature an interesting anecdote:

[...] I called at a bookshop in Dorchester and inquired of an elderly, prim, and rather tart female if she had a copy of Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*, which had lately been published, and which had been received by what is known in England as the 'rectory public' somewhat superciliously. I think it shocked them. In response to my inquiry the prim female said that she had not a copy of *Jude the Obscure* in stock. 'What!' I cried, 'in his native Dorchester you have not a copy of the latest book by the greatest living English novelist'. She eyed me with hauteur, and tossing her head, said: 'Perhaps we have not the same opinion of Mr. Hardy in Dorchester as you have elsewhere' (Ray, 2007: 105).⁷

Hind's light-hearted recollection of the experience, punctuated with adjectives like 'tart', 'prim' and 'supercilious' to describe a female representative of people who inhabit a vicarage, becomes an example of the prudishness of the readers whose sense of propriety was offended by *Jude*. Hardy knew that he was writing of and for individuals 'into whose souls the iron has entered and has entered deeply' (Millgate, 1990: 101), and it would take readers of a certain level of maturity and open-mindedness to appreciate the novel, but nothing prepared him for the huge furore of condemnatory charges against *Jude*.

Margaret Oliphant (1828-1897), a noted novelist and an active commentator on the 'Woman Question', was a regular reviewer for *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* for over

⁷ Original excerpt from Charles Lewis Hind. *Authors and I* (1921).

forty years, from the mid-1850s till the 1890s, writing sporadically in other periodicals like *Edinburgh Review*, *Fraser's Magazine* and the *Contemporary Review*. In her article "The Anti-Marriage League", published in *Blackwood's Magazine* in January 1896, *Jude* is vociferously and viciously attacked on two counts: first, the prominent way in which sexuality is discussed in the novel, second, the anti-marriage sentiments that evolve through the narrative. Oliphant's outrage is palpable from her claim that 'nothing so coarsely indecent as the whole history of Jude in his relations with Arabella has ever been put in English print' (Lerner and Holmstrom, 1968: 138).

Her tirades against *Jude* go deeper than mere disgust at the sexualized discourse and non-conforming behaviour of the protagonists, to reflect her immense discomfiture with what she perceived as the reduction of 'the perfect friendship of joy and sorrow, of interests and hopes, of mutual help, support and consolation' (Lerner and Holmstrom, 1968: 144) to one of biological urge. Oliphant considered *Jude* to be the marking point of Hardy's membership into the 'Anti Marriage League', an assault not just on the institution of marriage but also an exemplification of a disrespectful portrayal of womanhood. She was not alone in her condemnation as can be observed in a newspaper article from *Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser* of November 26, 1895:

One would have thought the anti-matrimonial subject worn threadbare, yet here is Mr. Thomas Hardy joining the army of new women and giving in "Jude the Obscure" a story which is less a picture of life than a diatribe against the servitude of marriage. From every point of view this departure of one of our most gifted writers is deplorable. Mr. Hardy wastes his unique powers and gifts when he writes after this fashion (1895).

Oliphant's disgust seems to be directed at the reductive manner in which the two women, Sue and Arabella, have been presented, both defined primarily in the novel based on their sexual behaviour. They act as foils to each other; Arabella is crude and sexually

manipulative, Sue is whimsical and cold; differing vastly but similar in one regard, the damage they do to the hapless hero's life. An interesting aspect of the review is that it is initialled by Oliphant and attributed to her in the table of contents: a departure from the usual norm as she generally preferred anonymity in periodicals, though her volume publications appeared in her name. It appears to be a conscious act, a need to assert herself as a woman in showing her vitriol at what she construed a simplified depiction of woman's potential; a lashing out against what she saw to be stereotyping that was demeaning to women. She wrote to Archibald Blackwood in November 1895, post the publication of her review of *Jude* in the article "Anti-Marriage League", stating that, 'I have been thinking over Hardy's book and I don't feel sure that it might not be my duty to treat it and a few others of the same kind seriously, putting my name to the article [...]' (Bellamy, Laurence and Perry, 2000: 148).

Her extreme concern about the way women were being presented and discussed in the novels of the time can be observed in the same letter where she writes that '[t]he evil is very great [...] I only doubt if my voice is authoritative enough to denounce it [...]'. A perusal of Oliphant's earlier reviews in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* reveals that her dismay at the overt sexualisation of fictional women like Arabella was not restricted to *Jude*. In her article "Novels", published in *Blackwood's*, September 1867, she had expressed her dissatisfaction with the way the heroines of the 'Sensation Fiction' of the 1860's were portrayed; their raging sexual desires acting as the force leading them away from sexual morality, creating 'a very fleshly and unlovely record' (Robinson, 2003: 149). Her disgust at the sexualized accounts of heroines governed entirely by sexual impulses is carried forward in her critique of Hardy's portrayal of Arabella thirty years later. She is motivated not just by prudishness over what is acceptable to represent in fiction, but also

the belief that 'sensation' writers have introduced a new type of fictional heroine, and focussed upon their sexuality; hence failing to encompass the true complexity of women and trivializing complicated human relationships. What problematizes Oliphant's reading of *Jude* is her diatribe against the depiction of the 'New Woman', like Sue, for their alleged support of the 'free love' unions that allowed women more autonomy to change companions at will.⁸ The association between the 'New Woman' and 'free love' paved the way for the labelling of the 'New Woman' as sexually decadent, causing Oliphant to deplore the 'disposition to place what is called the Sex-question above all others in the theme of fiction' (Lerner and Holmstrom, 1968: 126).

Oliphant has often been viewed by critics as an anti-feminist; understandably so given that one of her many claims to fame is her notorious criticism of the philosopher John Stuart Mill (1806- 1873), and his 'mad notion of franchise for women' (Oliphant, 1974: 211). In fact, eminent gynocritics like Elaine Showalter have placed Oliphant in the camp of the 'feminine' writer, who is 'vehemently opposed' to the issue of female suffrage (Showalter, 1982: 216-217). This viewpoint is problematic as it fails to take note of the fictional heroines like Lucilla Marjoribanks and Hester Vernon, created by Oliphant as agents of change for women, signifying her interest in female emancipation.⁹ This is coupled with the fact that Oliphant herself was an autonomous, independent woman who supported three children and a few inadequate male relatives with the money she earned by her writing. The contradiction points to the idea that she occupied an ambiguous, fluid position, perhaps very consciously, to keep her reading public happy by catering to their

⁸ 'Free love' rejects the institutionalized social bond of marriage. This social movement's initial goal was to separate the state from sexual matters such as marriage, birth control and adultery, and claimed that such issues were solely the concern of the individuals involved.

⁹ Lucilla Marjoribanks is the feisty heroine of *Miss Marjoribanks* (1866), a novel by Margaret Oliphant that follows the exploits of Lucilla, who schemes to improve the social life of a provincial English Town. Hester Vernon is the female protagonist of Oliphant's novel *Doctor's Family* (1863).

taste and moral viewpoints, which might not necessarily be a reflection of her own. Her sometimes ambivalent and often sexist stance on women's rights becomes emblematic of the confusion of some Victorian middle-class woman, whose personal experiences could have made her sympathetic to some of the aims of the women's movement at the turn of the century. But the desire for equal rights is trumped by a tenacious clinging to the strict moral codes of an earlier age and remaining firmly opposed to the sexual liberalism of the fin de siècle.

Some other reviews of the same period regarded *Jude* with more appreciation, seeing it as 'a work of genius' (*Illustrated London News*, 1896: 50). Richard Le Gallienne (1866 – 1947) felt similarly, seeing *Jude* as 'the most powerful and moving picture of human life' and 'an indictment of much older and crueller laws than those relating to marriage, the laws of the universe' (Le Gallienne, 1896: 114-115). Gallienne opposed Oliphant's stance of perceiving *Jude* purely as a polemic against marriage and found her review to be a 'grossly unjust and exceedingly pointless and clumsy attack'. He locates the maliciousness in Oliphant's attack on Hardy's *Jude* in generational prejudice, hinting that senility and a grandmotherly world-view has caused her to have such a hostile reaction to the plot and characters of *Jude*. A later critic, Robert Gittings, refers to Oliphant's article as the passing of the attacks on *Jude* from 'the serious reviewers into the lunatic fringes of literature' (Gittings, 1978: 82), expressing his indignation at the nature of the vitriolic and personal attack against Hardy. Hardy himself voiced his displeasure at her review by hailing it as 'the screaming of a poor lady in *Blackwood*' (Hardy, 1895).

After the fiery criticism from Oliphant, Edmund Gosse's review of *Jude* that appeared in the *Cosmopolis* in January 1896 comes across as pacifying in tone. A secretly scandalized yet impressed Gosse pays his respect to the artist while not particularly

commending the creation, stating, '[t]o tell so squalid and so abnormal a story in an interesting way is in itself a feat, and this, it must be universally admitted, Mr. Hardy has achieved' (Gosse, 1896). Subsequently, Gosse the 'adulatory supporter' of Hardy lets his true feelings about *Jude* surface by referring to it in *St. James' Gazette* as 'a grimy story' (Gittings, 1978: 80) and telling Hardy publicly to his face that *Jude* was the most indecent novel ever written (Millgate, 1990: 96). He asserts:

[...] It does not appear to me that we have any business to call in question the right of a novelist of Mr. Hardy's extreme distinction to treat what themes he will. We may wish - and I for my part cordially wish - that more pleasing, more charming plots than this could take his fancy. But I do not feel at liberty to challenge his discretion (Lerner and Holmstrom, 1968: 119).

However, later in the same review, Gosse contradicts himself in challenging and questioning Hardy's discretion in the choice of his subject matter in asking, '[...] Is it too late to urge Mr. Hardy to struggle against the jarring note of rebellion which seems growing upon him? [...] He should not force his talent, should not give way to these chimerical outbursts of philosophy falsely so called' (Gosse, 1896). The choice of words, 'chimerical outbursts', is significant to note as through that expression Gosse effectively dismisses the plot that he had himself commended as being 'a study of four lives, a rectangular problem in failures, drawn with almost mathematical rigidity', as a mere chimera, a discussion of an implausible idea. Gosse's rather wistful suggestion that he wishes Hardy 'would go back to Egdon Heath and listen to the singing in the heather [...]' (Gosse, 1896), becomes symptomatic of the Victorian discomfiture surrounding the changes that marked the turn of the century and a longing to return to a simpler, more pastoral past.

Gosse wrote a second review of Hardy's novel, which was published in the January 1896 issue of *Cosmopolis*. Between the two reviews, the letters that Hardy wrote to Gosse

stand as evidence of Hardy influencing Gosse's ideas about the novel. On 10th November Hardy explained to Gosse about Jude's ideals and his real life, '[t]he grimy features of the story go on to show the contrast between the ideal life a man wished to lead, & the squalid real life he was fated to lead' (Purdy and Millgate, 1980: 93). It is this stark realism, verisimilitude and rejection of nineteenth-century sentimentalism, supernaturalism and melodrama in *Jude* that wins the praise of the Victorian physician and sexologist, Havelock Ellis (1859-1939), in his article "Concerning *Jude the Obscure*" in which he hails *Jude* as one of the greatest novels written in England for many years. Ellis' article is an interesting critique of Hardy's novels in the light of sexology, an up and coming scientific genre of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, which dealt with psycho-sexual interpretations. In an earlier article titled "Thomas Hardy's Novels", published in 1883, Ellis had discussed the women in Hardy's novels claiming that 'far from being the "conscience of man", it is with the men always that the moral strength lies' (Ellis, 1883: 334-364). Ellis writes:

Morals, observe, do not come in [...] Mr. Hardy's heroines are characterized by a yielding to circumstance that is limited by the play of instinct. They are never quite bad. It seems, indeed, that this quality in them, which shuts them out from any high level of goodness, is precisely that which saves them from every being very bad. They have an instinctive self-respect; an instinctive purity [...] One feels compelled to insist on the instinctiveness of these women (quoted in Cox, 1970: 106).

Ellis interprets Hardy's female characterizations as mostly instinct led, placing his works in the feminine tradition of novel writing represented by Jane Austen, Charlotte Bronte, and George Eliot, because of its 'conception of love as the one business of life' (Cox, 1970: 108). This is a problematic reading, as a later critic, Rosemarie Morgan, points out by stating, 'Ellis shapes a particularly complex dialogue on Hardy's women. They are alternately "instinctively pure", "demonic", "human" yet devoid of "soul": "we see at once

that they have no souls” (Quoted from Ellis, Morgan, 1988: 137). Ellis reserves his judgement about the intellectual acumen and individuality of the female characters, clumping them together in his analysis in 1893. He attributes all female actions to an instinct led consciousness, essentially stripping them of intellect and agency. However, in his article on *Jude* in 1896, he praises Hardy volubly for daring to explore and go beyond the prevalent attitudes towards ethics, morality, sex and sexuality. His disgust towards the tremendous negative backlash that the publication of *Jude* generated is evident when he says:

To treat Jude, who wavers between two women, and Sue, who finds the laws of marriage too mighty for her lightly-poised organism, as shocking monstrosities, reveals a curious attitude in the critics who have committed themselves to that view. Clearly they consider human sexual relationships to be as simple as those of the farmyard. They are as shocked as a farmer would be to find that a hen had views of her own concerning the lord of the harem (Ellis, 1896: 46).

Ellis praises Hardy for his stark and honest representations of the physical and emotional ties between men and women that engaged with, and contributed to, the highly topical debates on matters of gender in Victorian England. His appraisal of *Jude* is a noteworthy defence of the challenge that Hardy throws in the face of the idealized notions of marriage and heteronormative social structures. According to Ellis, *Jude*:

[...] deals very subtly and sensitively with new and modern aspects of life, and if, in so doing, it may be said to represent Nature as often cruel to our social laws, we must remark that the strife of Nature and Society, the individual and the community, has ever been the artist's opportunity (Cox, 1970: 255).

Ellis considers *Jude* to be an exemplification of the ‘audacity, purity and sincerity’ of an artist who went beyond the norms dictated by social etiquette to engage fully with the issues of morality and the problems therein (Cox, 1970: 249-315). However, these positive reinforcements were few and far between when compared to the scathing indictment the

novel evoked from the time of its publication. By comparing *Jude* to Hardy's earlier fiction, Ellis commends it for being much more realistic than the 'distressing melodrama into which Mr Hardy was wont to fall in his early novels' (Cox, 1970: 253).

One of the first reviews of *Jude* appeared just days after its publication in the form of a newspaper section titled "New Books of the Week" in the *Glasgow Herald*, 1895. The reviewer titled the report "Mr. Hardy's New Horror" and declared that:

Mr. Hardy has set himself to out-Tess "Tess of the Durbervilles," and he has succeeded. Nothing at once so Zolaesque and so grotesque has appeared for many a long day, on this side of the English Channel [...] And then what a fall from Bathsheba Everdene, even from Grace Fitzpiers, to Sue Bridehead, who is such a heroine as this story possesses! It can hardly be paralleled except by the fall from Fanny Robin to Arabella Donn, the coarsest courtesan, disguised as a wife, that has ever figured even in modern fiction (1895).

The horrified reception of Sue Bridehead's characterization essentially sets the tone for the deluge of criticism under which the character would eventually be submerged, radical and non-conforming as she was.

The fuel to the fire of controversy that surrounded *Jude the Obscure* from the time of its publication was the characterization of Sue Bridehead. Sue is debatably the most extreme and complex of Hardy's heroines, 'at first sight one of the most innovatory aspects of the book [...] in some respects only a more extreme, much franker treatment of a type Hardy had portrayed many times before' (Millgate, 1971: 320). A critical viewpoint about the inception and portrayal of her character is that she is based on the 'New Woman' of the late nineteenth century, who was 'by no means identical to the feminist, but clearly a relative' and 'almost a cliché by 1895' (Boumelha, 1982: 136). Hardy's interest in the 'New Woman' is evident as he had copied out a passage from George Egerton's short story collection *Keynotes* (1893) about the obscurity surrounding 'the problems of [woman's]

complex nature' that confounded men (Bjork, 1985: 60).¹⁰ George Egerton wrote to Hardy after the publication of *Jude*, stating that she considered Sue to be 'a marvellously true psychological study of a temperament less rare than the ordinary male observer supposes' (Purdy and Millgate, 1980: 102), commending Hardy on attempting to unravel the complexity surrounding women's nature. Hardy responded to Egerton stating that he had been 'intending for years to draw Sue, & its extraordinary that a type of woman, comparatively common & getting commoner, should have escaped fiction for so long' (Purdy and Millgate, 1980: 102).

It is curious that Hardy considered female characters like Sue to have 'escaped' fictional representation. The 1890s was the time when the ideal of the 'New Woman' was well on its way to becoming a catch phrase to describe the educated, independent career women in Europe and the United States who challenged the limits set by a male-dominated society. As mentioned earlier, the phrase 'New Woman' was first used by novelist Sarah Grand in her 1894 article "The New Aspect of the Woman Question". It was then adopted by the British periodical press to refer to anything and anyone 'feminist'; another term that came into usage in the 1890s alongside the word 'feminism', which Carolyn Christensen Nelson suggests were employed by critics, usually negatively, while reviewing the 'New Woman' fiction of the decade (Nelson, 1996: 1-2).

A particularly compelling argument put forward by Robert Gittings in *Young Thomas Hardy* regarding Sue is that, though she was considered to be a representative of the 'New Woman' of the 1890s by the critics of *Jude*, she was not a woman of the 1890s but of the 1860s (Gittings, 1975: 139). He bases his hypothesis on certain key aspects of

¹⁰ George Egerton was the pen name of Mary Chavelita Dunne Bright (1859 —1945) a writer and feminist, who was regarded as one of the most important of the 'New Woman' writers of the nineteenth century fin de siècle.

Sue's portrayal, like her loss of faith, and the replacement of it with the 'Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte made fashionable in the 1860's among English intellectuals by Mill's exposition of it in 1840' (Gittings, 1975: 140). Gittings argues that the women of the 1860s would have been familiar with the works of J. S. Mill, as he had shot to fame at the time for his elucidations of his principles in a magazine called *The Englishwoman's Journal*. Hardy's characterisation of Sue enables Gittings to make this clear link as Sue is shown to quote from Mill's essay "On Liberty" in *Jude*.

Sally Ledger writes in *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the fin de siècle* (1997) that the 'New Women' became identifiable by multiplicity of identities: 'variously, a feminist activist, a social reformer, a popular novelist, a suffragette playwright, a woman poet; *she was also often a fictional construct, a discursive response to the activities of the late nineteenth-century women's movement*' [my emphasis] (Ledger, 1997: 16).¹¹ Perusal of the Victorian response to the 'fictional construct' of the 'New Woman', with particular emphasis on Sue Bridehead, generates direct insight into the Victorian discomfiture with the feminist movement. The journals such as *Nineteenth Century*, *Blackwood's* and others that had a conservative approach, portrayed the 'New Woman' in unflattering ways, often under derogatory titles like "Modern Mannish Maidens", "Wild Women", the "always manly Novissima", "Literary Degenerates" and the "Anti-Marriage League", among others.¹² These articles disparaged the 'New Woman' as a sexual revolutionary incapable of love and intent on undermining the sanctity of marriage and maternity.

¹¹ The 'New Woman' will be revisited in more depth in chapter 4.

¹² "Modern Mannish Maidens" is the title of an unsigned article in *Blackwood's* from February 1890.

"Wild Women" is the epithet that is used three times by Eliza Lynn Linton to name anti-women's rights articles – "The Wild Women as Politicians," "The Wild Women as Social Insurgents," and "Partisans of the Wild Women" – that appeared in the magazine *Nineteenth Century*, between July 1891 and March 1892.

The fictional version of the ‘New Woman’ appeared on the stage of the Little Theatres in plays like *A Doll’s House* by Henrik Ibsen and *Mrs. Warren’s Profession* by Bernard Shaw. Novels of the 1890s, like Sarah Grand’s *Heavenly Twins* (1893), Mona Caird’s *The Daughters of Danaus* (1894), Grant Allen’s *The Woman Who Did* (1895) and short story collections like George Egerton’s *Keynotes* (1893) also featured fictional representations of the ‘New Woman’, who challenged their assigned role inside the family and society, and refused to partake in the conventional codes of expected moral behaviour. According to Havelock Ellis, the ‘New Woman’ was identifiable from the following behaviours that he explicates in his study *Sexual Inversion* (1897):

The brusque energetic movements, the attitudes of the arms, the direct speech, the inflexions of the voice, the masculine straight - forwardness and sense of honour and especially the attitude towards men, free from any suggestion either of shyness or audacity, will often suggest the underlying psychic abnormality to a keen observer (Ellis, 1897: 250).

That the ‘New Woman’ figure in late nineteenth-century Britain was also a source of ridicule and mockery is apparent. Clichéd representations of this figure were regularly parodied in London plays and satire magazines. Caricatures of the ‘New Woman’ appeared in *Punch* cartoons. Image 1 depicts Mrs Patrick Campbell; the leading lady of the play *The Second Mrs Tanqueray*; ‘leaping a literal Hurdle of Convention’ while Sir Arthur Wing Pinero, the playwright, ‘stands to one side mopping his brow’ (Kaplan and Stowell, 1995: 48):

“Novissima” is the name given to the ‘New Woman’ by H. S Scott and E. Hall in their “Character Note: The New Woman”, that appeared in *The Cornhill* in 1894.

“Literary Degenerates” is Janet Hogarth’s castigation of the writers of ‘New Woman’ fiction, published April 1, 1895, in the *Fortnightly Review*.

“Anti-Marriage League” is Oliphant’s indictment of Hardy’s *Jude* and Grant Allen’s *The Woman Who Did* in January 1896.

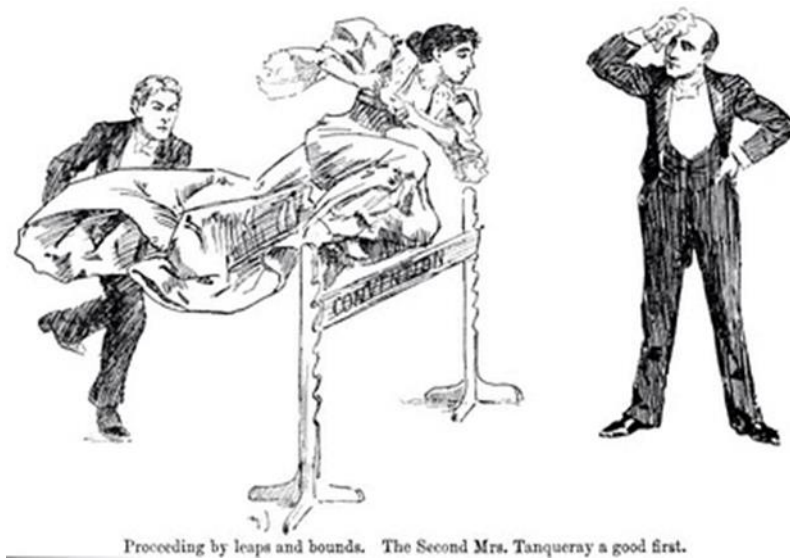


Image 1. Published in *Punch* on June 10, 1893.

Thus, as H.G. Wells (1866 –1946) asserted in a review of *Jude* in 1896, ‘[f]ar from being a pioneer, Sue Bridehead comes in company with a crowd of “intellectualized, emancipated bundle[s] of nerves”’ (Wells, 1896: 153). Sue is clearly part of the traditional representation of the ‘New Woman’; the proto-feminist, the young woman who is educated, intelligent and characterized by a rebellious spirit of being that manifests itself through a resistance to the oppressive institutions of marriage and the Church and her seeming disregard and dislike for sexual contact and sensuality. Her revulsion to the idealism associated with marriage and compulsory heterosexuality as well as the physical functions of the female body such as pregnancy and childbirth, becomes symptomatic of her resistance to sexual colonialism. Hardy focuses on Sue’s sexuality in the novel to emphasize her unorthodoxy. Her characterization is a direct threat to the Victorian model

of the proper woman, who is imbued with the qualities of reticence, self-restraint, a quiet demeanour, a physical and intellectual timorousness and so forth.

It is important to note at this point that the Victorian era was a particularly significant period for the feminist movement as there was a central paradox at the heart of the movement. On the one hand, the movement strove for equal rights between men and women, while on the other, categorically maintained intellectual, moral and sexual differences between men and women. What started as a movement to allow women access to the public sphere eventually became a struggle to eradicate female oppression within the confines of the home, the institution of marriage and the problematic zone of sexual relations. There was a lot of emphasis put on the female body and the essentialist connection between the physical and the social and moral qualities of women. Like the scientists of the eighteenth and the nineteenth century, many feminists too focussed on the reproductive capacities of women and the role of motherhood.

The latter part of the nineteenth century witnessed a problematic intersection of biological theories of determinism and the cultural anxieties symptomatic of the fragility of the end of one era and the beginning of another. Charles Darwin's theories of evolution had a strong impact on the intellectual, social, cultural and political climate of Britain. His discussion of human evolution as a product of accident or chance and not preordination and the idea that women had a say in the 'selection' of their sexual partner effectively brought about a change in the perception surrounding Britain's place in human history and the danger of devolution for the species. This contributed directly to the creation of Francis Galton's theory of Eugenics; a social philosophy that advocated the improvement of human hereditary traits through the promotion of higher reproduction of more desired people and traits, and reduced reproduction of less desired people and traits; elevating

motherhood to a nationalist cause. As a result, the 'Woman Question' became 'a magnet for a host of deep-seated fears, concerns' (Soloway, 1990: 111), as the 'New Woman' seemed to challenge 'what many people believed were the sustaining strengths of Britain's favoured place in the world – the patriarchal family, the division of labour, and the nurturing of a great imperial race' (Soloway, 1990: 110). The concept of compulsory motherhood gained momentum as a test of solicitude for the future of the nation and the nation's stock (Davin, 1978: 65). Karl Pearson (1857-1936), English mathematician and eugenicist, creates a direct correlation between woman's role as mother, child-carer and the destiny of the state:

The race must degenerate if greater and greater stress be brought to force woman during the years of child-bearing into active and unlimited competition with men [...] Indeed the state should intervene in the interest of eugenic health in recognition that woman's child-bearing activity is essentially part of her contribution to social needs (Pearson, 1894: 560-575).

Theories of evolutionary progress and worries about degeneration were frequently deployed to rationalize the existing gender, class, racial and imperial hierarchies. Darwinian evolutionary theory and Eugenics significantly affected women's social reality as reproduction and maternity became the dual prongs of the 'Woman Question', determining and confining its scope to gradations of biological difference. A later critic, Jill Davis, who highlighted the combative approach of eugenics to the feminist project, referred to the enterprise as:

[...] a specific form in which Darwinist ideas came to contest feminist ideas about women's social role in nineteenth century England [...] predicated on the reduction of people to their sexual and reproductive roles, reasserting the biological binary of man/woman that feminism was struggling to deconstruct (Gardner and Rutherford, 1992: 20).

As an extension of this sentiment, eugenics served the purpose of re-inscribing women as biological sustainers of the populace; a mere sum of their physical functions. There was a shift from the ‘maternal to a uterine economy, which characterized infertility as a function of a lack of will, maidenhood as an unnatural damming of sexual desire and social duty, and disinclination as abhorrent to nature’ (Graff, 2000). The conservative imperialists regarded ‘New Woman’ fiction as a social poison; ‘the loosening of sexual controls apparently encouraged by [...] New Woman fiction was almost universally believed by late-Victorian critics to threaten the vital bonds of state and culture’ (Dowling, 1979: 438). The discourse surrounding the ‘New Woman’ thus emerged at a critical juncture, as the theories of evolutionary progress and fears of degeneration evolved alongside newer ways of thinking about issues of gender, sexuality, race and class. Barbara Caine discusses the nature of the Victorian domestic ideology at length in her book *Victorian Feminists* (1992), stating that:

Victorian domestic ideology, centring as it did on the notion of separate spheres for women and men, on the intellectual, moral, and emotional differences between men and women, and on the moral superiority of women, was at least as important in the formulation of feminist thought as was liberal political and economic theory (Caine, 1992: 21).

The ‘Woman Question’ stemmed from these colluding forces of the domestic ideology on the one hand, and the criticism of the actual position of women and the institution of marriage on the other. This dichotomy becomes symptomatic of the reception of *Jude* as well. Hardy’s own views that were sometimes expressed outside of the novels did not always meet with the favour and approval of the feminists of the 1880s and 1890s. The ideological gap between Hardy and the female critics and feminists of the late nineteenth century can be seen through Hardy’s remark to Edmund Yates in 1891; ‘[...] many of my novels have suffered so much from misrepresentation as being attacks on

womankind' (Purdy and Millgate, 1980: 250). Hardy's non-conforming women caused confusion and alarm in the minds of readers as well as feminists, who debated whether or not Hardy was doing the feminist movement a disservice by creating female characters that were too real in their imperfections in a less-than-perfect world. In this social climate Hardy wrote two of his major works, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude*. His utter disdain for the idea of forcing two people to vow to love one another forever and making them socially bound to stay with each other emerges strongly through his scathing indictment of the institution of marriage in *Jude*. Hardy appeared to be not so much against marriage as he was against the idea that it was an irrevocable contract.

While it was possible for a man to divorce his wife on the grounds of adultery from 1857, double standards of morality came into play in denial of similar rights to the wife. A wife could file for divorce if she could prove her husband guilty of adultery *as well as* some other offence like desertion, cruelty, sodomy or incest. As Annie Besant (1847-1933), a women's rights activist, put it:

A married woman loses control over her own body; it belongs to her owner, not to herself; no force, no violence, on the husband's part in conjugal relations is regarded as possible by the law; she may be suffering, ill, it matters not; force or constraint is recognized by the law as rape, in all cases save that of marriage [...] no rape can be committed by a husband on a wife [...] the wife is the husband's property, and by marriage she has lost the right of control over her own body. The English marriage law sweeps away all the tenderness, all the grace, all the generosity of love, and transforms conjugal affection into a hard and brutal legal right (Besant, 1882: 13).

Hardy voices precisely the same concerns through his mouthpiece Sue, whose horror and disgust towards marriage become evident when she says:

I think I could begin to be afraid of you, Jude, the moment you had contracted to cherish me under a Government stamp, and I was licensed to be loved on the premises by you-Ugh, how horrible and sordid! Although, as you are, free, I trust you more than any other man in the world (*Jude*: 249).

The male-dominated and hypocritical state of affairs in Victorian society became painfully apparent, particularly after the passing of the Contagious Diseases Acts, forcing women believed to be prostitutes to undergo medical examinations and incarceration if found to be infected, to control the spread of venereal diseases among the men in the army and navy. The differential standards of sexual morality were starkly exposed by the shifting of the onus of responsibility from men to women; one receiving protection, the other intrusive physical examination and imprisonment for the same ‘offence’.¹³ Through Sue’s portrayal Hardy echoes the anxieties of the era she is depicted as belonging to, in considering marriage to be a zone of ‘fanatic prostitution’ (*Jude*: 349), as it strips the woman of all autonomy over herself as she becomes the property of her husband to do with her what he wishes, when he wishes.

A representation like Sue met with disfavour not just from anti-feminists but feminists as well; her non-conformity is a direct threat to communal laws and social order that can cause disruptions in more worlds than just her own. The complexity surrounding Sue’s characterization stems from her resistance to the forces that fetter her, be it demands on her sexuality, or the constraints of legal conventions and religious dogmas that limit her options in life because of her gender. To analyse the nature of the criticism that was hurled at Sue it is important to consider the time of *Jude*’s publication, when the eugenics movement was urging women to bear children and the social purity movement was stressing the importance of ‘morals’, actively discouraging birth control and abortion. *Jude*

¹³ The Ladies’ National Association was led from the front by Josephine Butler (1828-1906), a feminist/social reformer of the times who protested vehemently against the Contagious Diseases Acts, seeking its Repeal. Instances of this kind brought the focus very categorically on the duality in perception and treatment of the sexes and completely different sets of moral values assigned to each gender. What began as a campaign against the Contagious Diseases Act eventually evolved into the ‘social purity’ movement, an attempt to resuscitate society by morally regenerating it.

brings together the dual tropes of the confusing characteristics of the 'New Woman', a product of her times, and a depiction of degenerative strains in families, a direct manifestation of Hardy's interest in the Darwinian brand of psychiatry. Gillian Beer, in her book *Darwin's Plots*, shows how the structure of Hardy's narratives reveals the direct influence of evolutionary theory in his attempts to depict the struggles of the individual in the evolutionary context. She discusses Hardy's use of the Darwinian notion of 'genealogical ordering', reflected in the web-like element of narrative structure, that Hardy writes about in his diary in 1886: 'The human race to be shown as one great network or tissue which quivers in every part when one point is shaken, like a spider's web if touched' (Beer, 2000: 157).

In an attempt to reinstate the weakening borders of the separate spheres of the public and the private, medical research into female sexuality had also begun in the second half of the nineteenth century, seeking proof that the differences in men and women's physical and mental make-up justified their established positions in society. Many doctors tried to dispel the actions of the 'New Woman' figures, who chose to live independently of husbands, therefore representing themselves in society and supporting themselves financially. William Acton (1813-1875), a British medical doctor of the Victorian era, wrote in *Functions and Disorders of the Reproductive Organs*, (1875) that:

[...] the majority of women (happily for society) are not very much troubled with sexual feeling of any kind. What men are habitually, women are only exceptionally [...] Many persons and particularly young men, form their ideas of women's sensuous feelings from what they notice early in life among loose or at least, low and vulgar women [...] Such women however, give a very false idea of the condition of female sexual feeling in general [...] As a general rule, a modest woman seldom desires any sexual gratification for herself [...] (Acton, 1875: 112).

His theory that 'modest' or decent women did not seek sexual gratification but only submitted to sex to please their husbands and achieve maternity reinstated the virgin/whore

dichotomy, which was met with protests by the likes of Elizabeth Blackwell (1821-1910). A physician herself, Blackwell argued that a woman's disinterest in sexual passion stemmed from a fear of pregnancy and childbirth. Medical practitioners like Acton, in claiming that women were 'passionless', were paradoxically creating greater awareness about female sexuality and the understanding of sex as a physical function and natural desire for both sexes; more than just a procreative function. One of the areas where the threat to the existing order was felt was the field of literature. As Elaine Showalter (1941-), one of the founders of feminist literary criticism in the United States, put it; '[p]olitically, the New Woman was an anarchic figure who threatened to turn the world upside down and to be on top in a wild carnival of social and sexual misrule' (Showalter, 1990: 38).

Millicent Fawcett (1847-1929), an English Suffragist and an early feminist, wrote to Hardy in 1892 about the problematic nature of sexual intimacy, discussing it as a factor that leads to the ultimate surrender of the self. Apart from the suffrage movement, Fawcett was particularly interested in the social purity movement and an attempt to protect young women from sexual exploitation. She was mostly regarded as a 'Victorian Liberal Feminist', but her concern for the suffering of women sometimes found expression in 'passionate outbursts' (Caine, 1992: 199). The underlying tension between Fawcett's ideas about the 'Woman Question', and her active but quiet involvement in campaigns directed at the double standard in sexual morality is worthy of note. The influence of the new ideals and movements seeking to establish equal political, economic and social rights for women percolated into Hardy's creation of Sue, as can be seen from his letter to Millicent Fawcett in 1892:

With regard to your idea of a short story showing how the trifling with the physical element in love leads to corruption: I do not see that much more can be done by fiction in that direction than has been done already. You may say the treatment has

been vague and general only, which is quite true [...] To do the thing well there should be no mincing of matters, & all details should be clear and directly given. This I fear the British public would not stand just now; though to be sure, we are educating it by degrees (Purdy and Millgate, 1980: 264).

Hardy was convinced of a need to change the attitudes of his reading public. It is evident that he was entering dangerous territory and was aware that the explosive content of the novel, along with the frank handling of certain controversial issues, would be met with severe criticism. Yet his desire to 'educate the British public by degrees' seemed to be greater than his desire for universal praise, which ultimately culminated in him writing:

[...] a novel addressed by a man to men and women of full age; which attempts to deal unaffectedly with the fret and fever, derision and disaster, that may press in the wake of the strongest passion known to humanity; to tell, without a mincing of words, of a deadly war waged between flesh and spirit; and to point the tragedy of unfulfilled aims (*Jude*, xiii).

Though Fawcett's comment might have contributed to Hardy's plot-construction of *Jude the Obscure*, one can surmise that the net result would not have found favour with her given that she viewed the concept of 'Free Love' negatively, an idea that Sue openly supports in *Jude*. Fawcett vehemently opposed the depiction of 'Free Love' in Grant Allen's *The Woman Who Did*, a novel that featured a heroine, Herminia Barton, who rejected marriage on principle, instead choosing to live with her lover outside the bond of matrimony. As Caine observes:

Fawcett was one of the main names to reckon with in the suffrage campaign, coming to the peak of her importance as a suffrage leader and as a major figure in British politics in the 1880s and early 1890s [...] It was she who tried to find a new political framework as the nineteenth-century structure of political parties was replaced by a new one, and she who had to try and negotiate a relationship between the 'constitutionalists' and the 'militants' (Caine, 1992: 241).¹⁴

¹⁴ The constitutionalist suffragists, who were part of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) were committed by definition to non-militant activity, whereas the 'suffragettes', who formed the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), employed militant tactics of protest (See Harrison, 2000: 48).

Led by the political activist Emmeline Pankhurst (1858-1928), the suffragettes committed various crimes to draw attention to their demands for the vote and put pressure on the government while avoiding any actual harm to anyone. Fawcett found herself in a rather precarious position as the mediator between the two groups, a role which called for acute diplomacy and a rather ambivalent stance with regards to her opinion about the position of women. This becomes observable through her interactions with Thomas Hardy. To what extent Hardy contributed willingly to the 'Free Love' movement is also debatable, as he expressed his displeasure about being linked with the movement in a letter to Florence Henniker on June 1, 1896, stating that:

I have been offended with you for some time [...] for what you said – that I was an advocate for “free love”. I hold no theory whatever on the subject, except by way of experimental remarks at tea parties, & seriously I don't see any possible scheme for the union of the sexes that wd be satisfactory (Purdy and Millgate, 1980: 122).

Hardy's profound if not always fully articulated concern for the social, economic, and sexual exploitation of women within contemporary society emerged strongly in *Jude*, though he made an obvious attempt to keep his distance from the feminist movements of the day. His views on feminism and the 'New Woman' are ambivalent, and records indicate that even as late as 1916, he refused to be publicly and directly involved with the women's suffrage cause, often facing criticism for it, though his support for the cause and interest in the feminist movement kept surfacing in his novels, particularly *Jude* (Purdy and Millgate, 1980: 186). In this regard, it is important to note how his remarkable letter to Millicent Fawcett in 1906 in which he expressed his personal support for the suffrage movement was shot down for publication, as even a progressive thinker and 'suffragist' like Fawcett felt inhibited about publishing Hardy's radical ideas on enfranchisement:

I have for a long time been in favour of woman-suffrage [...] I am in favour of it because I think the tendency of the woman's vote will be to break up the present pernicious conventions in respect of manners, customs, religion, illegitimacy, the stereotyped household (that it must be the unit of society), the father of a woman's child (that it is anybody's business but the woman's own, except in cases of disease or insanity), sport (that so-called educated men should be encouraged to harass & kill for pleasure feeble creatures by mean stratagems), slaughter-houses (that they should be dark dens of cruelty), & other matters *which I got into hot water for touching on many years ago* [my emphasis] (Millgate, 1990: 192).

The reference to *Jude* is unmistakable, which caused Hardy to get 'into hot water [...] many years ago'. Hardy makes his disdain apparent for the 'pernicious conventions' of the Victorian society that throttled the individual voice, emphasizing a collective conformity instead; social, moral and sexual; as well as lashing out against the cruelty of the supposedly 'civilized' human race against animals. Fawcett felt that Hardy's radical viewpoint was way ahead of its time and 'John Bull is not ripe for it at present' (1906). Hardy's ideas would presumably have been problematic for Fawcett on a personal level too, as her political viewpoints are structured around the core belief that maternity determines a woman's role in society. This locates her firmly within the grids of the Victorian traditional family structure where the 'women as mothers, are given the charge of home and the care of children' (Caine, 1992: 221), thus creating the division between women and men while paradoxically striving for equality. Thus, Hardy's viewpoints that completely subvert the central values of the patriarchal family setting did not find favour with Fawcett, progressive though she otherwise was in her campaigns against female subordination. If Fawcett felt unable to publish Hardy's progressive views in 1906, it is hardly surprising that Hardy would face severe criticism from the Victorian critics and readers in the 1890s for touching upon highly sensitive issues.

As far as the Victorian critical response to Sue is concerned, it is extremely useful to note how Margaret Oliphant criticizes Arabella's overtly sexual nature as shameful and

disgusting, yet in the same breath denounces Sue for her seeming disinterest in sexual unions. She hails Sue as the ‘other woman who makes virtue vicious by keeping the physical facts of the relationship in life in constant prominence by denying, as Arabella does by satisfying them [...] complet[ing] the circle of the unclean’ (Lerner and Holmstrom, 1968: 128). Hardy is caught between a rock and a hard place, as Oliphant manages to find a point of criticism irrespective of the stance he takes. She does not stop at just criticizing the novel but goes on to openly challenge the discretion of the readers:

If the English public supports him (Hardy) in it, it will be to the shame of every individual who thus confesses himself to like and accept what the author himself acknowledges to be unfit for the eyes – not of girls and young persons only, but of the ordinary reader – the men and women who read the magazines, the public whom we address in these pages (Lerner and Holmstrom, 1968: 130).

Through a statement of this nature, she dares disagreement and assumes a level of her literary influence as critic and tastemaker. Her dislike for the strong, individuated women characters who refuse to conform to societal expectations and play at being hand-puppets of their male-counterparts, emerges strongly and scathingly through her comment:

It is the women who are the active agents in all this unsavoury imbroglio [...] The men are passive, suffering [...] victims of these and of fate. Not only do they never dominate but they are quite incapable of holding their own against these remorseless ministers of destiny, these determined operators, managing all the machinery of life so as to secure their own way (Lerner and Holmstrom, 1968: 128-129).

This throws up interesting ideas about the Victorian idea of the female selfhood, especially from the woman’s perspective. In discussing Arabella’s overt sexual drive and condemning it, Sue’s lack of sexual drive and condemning it, yet not bringing up the third angle of the discourse which is Jude’s ‘*erotolepsy*’ that leads him wayward oftentimes in the novel

(*Jude*: 92),¹⁵ to disastrous consequences, Oliphant is making a strong statement through her silence. Falling in with the tenets of the Victorian domestic ideology, she is propagating separate value systems for men and women, in which women operate as vehicles of the moral good amongst wayward men, setting aside their personal agendas and suffering in silence. In stark contrast, J.S. Mill labels such philosophy ‘exaggerated self-abnegation’ on the part of women (Mill, 1869). Interestingly, Sue quotes Mill to Phillotson while entreating him to let her leave him and live together with Jude outside of wedlock, establishing Hardy’s familiarity with Mill’s work *On Liberty*, as he tested out Mill’s ideas through his mouthpiece Sue:

She, or he, ‘who lets the world, or his own portion of it, choose his plan of life for him, has no need of any other faculty than the ape-like 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 (Hardy, 1895: 269).

Sue echoes what is at the heart of all of Mill’s economics, politics, feminism and moral philosophy – the ideal conception of a life that is lived well, autonomously and socially, and in energetic pursuit of a self-defined, self-improving existence. Sue’s aspirations are met with Phillotson’s weary reply; ‘[w]hat do I care about J.S. Mill! [...] I only want to lead a quiet life!’ (*Jude*: 215). This role reversion of the female protagonist spouting Mill’s ideas while her male counterpart seeks a simple, peaceful existence is possibly at the heart of the general vitriol directed towards Sue, especially from the female readers.

An evident distinction in the attitudes of the two sexes towards Hardy’s female characters finds mention in Edmund Gosse’s (1849-1928) essay in *The Speaker*, where he writes:

¹⁵ “Erotoplepsy” is a term first used by Hardy in *Jude* to describe a passionate sensual desire and longing, which is felt violently and urgently. It has subsequently been described as “love-seizure” and “sexual recklessness” (See Sutherland, 2005: 214).

The unpopularity of Mr. Hardy's novels among women is a curious phenomenon. If he had no male admirers, he could almost cease to exist [...] even educated women approach him with hesitation and prejudice. This is owing to no obvious error on the novelist's part; he has never attacked the sex, or offended its proprieties. But there is something in his conception of feminine character which is not well received (Gosse, 1896).

This prominent distinction can be observed in the critical reaction to *Jude*. The male critics like Edmund Gosse, W.D. Howells and Havelock Ellis are kinder in their response to the novel in general; the women characters in particular; not in ignoring their subversiveness, but in being more understanding of them, while the female critics like Oliphant and Gilder are much more negative in their stance. But this is a problematic analysis, as there are certain female suffragettes towards the end of the nineteenth century who commended Hardy generously on his characterization of Sue.

Cases in point are the reviews of *Jude* that appeared in feminist periodicals of the fin de siècle, like the *Women's Penny Paper* and *Shafts*. The *Women's Penny Paper* was founded by Henrietta Müller on October 27, 1888, and had the objective of speaking with 'honesty and courage' about issues important to women, claiming to represent women from different backgrounds and classes. The *Women's Penny Paper* subsequently became *The Woman's Herald* in 1891 and *The Woman's Signal* later. In 1892, Margaret Shurmer Sibthorp founded the periodical *Shafts*, encouraging women to take part in the feminist movement of the day. These two weekly journals became active voices in the feminist movement in the 1890s, considering literary representations as an important method to advance the cause of women, reviewing the works of both women and male writers and setting a standard by which to judge 'New Woman' literature. Molly Youngkin, in *Feminist Realism at the Fin de Siècle: The Influence of the Late-Victorian Women's Press on the Development of the Novel*, coins the term 'feminist realism' to articulate a feminist realist aesthetic, which assumes that literary representations of women should provide a

model for social change. The journals reviewed and encouraged representations of fictional women asserting their agency through the narrative strategies of internal perspective, dialogue, and description of action in novels; reflective of the thought, speech, and action of the real-life women who were striving to change their socio-political status in society.

Kate Flint outlines the importance of these magazines to further the cause of the feminist movement in *The Woman Reader 1837- 1914* (1993). Flint discusses the way these feminist periodicals potentially created a new model of the woman reader, different from the previously existing one where she is presented by the mainstream modern press as a reader in need of protection and control; an extension of the helpless ‘Angel in the House’ trope. Instead, she is perceived as a woman who wishes to broaden her mind and expand her knowledge beyond the topics that are traditionally deemed appropriate for her (Flint, 1993: 150-151).

‘New Woman’ critics, such as Dora Montefiore and Mary Eliza Haweis, recognized inconsistencies in Hardy's character development but praised his representation of women's struggles against cultural conditions. The review of *Jude* that appeared in *Shafts* is sympathetic to Hardy, and the suffragist Dora Montefiore commends him in his depiction of Sue:

[...] all the characters are drawn with a master-hand; but in the case of Sue Bridehead the novelist has well nigh excelled himself. She is the type of upward struggling woman, unconscious almost yet in her struggle, and feebly armed it may be against that terrible ‘letter’ which in the end shall kill her delicate ideal purpose [...] (Youngkin, 2007: 67).

Montefiore considers Sue's struggle to be an unconscious one, indicating a lack of self-knowledge, but she credits Sue as a ‘highly developed woman’ whose intellect, when compared to Jude's, is like a ‘star to a benzoline lamp’. It is on account of this higher

intellectual acumen of Sue that Montefiore questions Sue's decision to return to Phillotson, as such an act of utter debasement of the self appears contradictory to her characterization. But Montefiore locates the act and the individual within the bigger context to 'see beneath the fret [...] the ironies and apparent failures, and to recognise the story of their lives as the perfectly told history of an infinitesimal part of a great whole' (Youngkin, 2007: 68). On the contrary, another review that appears in *The Morning Post* also refers to Sue's high intellect and her 'extensive and peculiar reading, from Greek and Latin classics in translations to 'Lempriere, Catullus, Martial, Juvenal, Lucian, Beaumont and Fletcher, Boccaccio, Scarron, De Brantome, Sterne, De Foe, Smollet', as a major cause behind the troubles and trials of Jude and his 'unsatisfactory cousin' (1895: 6). A woman nurturing her brain over her babies is 'unsatisfactory' indeed in the Victorian context, as the general response suggests.

It is still a problematic task to gauge Hardy's thoughts on women with absolute precision, as central contradictions and ambivalences come into play far too often. There can be no doubt that Hardy widens the parameters of what was considered socially acceptable or morally sound female conduct in his fictional explorations. There are letters proving the incidences of suffrage societies directly asking him for his support for their cause. Alice Grenfell, the secretary of the Women's Progressive Society, wrote to Hardy in 1892 to request him to serve as the society's vice president, an offer that he eventually turned down (Purdy and Millgate, 1980: 266).

Ann Ardis suggests in *New Women, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism*, (1990) that the 'New Woman' is 'many things to many people' (Ardis, 1990: 10). That seems to be a legitimate analysis as it was a phenomenon that had clearly acquired a stature which commanded attention from all quarters, and amassed an enormous amount of critical

commentary. It is important to note just how closely linked these assessments and discussions are to the literature of the period, making it clear that fictional representations were at the heart of the discourse, playing a very important role in shaping public opinion. This throws up interesting ideas about the rise of the of 'New Woman' fiction, as well as the nuanced differences that marked the responses of the critics, the feminists and the general readers of realist fiction of the nineteenth century. 'New Woman' fiction had come under the microscope in the latter part of the Victorian era and was regarded by the conservative section of Victorian society as social poison that had the capacity to threaten the vital bonds of state and culture by the loosening of sexual control (Dowling, 1979: 438). The marital unions that Hardy portrays in *Jude* appear to hinge on the idea of 'companionate' marriage, at least as far as Sue's desires are concerned, the notion of marriage as 'a comradeship rather than a state where the woman is subservient to and dependent on the man' (Mitchell, 1977: 88). The 'companionate marriage' propounded the idea that the 'wife, instead of being a male plaything or a suffering Madonna, would enjoy solidarity and respect. The husband - a helpmeet rather than a lover- would renounce, or restrain, the sexual passion' (Garnett, 1993: 231). The absence of physical attraction in a romantic relationship was considered less an impediment and more the basis of a happy conjugal life by some eminent women of the nineteenth century like Beatrice Potter (1858-1943), who entered into a lifelong partnership with Sidney Webb, with whom she co-founded the London School of Economics and played a crucial role in the forming of the Fabian society. The relationship was supposedly based on purely platonic sentiments: an egalitarian union. Other famous examples of partnerships based on the ideal of the 'platonic love' were Virginia Stephen's courtship with Leonard Woolf and Havelock Ellis' marriage to Edith Lees (Rose, 1986: 81-89). This lays emphasis on the idea of the

‘platonic’ friendship, an ideal that Sue probably strove to achieve without much success. Sue is described by Hardy as ‘[...] the ethereal, fine-nerved, sensitive girl, quite unfitted by temperament and instinct to fulfil the conditions of the matrimonial relation with Phillotson, possibly with scarce any man [...]’ (*Jude*: 210). She confesses to Jude that ‘I have never yielded myself to any lover, if that’s what you mean! I have remained as I began [...]’ (*Jude*: 143).

Sue makes her preference for sexless co-habitation very clear, but she fails to enter into a peaceful platonic partnership because the men she gets involved with find it impossible to get over the ‘sense of her sex’ (*Jude*: 147). Her body is continually de-sexualized and re-sexualized through the course of the novel by the male gaze of Jude and Phillotson, as well as the male authorial voice, creating the grounds for Sue to be perceived by a Victorian critic as ‘a strange and unnatural creature. A highly strung, nervous, hysterical woman, who [...] is distinctly abnormal’ (Lerner and Holmstrom, 1968: 109).

Sue’s presumed sexual dysfunction is an issue that has practically eclipsed all other discussions of *Jude*, causing Edmund Gosse to comment that ‘the *vita sexualis* of Sue is the central interest of the book’, and that Sue is:

[...] a poor maimed ‘degenerate’ ignorant of herself and of the perversion of her instincts, full of febrile, amicable illusions, ready to dramatise her empty life, and play at loving though she cannot love [...] It (*Jude*) is a terrible story in pathology but of the splendid success of it, of the sustained intellectual force implied in the evolution of it, there cannot, I think, be two opinions (Gosse, 1896: 121).

The increasing pathologization of female sexuality in the latter part of the nineteenth century, a result of the pioneering of the sexual sciences by sexologist Havelock Ellis and others, is reflected in Gosse’s analytical reading of Sue, providing the platform for Hardy to defend her:

[...] there is nothing perverted or depraved in Sue's nature. The abnormalism consists in disproportion: not in inversion, her sexual instinct being healthy in so far as it goes, but unusually weak and fastidious; [...] One point illustrating this I could not dwell upon: that though she has children, her intimacies with Jude have never been more than occasional, even while they were living together (I mention that they occupy separate rooms, except towards the end), and one of her reasons for fearing the marriage ceremony is that she fears it would be breaking faith with Jude to withhold herself at pleasure, or altogether... He (Jude) has never really possessed her as freely as he desired (Millgate, 1990: 103-104).

Sue seems to look upon marriage as a 'mere mouldering branch of the patriarchal tree' (Kent, 1987: 84), a surrender of independence and autonomy, to social and moral expectations. Sue's anxiousness about sexual contact is made quite evident through the narrative, causing a critic to remark wryly in the *Glasgow Herald* (1895):

Sue Bridehead, who is a compound of Fanny Robin, Eustacia Vye, and the New Woman of the Sarah Grand variety [...] is a bundle of nerves, has read a good deal, has lots of ideas, especially about the relations between the sexes [...] and has lived quite platonically with an undergraduate who would have liked so much to have been her sweetheart in the non-platonic sense (1895).

However, her apparent frigidity belies her actual sexual drive. There is enough textual evidence scattered throughout the narrative to attest to it: her purchase of the statues of Venus and Apollo, her reading of Swinburne, her interpretation of the Song of Solomon as a rendition of 'ecstatic, natural, human love' (*Jude*: 146). It is not sex that she fears, it is the consequence of it; both in the conquering of her independent self-hood and more importantly, in the affirmation of her status as a potential child-bearer, a role that was increasingly taking on the shape of a nationalist cause in Britain in the wake of the falling birth rates and the propounding of the Eugenic theory.¹⁶ In a moment of exasperation, Sue gives vent to her absolute frustration at the societal expectations, lamenting 'no poor woman has ever wished more than I that Eve had not fallen, so that [...] some harmless

¹⁶ Hardy's notebooks contain extracts from Francis Galton's *Inquiries into the Human Faculty and its Development* (1883), the work in which the term eugenics was coined, and he was known to attend meetings of the Eugenics Education society at least once a year.

mode of vegetation might have peopled Paradise' (Hardy 1895: 287). As a reviewer of *The Graphic* (1895) put it, it is not possible to slot Sue into any pre-determined grid. She is:

[...] the really striking feature of the novel – Jude's hitherto unknown Cousin [...] who will henceforth take her place among the most ambitious, the most complicated, the most subtle, and in very many respects the most interesting of all Mr. Hardy's studies in the psychology of her sex. Arabella represents the type and influence of wholly animal passion. Sue is at once fire and ice – sensuous in imagination, but cold in intellect, and scarcely knowing what passion means; cultivating emotions almost in the spirit of experimental science; utterly, though unconsciously selfish, while capable of remorse, penances, and reparations to the most fanatical extreme [...] (1895).

Sue not only shows greater interest in intellectual advancement than in cultivating her feminine virtues, but she also refuses to conform to the standard norms of sexuality, choosing to exercise her free will in her sexual conduct. She is an example of the Hardy woman, who pushes the envelope in confronting issues of love and marriage, refusing to take the moral high ground, but not happy either in her 'choices' between physical, emotional or financial survival; each seemingly a water-tight compartment, binding and mutually exclusive.

Hardy's heroines noticeably antagonized a section of his readers. Could this be a defensive lashing out towards an author who empathetically debates the effects of the curbing of individual rights and choices, instead of chastising the non-conforming woman? Or is it frustrated anger at the author who creates such strong female characters only to have them eventually return to the zone of convention, like Sue, or meet with a tragic fate, like Tess and Eustacia? Hardy's ambivalence is reflected through his 'revolutionary protests against social conventions that restrict women's freedom [on the one hand] [...] and for the blatantly sexist remarks that are scattered throughout his oeuvre like some kind of sexist graffiti [on the other]' (Mitchell, 1993: 173), effectively contributing to the indecisive attitude the nineteenth-century feminist critics harbour towards him.

As can be observed in this chapter, a significant number of Hardy's contemporary readers ripped *Jude* apart in reviews, as they found his depiction of the intellectually and psychologically complex Sue, and her disdain for the heteronormative, patriarchal structure of the Victorian era concerning sex, sexuality, marriage and motherhood, far too controversial and discomfiting. Critical opinion on Hardy's creation of *Jude*, particularly his portrayal of Sue, will continue to be divided and gain more momentum with the advent and application of newer modes of literary criticism, which will be discussed in the following chapters.

The critical dilemma that is Sue – criticism ranging
from early twentieth century to the 1970s

*“You would think it strange at first, but then
Everything has been strange in its time.
When some one said on a day of the prime
He would bow to no brazen god again
He doubtless dazed the mass of men.”*

The Recalcitrants – Thomas Hardy

In this chapter, I analyse the early twentieth-century responses to Sue Bridehead, up to the 1970s, with a particular focus on the elaborate analysis of Thomas Hardy’s works, *Study of Thomas Hardy* by D.H. Lawrence (1885-1930). I also study the debates about Hardy’s status as a ‘tragic’ novelist - an inescapable concern while studying the form, structure, plot or characterizations in his novels as nearly every book length study on him, alongside multiple reviews and articles, has addressed it, and in many instances also attempted to assess Sue Bridehead’s standing as a tragic character.

A problem often encountered by critics while trying to ascertain the main themes of *Jude* is that it addresses too many concerns – class; the rigidity of the institutions of education, marriage, religion; the problems of trying to adapt to a rapidly transitioning world; and the search for identity and intellectual fulfilment. *Jude* becomes a precursor of modern psychological novels in its depiction of rootlessness, isolation, frustration and anxiety in a materialistic, more urbanized environment and the search for fulfilment and meaning in a post Darwinian world of perpetual doubt and insecurity. As Gillian Beer writes in *Darwin's Plots*:

Though the individual may be of small consequence in the long sequence of succession and generation, yet Hardy in his emplotment opposed this perception and does so by adopting again the single life span as his scale (Beer, 2000: 239).

Beer discusses how natural law ultimately triumphs over individual effort in Hardy's fiction, which becomes the basis of the tragedy of his characters. As Hardy himself puts it, a 'Plot, or Tragedy, should arise from the gradual closing in of a situation that comes of ordinary human passions, prejudices and ambitions' (F.E. Hardy, 1928: 157). Despite important differences, the running thread of pessimism in Hardy's novels and his focus on fate, the inexorability of natural law and the doctrine of determinism creates a link between Hardy and the school of literary naturalism as espoused by French novelist and critic Emile Zola. Hardy offers a little insight into his worldview through his musings when he writes, '[t]his planet does not supply the materials for happiness to higher existences. Other planets may, though one can hardly see how' (F.E. Hardy, 1962: 218). Beer writes in "Finding a scale for the human: plot and writing in Hardy's novels" that:

Plot in Hardy is almost always tragic or malign: it involves the overthrow of the individual either by the inevitability of death or by the machinations (or disregard) of 'crass casualty'. Deterministic systems are placed under great stress: a succession of ghost plots is present. The persistently almost-attained happy

alternatives are never quite obliterated by the actual terrible events. The reader is pained by the sense of multiple possibilities, only one of which can occur and be thus verified in time, space, and actuality (Beer, 2000: 220).

The debate among critics regarding whether or not Hardy's works, particularly *Jude*, can be given tragic status remains an on-going one. Many critics detected tragic elements in his novels but did not attempt to describe the specific nature of Hardy's representation of tragedy, instead comparing it to the tragedies of Sophocles and Shakespeare. Another strand of critical thought concluded that Hardy's major novels lacked certain key elements for a literary work to be considered a tragedy. The split between the critical viewpoints about Hardy's works, be it regarding the potential of his novels to qualify as tragedies, or his ambivalent stance on women, becomes evident in the growing scholarship on him, as will be discussed in detail in this chapter.

§2.1

Sue and the early twentieth century critics

Max Beerbohm (1872 –1956) opines in “Thomas Hardy as Panoramalist”, that appeared in the *Saturday Review* in January, 1904 that:

Eight years ago *Jude the Obscure* was published. Since then Mr. Hardy has given us two to three volumes of poetry, and now a volume of drama, but no other novel. One assumes that he has ceased as a novelist. Why has he ceased? The reason is generally said to be that he was disheartened by the many hostile criticisms of *Jude the Obscure*. To accept that explanation were to insult him [...] Mr. Hardy writes no more novels because he has no more novels to write (Beerbohm, 1904).

Whether it was weariness with the relentless criticism directed at his novels, or an artist’s personal choice to express himself through one medium over another that caused Hardy to abstain from novel writing in favour of poetry after 1895, the ironic fact was that he grew in popularity in the twentieth century, particularly due to a burgeoning interest in his novels. In the period spanning 1900-1914, Hardy’s reputation shifted somewhat from being the ‘poet’ of Wessex to the ‘English rural annalist *par excellence* [...]’ (Brooker and Widdowson, 2014: 145).

The growing anxiety about the self in relation to the changing world around it that characterized the late nineteenth century was marked by industrialization, urban expansion, the growth of the railways and the mechanization of the workplace. Charles Whibley (1859 - 1930) perceives the essence of this split in Hardy:

The Wessex of Mr. Hardy is “a modern Wessex of railways, the penny post, mowing and reaping machines”. But by birth and ancestral associations he belongs

to the soil and land which he describes; his writing is instinct with these associations, bred in the physical fibre and in the imagination (Cox, 1970: 439).

Edward Wright, in “The Novels of Thomas Hardy” (1904), identifies Sue as an exemplar of Hardy’s:

[...] wild attempt to realize in narrative form some current pessimistic theories, by imagining a world where all women will have innate aversion against marrying and bearing children; and where, even when children are born, they will resort to suicide out of an instinctive desire to not live (quoted in Cox, 1970: 374).

His derision for Hardy’s depiction of a non-conforming, anti-marriage campaigner like Sue, and the depressingly morbid life and death of Father Time and the other children is reflective of the reaction that *Jude* evoked from many early critics. He detects in *Jude* ‘the more gratifying idea of the rapid extinction of the human race by degeneration’ (Cox, 1970: 374). Wright’s idea is explored and developed further by Lawrence a few years later in his *Study of Thomas Hardy*, where he traces in the textual bodies of Jude and Sue the tell-tale signs of the cultural/biological degeneration of western civilization, leading to a hopeless, pathetic downfall. There is, however, an important difference in the assessment of *Jude* by Wright and Lawrence. Lawrence perceives Hardy’s depictions of Jude and Sue’s intellectual, emotional and physical trials to be fictionalized accounts of very real people caught up in the tussle between dual forces within the self, as well as the self in opposition to societal strictures. Wright, on the other hand, is of the opinion that Hardy’s attempt at this ‘novel of misery’ is in vain as ‘the principal characters and the main events, as described’ are too ‘far removed from the realities of the world’ (Cox, 1970: 375). He sees the only truly tangible, real aspect of Hardy’s venture to be the fact that it reveals Hardy’s frame of mind when he wrote it; his ‘impression of fellow-creatures and the universe [...]’, the characters a representation of the ‘younger and more febrile generation’,

and his female characters ‘women of strange, passionate, irresponsible temperament’ (Cox, 1970: 375-376).

Most of the critics of the nineteenth century did not focus on Hardy’s social realism, instead concentrating more on the notion of every human being possessing a core universality; often falling into the trap of offering value judgement on character traits and actions of characters, rather than seeing them as tools of social criticism. Methodologically, the essays of the early twentieth century eschew overt politicization of the literary text or a character by the encroachment of theoretical frameworks. The approach of this kind of criticism is mostly humanistic and moralistic stressing the notion that human nature is fundamentally static and unchanging. This view serves to articulate and establish the universality of good literature. As a mode of criticism, however, it struggles to accommodate highly individual and individuated thought and action, as in the case of Sue Bridehead’s presentation, preferring to relegate her to a zone of some form of abnormality – psychological, social or sexual. Consequently, this mode of analysis is challenged after the 1960s with the advent of newer modes of literary criticism, as will be explored in the next chapter.

Lascelles Abercrombie’s (1881-1938) *Thomas Hardy: A Critical Study* (1912) is an important contribution to Hardy scholarship in the early twentieth century. Abercrombie’s critical stance is primarily liberal humanistic which emphasised strongly the meaning located within the text and considered literature/poetry to be timeless and revelatory of a constant or universal truth about humanity. In his discussion of Hardy’s tragic conception of the world, however, Abercrombie takes note of the individuality of the thoughts and actions of the characters in *Jude*. He recognises the impact of the socio-cultural context in which Hardy wrote *Jude*, a post-Darwinian, post-Industrial Revolution world of high

anxiety, situated precariously on the brink of the First World War. He identifies in Hardy's works a 'tragic purport', the obvious quality of his tragic works being that:

[...] it does not begin in the persons who are most concerned in it; it is an invasion into human consciousness of the general tragedy of existence, which thereby puts itself forth in living symbols. We assuredly do not feel Hardy's tragic characters to be mere puppets jerked by a malicious fate [...] Neither has he anything comparable with the moralized destiny of Greek tragedy, ready to avenge any violence to the prescribed symmetry of mortal affairs [...] this tragic fate in Hardy's novels; it is a condition of activity (Abercrombie, 1912: 20-26).

Abercrombie points out how Hardy was starting to experiment with his plot-construction and novelistic style while drafting *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), and struggling with the restrictiveness of the set theories of tragedy. In *Jude*, Abercrombie observes that the focus is on the life and the story of one individual, Jude, around whom the plot evolves and develops, and even though Sue 'is a character drawn with as exact and penetrating a care as Jude himself', she is still 'the subject of the book in so far as she affects Jude' (Abercrombie, 1912: 132). This is important to consider in Abercrombie's study of Sue as his analysis becomes symptomatic of unconscious sexism in seeing Sue as just a catalyst/reflection of Jude's tragedy, rather than tragic in her own right. He examines the form and nature of tragedy in Hardy's novels, arguing that his tragic works follow the tradition of the ancient Greek tragedies of Sophocles (C. 496 – 06 BC) in their structural integrity, and the way Hardy depicts a chain of events emerging from a single initial incident to avoid major digressions. He considers Hardy to replace 'breadth of event' with 'breadth of significance', keeping the focus of the novel narrow and tight on the struggle of the protagonists against external and internal conflicts (Abercrombie, 1912: 134). Abercrombie draws some interesting comparisons between Jude and Tess, stating:

[...] while Tess only suffers her tragedy, Jude deliberately courts his. She is punished simply for the sin of personal existence; but Jude with the more rebellious

consciousness of masculine nature, adds to this the further sin of aspiration – he being thus typical of his sex, as Tess is of hers (Abercrombie, 1912: 152-153).

While the male/female binary employed in the analysis is essentialist and dated, Abercrombie makes a very succinct observation about the nature of Jude and Sue's tragedy. The strand of masochism that runs through the length and the breadth of *Jude*, touching upon the portrayals of both Jude and Sue, who genuinely appear to be 'courting' their tragedy at certain points in the novel, signals a gradual foray into a more psychoanalytic approach to Hardy's works.

Samuel C. Chew brings the focus back on Hardy's depiction of 'modern' sex relations in *Thomas Hardy: Poet and Novelist* (1928), noting the unconventionality of Hardy's views on love, sex and marriage and their manifestations through his female portrayals:

On the whole, however, Hardy's attitude towards women is unfavourable; his opinion of them is bitter. They have many good qualities of heart, but they are fickle and vain, insincere, conscienceless, and seductive. Almost all are passionate, and passion leads invariably to grief (Chew, 1928: 133).

Chew asserts that the passionate nature of Hardy's women inevitably leads to their grief, but he desists from conferring tragic status on *Jude*, stating that 'there is no room for that eternal conflict which is the essence of "tragedy"' (Chew and Altick, 1948). He spots the influences of eminent philosophers Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) and Eduard von Hartmann (1842-1906) in Hardy's handling and discussion of the marriage problem in *Jude*. Schopenhauer viewed humankind as both a product and a victim of blindly operating forces in a phenomenal world that is godless and driven by a malignant will. Chew identifies Arabella to be 'the very embodiment of Schopenhauer's view of women', a force of nature in her own right, a product of a godless world; while Sue is the 'modern type of woman that is slowly emerging, one in whom the reason is asserting itself with a

consequent approximation to the position of modern man' (Chew, 1928: 135-136). Hartmann emphasized the role of the unconscious mind in an attempt to reconcile the conflicting forces of rationalism and irrationalism. Chew surmises that the influence of Hartmann's theories of pessimism; the view of life which considers evil to necessarily belong to existence, evil that can cease only with the cessation of existence itself, becomes apparent in Hardy's depiction of Father Time. Chew perceives Father Time's 'murder of Sue's babies and his own suicide' to be a playing out of the 'prophecies of the future generations, foretold by Von Hartmann, who will thus rid themselves of the burden of the mystery of the world' (Chew, 1928: 137).

Patrick Braybrooke (1894–1956) also perceives the influence of Schopenhauer's notion of a godless, malignant world in the tragic setting of *Jude*, but feels that 'one cannot read far in *Tess* or *Jude* without sensing Hardy's profound sense of human sympathy' (Braybrooke, 1928). Braybrooke finds it 'hard to fathom Hardy's philosophy as far as he means to evidence it in Sue's religious philosophy' (she first denounces it before ultimately reverting back to it), but lauds Hardy's portrayal of a female figure who shows a highly developed emotional perceptiveness that can be attained only through education and intellect.

Harold Williams feels that even if 'his dramas be simple in construction, Mr. Hardy spares no pains of complexity in the drawing of his characters [...] [h]is women especially stand out with a clarity and personal distinction which it is not easy to match in modern literature'. On the contrary, W.L. Phelps straightforwardly condemns *Jude* as 'the worst novel he [Hardy] has ever written, both from the moral and from the artistic point of view'. Phelps adds that 'Pessimism which had been a noble ground quality of his earlier writings is in *Jude* merely hysterical and wholly unconvincing [...] the representation of marriage

and the relations between men and women, instead of being a picture of life, resembled a caricature' (Cox, 1970: 408, 424). Despite the controversy on this count, Hardy's empathy for women's suffering leads critics like H.C. Duffin (discussed below) to recognize his literary feminism. A study of the trajectory of Hardy's fiction in early and later periods of his career shows a marked evolution in his depiction of women. Though Hardy's philosophy of life that permeates his novels is quite uniform, his attitude concerning women inhabits the twilight zone of constant fluctuation, particularly in later works like *Tess* and *Jude*, where his novelistic stance is openly revolutionary, challenging and questioning of accepted norms, but ultimately depicting the rebels either capitulating to accepted norms or meeting with tragic fates.

H.C. Duffin, in *Thomas Hardy: A Study of the Wessex Novels, the Poems, and the Dynasts* (1937), defends Hardy against the charge of misogyny that follows him around, judging Hardy's propensity to make his female characters suffer to stem from a place of 'hurt idealism':

Hardy's sense of the gulf between woman's possible best and her actual achievement towards it [...] his ruthless picture of woman's folly and suffering are the bitter cry wrung from him by grief [...] What Hardy could do for his women he did - he made them full of beauty, interest, fascinating and lovable qualities of all kinds, he gave them great parts to play [...] His estimate of woman is high but tempered and conditioned by keen observation (Duffin, 1937: 238).

He hails Hardy as 'a specialist in women', each female character standing out 'as clear and distinct from each other as primary colours' while the male characters do not show much subtlety and depth with the exceptions of Jude and Angel Clare. Duffin identifies Sue's characterization to be that of an intellectual woman, 'merely dabbling in one of the many subtleties of modern sex-relations' (Duffin, 1937: 234-235).

In *The Technique of Thomas Hardy*, Joseph Warren Beach (1880 –1957) finds Sue to be utterly morbid:

And then – for there are as many ways of offending in the treatment of sex as there are varieties of temperament – another class of readers may be willing to accept the whole story of Arabella, as at least *natural*, who will repudiate all that relates to Sue as tainted with morbidity and going beyond all decent bounds of frankness. Morbid and unnatural they will find the epicene nature of this woman, whom Jude calls a “distinct type,” a creature “intended by Nature to be left intact.” Indecently frank and revolting they will find the author’s mention (however delicately phrased) of her relation to her husband, her loathing of his contact, and her final sacrifice to what she conceives her religious duty (Beach, 1922: 224-225).

Beach’s confusion in trying to analyse Sue, the ‘strange creature’, is evident from the way he tries and fails to understand Sue’s indecisiveness regarding marrying Jude before choosing an itinerant life of social ostracism with him (Beach, 1922: 220). He finds Hardy’s portrayal of Sue too frank, too indecent to be palatable but lauds Hardy for daring to portray the trials of the ‘poor creatures of an urban industrial order’, depicting ‘in the persons of Jude and Sue [...] the human nature of our unheroic experience (Beach, 1922: 243). The shift in the critical stance regarding Hardy’s presentation of Sue becomes apparent with early psychoanalytic and feminist readings appearing from the second decade of the twentieth century that construe Sue’s portrayal to be representative of ‘the stunted growth of modern life, with all its maladjustment, discontent, and restless, craving intellectuality’ (Beach, 1922: 243).

§2.2

Sue Bridehead: A tragic character?

In studies of Hardy as a novelist, or of Hardy's characters, plots and philosophy, Sue Bridehead's characterization has evoked interest, curiosity and criticism from the time of publication of *Jude*, but it was Lawrence's in-depth, lengthy analysis of Sue's character in his *Study of Thomas Hardy* that effectively changed the landscape of the criticism surrounding Sue. Critics, reviewers and readers have puzzled over both Hardy and Lawrence's contradictory representations of and responses to their female characterizations, tending to either brand them as misogynist or appropriate them to the feminist cause.

It is important to contextualize Lawrence's *Study of Thomas Hardy* in the socio-political climate of the first half of the twentieth century. The First World War broke out in August 1914, an event that deeply disturbed Lawrence. He wrote to J.B. Pinker on September 5, 1914, to give vent to his anguish, '[w]hat a miserable world. What colossal idiocy, this war. Out of sheer rage I've begun my book about Thomas Hardy. It will be about anything but Thomas Hardy I am afraid – queer stuff – but not bad' (Zytaruk and Boulton, 1981: 212). Lawrence's *Study*, which he writes in 1914-1915, had its inception as a commissioned project for the 'Writers of the Day' series run by James Nisbet and Company, 'a little book [...]—a sort of interpretative essay on Thomas Hardy, of about 15000 words' (Zytaruk and Boulton, 1981: 93). During the writing process, the scope of

the ‘little book’ on Hardy burgeoned, evolving into an experimental platform for Lawrence to develop his own philosophy. Lawrence wrote to Amy Lowell, an American poet and writer, in November 1914, stating that: ‘I am just finishing a book, supposed to be on Thomas Hardy, but in reality a sort of Confessions of my Heart [...]’ even hailing the book as a ‘Confessio Fidei’ (Zytaruk and Boulton, 1981: 235, 243). As Langbaum puts it, Lawrence ‘partly misreads and rewrites Hardy’s novels as a way of arriving at his own art’ (Langbaum, 1985: 69). The *Study* is considered to be one of the most complete statements of Lawrence’s early personal philosophy, published posthumously in 1936 under the title *Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D. H. Lawrence*. In “Why the Novel Matters?” (1985), Lawrence discusses the novel as a ‘book of life’, a way to understand life in its totality: ‘the whole hog’ (Lawrence, 1985: 195). The *Study*, Lawrence’s ‘little book on Hardy’s people’, becomes a merger between life and art as Lawrence studies the fictional characters as ‘people’ whose lives have been captured in art, to offer a panoramic view of their existences not possible in real life (Lawrence, 1936: 13).

Lawrence’s *Study* is widely regarded as a startling criticism and one of the most conspicuous of the enormous body of critical output on Hardy’s works. Since its publication, the *Study* has instigated a significant amount of critical debate, garnering its own brand of meta-criticism devoted to Lawrence on Hardy. Lawrence’s stance towards feminism as a movement was ambivalent, but his interest in the question of sexual liberation was profound. His fascination with Hardy’s female characters stemmed from his dedicated interest in the matters of love, life, sex and sexuality rooted in the human condition; the turmoil and conflict at the heart of human existence caused by factors that are internal and/or external.

A central issue of this chapter is whether Hardy's portrayal of Sue can be perceived as tragic. In addressing this question, I contend that Lawrence contradicts his central argument of the *Study* in asserting that Hardy's novels cannot be seen as true tragedies, while identifying in Sue the attributes of a truly tragic character, struggling as much with inner conflicts as with the external ones induced by repressive social forces. I also demonstrate that Lawrence's dualisms, and the painstakingly created metaphysic on which his entire analysis of Sue's characterization hinge, are contentious. Lawrence, like Abercrombie, praises Hardy highly for 'his feeling, his instinct, his sensuous understanding [...] [which is] deeper than that, perhaps of any other English novelist' (Lawrence, 1936: 93), but demurs with the analysis that Hardy's works are tragic. Lawrence sees the conflicts of Hardy's protagonists as largely external - a tussle between the personal and the social - as opposed to the Greek or Shakespearean tragedies that depict the individual in the throes of conflicting forces *within* themselves; forces that pull at them from opposite directions, morally and psychologically exhausting them. What sets Hardy apart from the true tragedies in Lawrentian terms is 'that whereas in Shakespeare or Sophocles the greater uncomprehended morality, or fate, is actively transgressed and gives active punishment, in Hardy and Tolstoi the lesser, human morality, the mechanical system is actively transgressed and holds, and punishes the protagonist [...]' (Lawrence, 1936: 29). Lawrence perceives the suffering of Hardy's protagonists as stemming almost entirely from a resistance to the civilizational and social constraints, and not from a greater force of destiny or an internal angst:

There is a lack of sternness, there is a hesitating betwixt life and public opinion, which diminishes the Wessex novels from the rank of pure tragedy [...] It is not so much the eternal, immutable laws of being which are transgressed, it is not that vital life-forces are set in conflict with each other bringing almost inevitable tragedy - yet not necessarily death [...] It is, in Wessex, that the individual

succumbs to what is in its shallowest, public opinion, in its deepest, the human compact by which we live together, to form a community (Lawrence, 1936: 51).

He does not perceive the many adversities faced by Hardy's fictional creations as cataclysmic:

Eustacia, Tess, Sue, what was there in their position that was necessarily tragic? Necessarily painful, but they were not at war with God, only with society. Yet they were all cowed by the mere judgement of man upon them, and all the while by their own souls they were right (Lawrence, 1936: 30).

However, in the same study he goes on to recognize in Sue the qualities of a tragic character, and struggles to slot the complex characterization of Sue within his metaphysic, as Sue's conflicted state of being and unique character traits evade a straightforward classification.

At the heart of Lawrence's study of Hardy is the anxiety that human beings have lost the ability for self-actualization or self-affirmation, choosing instead to live a life of hollow self-preservation. He sees it as a symptom of the cultural malaise of a nation caught in the throes of the soulless progress in industry and technology that disavows the space or scope for personal growth and agency. In the first chapter, Lawrence uses the images of the blooming poppy, and of the phoenix blazing up and resurrecting itself from its ashes to depict a kind of nostalgic yearning for self-actualization: a point of absolute culmination. He contrasts the human condition of subordination under external forces to the self-contained fulfilment of the poppy and the phoenix. This is the beginning of the development of his philosophy, his concern with 'the law of self-preservation' that forces human beings to conform to a social organization structured around 'the struggle for existence, the right to work, the right to vote, the right to this and the right to that' (Lawrence, 1936: 13).

The years immediately before the War were characterized by intense feminist activity. In the *Study*, Lawrence expresses his admiration for the feminists on the one hand, hailing them as the ‘bravest, and, in the old sense, most heroic party amongst us’, and his disdain on the other, exclaiming that ‘the women however, want the vote in order to make more laws. That is the most lamentable and pathetic fact. They will take this clumsy machinery to make right the body politic’ (Lawrence, 1936: 14-15). He criticizes the demand for the right to vote, condemning the suffragette movement for seeking ‘rights’ and other practical modes of ‘self-preservation’ when the citizens of the state lacked individuality. The greater emphasis on individuality and aesthetic achievement over basic sustenance and preservation of the self is an aspect of Lawrence’s philosophy that critics surmised was intensified by his personal circumstances of the time. Lawrence was in deep financial crisis: circumstances that worsened when the contract for the novel he was working on at the time, *The Rainbow*, got withdrawn by the publishers (Worthen, 1979: 56). Lawrence’s attitude to feminism morphed in a major way after the War. Hilary Simpson argues that the period spanning from 1913-1915, during which he wrote the *Study*, was probably the only time when he was genuinely sympathetic to the feminist cause (Simpson, 1982: 174). In a letter to Sally Hopkin, a feminist friend, Lawrence makes the proclamation; ‘I shall do my work for women better than the suffrage’ (Squires and Cushman, 1990: 66).

Terry R. Wright describes the dialectical model that Lawrence creates through which he can analyse Hardy’s novels and arrive at his own philosophy and ideology for his own novels:

Lawrence celebrates the male desire for a woman as the central element in his life [...] More esoterically, he develops the theology [...] in terms of a set of related oppositions between Female and Male, God the Father and God the Son, Law and

Love, the Flesh and the Spirit. For Lawrence God the Father (counter-intuitively) is Female, the creator of life, while God the Son, Christ the Word, is Male, inherently suspicious of the body [...] Ideally, the Male and the Female principles should not struggle for dominance but remain in creative balance. In Hardy, however, as in Tolstoy there is no such equilibrium; his metaphysic demands that the Female bow to the Male, the Flesh succumb to the spirit (Wright, 2009: 465-475).

This stress on human inter-personal desire becomes apparent in Lawrence's analyses of Hardy's novels, particularly *Jude*, relegating every other theme and concern present in the novel to a zone of secondary importance to what he considered to be the overarching theme of the novel: the criss-crossing inter-personal relationships of the primary characters Jude, Sue, Arabella and Phillotson. Lawrence observes that 'none of the heroes and heroines care very much for money, or immediate self-preservation, and all of them are struggling hard to come into being [...] the struggle into love and the struggle with love: by love meaning the love of a man for a woman and a woman for a man' (Lawrence, 1936: 20).

In *The Concept of Character in the Major Novels of D. H. Lawrence* (1971), Donald Eastman studies the dual forces that Lawrence employs in the course of the *Study* while creating his dialectical model of analysis for Hardy's novels. This is important to note as Lawrence builds on the mind/body duality to discuss the Law/Love divide in his analysis of Sue. Law is the 'female principle' of body, instinct, sensation while Love is indicative of the abstract consciousness of the mind, of being and knowing; dialectically opposed forces, each striving for domination while what is desired is a harmonious balance. H.M. Daleski, in his study of Lawrence's works, *The Forked Flame* (1965), discusses the opposed forces of female and male principle, and Law and Love, as dual polarities with no chance of a resolution. Mark Kinkead-Weekes in "The Marble and the Statue" (1968) discusses the same forces as two halves of a dialectical model, capable of attaining a state of synthesis beyond the point of conflict. Lawrence in his original

development of the dialectical model of Love and Law construes true artistic form to be ‘a revelation of the two principles of Love and Law in a state of conflict and yet reconciled: pure motion struggling against and yet reconciled with the Spirit [...]’ (Lawrence, 1936: 90). This becomes a point of dispute as Lawrence identifies Thomas Hardy’s metaphysic to be ‘something like Tolstoi’s. “There is no reconciliation between Love and the Law,” says Hardy. “The spirit of Love must always succumb before the blind, stupid, but overwhelming power of the Law”’ (Lawrence, 1936: 93). Lawrence commends Hardy’s effective dramatization and depiction of the psychological and physical conflicts of his characters, but questions his metaphysical understanding of the Law/Love divide, arguing against his ‘overweening theoretic antagonism to the Law’ (Lawrence, 1936: 92). As far as Lawrence is concerned, ‘the via media to being, for a man or woman, is love, and love alone’ (Lawrence, 1936: 20).¹⁷ He admires the Hardyan rebels like Sue, Eustacia and Tess, who at least strive to rise above the puritanical dictates of a conservative social order, and resents their inevitably tragic end:

It is not [as] a metaphysician that one must consider Hardy. He makes a poor show there. For nothing in his work is as pitiable as his clumsy efforts to push events into line with his theory of being, and to make calamity fall on those who represent the principle of Love. He does it exceedingly badly, and owing to this effort his form is execrable in the extreme. (Lawrence, 1936: 93)

In the tussle between Law and Love, Law almost unequivocally wins over Love, replete with the ultimate capitulation of the struggling individual. This is a recurring motif in Hardy, observable repeatedly: Eustacia’s symbolic drowning in the whirlpool of her own overarching ambition and desire, Henchard’s fall from greatness to an anonymous death in a workman’s hut, Jude’s miserable, lonely death in Christminster, a city that rejects and

¹⁷ The word ‘love’ is noticeably in lower case in this quote, signifying that it has been used in the broad, non-technical sense of affection and not in Lawrence’s very particular idea of it in his metaphysic.

spits him out, Sue's ultimate break-down and capitulation to socio-religious expectations from her.

Lawrence commends Hardy for creating characters with 'a real, vital, potential self [which] suddenly bursts the shell of manner and convention and commonplace opinion, and acts independently, absurdly, without mental knowledge or acquiescence' (Lawrence, 1936: 20-21). This 'outburst' becomes the cause of their eventual tragedy as they become unfit for the 'great self-preservation system [...] How to live in it after bursting out of it was the problem [...]' (Lawrence, 1936: 20-21). He also points out a 'definite weakness, a certain oldness of temper, inelastic, a certain inevitable and unconquerable adhesion to the community' that Hardy straddles his characters with (Lawrence, 1936: 49). The problem with the Hardyian tragedy stems from an adherence to a 'certain moral scheme', according to Lawrence, which gives rise to an extraneous, one-dimensional conflict:

This is the tragedy, and only this: it is nothing more metaphysical than the division of a man against himself in such a way: first that he is a member of the community, and must, upon his honour, in no way move to disintegrate the community either in its moral or its practical form; second that the convention of the community is a prison to his natural, individual desire, a desire that compels him, whether he feels justified or not, to break the bounds of the community [...] (Lawrence, 1936: 21)

To state that Hardy's characters struggle with purely external forces is an inadequate reading of his fictional characterizations, particularly while analysing a highly developed and individuated character like that of Sue. Her complex blend of struggles and crises are legitimately metaphysical; a juxtaposition of private, internalized angst, and public, external socio-culturally dictated anxiety. The struggle is turned inwards and the focus is centred more on the conflict between self and ego, the self in contradiction to itself and to others, than on the disruptive forces of the conflict between the individual and society.

Lawrence's point of interest in Thomas Hardy's 'Wessex people', their tenacity in struggling against the constraining forces of society, also becomes his central point of criticism when he questions Hardy's tendency of punishing the non-conforming characters in the end, criticizing him for painstakingly creating his rebels only to condemn them. As Lawrence explicates, Hardy shows his sympathy for the individual who has the gumption to go against society, though he ultimately 'cannot help himself, but must stand with the average against the exception, he must in his ultimate judgement represent the interests of humanity, or the community as a whole, and rule out the individual interest' (Lawrence, 1936: 48). Ultimately, the Hardyian men and women have to bow down to the norms of society and community 'weeping over [their] denied sel[ves]' (Lawrence, 1936: 17).

§2.3

“And Jude the Obscure and His Beloved”

Lawrence’s keen interest in the characterization of Sue and her highly complicated relationship with Jude can be seen even before his full-blown analysis of *Jude* in the *Study*, as he wrote a poem called “*And Jude the Obscure and His Beloved*” dated in manuscript c.1910. In the poem, Lawrence creates an imaginary conversation between Jude and Sue, as a spin-off from the plot of the main novel:

“Oh my God what a bitter shame,
After all this time of patience and pain
Still to answer me just the same,
Still to say: “I want no flame
To lick me up, but only the warm
The steady glow: for oh the charm
Of your heart of fire in which I look!
Oh better there than any book
Glow and enact the dramas and dreams
I love for ever: and it seems
Richer than life itself, till desire
Comes licking in flame through the bars of your lips,

And over my face your stray fire slips
Leaving a burn and a smart
That must have the oil of illusion: Oh heart
Of love and beauty loose no more
Your reptile flames of passion: store
Your beauty in the basket of your soul,
Be all yourself one bonny, burning coal,
That steady stays with joy of its own fire,
But do not seek to take me by desire,
Oh do not seek to thrust me in your fire.

For all the firing all my porcelain
Of flesh would crack and shiver with keen pain,
My ivory and idols split in twain,
My temples broken, then I should remain
A priestess execrated, full of stain.”

But oh my God what a bitter shame
That I, who have known her a little, am kept
Like a glowing brazier, faintly blue of flame,
Floating above my silver, so that the adept
At love should sprinkle me daily with a rare
Sweet fragrance of love, and feed me with kisses fair,
And gather my burning, beautiful dreams for her share,
And leave me torture and wrath and a drossed despair.

Oh my god what a bitter shame
After all this time it should be the same,
That she should ward away the flame,
Yet warm herself at the fire, and blame
Me that I flicker in the basket:
Me that I glow not still in content
When all my substance is being spent;
What a bitter shame that she should ask it

Of love not to desire,
Not to reach one tongue of fire
Burning like Dives in Hell to her
Not to utter one cry to her.”

Lawrence addresses the conflicting forces at play in the relationship between Jude and Sue in this poem. The first clash is external; the shadow that falls between Jude's desire for Sue and her reluctance to submit to him sexually. The second conflict is internal; the duality inherent in Sue's nature, where her acute desire to be desired is at direct loggerheads with her wish to remain untouched by physical love, the 'reptile flames of passion'. Lawrence's sympathy at the time of writing the poem is tilted in favour of Jude and there is an underlying note of remonstrance directed at Sue for being a coquette and a tease. He depicts Jude's keen despair at being caught up in a sexual maelstrom with Sue, who 'warm[s] herself at the fire' of Jude's passion, while routinely thwarting his amorous advances, causing his very substance to be spent in his futile desire as he self-combusts slowly like 'bonny, burning coal'. Lawrence continues the image of Jude's slow, torturous internal combustion through the description of a 'glowing brazier', within the silver depths

of which Jude's passion for Sue burns hot, providing warmth and light to her which she absorbs while maintaining her abstinence, leaving Jude feeling 'torture and wrath and a drossed despair'. The use of the word 'brazier' is striking as it evokes the image of silver being extracted from the ore, the process of smelting separating the metal from its by-products. Sue steals the silver from Jude, extracting the best of what he offers to her, his love, warmth and passion, while casting his physical fervour for her aside, splitting him into two and alienating him from himself. Lawrence explicates Jude's predicament further in the *Study* in stating that Sue 'asked for what he [Jude] could not give – what perhaps no man can give: passionate love without physical desire' (Lawrence, 1936: 121). In a moment of absolute emotional honesty, Sue confesses to Jude about the true motivation behind her eventual submission to him sexually:

At first I did not love you, Jude; that I own. When I first knew you 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 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 (*Jude*: 341-342).

Sue displays an instinctive wariness of the emotional vulnerability that accompanies total surrender of the self when one submits to another, intellectually, emotionally and physically, miserably trying and failing to strike a balance between her need for love and companionship, and her fear of sexual acquiescence. Lawrence's analysis of her predicament is incisive and acutely sympathetic:

Sue was cruelly anguished with jealousy of Arabella. It was only this, this knowledge that Jude wanted Arabella, that made Sue give him access to her own body. When she did that, she died (Lawrence, 1936: 116).

The last short sentence summing up the deep blow to Sue's personhood after the unwilling act of consummation packs a powerful punch. It is almost equivalent to rape of the self, an ultimate form of masochism, a trait that lurks quietly in Sue's personality through the course of the novel, climaxing in the end when she commits the highest form of self-flagellation she can by going back to her marital bed with Phillotson:

The last act of her intellect was the utter renunciation of her mind and the embracing of utter orthodoxy, where every belief, every thought, every decision was made ready for her, so that she did not exist self-responsible. And then, her loathed body [...] that too should be scourged out of existence. She chose the bitterest penalty in going back to Phillotson.

There was no more Sue. Body, soul, and spirit, she annihilated herself (Lawrence, 1936: 121).

Lawrence's sympathy for this inner turmoil that Sue undergoes is profound in the *Study*, championing her right to her own body and her sexual choices in a clear shift from his previous condemnation of her sexual passivity. He asserts, '[i]t was wrong for Jude to take her physically, it was a violation of her. She was not the Virgin type, but the witch type, which has no sex. Why should she be forced into intercourse that was not natural to her?' (Lawrence, 1936: 108).

While the virgin/witch dichotomy is a classic example of Lawrence's dual categorizations to attempt to delineate human preference and behaviour into neat slots, not always effective or even possible, his sympathy for Sue's predicament is absolute. He insists on her right to have agency over her body and be entitled to follow the dictates of her own nature, not external pressures and legal prescriptions. Lawrence advocates the tenets of Individualism in arguing that the interests of the individual should be given greater primacy over the social collective/group expectations.

Lawrence interestingly reuses the ‘reptile’ imagery, that he used in the poem to allude to Sue’s coldness and apparent frigidity, to a very different effect in the *Study*, to make sense of the reason behind Sue’s acute revulsion towards Phillotson sexually:

Why does a snake horrify us, or even a newt? Why was Phillotson like a newt? [...] Is it that the newt, the reptile, belong to the putrescent activity of life [...]? Is it that the newt and the reptile are suggested to us through sensations connected with excretion? And was Phillotson more or less connected with the decay activity of life? Was it his function to reorganize the life-excreta of the ages? (Lawrence, 1936: 114).

It is evident that Lawrence is trying to find a rationale behind Sue’s physical abhorrence of Phillotson. Though not explainable by any set logic, it makes sense in a perverse manner as individual desires and preferences in the choice of a sexual partner are inexplicable and unexplainable.¹⁸ He opines, ‘[s]he was unhappy every moment of her life, poor Sue, with the knowledge of her own existence within life. She felt all the time the ghastly sickness of dissolution upon her, she was as a void unto herself’ (Lawrence, 1936: 114). Lawrence keenly feels this existential angst of the suffering individual in the declining western society at the turn of the century, as depicted in Sue’s portrayal, rebelling internally without any real hope of success, while desperately clinging on to the prevalent social code of ethics. Lawrence’s reading of Sue’s predicament is a curious mixture of sympathy and distaste; sympathy for the suffering of the hapless individual and distaste for the nature of the suffering.

Marrying Phillotson is a despairing attempt by Sue to ‘become a living physical woman’, to conform to the codes of femininity that a patriarchal social structure dictates,

¹⁸ Hardy does not portray Phillotson as a detestable corruptor of Sue’s chastity. Quite on the contrary, he is depicted as an erudite, middle-aged, mild-mannered man, who probably marries Sue as much from a sense of convenience of having her as a partner, both personally as a wife, and professionally as a co-teacher, as from a feeling of genuine regard. Sue marries Phillotson in a rather desperate bid to justify her place in society and life.

and in doing so ‘she consummated her own crucifixion’ (Lawrence, 1936: 114). Phillotson lets Sue leave him without too much protest to enable her to embark on a live-in relationship with Jude, progressively stating, ‘She asked leave to go away with her lover, and I let her. Why shouldn’t I? A woman of full age, it was a question for her own conscience – not for me. I was not her gaoler. I can’t explain any further. I don’t wish to be questioned’ (*Jude*: 238). This problematizes Sue’s characterization further as her actions are not always motivated by purely external and/or explainable factors. She becomes special by virtue of the opacity that surrounds her being, and sets the platform for her to be developed and discussed as a tragic character with a very individual sense of self, whose desire to be understood and accepted as she is, does not meet with success, leading to an ultimately tragic downfall. Abercrombie succinctly describes Sue as the ‘the subtlest and most exciting achievement of Hardy’s psychological imagination’, an amalgamation of ‘lucid, consistent, full of profound but clearly seen energies, yet capable of exhibiting actions that could hardly have been predicted, although, when they do occur, they evidently agree with the rest of the character, unexpectedly confirming it [...]’ (Abercrombie, 1912: 164, 32-33). Lawrence identifies this too and his sympathy for her dilemma is profound when he asks:

Sue had a being, special and beautiful [...] Why must it be assumed that Sue is an “ordinary” woman – as if such a thing existed? Why must she feel ashamed if she’s special [...] She was not a woman. She was Sue Bridehead, something very particular. Why was there no place for her? (Lawrence, 1936: 122).

There is a strange ideological confusion in Lawrence’s analysis of Sue, which has a strong advocacy of her emancipationist streak and her non-conformist attitude, but it is expressed through a filter that is a paradigm of essentialist pigeonholing. He reserves intellectual and spiritual transcendence as the realm of the male while positing the female with the forces

of emotion and the body, reinforcing the traditionally sexist male/female divisions. But Lawrence's metaphysics and sexual politics cannot be summarily dismissed as sexist. He displays clear support for the female desire of emancipation from the designated space that a male-oriented metaphysic confines her to, and lauds it when a female voice resists and revolts against the masculine metaphysic, but he cannot take a step back from the reinforcement of stereotypical gender-roles. In the poem, Lawrence describes Sue evocatively as a 'porcelain' figure, cold and fragile; a 'priestess' locked up in her ivory tower of ideology and temple of chastity; an image that is carried forth in the *Study*:

Her essentiality rested upon her remaining intact. Any suggestion of the physical was utter confusion to her. Her principle was the ultra-Christian principle – of living entirely according to the Spirit, to the One, male spirit, which knows and utters, and shines, but exists beyond feeling, beyond joy or sorrow, or pain [...] (Lawrence, 1936: 110).

Lawrence identifies Sue's principle as the 'ultra-Christian principle', hailing her as 'almost pure Christian, in the sense of having no physical life' (Lawrence, 1936: 114).

Abercrombie, on the other hand, offers an entirely antithetical analysis, stating that:

The Christian ideal of purity, to be gained by the denial of life, disgusts her; she is for the pagan ideal, the simple unquestioning acceptance of life, neither banning sex nor exaggerating it [...] It is her nature to excite desire, but she has a fastidious horror of physical sex; and rather than endure her husband with her at night, she jumps out of the window into the street. She desires to live altogether above the reach of sex; and yet she cannot help making a sexual appeal to men (Abercrombie, 1912: 162-163).

This creates an interesting contrast between two very different analyses of Sue's religious propensity, ultimately connected at the base in an effort to explain Sue's sexual behaviour.

The main point of contention is not whether Sue identifies herself as Christian or Pagan in her religious belief system, but where she places herself in her unique sexual and intellectual stance. Abercrombie's reading of Sue imbibing a pagan ideal is justifiable as

she openly disregards institutionalized religion and the Church, and Lawrence's analysis of Sue as 'Christian', in the sense of her repressing her physical self entirely in the development of her intellectual self, is pertinent as well. He perceives her denunciation of her physical desires to be a denunciation of her feminine self; the mark of a woman who is 'born with the vital female atrophied in her: she was almost male. Her *will* was male' (Lawrence, 1936: 108). The 'atrophied' female in Sue is the source of her tragedy, as she stands as a combination of contradictory forces that emerge as much from her unique sense of self, as from being a victim of the contradictions that Western European critical thought works into the male/female divides. Abercrombie assesses Sue's characterization with a keen analytical eye, stating:

She is as clever as Jude is, and, though clear-sighted enough to be sometimes tenderly amused at his unceasing dream, sceptical of the value of scholarship, and still more so of theology, she yet entirely sympathizes with his unfaltering desire. And she is amazingly lovable. None of Hardy's most charming women, not even Marty South or Bathsheba Everdene, can compare with Sue, for the strange and elusive delicacy of her charm. But she cannot escape her sex (Abercrombie, 1912: 162-163).

Sue's on-going struggle against the gendered expectations that situational and societal circumstances imposed on her adds to the nuances of her already complex characterization, widening her pre-existing inner schisms and creating the zone of additional conflict within the self. This is also the beginning point of the disruption of the principles that Lawrence bases his metaphysic on. His polarities are based on set expectations from each gender in a sexual relationship. When characters like Sue and Jude start demonstrating the obverse traits of what is expected of them, there is a fragmentation, a shift away from the unity that is only possible when the male/female principles as discussed by Lawrence are complied with. Lawrence describes the female body as the 'pistil' of a plant, 'the centre and the

swivel' on which the male, the 'stamens [...] turns closely, producing his movement' (Lawrence, 1936: 56). He surmises that:

The turning pivot of a man's life is his sex-life [...] The supreme desire of every man is for mating with a woman, such that the sexual act be the closest, most concentrated motion in his life [...] And the vital desire of every woman is that she shall be clasped as axle to the hub of the man [...] (Lawrence, 1936: 56)

The female body is the zone of stability, possessing a 'Will-to-Inertia' that roots the man, while the male body completes the dual; a stalk moving upwards, the embodiment of the 'Will-to-Motion'. This becomes the basis from which a host of other essentialist dualities spring up, intensifying the zone of segregation between the male and the female principles, in associating movement, activity, knowledge, mind, love to the male, and stability, permanence, feeling, body, law to the female. As Lawrence himself opines, there can never be 'perfect balance or accord of the two Wills, but always one triumphs over the other' (Lawrence, 1936: 59), creating an imbalance. In identifying sexual consummation as the 'turning pivot' for the male and the only means to being whole and developing a true sense of self, Lawrence dismisses all other human emotions and concerns as secondary.

In trying to chart a space for Sue's idiosyncratic personality on his spectrum of dualities, Lawrence finds it difficult to align her personality to her gender, ultimately arguing that her psyche is modelled on the 'male' spirit. Lawrence's dualisms seem to be an extension of some of the themes Hardy explores repeatedly in his fictional works, such as man versus woman, culture versus nature and mind versus body. The Female principle is linked pejoratively to the flesh, 'manifest in sensation [...] obsessed by the one-ness of things' (Lawrence, 1936: 63). In Sue, Lawrence detects the qualities that he classes under the male conception of the world: 'born to the knowledge that other things exist beside himself, and utterly apart from all, and before he can exist himself as a separate entity, he

must allow and recognize their distinct existence' (Lawrence, 1936: 65). Sue's inner conflicts, in Lawrentian terms, stem from her acute individuality, and the fluid zone she occupies in being female in form and male in spirit: '[s]he is developed to the very extreme, she scarcely lives in the body at all. Being of the feminine gender, she is yet no woman at all, nor male, she is almost neuter' (Lawrence, 1936: 121-122).

Lawrence sees in *Jude Hardy's* articulation of the unconscious, unspoken anxieties of the late nineteenth century, a product of heightened development of consciousness and a greater awareness of the different shades and complications of human inter-personal relationships. Sue becomes his depiction of the misunderstood, solitary individual; a symptom of the cultural ennui. She futilely tries to free herself, initially from societal expectations of her, and eventually from her own sense of self, ultimately severing herself from rational, logical thought and action. Lawrence recognizes the 'perfect union of male and female' to be the desired ideal, but the problem lies in associating the male with the spirit, the female with the flesh; problematic binaries in themselves that further complicate the process of attaining a harmonious union:

There is an eternal non-marriage betwixt flesh and spirit [...] This has been the confusion and the error of the northern countries [...] this desire to have the spirit mate with the flesh, the flesh with the spirit. Spirit can mate with spirit and flesh with flesh, and the two matings can take place in one, but they are always Two-in-One [...] But to try and mate flesh with spirit makes confusion [...] (Lawrence, 1936: 85)

Lawrence's belief that the inscrutable aspects of being a woman stem from their biology and need to be discussed primarily physiologically, is a body-oriented, sensual discourse that excludes the mind and consciousness. This makes his exploration of Sue's personality, who exists almost entirely as a sum total of her mental faculty, in conscious and determined rejection of the body, an intriguing analysis. She is the antithesis to Lawrence's

idea of the feminine principle as she is characterized by her intellectual prowess and complete disdain for sexual contact, subverting the mind/body dualism that Lawrence espouses. Through these dualities between the male/female principle, mind/flesh, Law/Love, Lawrence explores the conflicts primarily within the self, trying to explicate the nature of being, as well as analyse the impact of the outer world on the individual. In considering Sue as a highly developed character, he sets the platform for a depiction of her as a truly tragic character too: '[s]he knew well enough that she was not alive in the ordinary human sense. She did not, like an ordinary woman receive all she knew through her senses, her instincts, but through her consciousness' (Lawrence, 1936: 113-114).

This is symptomatic of the sexist nature of Lawrence's metaphysic; the misogyny creeping in through the idea that female consciousness is an aberration, not a rule, and not to be expected in most women. But what sets Lawrence's analysis of Sue apart, and prevents it from being utterly monochromatic in its vision, is the note of sympathy for Sue that permeates through it. Lawrence's acceptance of the irrationality of her conscious and unconscious choices is unflinching, his understanding of the difficulties that she faces, acute. He is at his most incisive in his assessment of Sue's sense of entrapment when he questions the curbing of her fundamental rights by societal forces that guide her private actions against her better judgement. He observes that for Sue, 'marriage was no marriage, but a submission, a service, a slavery' (Lawrence, 1936: 109).

Martha Vicinus observes that 'the 1880's and the 1890's were marked by public and private discussion of the weakness of marriage, the validity of divorce, and the importance of friendships across gender lines' (Vicinus, 1985). However, the main problem of the discourse was that though marriage was recognized as a problem and a confining and restrictive institution, a suitable alternative could not be agreed upon. This is

the frightening aspect of Sue's characterization. She becomes a living embodiment of the torment that gnaws away at the mind of the sensitive, the freethinking dissenter, who cannot completely disregard the society she lives in, but cannot belong to it either. Lawrence notes the strange regularity with which Jude and Sue are questioned regarding their marital status, as those who encounter them notice their inherent sense of unease:

How many people, man and woman, live together, in England, and have children, and are never, never asked whether they have been through the marriage ceremony together! Why then should Jude and Sue have been brought to task? Only because of their own uneasy sense of wrong, of sin, which they communicated to other people. And this wrong or sin was not against the community, but against their own being, against life (Lawrence, 1936: 118).

Lawrence identifies in Sue 'the rarest, most deadly anarchy in her own being' that necessitated for her to have 'some place in society where the clarity of her mental being, which was in itself a form of death [...] shine out without attracting any desire for her body' (Lawrence, 1936: 109). Herein lies Sue's tragedy, the turmoil that impacts and pervades every part of her life and being. This sense of sinning against oneself, the continual internal strife, makes Sue's tragedy much more than just a social one, nullifying Lawrence's notion that in Hardy's novels:

It is not so much the eternal, immutable laws of being which are transgressed, it is not that vital life-forces are set in conflict with each other bringing almost inevitable tragedy [...] It is [...] that the individual succumbs to what is in its shallowest, public opinion, in its deepest, the human compact by which we live together, to form a community (Lawrence, 1936: 51).

In Lawrence's own terms and conditions, Sue emerges very firmly as a tragic individual. Lawrence's probe into Sue's psyche is laced with acute sympathy for her predicament and her ultimate regression into a kind of socio-religious conformity after the demise of her children. He interprets Sue's attempt at maternity as a futile endeavor on her part to validate her womanhood: '[s]he was glad to have children, to prove she was a woman. But

in her it was a perversity to wish to prove she was a woman. She was no woman. And her children, the proof thereof, vanished like hoar-frost from her' (Lawrence, 1936: 119).

The narrative of *Jude* contradicts the claim that Lawrence makes about Sue being glad to have children. She 'writhe(s)' when she is questioned by Arabella about her marriage to Jude and the number of children she has, visibly upset about her pregnant state, ultimately bursting out '[i]t is not that I am ashamed – not as you think! But it seems such a *terribly tragic thing* to bring beings into the world – so presumptuous – that I question my right to do it sometimes!' [my emphasis] (*Jude*: 301). It is interesting that Lawrence picks up on a particular statement of Sue, where she herself uses the term 'tragic' to describe her situation of having to negotiate pregnancy, childbirth and motherhood despite her strong disinclination for it. Lawrence credits Sue with more maternal instincts than Hardy intends for her character to possess, explaining her desire for motherhood to stem from a lack, a void in her life that is a consequence of her following her intellect more than her bodily instincts, her own individual voice of reason more than the collective, social prescription:

[...] it is most probable she lived chiefly in her children. They were her guarantee as a physical woman, the being to which she now laid claim. She had forsaken the ideal of an independent mind (Lawrence, 1936: 119-120).

This analysis is flawed, as is evident from a snippet of a conversation between Sue and Father Time:

'Tis because of us children, too, isn't it, that you cannot get a good lodging?'

'Well people do object to children sometimes.'

'Then if children make so much trouble, why do people have 'em?'

'O – because it is a law of nature.'

‘But we don’t ask to be born?’

‘No indeed’ (*Jude*: 322-323).

Sue’s maternity clearly arises more from a helpless surrender to the fertile capacities of her healthy body, capable of conception, gestation and reproduction, than from a burning desire to bring another human being into a world that she has continually struggled to find resonance with. It could be argued that she is almost careless in her overt frankness in answering the precocious queries of Father Time, the highly intuitive child with a morbidly depressive streak. Her ponderous, hesitant silence to his highly concerning statement, ‘whenever children be born that are not wanted they should be killed directly, before their souls come to ’em, and not allowed to grow big and walk about!’ (*Jude*: 323), followed by her mistimed revelation to him that she was pregnant again with a third child, does more damage to his psyche than she could ever imagine. And this misjudgment on her part leads to an absolute massacre when Father Time kills her children before taking his own life, leaving behind a note that is horrifying in its simplicity, epic in its economy of words: ‘Done because we are too menny’ (*Jude*: 325).

In becoming a ‘physical wife and a mother’, Sue had in any case, as Lawrence precisely put it, ‘forsook her own being’ and the sight of her dead children and the little note is the final blow to her personhood (Lawrence, 1936: 120). Lawrence feels that in going against everything she believed in, everything she stood for, Sue annihilates her identity and sense of self in one strong blow: ‘Sue ceases to be: she strikes the line through her own existence, cancels herself’ (Lawrence, 1936: 120). In the movement away from her body to the mind, Sue annihilates herself according to Lawrence, and he locates her tragedy within these very parameters, effectively contradicting his own argument that Hardy’s protagonists could not be given the distinction of being truly tragic.

[...] this [Sue's] tragedy is the result of overdevelopment of one principle of human life at the expense of the other; an overbalancing; a laying of all the stress on the Male, the Love, the Spirit, the Mind, the Consciousness, a denying, a blaspheming against the Female, the Law, the Soul, the Senses, the Feelings (Lawrence, 1936: 121).

It is not just in Sue's case that Lawrence's dualisms contain some ingrained confusion or fragmentation. His description of the 'real man', who disregards the body in pursuit of intellectual/ideological pursuits, does not mesh with his discussion about the male principle, which is constructed around the man finding fulfilment through sexual gratification. This creates the grounds for a confused reading of Jude as well, whose real desire according to Lawrence was

[...] not to live in the body. He wanted to exist only in his mentality. He was as if bored, or blasé, in the body, just like Tess [...] This drove him to Sue [...] She was like himself in her being and her desire; like Jude, she wanted to live partially, in the consciousness, in the mind only. She wanted no experience in the senses, she wished only to know (Lawrence, 1936: 108).

Lawrence's analysis of Jude does not seem to be founded on the actual plot of *Jude*, that depicts Jude being led off his desired path of intellectual enlightenment time and again by him succumbing to his sexual instincts. According to Lawrence, Jude is led to Arabella by his sexual desire for her, after which, having been gratified, he eventually gravitates towards Sue for his spiritual fulfilment. The fundamental problem with this analysis is once again the absoluteness of the mind/body polarity, which in Jude's case is not easily maintained. Jude did not wish to 'live partially' in the 'mind only' without sensual/sexual experiences with Sue. His desire for Sue was very much dictated by physical attraction as well as an emotional/intellectual bond.

Arabella's characterization is the only one of the main protagonists of *Jude* which fits remarkably well into the Lawrentian frame of the 'true female', her body and her physicality being the defining forces of her being. Lawrence openly commends and

supports Arabella's sometimes questionable, sometimes objectionable actions. Lawrence denounces Hardy's reduction of the 'whole picture of Arabella' to the 'pig-sticking, false hair crudities' as 'Hardy's bad art' (Lawrence, 1936: 101). He feels that Hardy takes 'personal revenge on her for her coarseness' because of his own prudish nature. This is a very interesting analysis as Arabella, far from being punished in the novel, remains the only one of the main characters with any residual hope for the future and a better life. Her portrayal is the epitome of the phrase 'survival of the fittest' that Herbert Spencer coins in his 1864 book *Principles of Biology* while discussing Darwin's theory of 'natural selection' (Spencer, 1864, 444). Arabella is a true survivor in the sense that she adapts to unfavourable circumstances in the way that best suits her purpose. Lawrence suggests that Hardy punishes Arabella by portraying her as crudely as he does. In giving her a better life than the other protagonists of *Jude*, Hardy makes a scathing indictment of a society that favours coarse and simple people over complex characters who think, feel and aspire towards a higher ideal. Arabella is marked by her cold, calculated pragmatism, often using what she considers the most potent weapon in her arsenal, her sexuality, to get what she wants from life. Lawrence defends Arabella's pretensions, vulgarities, lies and deceitfulness in stating that 'under all her disguise of pig-fat and false hair, and vulgar speech, [she was] in character somewhere an aristocrat' (Lawrence, 1936: 101).¹⁹ She is the sexually virile, archetypally sensual female possessing the 'selfish instinct for love', making a 'man' of Jude, 'who becomes a grown, independent man in the arms of Arabella, conscious of having met, and satisfied, the female demand in him [...]' (Lawrence, 1936:

¹⁹ The categorization of Arabella as an aristocrat is an instance of the Lawrentian muddle. In calling Arabella an aristocrat, he puts her in the same bracket as Tess, whom he also perceives as an aristocrat for her well-defined sense of self, her giving, self-sacrificing, helpful nature that always puts others before herself. This is a problematic assessment as Arabella is very firmly situated at the centre of her own universe, with clear expectations from others around her, her actions motivated purely by self-interest.

105). Lawrence sees the ‘female’ in Arabella as a strong and potent force, who ‘did a great deal for the true making of [Jude], for making him a grown man. She gave him to himself’ (Lawrence, 1936: 107).

Lawrence’s analysis of Sue’s characterization, though incisive, is not free from the points of tension at the heart of binaries like mind and body, reason and emotion and masculine and feminine on which he bases his metaphysics, as well as his understanding of male/female gender roles. Feminist critics like Simone de Beauvoir and Kate Millett summarily dismiss Lawrence’s metaphysic as profoundly misogynistic. Beauvoir’s main point of criticism of Lawrence in *The Second Sex* (1953) is that his metaphysic is tilted in favour of masculine thoughts and ideas, to the extent that women and femininity are depicted as mere enablers and instruments to further the cause of masculinity. According to her, Lawrence displays prototypically chauvinistic tendencies in positing masculinity with the primary qualities of intellect, rationality, activity and creativity, while femininity is depicted as a complement to the masculine forces, and secondary in importance, characterized by passivity and the base forces of the body and emotions. Millett, in *Sexual Politics* (1970), furthers the claim and directs an even stronger invective at Lawrence in stating that his metaphysic of male/female duality is motivated by deep-seated insecurity and fear of female infiltration into the ranks of the public sphere of intellect and agency, perceived as the domain of the male. She argues that Lawrence ‘began in the midst of the feminist movement and that he began on the defensive’ (Millett, 1970: 260). While Beauvoir and Millett touch upon important points of concern, particularly in identifying the male/female dualities as highly reductive, Lawrence’s brand of sexual politics goes deeper than the apparent chauvinism, as is particularly revealed through his problematic yet highly sympathetic reading of Sue’s characterization.

Lawrence construes Sue's portrayal to be a reflection of the suffering cultural/biological health of Western civilization at the turn of the century. His account, despite its many limitations, is considered to have 'virtually singlehandedly instigated a change from a Victorian to a twentieth-century approach to Hardy' (Herbert, 2013: 451). All subsequent readings of Hardy's works have considered Lawrence's criticism, implicitly or explicitly, be it to praise or to criticise. The main reason behind the huge impact of Lawrence's evaluation of Sue has been his focus on the interiority of her mind, her psychology.

§2.4

Other early to mid-twentieth century criticism on Sue

Other major critical considerations of Hardy continued to add to the steadily growing scholarship on his works in the early twentieth century, despite a lull in the study of his novels in favour of reading and assessing his poetry. However, a number of insightful and valuable contributions made their presence felt. William R. Rutland, in *Thomas Hardy: A Study of his Writings and their Background* (1938 reprinted in 1962), notes Lawrence's keen interest in Sue, while remaining thoroughly unimpressed by her characterization:

Many of the critics have become enthusiastic over Sue, as the subtlest of Hardy's women endeavouring to consider her as a woman, and not as Hardy's ingeniously constructed puppet, I cannot agree with them. She is, as a woman, a psychological abnormality (which is not tantamount to saying that she is a pervert). There is no reason why art should not treat of the abnormal, but under one condition only: however abnormal the subject, the treatment must make universal appeal (Rutland, 1962: 256).²⁰

Rutland's greatest criticism against *Jude* is that he finds it 'false to life' and Sue's presentation in it, 'her sensitiveness, her perception, her conscience, all, in fact, that differentiate the human from the animal', the reasons for the damnation of both her and Jude (Rutland, 1962: 257). He criticises Sue's view of marriage, stating that it 'leaves a nasty taste in the mouth' and condemns 'Sue's return, by way of penance, to her first

²⁰ Rutland adds a footnote to support his claim: "Perhaps the most notable panegyric is in the strange rhapsody by D. H. Lawrence miscalled 'A Study of Thomas Hardy'"

husband whom she loathes' as 'one of most horrible things in fiction' (Rutland, 1962: 249). The particularly interesting observation by Rutland is the linking of the marriage question raised in *Jude* with a contemporary incident, popularly known as the Parnell case, the huge controversy that ensued when Captain O'Shea filed for divorce from his wife on the grounds of her cheating on him with Charles Parnell, a greatly revered Irish political leader. Parnell subsequently lost his political position and reputation once the affair became public, which resulted in a huge debate and discussion on matters of love, marriage and divorce. As Rutland puts it:

Properly to understand the main subject of *Jude the Obscure*, it is necessary to glance at something that was happening in England in the early 'nineties [...] The whole question of marriage and divorce was brought to the forefront of public attention in 1890 by the Parnell case (Rutland, 1962: 249-251).

Rutland also links Hardy's treatment of marriage in *Jude* to the controversy surrounding the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen's plays, to demonstrate Hardy's acute interest in the marriage question and argue against Hardy's claim that the marriage questions was not central to *Jude*.²¹ Rutland points out Hardy's interest in the contemporary news and articles published in the *Fortnightly Review*, a periodical that he followed, which actively contributed to the 'marriage question' with articles like "Public Life and Private Morals" and "Marriage and Freethought" that he suggests influenced Hardy while drafting *Jude* (Rutland, 1962: 252-253). Rutland discusses how Hardy's disdain for the idea of forcing two people to vow to love one another forever and making them socially bound to stay

²¹ Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906), hailed as 'the father of realism' and a founding figure of Modernism in theatre, examined the realities that lay behind the façades of social and moral institutions, such as marriage, in his plays, revealing aspects of it that were disquieting to his contemporaries. His later dramas were considered scandalous, particularly in the context of the late nineteenth century, a time in history when European theatre was expected to model the strict morals of family life and propriety. Hardy was among the first members of an Independent Theatre Association set up to sponsor Ibsen's plays, displaying his clear solidarity and support for Ibsen's works.

with each other, emerges strongly through his scathing indictment of the institution of marriage in *Jude*.

Arthur Mizener (1907- 1988) continues the deliberation about whether Hardy's novels can be regarded as tragedies in "Jude the Obscure as a Tragedy" (1940). He cannot detect an 'unresolvable tragic tension between the real and the ideal in his [Hardy's] attitude', as a consequence of which there is no real friction in 'the formal structure it invokes as its representation' (Mizener, 1940: 201). He attributes this lack of tragic friction in Hardy's works to his inability to place the source of his idealism 'outside of time', judging Hardy's philosophy in *Jude* and outlook towards the characters to be 'not complex and inclusive, but simple and exclusive' (Mizener, 1940: 201, 195). Mizener attacks what he sees as Hardy's meliorism in particular; the metaphysical belief that the world can improve progressively, and humans can aid its betterment, which he sees to be directly at loggerheads with the critical consideration of Hardy as a tragic novelist. Mizener also objects to *Jude* being hailed as a tragedy, as he perceives Hardy to 'contrast the ideal life with the real life not of man but of *a* man'. He thus critiques Hardy for keeping the focus on Jude so tightly that the novel ends up being the 'history' of one 'worthy man's education' rather than a fully developed tragic novel (Mizener, 1940: 203). Mizener's study is Jude-centric, without much focus on Sue, a point that is important to note as the question of Sue as tragic is not raised.

Ted R. Spivey deepens the Jude-centric discussion in "Thomas Hardy's Tragic Hero" (1954), but disagrees with Mizener's assessment in seeing *Jude* as a tragedy and Sue to be as important a cog in the tragic machinery of *Jude* as Jude himself. Spivey considers Sue and Jude's lives and narratives to be completely interlinked and Jude's idea of enlightenment, or a 'higher spiritual state', to be based as much on his 'intellectual

development' as on the consummation of his romantic love for Sue, the failure of which leads to both of their downfalls. As he puts it:

Tragedy for Hardy is the defeat of the romantic hero's desire to reach a higher spiritual state. The drives of Hardy's characters to achieve states of love and ecstasy are powerful enough to make his chief characters among the most passionate in English literature (Spivey, 1954: 188-189).

Spivey also points out that the 'ill fortune that befalls a tragic hero is the result not only of forces working against him from without but of forces within him that hasten him toward his downfall', claiming that 'Hardy's great heroes - Tess, Sue, Jude, Henchard, Clym, and Eustacia - are all driven by forces within them that act as tragic flaws' (Spivey, 1954: 184). Thus, the forces of destruction in Hardy's protagonists like Sue and Jude operate both externally as well as internally. From the reader's point of view, Spivey suggests, '[t]ragic awe and terror result from seeing a passionate but noble person defy and finally accept the forces of destruction [...] pity follows the realization by the reader of the waste of an awesome person' (Spivey, 1954: 185). Spivey also dissents from Mizener's view of seeing Hardy as a meliorist, stating:

Hardy was not all of a piece in his world outlook. He was capable both of a tragic apprehension of this world and a belief that the world might, in some cases, be made better for men. Possibly Hardy's utopianism detracts from the power of his tragedies [...] But regardless of this, Hardy's vision in his great novels is fundamentally tragic. To concern oneself too much with Hardy's meliorism or with his supposed lack of ethical significance is to take the risk not only of losing sight of his tragic effects but also of missing his contribution to our deeper understanding of man (Spivey, 1954: 191).

Spivey considers the main merit of *Jude* as a tragic novel to be Hardy's exploration of the 'depths of man's soul', to find 'dark forces there that helped to drive him to destruction in spite of his surface desires for worldly happiness', which is particularly observable in his portrayal of the 'divided souls' of Jude and Sue (Spivey, 1954: 191).

It is noteworthy that Spivey observes and comments on something inherently 'wrong' in the natures of Jude and Sue that the characters themselves recognise and articulate. He points out Jude's lament that 'human nature can't help being itself' (*Jude*: 341), and Sue's response that 'it must learn self-mastery', her words 'a mockery', as discussed by Spivey; as she possesses that same tormenting impulse in her that drives her to 'self-torture' (Spivey, 1954: 190). Hardy's strategy of barely presenting Sue's inner thoughts means that critics vary greatly in reading and responding to her representation.

E. M. Forster (1879-1970), in *Aspects of the Novel*, displays his ambivalence to Hardy's novelistic status, hailing him primarily as a poet whose poetic qualities percolate down into his novels while his fiction suffers as plot and causal forces triumph over characters:

[...] there is some vital problem that has not been answered, or even posed, in the misfortunes of *Jude the Obscure*. In other words, the characters have been required to contribute too much to the plot [...] their vitality has been impoverished, they have gone dry and thin (Forster, 1962: 100-101).

Forster feels that the weakness of Hardy's novels is that his characters end up as puppets in the hands of the plot, which ultimately culminates in feeble, forced endings when the novelist starts to get 'muddled or bored' (Forster, 1962: 100). He does not review Sue individually, but *Jude* suffers as a whole in Forster's analysis as the protagonists have to suffer entirely too much in the course of their novelistic lifetime to contribute to the progression of the plot.

In *Hardy the Novelist: An Essay in Criticism* (1943) published in the middle of the Second World War, Lord David Cecil's (1902-1986) own lived experiences interweave with his analysis of Hardy's novels. Cecil focusses on the human condition, the struggle that human beings have to undergo in their lifetime against fate and chance, forces that are

out of their reach and control. Written in the liberal humanist vein, Cecil's study emphasizes the development of Hardy as a tragedian as well as his patriotic attachment to the English landscape and its people, positioning him as a product of his age, whose emotional response to current affairs finds manifestation in *Jude*. According to Cecil, *Jude* is a failure overall, as it depicts events and affairs that are outside of the frame of reference of the author, and thus ring untrue. Cecil does not perceive Sue as a unique character either, seeing her as an extension of female characters Hardy has already depicted, such as Grace Melbury and Bathsheba Everdene, though she is 'intended to be a portrait of the advanced woman of Hardy's day- neurotic and intellectual' (Cecil, 1943: 71-73).

Albert J. Guerard (1914-2000) locates in Hardy 'a traditional teller of tales, who includes the distortions of popular storytelling – exaggeration, grotesque, horror, macabre coincidence – to achieve his darker truth' in *Thomas Hardy: The Novels and Stories* (1949). Instead of being dismissive about Hardy's stories being unrealistic, he perceives Hardy's juxtapositions of the fantastic and the everyday 'as highly convincing foreshortenings of the actual and absurd world' (Guerard, 1949: 45). A significant contribution to Hardy scholarship is Guerard's edited collection, *Hardy: A Collection of Critical Essays* (1963), which contains valuable essays with insightful analyses of Hardy's women from critics such as Lawrence, A. Alvarez, John Holloway and Morton Dauwen Zabel. In "The Women of the Novels", Guerard creates a genealogy of Hardy's women that appear in his fictional creations, broadly classifying them into 'fairly distinct groups – the sweet ingénues, the restless hedonists, the patient and enduring sufferers [...] and so forth [...]' (Guerard, 1963: 65). He notes Sue's individuality, however, in stating that 'Hardy's characterizations of young women are rarely ambiguous and with the single exception of Sue Bridehead require no interpretation' (Guerard, 1963: 65). Guerard's

classification of Hardy's women is an exemplar of a broad range of stereotyping. He considers all of Hardy's women to be driven by a 'radically feminine impulse', which makes them fascinating to study and more interesting and convincing than his male characters. Guerard picks out what he considers to be Hardy's 'six greatest women characters': 'Elfride, nervous and evasive; Bathsheba, curiously masculine and feminine; the wild, proud, and unreconciled Eustacia, the tender and "pure" Tess; the tormented yet fun loving Sue; and Arabella, the female animal' (Guerard, 1963: 70). In his essay "Jude the Obscure", published in the same collection, A. Alvarez opines that 'Jude's tragedy, like every true tragedy, comes from inner tensions which shape the action, not from haphazard and indifferent force of circumstance. Jude is frustrated by Sue, his ideal, intellectual woman, as he is by Oxford, his equally shining ideal of intellectual life' (Alvarez, 1963: 114). This returns the focus to the interiority of the characters and their mindscape over and above the socio-cultural climate of the landscape they inhabit, or the influence of fate, destiny or chance. He explores and builds on previous critical opinions, like those of Abercrombie and Mizener, in perceiving *Jude* to revolve around Jude's portrayal on such a tight orbit that even a strong characterization like that of Sue becomes an extension of the portrayal of Jude. As he puts it; '[t]here is, however, nothing exterior about the part Sue plays in Jude's tragedy. At times, in fact, she seems less a person in her own right than a projection of one side of Jude's character' (Alvarez, 1963: 115). However, projection/extension of Jude's character or not, whether she exists in her own right or not, Sue continues to claim and demand critical attention over the years. As Alvarez himself observes later in the same essay:

[...] although his [Hardy's] final attitude to Sue might have been ambiguous, in creating her, Hardy did something extraordinarily original: he created one of the few totally narcissistic women in literature; but he did so at the same time as he

made her something rather wonderful. Her complexity lies in the way in which Hardy managed to present the full, bitter, sterility of her narcissism and yet tried to exonerate her (Alvarez, 1963: 118).

Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) writes “The Novels of Thomas Hardy” in January, 1928, shortly after Hardy’s death, hailing Hardy’s acumen as a novelist but criticizing *Jude* as ‘the most painful of all Hardy’s books, and the only one against which we can fairly bring the charge of pessimism’ (Woolf, 1965: 255). Woolf desists from giving *Jude* tragic status as she feels that ‘argument is allowed to dominate impression’ in *Jude* with the consequence that ‘though the misery of the book is overwhelming it is not tragic’:

As calamity succeeds calamity we feel that the case against society is not being argued fairly or with profound understanding of the facts. Here is nothing of that width and force and knowledge of mankind which, when Tolstoy criticizes society, makes his indictment formidable. Here we have revealed to us the petty cruelty of men, not the large injustice of the gods. It is only necessary to compare *Jude the Obscure* with *The Mayor of Casterbridge* to see where Hardy’s true power lay. *Jude* carries on his miserable contest against the deans of colleges and the conventions of sophisticated society. Henchard is pitted, not against another man, but against something outside himself which is opposed to men of his ambition and power (Woolf, 1965: 255).

Woolf does not review the characterization of Sue in any detail, briefly skimming over the surface of her presentation to put her in the same bracket as the rest of Hardy’s strong female characterizations, Bathsheba, Eustacia and Lucetta, without offering a more individuated analysis. Her reluctance to call *Jude* a tragedy stems from her assertion that tragedy ought to be a conflict between the individual and external forces beyond their control: conflicting internal forces and desires in an individual, which eventually lead to their damnation, as seen in the instances of *Jude* and Sue, cannot be merited as tragedies according to her.

One notable exception to the trend of critics glossing over Sue's portrayal is Lina Wright Berle's study *George Eliot and Thomas Hardy: A Contrast* (1917) where she engages at length with Sue's portrayal and finds it to be largely negative:

Hardy's stories are of the mating, mismating, and unmating of men and women, ignoring the existence of any other motives as determining factors in human intercourse. Even in a book like *Jude the Obscure*, where in Sue Bridehead he tries to picture a woman relatively free from the dominion of sex, he succeeds only in creating an impression of sexual irresponsibility [...] (Berle, 1917: 46).

Berle questions Sue's moral values, her intellect and the rationale behind her actions, stating:

That a woman, feeling this repulsion, [for Phillotson] as Sue did from the beginning, should nevertheless have consented to yoke herself for life with its object, is evidence of fundamental ignorance in the first instance; that, being free from him, any vague hope of reparation should force her back to him, even in the revulsion of feeling incident to such an event as the murder of her children by "Father Time," is indisputable proof of thoroughgoing ignorance of her basic human duty and privileges. (Berle, 1917: 125)

The indictment of Sue's personality and her poor choices is strong in Berle's study, as is her criticism of Sue's awkward whimsicality and utter inability thereafter to handle the consequences of her actions. Sue's initial inability to adapt to the role of a dutiful wife to Phillotson or be a mistress to Jude without guilt, and her ultimate return to her original marriage bed as an act of penance, is regarded by Berle as Sue's ignorance of and disregard for her basic human duty and privileges.

Jeanette King in her study *Tragedy in the Victorian Novel* (1978), does not delve into an in-depth study of Sue's tragedy, assessing her portrayal primarily to emphasize Jude's tragic status. Her stance is similar to earlier critics like Abercrombie who perceive Sue as a vessel of Jude's tragedy. King considers Sue's characterization to have tragic elements, but in accepting 'divine law' and 'suffering as a punishment for her sins', King

considers her to find a kind of ‘escape’ and ‘outlet for anguish which is denied Jude’ (King, 1978: 124). As she puts it; ‘Jude and Sue speak not for a race that is dying, but for a race that is yet to be born’ (King, 1978: 125). King’s statement builds upon Raymond Williams’ idea that the tragedy lies ‘not only in his sacrifice’ but ‘in the general condition, of a people reducing or destroying itself because it is not conscious of its true condition. The tragedy is not in the death, but in the life’ (Williams, 1966: 157, 162). In King’s account, Sue’s potential as a tragic character is lost or eclipsed by that of Jude. While her study of Sue and Jude’s status as tragic characters is insightful, her perception of tragedy comes across as sexist; based on the premise that the fate and downfall of the male characters have more tragic impact than those of their female counterparts. King traces the development of the novel in the Victorian period, which necessitated a reworking of the existing ideas of tragedy, to incorporate the more contemporary concerns with realism:

Classical tragic drama not only does without, but requires the absence of, realism [...] In the Victorian novel, the tragic mode had to come to terms with the methods of realism. For the Victorian novelists interest in the individual’s relationship with society is typical of what Raymond Williams calls the ‘highest realism’ [...] The writer who attempts to combine tragedy and realism has to find ways of isolating and universalizing the individual’s experience, to make him at once exceptional and representative, without destroying this sense that each element in society is inseparable from the whole (King, 1978: 50).

Thus, the realism, which the Victorian novelists concerned themselves with, brought about a shift in the characterization of the protagonist(s) of the novel. The more traditional portrayals of exceptional leader figures - magnificent and eloquent - gave way to a much more grounded depiction of the private life and trials of a seemingly average individual, fighting a private battle in trying to belong to and function in a steadily deteriorating and complicated society. King points out that Hardy’s characters are:

[g]iven both their representative and heroic qualities through their closest domestic and social relationships, and through their work. But his heroes often embody not so much the finest existing qualities of their class, as its potential, revealed in a sensitivity that implicitly or explicitly calls the reality into question (King, 1978: 52).

The 'potential' refers more to a desire to escape the confines and trappings of their class, as can be witnessed through the restless wanderings of Jude and Sue, than to a desire to stay within the restrictions of the class and fulfil its expectations. King points out that the relationship between fact and fiction in the works of Hardy is clear. She considers Hardy to be aware that creating 'tragedy out of commonplace private experience' requires a careful adjustment between 'things unusual' and 'things eternal and universal' (King, 1978: 53). The key to making 'an individual's inward suffering' poignant enough 'to impress the reader as tragic', is to enable the reader to 'share the utter exclusiveness of the experience for the individual, as well as seeing it in an inclusive universal perspective such as symbolism may add' (King, 1978: 53, 62). According to King, '[t]ragedy arises out of the gap between what the character is - his true self - and what he does - the identity he presents to the outer world'; 'much of the pity and horror' felt by the reader turning on 'the sense of wasted potential, the sense of individuals born in the wrong time or place' (King, 1978: 99-100). This is an idea explored by Hardy in *Jude*, when Jude muses aloud that both Sue and he were born fifty years ahead of their time. She traces the influence of Aristotelian tragic theory in Hardy's works in the way he depicts the relationship between event and character - creating 'tragedies of situation, rather than that of character' (King, 1978: 99). This becomes a particularly interesting point to note as Sue's characterisation is rooted in the circumstances of her fictional existence on the one hand, but on the other, her portrayal has continued to evoke critical interest over time because of a certain indecipherability of her being that does not remain confined within her circumstantial

limits. King notes the way the titles of Hardy's four great tragic novels 'define the central characters by such "situations" – "the Native", "the Mayor", "the Obscure" and "of the D'Urbervilles"', where 'the conflict of ideas or feelings is made tragic by the situation' (King, 1978: 99). She also perceives how Hardy continues to be more and more experimental with the form and ideas of tragedy, ultimately authoring *Jude* where 'character [...] is clearly more problematic and modern in concept than in Hardy's earlier novels' as 'action is no longer purposeful' which makes the author unable to 'rely on this alone to convey character' (King, 1978: 124).

King discusses how Hardy's social concerns become manifest in his works in his depiction of 'the misery caused by changing economic and social pressures, arising out of humanity's indifference to itself' (King, 1978: 66). Jude's class, for example, becomes an impediment to his academic ambition, while Tess' poverty paves the way for her exploitation. King muses that an important characteristic of the Victorian novel is its portrayal of 'a very specific social and historical situation, its institutions, its *mores* and its manners' (King, 1978: 64). This becomes the point of contention for many critics who question if it is possible for true tragedy to emerge from a social condition, as tragedy must arise from 'unchanging and ubiquitous' factors and not situational ones, in which case 'disaster [can] be averted simply by changing the situation' (King, 1978: 64-65). King discusses how Lawrence's *Study* of Hardy raises a similar concern when Lawrence too questions whether Hardy's works can be given tragic status or not by insisting that 'Fate, or Nature, should instigate tragedy and punish the tragic hero; society, the substitute which writers like Hardy provide, is totally inadequate' (King, 1978: 65). Class-based tragedy is seen as questionable, as the conditions are 'temporal and – in the long term – temporary', the 'suffering' relating to a section of society more than to the individual (King, 1978: 65).

This traditional idea of tragedy/tragic character gives way to a more modern/twentieth-century ideology where the ‘social machinery’ - ‘those laws and institutions which so often express man’s inhumanity to man’ and in which ‘society codifies its morality’ – replaces the concept of traditional fate and divine intervention (King, 1978: 121). King refutes Guerard’s argument that Jude cannot be taken to be a tragic hero because he is a ‘modern man, stating that:

[...] to suggest that modernity is incompatible with tragedy is to ignore what so many readers experience as they read *Jude the Obscure*. It is not enough to dismiss its aspirations to tragedy merely because it has less contact than Hardy’s other novels with the classical ideal. New concepts of tragedy are perhaps necessary. For the novel deliberately questions the traditional concepts of law and character associated with classical tragedy in a way that points towards twentieth-century ideas of ‘modern tragedy’ (King, 1978: 121).

She traces the way Jude’s tragedy stems from his ‘struggles with the various forms of law’: the ‘law of Nature’, in the form of Arabella that subdues ‘the spirit to the flesh’; the ‘social laws’ that turn ‘Jude’s momentary submission’ to ‘a life-long trap by the unwritten law that he must marry the “wronged” woman’; the ‘written law which gives this act of reparation such binding and allegedly divine sanction’; and finally, ‘the laws of the Church’, ‘the centre of religion’, where Jude is as much of an ‘outsider’ as he is in the ‘centre of learning’ because of his class (King, 1978: 123). Jude, alongside Sue, whose ‘will is law’ to him, refuses to ‘conform to the law of survival’, both of them perishing ultimately (King, 1978: 123). Where Jude’s tragedy ends in his death, Sue’s tragedy begins in seeking out a life for herself that is worse than death. This analysis also highlights the reason behind the continued critical interest in *Jude*, which, like the nature of Sue’s tragedy, has an enduring quality, a shelf-life that is longer than its circumstantial time frame. As King sums it up; ‘[t]he novel leaves the reader not with the sense of a world saddened but wiser,

not with a sense of order rising out of chaos, but with the harrowing and unreconciled cry of the martyred saints – “How long?”” (King, 1978: 125).

A detail that becomes noticeable while surveying the different critical voices commenting on Hardy’s body of work in the early twentieth century is that a significant number of female critics tend to skim briefly over the characterization of Sue in their essays and articles, focussing more on plot, narration and Hardy’s male presentation. When the female critics actually touch upon Sue’s characterization, it is mostly negative, while the male critics offer a more varied response, generally regarding her characterization as an interesting case study; nuanced enough to be interesting, baffling enough to be irritating.

Another important study on Hardy’s status as a tragic novelist is Dale Kramer’s *Thomas Hardy: The Forms of Tragedy* (1975), in which Kramer sets out to answer the ‘time-worn’ question; ‘[c]an Hardy’s last novels legitimately be called *tragic* with their lower-class protagonists and their pessimistic views of life?’ (Kramer, 1975: 165). He discusses how Hardy’s works have been hailed as tragic throughout his lifetime and thereafter by critics ‘who were concentrating upon the grandeur of his conceptions, the lowering gloom of his characteristic atmospheres, and the courage of his characters who are unable to avoid being destroyed by Fate or Chance’ (Kramer, 1975: 14). He demonstrates the shift in critical perception with the rise of New Criticism, which considered formal unity a requisite – a factor that Hardy’s works were lacking, thus keeping the debate about Hardy’s status as a tragic novelist ongoing.²²

²² New Criticism, a formalist movement in literary theory, emphasized close reading, to study how a work of literature could function as a self-contained, aesthetically complete object. New Critics paid special attention to the intimate connection between the structure and meaning of texts and believed that the two should not be studied separately. The focus was trained on in-depth analyses of texts, with a view to detach it from the reader’s response, the author’s intention, the historical and cultural context of production, and any bias that might arise in the analysis from those factors.

Kramer emphasizes the paradoxical impact that the advent of New Criticism had on the reception of Hardy's works. The 'same New Criticism which contributed to Hardy's decline' also became 'responsible for a rejuvenation of interest in the *tragic* as a quality in literature apart from the manner in which certain pieces of writing employ methods that are present in classical masterpieces' (Kramer, 1975: 15). Kramer argues that the theoretical framework of New Criticism broadened the definition of tragedy, which enables Hardy's works to fit within the tragic framework. In "*Jude the Obscure: Doctrine or Distanced Narrator*", Kramer locates the tragic element of Hardy's works primarily in their structure and form. According to him, 'Hardy's objection to the tastes of his age is grounded in an abhorrence of the results of literary realism' (Kramer, 1975: 10). Francis O'Gorman, in an essay on Hardy's realism, begins with an anecdotal reference to Hardy's observation that 'realism', though in vogue in the nineteenth century, was 'an unfortunate, ambiguous word' (Hardy, 1891: 315-319). He draws attention to Hardy's complicated relationship with the trope of realism; his primary objection stemming from how broad, how capable of multiple meanings and imbued with moral judgement it could be (O'Gorman, 2013: 113-121). Thomas Hardy's interest in the day-to-day lives of ordinary people from the working class is obvious in his selection of protagonists, particularly in his later novels. According to Kramer, Hardy's aim as a novelist was to capture and create the extraordinariness that ordinary people could achieve when faced with unnatural/uncommon events. Kramer also points out that:

The customary classification of Hardy's last novels as "naturalistic" is not necessarily incorrect; but it is misleading if it is intended to convey a judgement that such novels are a less valuable form of tragedy. Emphasis on the intensity and sanctity of individual perceptions in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* makes them among the most intimate and compelling narratives of the last century (Kramer, 1975: 165).

Kramer challenges previous critics like Mizener, who find *Jude* lacking in its aspiration to achieve tragic status as there is no ‘unresolvable tragic tension between the real and the ideal’. Kramer, on the other hand, asserts that more attention needs to be paid to the carefully constructed authorial distance that Hardy engineers in *Jude*, to show the disparity between the narrative voice and the voices of the characters, which helps to create a new relativism of perspective and understanding, and a rejection of any absolutes. This is a key element of Kramer’s argument; the idea that opinion on a matter depends on the point of view from which it is considered. He points out from his study of Hardy’s letters that the ‘key word in Hardy’s comments on form in fiction would seem to be *organic*. Everything affecting the plot and characters must be natural to the conditions in the novel and must grow out of those conditions’ (Kramer, 1975: 11). Kramer sees each novel of Hardy being dominated by a specific aesthetic or structural aspect ‘that informs the entire work and creates the peculiar quality of tragedy that distinguishes it’. This is observable in *Jude* too in the form of ‘the manipulation of perspective that evaluates the protagonist [...] without confusing the narrator’s personality for the author’s’ (Kramer, 1975: 21). The resultant ‘complexity of perspectives’, creates what Kramer terms a ‘pervasive relativism’, which, ‘though it occurs in all of the novels, reaches new subtleties in *Jude*’ (Kramer, 1975: 154, 163). This relativism is achieved by the distance that Hardy consciously creates between ‘himself and his narrator, and between his narrator and the characters’, enabling the point of view to be objective and based on a ‘multiplicity of interpretive angles’, which ultimately ‘permits a shift in the method of presentation of tragedy towards the end of the novel’ (Kramer, 1975: 160):

Most modern theories of tragedy assume, implicitly or explicitly, that intensity is a crucial quality in the tragic personae. Unless the protagonist can feel deeply, and unless the author is able to make us realize that the protagonist is feeling deeply

and suffering keenly, we are unlikely to become involved enough to catch a glimpse of the nature of existence that propels the protagonist [...] In Hardy the intensity of a character's perception of his situation is the principal bolstering factor in his expression of an element of tragic existence (Kramer, 1975: 19).

This is a crucial point to consider in the discussion of *Jude* as a tragedy, as the 'power of this novel' lies in the 'intensity of mental experience' of the protagonists as well as the readers (Kramer, 1975: 132). Kramer makes a very interesting observation in his analysis of Sue while trying to clear Hardy of the charge of dogmatism:

Sue's dilemma, of a piece with her doubling back upon her opinions which early and late in the novel causes Jude most of his misery, claims something less than clear sympathy. Hardy, in making a torn person like Sue a spokesman for a view he had much sympathy with, prevents what might easily in lesser hands have been dogmatism (Kramer, 1975: 149).

Kramer also probes into the debate surrounding Sue's sexual instincts, or the lack of them. He scrutinizes the narrator's voice and the 'temporal perspective' which is 'as limited as that of any human character', and points out instances from the novel where Sue's apparent lack of sexual interest can be questioned as she displays her passion for Jude, admitting to Mrs. Edlin that 'she loves Jude "O, grossly!" (p. 476)' (Kramer, 1975: 154). As Kramer succinctly sums up, based on textual evidence:

It is certainly more reasonable to believe that she does have a degree of genuine sexual passion than to believe – as now seems the fashionable critical approach – that all of these indications are efforts on Sue's part to disguise her sexlessness by pretending to have "conventional" sexual feelings (Kramer, 1975: 154).

This is a line of enquiry into the debate surrounding Sue's sexual behaviour that has gained in currency in subsequent analyses, particularly, the feminist studies of Sue's portrayal. Furthermore, Kramer links 'the brevity and even absence of explanations of character motivation', in the case of Sue, to an 'abruptness of action' observable in the text (Kramer, 1975: 140). Kramer shows how Hardy intersperses *Jude* with 'ironic comments and

extreme statements with little cause’, to show his detachment from the ‘fiction he was organizing’ (Kramer, 1975: 149). He gives multiple examples from the text to support his analysis – identifying a ‘major irony’ of the novel to be:

[...] Sue and Jude’s reluctance to marry each other after their divorces from their first marriages are final. She shrinks from marriage with Jude because marriage is “irrevocable”. It is starkly inconsistent for Sue to call marriage an “iron contract” (p. 311) when she and Jude have just remarked on how easy it is for a poor person to obtain a divorce. Moreover, her diatribe here is against government for licensing love (p. 312), not against society for restraining divorce (Kramer, 1975: 150).

Kramer uses textual evidence to support his argument that Sue and Jude display a high level of confusion in their conversations, even regarding the causes they are depicted to feel strongly about. This analysis relieves Hardy of the charge of dogmatism as he makes their indecisiveness a focal point of their characterization. The authorial detachment is an important aspect of consideration as Kramer argues that ‘Hardy’s growing competence in developing methods of organization and presentation’ is visible in his growth as a novelist, and ‘his appeal is largely in his readers’ awareness that they are not being asked to sympathize with characters towards whom the author is indifferent’ (Kramer, 1975: 138). Hardy is instead aiming for an ‘increasing subtlety in the handling of one aspect of narrative art [which] has its culmination in *Jude the Obscure*’, the ‘acknowledgement’ which gives readers ‘a new view’ into how Hardy’s novels achieve the ‘objectivity and balance of tragedy’ (Kramer, 1975: 138).

Kramer concludes that after examining the effects of Hardy’s use of form, he believes, alongside most readers, that ‘the social class of the protagonist is irrelevant to the quality of the tragedy they can evoke’, and that Hardy does not try to offer any final words on human efforts or suffering (Kramer, 1975: 165). Through the authorial distance, Hardy essentially allows the readers to form the impression that the characters have lives of their

own that is not just limited to the machinations/intentions of the author, and thus open to multiple analyses.

Joseph Hillis Miller's *Thomas Hardy: Distance and Desire* (1970) is another significant publication on Hardy's works, despite its limitations. Miller's study of *Jude* is among the first studies of an English author to engage (circumspectly) with the ideas of structuralism,²³ to unpack 'the underlying structures which persist through all the variations in Hardy's works and make it whole' (Miller, 1970: x). Miller identifies the complex interplay of love and relationships to be the 'urgent' themes of Hardy's works: 'distance as the source of desire and desire as the energy behind attempts to turn distance into closeness' (Miller, 1970: xii). Miller sees Jude and Sue's relationship to be founded upon an inability to overcome the problems of distance and desire. Miller explains that characters like Sue and Jude are driven by an emotional void, and the need to replace it by presence and possession of another person, which would enable them to achieve an integrated sense of self. Desire, and the chase of desire, marks the lives of Sue and Jude; a desire which dies with sexual consummation. Miller sees the cause of their suffering to stem from an arrival at the modern angst of a 'suicidal passivity, a self-destructive will not to will' (Miller, 1970: 219). This is particularly observable in Sue's masochistic, passive surrender to the social norms she resists so hard initially, and Jude's utter loss of the will to live by the end of the novel.

²³ Structuralism argues that there must be a structure in every text, which relates literary texts to a larger structure, either of a particular genre, or of intertextual connections, or a model of a universal narrative structure, or a system of recurrent patterns or motifs. A potential problem of structuralist interpretation is that it can be reductive, and insensitive to differences in varying texts, as it necessitates that everything that is written be governed by specific rules or a 'grammar of literature' that one learns in educational institutions.

However, Miller, in a later work *Fiction and Repetition* (1982), shows the clear influence of French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), and his theory of deconstruction, in his works.²⁴ Miller discusses his deconstructionist strategy:

It is possible to distinguish chains of connection which are material elements in the text, like the red things; or metaphors, [...] or thematic elements like sexuality or murder; or conceptual elements, like the question of cause or the theory of history [...] (Miller, 1982: 126).

He applies the notion of the ‘chain of connections’ to study Hardy’s novels, seeing *Jude* as ‘the story of the single consciousness divided against itself, striving to merge again with itself, seeing in others even of the opposite sex, only its double’, ultimately concluding that Sue is a narcissistic projection of Jude’s ambivalent desires (Miller, 1982: 160). Miller’s interest in Sue’s portrayal remains an ongoing process, as in a later work he discusses Sue in Freudian terms as ‘a certain kind of hysteric who punishes men by arousing their desire and then holding them off’ (Miller, 1992).

Miller makes the distinction between reading Hardy in the context of Darwin, and reading him through Derridian concepts in his essay “Thomas Hardy, Jacques Derrida, and the ‘Dislocation of Souls’” (1984). He bases the distinction on the point of emphasis in analysing Hardy’s writing. Critics like Beer who perceive Hardy as Darwinian focus on the continuity between man and nature in Hardy’s fiction, while critics like Miller, who find Hardy’s works to contain Derridian elements, see the total break between man and nature in some of his novels; a particularly strong example being *Jude*. The focus falls on the trope of ‘writing’ as a marker of a social or symbolic organisation, to enable the

²⁴ Derrida’s method of Deconstruction refers to the pursuing of meaning in texts to expose the supposed contradictions and internal oppositions upon which it is founded, revealing the foundations of texts to be complex and unstable or impossible. Deconstruction attempts to show that any text is not a discrete whole but contains several irreconcilable and contradictory meanings, which leads to the possibility of multiple interpretations.

constitution of subject through language by breaking away from nature. Miller's evolving and modifying critique of Sue's portrayal becomes a marker of his own intellectual journey and a display of his adherence to different praxes of theoretical analysis at different times of his career, in keeping with the changing intellectual climate. This is reflected in the advancement and development of his criticism of Sue, reinstating the function of her characterisation as a Rorschach test.

Ian Gregor, in his humanist formalist study of Hardy, *The Great Web: The Form of Hardy's Major Fiction* (1974), is primarily concerned with the reader's response to, and participation in, the text. He rejects a contextual approach, explicitly stating that he has little to say about Hardy or his times, and focusses instead on the reading process. He traces the fragmentation of the notion of Wessex through a reading of Hardy's major novels, particularly noticeable in the works after *The Return of the Native* (1878), taken to its extreme point in *Jude*. The result is a conflicted novel, situated on a borderline between Hardy's previous works and the kind of fiction Hardy discerned as 'meeting his need, but which imaginatively, he had no access to':

When we come to reflect on the relationship that exists between the kind of fiction Hardy writes and the substance of that fiction, we find an interesting correspondence. On 4 March 1885 we find Hardy making an entry in his journal: 'The human race to be shown as one great network or tissue which quivers in every part when one point is shaken, like a spider's web if touched' (Gregor, 1974: 33).

Gregor suggests that the image of the web provides the overarching idea of Hardy's development of his fiction and its substance. He considers *Jude* to be Hardy's 'furthest advance in fiction on two fronts: in its structure and style, and in the nature of its subject', and Hardy's only novel in which 'plot, the essence of Hardy's fiction in the past, is superseded by what the artist himself calls "a series of seemings"' (Gregor, 1974: 136,

139). Gregor highlights Hardy's focus on the portrayal of consciousness and Jude's 'wandering ego' (Gregor, 1974: 139), anticipating in it the concerns of modern fiction.

This chapter marks the shift in the critical commentary on Hardy's novels, particularly in the 1950s and 1960s, from the pre-existing branches of liberal humanism to more formalist frameworks that allow critics to analyse Hardy's texts from a purely structural viewpoint. This results in New Critical readings of Hardy that consider his novels as self-contained works of literature, alongside structuralist and formalist readings, as has been elucidated in this chapter.

Modes of Changing Criticism

*“None will recognize us as a pair whose claims
Righteous judgment we care not making;
Who have doubted if breath be worth the taking,
And have no respect for the current fames
Whence the savour has flown while abide the names.”*

The Recalcitrants – Thomas Hardy

This chapter highlights how Sue’s characterization acts a catalyst for different critical debates as her provocative portrayal makes readers and critics commit to certain positions, encouraging reactions. If the main modes of criticism prior to this point were mostly formalist and humanist, hinged on close reading, notions of tragedy and the human, new modes of reading now began in earnest based on poststructuralism, sophisticated readings of socio-historical and political frameworks, Marxism, psychoanalysis, and most importantly, the emergence of feminist and gender based perspectives.

§3.1

Hardy's realism

In “Hardy and Critical Theory”, Peter Widdowson describes Hardy as a ‘widely read intellectual who was closely familiar with the literary debates of the second half of the nineteenth century’; a ‘transitional’ figure who was wedged between ‘Victorian’ and ‘Modern’ sensibilities (Widdowson, 1999: 74). *Jude* is a compelling case in point as it ‘presents more complexities as a cultural marker than the other “great” Hardy novels in some degree because of the accident of it appearing just as the traditional novel form was being revised’ (Kramer, 1999: 168). Widdowson suggests that a perusal of Hardy’s essays, notebooks and other ‘memoranda quoted in *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*’, makes it evident that Hardy actively participated in the:

[...] pan-European debate about Realism, and that he was opposed to a “photographic” naturalism, favoring instead a kind of “analytic” writing which “makes strange” common-sense reality and brings into view other realities obscured precisely by the naturalized version (Widdowson, 1999: 74).

Widdowson highlights Hardy’s opposition to the idea that literature should be a photographic or naturalistic representation of human experiences and draws attention to Hardy’s own assertion in *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy* that:

Art is disproportioning – (i.e., distorting, throwing out of proportion) – of realities, to show more clearly the features that matter in those realities, which, if merely copied or reported inventorially, might possibly be observed, but would more

probably be overlooked. Hence 'realism' is not Art (quoted in Widdowson, 1999: 74).

Hardy's relationship with French naturalism has continued to be contested over the decades, particularly as his novelistic career coincided with the period that also saw the rise of French naturalism, but no clear consensus has been reached regarding Hardy's status as a naturalist author. As a social realist though, Hardy depicted and commented on the plight of human beings caught in the social/personal travails of life. He engaged with multiple social issues in his works; the rural-urban shifts of the late nineteenth century; the changing mindsets and lives of women who were seeking education, employment, greater independence and mobility while struggling with the social forces of sexual double standards and repression; the oppressiveness of religion and class; and the legal institutions of marriage and divorce. *Jude* differs from his other hard-hitting works like *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891) and *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886) in being blatant and raw in its depiction of flawed characters and personalities trying to grapple with social conformity and failing miserably. The presentation of delicate matters is not oblique anymore, but direct and shocking in its depiction of a disturbing level of sordidness and angst. *Jude* stands out from Hardy's other novels also because of Hardy's creation of realistic characters in a very realistic social setting, whom he then treats almost as non-realistic symbols to explore ideas. Hardy wrote three essays on the art of writing fiction shortly before writing *Jude*: "The Profitable Reading of Fiction" (1888), "Candor in English Fiction" (1890), and "The Science of Fiction" (1891), the first published in the magazine *Forum*, and the two subsequent ones in the magazine *New Review*. In the essays, Hardy addressed the ongoing critical debates regarding the true function of fiction. He questioned if fiction should be reflective of society at large and hold up a mirror to broad social problems such as the legal entrapments of marital laws, adultery, women's rights and

social injustices, and provide a kind of moralistic lesson, or if it should concentrate on being true to the subject at hand without passing any moral judgement.

To analyse Hardy's standpoint in the debate around the true role of fiction, it is important to revisit certain critical studies on Hardy spanning over the decades. Joseph Warren Beach's study, *The Technique of Thomas Hardy* (1922) that I have briefly alluded to in chapter 2, is an early, detailed study of 'the structural art of the novel: the method of assembling and ordering these elements of subject matter, social criticism, and the like' in Hardy's novels (Beach, 1922: v-vi). His mode of analysis is primarily formalist, but he concedes that it is not possible to study technique in isolation from plot and social and philosophical issues at play in novels. He discusses a broad range of technical concepts like setting, drama, irony, and then moves on to philosophical discussions of pity and truth to show how the greatest achievement of Hardy's novels is his empathetic and keen insight into human feelings and emotions.

In "Hardy and the Naturalists: Their Use of Physiology" (1951), William Newton argues that though Hardy's novels contain aspects of a naturalistic novel, he was not preoccupied with physiology the way other naturalists were. He supports his argument by quoting from Hardy's journal entry in July 1887:

It is the proper thing nowadays to attribute to physical causes all the phenomena which people used to call spiritual. But I am not sure. One may be dyspeptic and yet perfectly cheerful, and one may be quite well and yet fit company for a churchyard worm (F.E.Hardy, 1928: 230).

In the 1950s and 60s the critical interest in the compositional history of Hardy's novels continues. Richard Little Purdy's book *Thomas Hardy: A Bibliographical Study* (1954) provides an exhaustive account of the different editions of Hardy's texts, the changes in the manuscripts from the serialized versions to the novel version, and how these

changes impacted upon the final novel. This formal interest continues in subsequent essays like Robert C. Slack's "The Text of Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*" (1957) which looks at the complicated history of the creation of *Jude*, and John Paterson's "The Genesis of *Jude the Obscure*" (1960). Slack and Paterson's essays overlap in their discussion of the form of Hardy's novels, and the way even subtle changes in words and sentence structures alongside more obvious plot changes impacted upon the characterization and narrative flow of the novels.

The impact of the novels of French Realists on Hardy's novels has also received continued attention in subsequent works; "Hardy's View of Realism: A Key to the Rustic Characters" by William J. Hyde (1958), and Penelope Vigar's *The Novels of Thomas Hardy: Illusion and Reality* (1974). Vigar focusses on the contrast between appearance and reality in Hardy's fiction, examining Hardy's technique of using landscape, nature, the play of light and darkness, night and day as reflections of the mood and emotions of the characters to explore 'the complexity of the illusion which is man's only possible conception of ultimate truth' (Vigar, 1974: 212). She concerns herself primarily with the language and imagery in his works to explore the nature of realism in Hardy's novels.

Irving Howe (1920-1993) in *Thomas Hardy* (1967), discusses how Hardy perceives the convention of Victorian fiction to be repressive and strives to break from traditional realism. Howe considers Sue's portrayal as a strong signification of Hardy's attempt to break from the norm and explore the unusual. He hails Sue as the:

[...] 'epicene woman', the ethereal, spiritualized, undersexed coquette who drives men to distraction. So summarized, Sue Bridehead may seem a monstrously unpleasant person, as unpleasant as most fictional neurotics. But she is, as it happens, one of Hardy's most appealing heroines (Howe, 1967:142-143).

Sue's inconsistencies and the controversial nature of her portrayal become an integral aspect of the formal arrangement of *Jude*: Hardy's attempt at successfully creating a character so complex and dynamic that she eludes any structured analysis, being 'utterly charming and vibrant' on the one hand, yet baffling and 'unpleasant' on the other (Howe, 1967: 143). Howe asserts that Hardy had a special penchant for 'creeping intuitively into the emotional life of women', his 'openness to the feminine principle' allowing him a special insight into the female mind (Howe, 1967: 109). He surmises that Sue's characterization is 'the first major anticipation in the English novel of that profoundly affecting and troublesome creature: the modern girl' (Howe, 1967: 238). Howe's observation is questionable as Sue, far from being an exceptional portrayal of a 'modern girl', was very clearly a part of the steadily developing community of the New Woman, both as fictional literary figures and as real women of the late nineteenth century. What is interesting to note though, in Howe's study of Sue, is his analysis of her as a symptom of this changing environment; a manifestation of an individual caught up in a mobile, uncertain world. As he puts it:

Sue is that terrifying spectre of our age, before whom men and cultures tremble: she is an interesting girl [...] Promethean in mind but masochist in character [...] all intellectual seriousness [...] all feminine charm, but without body, without flesh or smell, without femaleness (Howe, 1967: 142).

Jude for Howe marks the end of Victorian idealism and the beginning of a literary modernism that would eventually take over in the twentieth century. Sue and Jude are characters who are trapped in this transition. They are 'lost souls [...] who have no place in the world they can cherish or to which they can retreat' (Howe, 1967: 139). Sue's complicated psychology, her thought process, her indecisiveness, her conflicted sense of self, is thus a product of the growth of intellectual scepticism, embedded in the new

historical context. Howe's analysis signposts the direction of criticism of Hardy's works from the 1970s onwards, particularly *Jude*, which burgeons and diversifies, as will be discussed at length in the next section.

§3.2

Marxist/Sociological/Materialist criticism

The shift in Hardy scholarship towards a more Marxist, Sociological and Materialist criticism is visible during the 1970s when insightful and nuanced readings of *Jude* linking it to its social context and class issues surface and become talking points. Raymond Williams (1921-1988) studies Hardy's works from a primarily sociological perspective, in *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence* (1970). He points out Hardy's preoccupation with the possibility of mobility across the different social classes – particularly through education. Williams also observes and comments on the way the relationships between people and the spaces they grow up in, move away from, and come back to, morph through migration. Williams situates *Jude* (1895) on one side of a creative chasm and *Sons and Lovers* (1913) by D. H Lawrence on the other: a schism that marks the ingress of capitalism as a system into a particularly corrupt phase, blocking human freedom and progress. This leads to new ways of structuring and exploring human development and growth, both as an individual agent, and, as a cog in a social machinery. Williams' chapter on Hardy opens up the space for many subsequent Marxist/sociological discussions on Hardy. Merryn Williams continues the discussion on social mobility in Hardy in *Thomas Hardy and Rural England* (1972). She notes how 'physical mobility' is possible in *Jude*, as depicted through the many rural-urban migrations of the characters,

but 'social mobility [is] decisively blocked' as observable time and again through the thwarted hopes and aspirations of Jude (Williams, 1972: 121-122).

R. J. White, in *Thomas Hardy and History* (1974) studies Hardy through a socio-historical lens too. He sees in the characterization of Jude and Sue, as well as Father Time, not just reflections of tragic protagonists of classical works of a bygone era like Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667), and Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (1623), but also the foreshadowing of a modern existential angst. White highlights the futility of the attempts of non-conforming men and women like Jude and Sue to search for a space and society through their itinerant lifestyle that would accept them. This rootlessness is explored in greater detail by Terry Eagleton in his 'Introduction' to *Jude the Obscure* (1975). He writes:

Jude is not a peasant: that class had long since been destroyed by changes in the social structure of the English countryside [...] Jude isn't 'uprooted' from Marygreen because there is nothing to be uprooted from [...] Jude's own lack of roots is symptomatic of the generally deracinated condition of the place. Marygreen is not timeless but stagnant, not settled but inert [...] (Eagleton, 1975: 14).

According to Eagleton, *Jude* is an exploration of the dialectical relation between 'ideals and harsh actuality' - Jude's dreams versus his reality, Arabella's perceived charm versus her 'artificial hair, manufactured dimples, false pregnancy and sexual trickery', an idealized Christminster in Jude's mind versus the actual Christminster, 'a maze of false consciousness and sham ceremony' (Eagleton, 1975: 15). His Marxist ideology comes into play in the way he reads Hardy's description of *Jude* as a 'deadly war waged between flesh and spirit' as the 'war between the spirit of man and the obstructive flesh of a recalcitrant society' (Eagleton, 1975: 22). In Eagleton's account, the 'war' becomes more indicative of Jude's tussle with society than the constant advance and retreat, push and pull situation Jude finds himself in, pertaining to the women in his life, particularly Sue. Eagleton reads *Jude* as an example of a text that hinges on contradictory forces within itself, allowing

Hardy to explore the different literary tropes of social realism, tragedy and melodrama through the plot and characterisations.

It is not surprising that a Marxist critic like Eagleton merges two different strands of analysis – Feminist and Marxist – in his study of Sue: assessing the gender issues addressed in the novel and reading Sue's denial of the body as the need for 'autonomy', personal freedom and expression. He perceives Sue as a pre-Feminist, whose resistance against social restrictiveness manifests itself through her conflicted sexual behaviour. He contends that by rejecting the 'false social embodiments of love', she gains in agency and freedom but he considers this freedom 'in part negative and destructive' because 'her self-possessive individualism' also entails 'a fear of being possessed' and 'a fear of giving' (Eagleton, 1975: 18). This makes Sue come across as self-centered and insensitive; an assessment that echoes Robert B. Heilman's concern with the self-absorbed side of Sue's personality discussed later in the chapter. Eagleton considers Sue's reading of Mill's 'bourgeois notion of the autonomously developing self' as the point of development of her 'individualism', which is at loggerheads with Jude's more 'communal and collectivist ethic' (Eagleton, 1975: 18). He recognizes the influence of the idea of the autonomy of the self, the absoluteness of individual right and freedom, in Sue's speech and action, which makes the chasm between her and the men she gets involved with apparent, as they seem to be more firmly grounded in the socio-cultural, collectivist norms of the times.

Like Merryn Williams among other critics, Eagleton perceives Sue to be working on the level of representativeness, a portrayal in 'the tradition of nineteenth-century realism which Hardy inherited', through whose presentation Hardy is 'evoking movements and forces which can't be exhaustively described or evaluated at a simply personal level' (Eagleton, 1975: 20). Eagleton highlights Hardy's use of realism in seeing Sue as the

dramatization of ‘all the conflicts and evasions of what can best be termed a transitional form of consciousness, deadlocked between the old and the new’ (Eagleton, 1975: 18). He points out the constant contradictions at play in Sue’s portrayal, even in her religious choices; her ‘idealist’ reaction against orthodoxy, her ‘substitution of one spiritual identity for another’, the way idols continue to have an influence on her – ‘statues of Greek deities’ replacing ‘statues of Christian saints on her mantelpiece’ (Eagleton, 1975: 17).²⁵ Eagleton sees in Sue a study of a society in transition, and her collapse into religious ideology a futile attempt to clutch onto faith as a false consciousness. The ‘deadlock’ is even more apparent on the psychological level, which becomes manifest in Sue’s inherent ‘masochism and self-torture – a continual process of acting impulsively and then punitively repressing herself for it’ (Eagleton, 1975: 18). This manifests itself in no greater way than when Sue leaves Jude for Phillotson in an ‘attempt to live authentically in a false society’ which ultimately results in ‘guilty self-punishment, a flight from freedom into the consoling embrace of an impersonal system of authority which will relieve one of the burdens of selfhood, and so of responsibility’ (Eagleton, 1975: 22). The transformation is complete when ‘Sue, the celebrator of Pagan joy in life, becomes the woman who is glad her children are dead, eager to flay her flesh and bring her body into corpse-like submission to a man she physically detests’ (Eagleton, 1975: 22).

²⁵ Many critics have studied Sue’s portrayal as an avatar of the pagan ‘Great Goddess’. Abercrombie was among the first to make the connection followed by Ruth A. Firor (1931) who studies Sue and Arabella as ‘variations’ of the pagan goddess of love in English folklore, associated with phallic worship and death, especially those of young children. Shirley A. Stave (1995) discusses the conflict between Sue and the patriarchal social structure as a reflection of the bigger fracas between the values of a pagan worldview associated with nature, and matriarchal, egalitarian agrarian communities, and a ‘Judeo-Christian antagonist’, the patriarchal Victorian social structure. James Harding (1996) also exposes the characteristics of the pagan goddess in both Sue and Arabella.

Eagleton praises Sue's portrayal as 'Hardy's most masterly exploration of the limits of liberation in Victorian society'; someone who has 'seen through the cultural idea, and emancipated herself from the stagnant medievalism of Christminster' (Eagleton, 1975: 17). However, her emancipation is partial and in some ways false. She sees the University as a place full of 'fetishists and ghost-seers, but by the end of the novel she herself is both' (Eagleton, 1975: 17). Eagleton surmises that for all the conflicting accounts surrounding Sue's characterization, Hardy operates from a place of full knowledge about her intentions, the nature of her relationships with the men in her life and the general evasiveness of her personality. He considers Sue's inconsistencies to be a full realization of an enigmatic character on Hardy's part but still finds it remarkable that 'Hardy retains some of our sympathy for Sue against all the odds. For there isn't, when one comes down to it, much to be said in her defence' (Eagleton, 1975: 19).

In his analysis, Eagleton depicts Sue and Jude's brave yet futile struggle against 'empty convention' and contrasts it against Arabella's understanding of the 'artifice of those conventions' only to manipulate them, using her sexuality as a tool to bend the system in her favour. Arabella is also an individualist like Sue, '[...] and both exploit Jude: Arabella crudely and materially, Sue subtly and spiritually' (Eagleton, 1975: 21). *Jude*, according to Eagleton is very much a 'novel about passion – passion for human and sexual fulfilment, and its agonized frustration at the hands of a society which must everywhere deny it' (Eagleton, 1975: 18). Hardy's deliberate flouting of the convention of realism can be seen through his portrayal of Father Time, whose 'pessimism' as Eagleton surmises, springs from the 'weary passivity of a character who is outside history, unable to intervene constructively in it, condemned (like the naturalistic novelists of the period) to see things in a rounded, distanced, deterministic way' (Eagleton, 1975: 23).

Eagleton revisits *Jude* in *Criticism and Ideology: A Study in Marxist Literary Theory* (1976) and discusses it as ‘laborious and uneven’ due to the ‘peculiar *impurity*’ of Hardy’s usage of a multitude of literary forms: pastoral, melodrama, social realism, naturalism, and classical tragedy (Eagleton, 1976: 131-132). He analyses the contradiction inherent in ‘Hardy’s situation as the literary producer’ of *Jude*. He depicts Hardy’s attempts to develop a productive relationship with a ‘metropolitan audience’ who summarily reject his first attempt at a blatantly radical work, *Tess*, and ‘[...] by the time of *Jude the Obscure*, “reconciliation” has been effectively abandoned: that novel is less an offering to its audience than a calculated assault on them’ (Eagleton, 1976: 131). The portrayal of Sue is an extension of this attack by Hardy upon his reading audience. Eagleton deconstructs what has been critically referred to as *Jude’s* ‘crudities’ to be ‘less the consequences of some artistic incapacity than of an astonishing raw boldness on Hardy’s part’, a very determined breaking away from the ‘bounds of realism’ (Eagleton, 1976: 132):

Within the radical *provisionality* of Hardy’s productive practice is inscribed a second, more fundamental provisionality – the desired un-closure of social forms themselves (epitomized in sexuality), forms which in their received shape the novel ‘explodes’ in the act of ‘exploding’ the letter of its own text (Eagleton, 1976: 131).

Eagleton considers *Jude* to ‘explode’ in the effort of breaking through the social barriers, to reach out to an ‘unresponsive audience’ through ‘the murderous inertia of the letter’, and depict its ‘own displaced position within the literary social relations of its time’ (Eagleton, 1976: 131). Eagleton does not buy into the idea that it was the ‘bigoted public response to *Jude*’ that put an end to Hardy’s novelistic career, but attributes it to Hardy having exploded the organic forms of fiction to an extent where there was no further route for him to take as a novelist.

Other important sociological, Marxist and materialist studies of *Jude* are George Wotton's *Thomas Hardy: Towards a Materialist Criticism* (1985), John Goode's *Thomas Hardy: The Offensive Truth* (1988), Peter Widdowson's *Hardy in History: A Study in Literary Sociology* (1989), and Joe Fisher's *The Hidden Hardy* (1992). These books further develop Eagleton's discussion of the ways in which Hardy presents a deeply troubled social order, through characters that become representative of the degeneration. The influence of Penny Boumelha's Marxist/feminist analyses of Hardy's works (discussed at length later in the chapter) is clearly visible on these studies, particularly in Wotton and Goode.

Wotton, in his 'materialist criticism' of Hardy, discusses the difficulty of 'feminist and Marxist criticism to break with the traditional forms of bourgeois aesthetics', and the 'uneasy' relation between 'theory' and 'criticism' (Wotton, 1985: 8). Wotton discusses how Materialist criticism perceives the 'materiality of literature' to derive 'not from its status as an object or a collection of texts but from its existence as a social relation which involves a productive exchange between writing and criticism' (Wotton, 1985: 170). He explains that the aim of this kind of criticism is 'not evaluation or the discovery of meaning or significance in the "literary text" but an understanding of the historical conditions of the productions of writing and the ways in which literature operates in the process of reproducing the relations of production of class in society' (Wotton, 1985: 2). His study of Hardy suffers from the restrictiveness of his viewpoint as he himself acknowledges when faced with the challenge of analysing *Jude*:

The difficulty arises [...] when being confronted with having to say something about *Jude the Obscure*. Faced with that necessity 'theory' inevitably dissolves into 'criticism' and what a feminist or Marxist then actually says about *Jude* appears remarkably similar to what a 'bourgeois' critic says, but from a different 'point of view' (Wotton, 1985: 8).

He identifies in Hardy's writing 'the production of an *insight* into the true realities of life and the ideological problematic [...]' (Wotton, 1985: 3), but almost denies Hardy a political consciousness by disengaging him from his personal history. Wotton's study of Hardy is abstract and focusses in a disengaged fashion on the 'critical structure of perceptions [through which] we can see ideology in operation' (Wotton, 1985: 181). This point of view percolates into his analysis of Sue too, whom he sees as an 'ideological construction', which 'goes a long way to answering a recently posed question as to why feminists should be so interested in literature [and] what theoretical or political ends such a study might serve' (Wotton, 1985: 183). Wotton does not set out to offer his own critical assessment of Sue's characterization, instead choosing to discuss other prominent critical perceptions of her, concluding that:

The cumulative impression produced by these views is of a hysterically neurotic, egotistical, terribly vain, self-regarding and intellectually over-developed 'troublesome' creature, a sexually deficient, maladjusted and underdeveloped coquette (to use the polite term) in whom the vital female is atrophied (Wotton, 1985: 183)

According to Wotton 'the (re)productions of "Hardy's essential meaning" are based on a reading determined by a dominant class ideology, so the (re)production of "Hardy's women" is based on a reading determined by a dominant gender ideology' (Wotton, 1985: 183). This ideology and his disinclination to engage with traditional literary criticism as well as other accepted modes of analysing Hardy, gives rise to a partial and sketchy assessment that limits the scope of his study.

John Goode's analysis of Hardy's works focusses on the impact of economic and ideological determinants on literary texts, which becomes visible in the shaping of characters and events. The fictionalized representations become indicative of the history of forms and the particularly specialized productive situation of the author – Hardy's

experimentation with the bounds of realism, his exploration of different literary forms and his conscious attempt to test the imaginative limits of his audience. Goode's study receives critical acclaim from Eagleton, who writes in the Editor's Preface:

Goode's study is sensitively alert to Hardy's fiction less as 'representations' than as transformative practice, disruption, intervention, texts which refuse to stay still within their frames and which often enough meditate on the act of writing as a metaphor of their preoccupations. By the time of *Jude the Obscure* - a novel, in Goode's phrase, 'simply not fit for consumption' - Hardy will have carried this subversive, experimental practice of fiction to an extreme limit (Goode, 1988: vi).

Goode carries forth Eagleton's argument about the 'astonishing realism' of Hardy's mind which 'by the end of its imaginative trek, has seen coldly through the major ideological institutions of its society' (Goode, 1988: vi). Eagleton points out how Goode's study contextualizes Hardy among his contemporaries like William Morris, which 'allows the full, astonishing force of Hardy's radicalism to emerge, as it had rarely done previously in literary criticism [...] a radicalism of gender as well as class [...]' (Goode, 1988: vii).

Goode considers *Jude* to 'frequently annoy the reader', by keeping them from 'identifying' with the situation - an intriguing observation, particularly while trying to situate Hardy within the realm of a realist novelist. In the chapter titled "Hardy's Fist", he is openly sarcastic about Hardy's ludicrous depiction of the death of the children and the reactions of Jude and Sue:

It is all in the worst possible taste. The children have been found hanging on the back of the door, and not only does Jude produce an apt quotation which shows his knowledge more than it illuminates the situation, but Sue suddenly looks out of her understandable hysteria and both awards him an accolade and tells the reader how to assess his quotation (Goode, 1988: 139).

He finds the character portrayals in *Jude* exasperating not just because of the almost absurd characterization of Father Time, but also because of Sue and Jude's constant 'analysis and

comparison' of their circumstances, almost from an academic angle at times, 'doing the critics out of a job [...]' (Goode, 1988: 139-140). Goode's comment that *Jude* 'not only ruins the prospects of interpretation by explicit discussion but also offers its own system of literary allegiances, which makes it difficult for the critic to determine influences or place it in a tradition' (Goode, 1988: 140), offers an interesting insight into the continued critical interest in *Jude*. Goode discusses Jude's relationship with Sue and Arabella, in terms of a 'quadrilateral which could enclose a field':

1. 'Pigs must be killed. Poor folks must live' (Arabella)
2. 'She or he "who lets the world, or his own portion of it choose his plan of life for him, has no need of any other faculty than the ape like one of imitation."' (Sue, quoting J. S. Mill)
3. 'Feelings are feelings' (Arabella)
4. 'We should mortify the flesh, the terrible flesh' (Sue – this is not strictly axiomatic, but it is her inductive logic consequent on 'because we are too menny') (Goode, 1988: 149).

Goode points out the 'primary opposition between Arabella and Sue' using these 'four syntactically axiomatic statements'. Statements 1 and 2 embody the 'polarities of evolution' (Arabella focussing on survival and Sue on being human and humane), and Statements 3 and 4 'the polarity of emotion' (Arabella embracing and accepting her instinctive side and Sue condemning and mortifying the sexual aspect of her being) (Goode, 1988: 149). Goode perceives *Jude* to be structured on the contrasting axioms that allow Sue and Arabella to act as the opposite sides of the same coin, Sue just as 'axiomatic as Arabella because she gives voice to the inward forces which remain as much a part of the field as the utilitarian surface' (Goode, 1988: 151). Though many critics have contrasted Sue's educated civility against Arabella's crudeness, Goode does not see 'anything intrinsically civilized about Sue, who recognizes that she is pre-medieval, but

nevertheless is forced to retreat into urban ideologies, theoretic unconventionality or ritualism' (Goode, 1988: 158). He considers Hardy's depiction of Sue's return to Phillotson to be symptomatic of Sue's capitulation to a puritanical ideology to mortify her body:

Nothing mitigates the nauseating wrongness of Sue's return, and Hardy escalates the reader's discomfort by refusing to stop with the wedding and taking us to the consummation, which is enacted in painful detail. It is made worse by the sympathy we are forced to have with Phillotson and by the fact that he had done nothing to force the consummation. The detail is powerfully physical. He is snoring and stops and she hopes for a minute that he is dead; then she confesses to him, giving him the extra pain he does not need, and in this atmosphere of mortification she submits (her word is 'supplicates'). Worse still, Phillotson tries to dissuade her but in a sentence of remarkable mutual humiliation says, 'I owe you nothing after those signs', while she says, 'It's my duty'. Licensed to be loved on the premises, crude, loving kindness has to be left to look after itself. (Goode, 1988: 165-166)

The most compelling aspect of Goode's analyses of Sue is his demonstration of the way Hardy links 'ideological themes with the social relations of production, or in other words deals with an anomaly even more acute than the new woman, the educated proletariat' (Goode, 1988: 168). He points out how this 'radical discourse' particularly included women like Sue: 'whatever Sue's education and origin, in her relationship with Jude she is simply a female worker who is rightly called his comrade, and we must not forget that the one proletarian action of the novel is the strike of the girls in the Training-College' (Goode, 1988: 168). This is particularly noteworthy as Sue's own status as a professional – a shop assistant, a teacher in training and eventually a teacher has not been a central point of focus in previous analyses of Sue.

Written in the manner of a poststructuralist analysis, Goode studies the way the 'discussability' of a text can be 'resisted in various ways in order to inscribe the text within the institution of literature' to 'ascribe *meaning*' (Goode, 1988: 111). He emphasizes the importance of the reader as the primary subject of inquiry, rather than Hardy, focussing on

the social and cultural norms and the way they inform the text and the reader's perceptions. This kind of a study opens up the possibility of multiple analyses and allows the text to function as 'an infinite plurality of decipherings' (Goode, 1988: 111), which Goode uses to emphasize how *Jude* resists reduction to a singular explanation of its plot and characters.

Peter Widdowson studies Hardy's works from a 'New Historicist' perspective (Widdowson, 1989: 16). New Historicist criticism has been described as an area that 'has given scholars new opportunities to cross the boundaries separating history, anthropology, art, politics, literature and economics' (Aram Veesser, 1989: ix). New Historicists aim to understand literary texts as forms of social discourse, concerning themselves with the political and cultural function of literature in the attempt to reveal a rather complex model of historically specific truth. This is based not just on a mere chronicling of facts and events, but also a complex presentation of the various factual, discursive and competing aspects of the world – social organizations and conventions, taboos and prejudices – from which a literary text emerges. Widdowson's study signposts the way in which Hardy has been fashioned as a cultural figure across the twentieth century, particularly through literary criticism, as well as education, cultural tourism (Wessex country) and media adaptations. Widdowson refers to this phenomenon as *critiography*, which is:

[...] the main constitutive discourses within which 'Hardy the novelist' is produced and reproduced in the period between his present and our present [aiming] to show how meanings and evaluations are constructed on a writer's works and are not intrinsically and determinately contained in them (Widdowson, 1989: 6).

Hardy challenges the orthodox system of marriage in *Jude*, allowing it to be a 'subversive' text, but the tenets of New Historicism and Cultural Materialism make it possible to read it as a 'consolidatory' text as well. 'Consolidation', as described by New Historicism, is an ideological means by which a dominant order seeks to perpetuate itself while subversion is

the discovery of the means to resist it and change the order. In the case of *Jude*, there is definite resistance against the dominant code, depicted through Jude and Sue's absolute lack of faith in the institution of marriage. However, there is a sense of consolidation as well, as Hardy's stance remains ambiguous, and though Jude and Sue defy and flout the laws of marriage, they pay for it in the end. Widdowson indicates the direction that Hardy studies were taking during this period in a later essay "Hardy and Critical Theory", stating that:

[...] the main categories of the newer theoretical perspectives on Hardy are "materialist" (those with a sociological, Marxist, or socialist orientation); feminist; and poststructuralist (the last two drawing heavily on psychoanalytic theories). The categories are of course, fluid and overlapping, so that it is commoner to find socialist-feminist, materialist-poststructuralist, or feminist-poststructuralist approaches than discrete examples of them. What they all have in common, however, is a cultural politics, which seeks to subvert the orthodox "Hardy" (Widdowson, 1989: 80).

A particularly interesting Marxist/materialist analysis of Hardy's novels is Fisher's *The Hidden Hardy* (1992). As indicated by the title, Fisher intends his project to reveal obscure aspects of Hardy the author by reclaiming 'the raw materials of the texts themselves from ideologically informed interpretative structures' before the process of 'rebuilding can begin' (Fisher, 1992: 1). Fisher's work follows from the ideas explored in Widdowson (1989). While Widdowson considers the literary sociology that influenced reader responses to Hardy's works, to argue that criticism has constructed Hardy the novelist in accordance with a materialistic, liberal-humanist position, Fisher concentrates on the texts of the novels themselves from a revisionist perspective, extending Marxist theory alongside other intellectual traditions like psychoanalysis to his reading of *Jude*.

Fisher claims that Hardy's novels, essays and even personal correspondences like letters, are conveniently built on sarcasm and ambiguity. Hardy uses these tools self-

consciously, manipulating the literary platform available to him to express his subversive ideas concerning class and gender, hidden just under the textual surface, to intentionally challenge the existent social structure. In his essay “*Jude the Obscure (1895): High Farce*”, Fisher references ‘Havelock Ellis, Margaret Oliphant and an anonymous reviewer in the *Atheneum*’, all of whom found *Jude* to be ‘dangerously near to farce’, which Fisher surmises begins to identify itself ‘through its *verfremdungseffekt*, the novel’s articulated self-destruction’ (Fisher, 1992: 175). *Verfremdungseffekt*, commonly known as the distancing/alienation/estrangement effect, is a concept suggested by German playwright Bertolt Brecht (1898 – 1956). Brecht first used the term ‘*verfremdungseffekt*’ in his essay “Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting” (1936) and described it to be ‘playing in such a way that the audience was hindered from simply identifying itself with the characters in the play’ (Willett, 1964: 91). Fisher feels that this concept of a fictional character distancing itself from its reader/audience, in a way that acceptance/rejection of their words and actions becomes a conscious decision instead of just remaining on the realm of the unconscious, lends itself particularly well to reading a novel like *Jude*. He surmises that *Jude* becomes an example of ‘High Farce’, that manifests itself through the ‘process of Jude and Sue’s self-education, the rationalization of almost every event in intellectual-ideological terms, as they interpret their world through their imaginary relation to real relations [...]’ and through their adoption of ‘an alien, allusive cultural language which grossly mismaps their world’ (Fisher, 1992: 175-176).

In decoding Sue’s characterization, Fisher falls back upon English folklore to expose the pre-Christian and anti-Christian foundation of the novels, seeing Sue and Jude as ‘orphans of Gaia’s death’, who are ‘unprotected by any counter-textual old religion’ and eventually turn to ‘new religion’ (Fisher, 1992: 176). Sue is described as ‘christianity’ and

Arabella her 'ironic counterpart, the pub (where men are consumers and women supplicatory barmaids)' (Fisher, 1992: 177). According to Fisher, Sue is the 'complaisant victim of culturally empowered superstitions which suppress both identity and sexuality' left as the legacy of 'Gaia's judicial murder' (Fisher, 1992: 177). Fisher's central argument turns on the paradox that in using 'fundamentally anti-realistic fable and allegory', Hardy succeeds in creating 'heretical creative discourses' thereby attaining the freedom to properly portray 'socio-economic actuality' (Fisher, 1992: 126). *Jude* lends itself well to a Marxist reading, being a 'self-consciously complete inversion of Victorian novelistic practice' (Fisher, 1992: 174). Fisher sees *Jude* as the perfect ending to the novelistic career of a defiant artist who was reluctant to participate in the Victorian bourgeois social norms that permeated the literature of the period.

§3.3

Feminism and Sue

Feminist criticism on Hardy's presentation of Sue flourished from the 1970s, with Mary Jacobus' essay, discussed at length later in this section, leading the way and signalling the direction of the future feminist studies of Hardy's portrayal of Sue. The current phase of feminism is believed to have originated in the 1960s, particularly in the United States and France, in intense political agitation for civil rights. However, the literature of the late nineteenth century comprising depictions of the 'New Woman' figure reflects how feminism began much earlier. Hardy's later novels were written during this period, which has since been recognized as the time of the inception of 'first-wave feminism'. Because of this, Hardy's works remain in a zone of constant conjecture regarding their place in contemporary debates about the 'New Woman' Question, the laws/restrictions surrounding marriage, sexual ethics and morality. Hardy's portrayal of female characters with 'modern nerves' in a morally restrictive Victorian culture positions him as a forerunner of the writers of feminist fiction of the succeeding age who helped to lay down a solid foundation for the Feminist Movement that gathered body and momentum in the 1960s and the 1970s. Hardy advocates the tenets of liberal feminism in his attitude towards women and morality, as seen through his female characterisations caught between the dual forces of the self and society, as well as the conflicting forces within the self. Hardy's women like Tess, Eustacia and Sue, become symptomatic of this struggle to

understand the ‘self’ both as a unique entity and as part of the organic, social whole. With the introduction and flourishing of newer modes of criticism, the focus moves away from author and character oriented analysis, to a study of the role that gender plays in influencing narrative structure and critical opinions.

This section will focus on the importance of Hardy studies in Second Wave literary debate, with a particular focus on a landmark study of Sue’s presentation, Mary Jacobus’ article “Sue the Obscure” (1975), which consolidated the shift in attention and perspective from the male protagonist to the female. Sue is a classic rendering of an individual caught in the midst of the developmental stages of feminism. She is shown to struggle with the changes in gender dynamics and the blurring of the gender lines, roles and expectations; a change that is coveted on the one hand and feared on the other, as is the nature of taking tentative steps into any new construct or venture. This leads to acute anxiety about one’s personal as well as sexual identity, manifested through Sue’s characterization, which becomes emblematic of an individual striving to acquire and eke out her own social and sexual identity, be part of society, but be free from the patriarchal structure.

An important essay to begin the discussion with is Robert B. Heilman’s “Hardy’s Sue Bridehead” (1966). Heilman, (1906-2004) is a significant figure to consider in the study of Sue Bridehead, as his article anticipates the feminist concern with Sue that gains momentum in the 1970s, and the successive generations of readers who choose to focus more on Sue than the eponymous Jude. He discusses how Sue’s characterization evolves well beyond Hardy’s initial conceptualization of her, stating that:

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 (Heilman, 1966: 307).

Heilman attributes the continued critical interest in Sue's presentation to the fact that Hardy never 'explains or places' Sue, but maintains her 'elusive meaningfulness' (Heilman, 1966: 310). He sees Hardy's depiction of Sue as very deliberate, and not just a character sketched whimsically:

Hardy knew what he was doing in the action, for all the difficulties, puzzles, and unpredictability have been dramatized with utmost variety and thoroughness. From the beginning, in major actions and lesser ones, Sue is consistently one thing and then another: reckless, then diffident; independent, then needing support; severe, and then kindly; inviting, and then offish. The portrayal of her is the major achievement of the novel [...] She simply is, and it is up to the reader to sense the inner truth that creates multiple, lively, totally conflicting impressions (Heilman, 1966: 309-310).

Heilman commends Hardy for depicting Sue as an 'everyman' figure who epitomizes 'the permanent reality of human nature', always interesting and capable of generating opinions and criticism (Heilman, 1966: 323). In going into the 'everyman' discourse, Heilman is echoing Lawrence in pointing out the way Sue's characterisation stands out as a frightening reflection of the suffering of the sensitive, freethinking individual, unable to either properly belong or disengage oneself entirely from one's social timeline.

Heilman explores Sue's divided selfhood and her constant indecisiveness, like other critics prior to him, but notes that, '[t]hrough all the sensitiveness, fragility, and caprice there appears an impulse for power, for retaining control of a situation, very delicately or even overtly, in one's own terms' (Heilman, 1966: 311). This discussion of Sue as a character with a desire for power and autonomy is a line of argument that has gathered much force and conviction in subsequent readings of Sue from feminist critics, who have provided interesting tangents from that central idea. Sue's desire for agency becomes a central point of conflict for her, as her mind and body, her intellectual self and

sexual self, exist in a complicated mesh of interdependence that continually find manifestation in her whimsical actions. Heilman notes and comments on the sado-masochistic streak in Sue, noticed previously by Lawrence, and discussed subsequently by later critics:

Her selfishness is never consistent; she can be virtually ruthless in seeking ends, and then try to make reparation. She can be contemptuous and cutting, and then penitent and tearful. She can be daring and then scared [...] inconsiderate, and then generous; self-indulgent, and then self-punishing; callous, and then all but heartbroken-always with a kind of rushing spontaneity. Such endless shifts as these, which Hardy presents with unflagging resourcefulness, make Jude call Sue a “flirt” (IV, 1) (Heilman, 1966: 314).

Heilman strongly criticises Sue’s treatment of her suitors, the way she reduces them to positions of absolute helplessness, not just leaving them ‘palely loitering’ but coming ‘fairly close to husband murder’ (Heilman, 1966: 318). He sees a ‘hypersensitivity’ in Sue’s emotional engagements with the unnamed undergraduate student, Phillotson and Jude, and attributes it to a ‘self-concern which can mean a high insensitivity to others and hence a habit of hurting them which may actually embody an unconscious intention [...]’ (Heilman, 1966: 312). Her first suitor dies of consumption and his unrequited longing for her, and Heilman feels that despite ‘her formal words of regret and self-censure, Sue seems almost to relish the complaint of the student that she “was breaking his heart by holding out against him so long at such close quarters”’ (Heilman, 1966: 312). His indictment of Sue as an unfeeling coquette continues in his assessment of her involvement with Phillotson, whom she marries, but withholds sex from. Heilman notes the way ‘Hardy presents her desire to leave Phillotson as understandable and defensible, but at the same time he portrays her style with Phillotson as fantastically inconsiderate’, particularly as Phillotson eventually loses his position as a teacher, his financial stability and his standing in society for agreeing to divorce her. Heilman notes how Jude, the only one of Sue’s

suitors whom she desires not just intellectually but sexually as well, is also not spared the effect of her 'unrestraint that ranges from inconsiderateness to condescension to an outright desire to wound' (Heilman, 1966: 312), their eventual union culminating in absolute tragedy for both.

Heilman regards the portrayal of Sue as more tragic than that of Jude. Her strength of character and wilfulness puts her in a position of perpetual turmoil in a social structure that is not used to being challenged continually by female agency. After the demise of her children, she reaches a level of trauma born out of self-awareness that clearly identifies her as a tragic character and confirms her position as an example of the new, highly complex character of modern fiction:

[...] one might entitle an essay on Sue "The Coquette as Tragic Heroine." Because she has a stronger personality than Jude, has more initiative, and endeavors more to impose her will, she is closer to tragic stature than he. Like traditional tragic heroes, she believes that she can dictate terms and clothe herself in special immunities; like them, she has finally to reckon with neglected elements in herself and in the order of life. If the catastrophe which she helps precipitate is not in the first instance her own, nevertheless it becomes a turning point for her, a shock that opens up a new illumination, a new sense of self and of the moral order. After the death of the children Sue comes into some remarkable self-knowledge (Heilman, 1966: 315-316).

Alongside analysing Sue as an individual caught in a time of flux between the Victorian and Modern Ages, Heilman also situates Sue very interestingly on a borderline between Romantic and Victorian ideals, seeing her as an epitome of the contradictory forces of free-spiritedness on the one hand and an inherently oppressive and self-imposed restrictiveness on the other:

The allegorical content in Hardy's delineation of Sue has also a historical base: she is made a figure of Shelleyan idealism [...] Sue asks Jude to apply to her certain lines from Shelley's "Epipsychidion" [...] "a Being whom my spirit oft/Met on its visioned wanderings far aloft [...] A seraph of Heaven, too gentle to be human" (IV, 5)-and Jude later calls Sue a "sensitive plant" (VI, 3). Deliberately or instinctively

Hardy is using certain Romantic values as a critical instrument against those of his own day, a free spirit against an oppressive society, the ethereal against commonplace and material. (Heilman, 1966: 308)

Heilman notes Hardy's deliberate creation of the 'paradoxical and yet powerful kind of charm: the physical attractiveness of the person who seems hardly to have physical existence and hence evokes such terms as "aerial" and "ethereal"' (Heilman, 1966: 314). For all her apparent aversion towards sexual intimacy, Sue wishes to be sexually attractive in being desired and powerful in being unavailable, but also reveals herself to be very much a product of her times in her 'embarrassment in all matters of sex' and perpetual self-chastisement (Heilman, 1966: 313). Heilman sees Sue as Hardy's foray into 'the heart of a modern problem long before it was understood as a problem [...] rooted in the permanent reality of human nature. Neurotic Sue gives us, in dramatic terms, an essential revelation about human well-being' (Heilman, 1966: 323). Heilman's analysis of Sue as a self-destructive, neurotic character is developed further in the late twentieth century in the psychoanalytic accounts of Sue's presentation.

Hardy has been repeatedly discussed as a misogynist and/or a proto-feminist. His novels provide significant scope for approach and interpretation in analysing the research variables – 'sex' polarized as 'female' and 'male', 'gender' distinguished as masculine/feminine, 'sexuality' contrasted as 'normal' or 'aberrant' – to depict and question the gendered expectations to conventionalize bodies, sexual instincts and actions in a patriarchal structure and power dynamic.

Elaine Showalter coined the term 'feminist critique' in "Towards a Feminist Poetics" (1979) to refer to the process of a feminist critic reassessing and re-analysing the images and stereotypes of women in art and literature as either the idealized Madonna/Virgin figure or the temptress/whore figure. In studying Hardy's works, the

tradition of the ‘feminist critique’ is observable in ‘the way in which a female reader changes our apprehension of a given text, awakening it to the significance of its sexual codes’ (Showalter, 1986: 125-143). This emphasis on the ‘image’ of the ideal woman is a significant aspect of second-wave feminist politics and academic inquiry. Millett, in *Sexual Politics* (1970), argues that the images of women are seen in terms of patriarchal power dynamics in many literary texts and demonstrates how high literature has the potential of misogyny. She regards Sue as the ‘victim of a cultural literary convention ‘Lily and Rose’ that in granting her a mind insists on withholding a body from her’ (Millett, 1972: 133). Throughout the 1970s, feminist academics and activists considered the power of images – literary, visual and mass media – as an important focus. Showalter, while analysing Hardy’s novel *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), points out that ‘one of the problems of the feminist critique is that it is male-oriented,’ recognizing that even when patriarchy is being questioned, the critical focus is on the male. Consequently, she develops the concept of ‘gynocriticism’, ‘to construct a female framework for the analysis of women’s literature, and develop new models based on the study of female experience, rather than to adapt to male models and theories’ (Showalter, 1986: 131). Jacobus too discusses the ‘male-oriented’ critique and its limitedness in “Sue the Obscure” (1975), one of the first major and highly insightful feminist readings of Sue’s characterization. Jacobus sees the difficulty in identifying Hardy’s stance in relation to Sue’s feminism, and considers it the starting point of the ‘muddle’ surrounding Sue, ‘her creator’s intellectual uncertainty’ (Jacobus, 1975: 305):

‘[T]he frigid woman’ the lily of her name, Sue becomes less a tragic figure in her own right than an aspect of Jude’s tragedy [...] To an extent which often goes unnoticed, Hardy offers us a dual focus which valuably modifies the literary convention identified by Kate Millett. We see Sue as she appears to Jude and

Phyllotson - lovable, ethereal, inconsistent, capable of inflicting great pain, and, for Jude at least, ultimately unforgivable (Jacobus, 1975: 307).

For Jacobus, Sue is caught up in the middle of the irreconcilable forces of ‘flesh’ and ‘spirit’ throughout the course of *Jude*, and the varied points of view from which this fragmented impression of her is projected make the complexity surrounding her characterization more pronounced. Jacobus is interested in this uneasy otherness of Sue, her presence strong in the text at times, and at others, existing at the margins, her obscurity lending her a surreptitious agency. Jacobus identifies the ways in which Sue poses a threat to social and gendered conventions, ranging from sexual choices, education, and religion to an all-out struggle for personal autonomy. It is not just sexual intimacy that Sue finds herself opposed to, it is also the idea of being legally obligated to another, to respond sexually when desired: ‘Sue is not a hen with views of her own, but a woman for whom the laws of the farmyard spell oppression. Institutionalized sex takes as little account of her “lightly-poised organism” as it does of Jude’s wavering between two women’ (Jacobus, 1975: 311).

Jacobus acknowledges Lawrence’s study of Sue as ‘the most influential account of Sue’s character’, but regards it as ‘pseudo-psychological’ and rejects his analysis that Sue was born with the female ‘atrophyed’ in her. Instead, she argues that it is ‘precisely Sue’s femaleness which breaks her’, her inability to move past her biology, her ‘experience as a woman’ which ‘brings her from clarity to compromise, from compromise to collapse’ (Jacobus, 1975: 305, 320, 321). It is indeed the constant sexualisation of Sue’s body through the course of the novel, which gets in the way of her having any abiding relationship with any man. Other critics after Lawrence, such as Hyde, Heilman, Millgate and Gregor have consistently brought the charge of being insensitive and narcissistic against Sue. As Jacobus puts it:

Although Lawrence's blueprint does violence to the artistic and intellectual complexity of *Jude*, the Lawrentian view of Sue remains surprisingly current. Her crimes, ranging from frigidity to husband-murder, make her the villain of the piece in a number of recent critical accounts (Jacobus, 1975: 307).

Jacobus focusses particularly on Sue's perpetual vacillation between opposed forces without displaying any particular conviction for either: the display of her proclivity towards paganism as an 'expression of revolt' and not as positing any actual faith in it; her relationships with men, in trying to retain an 'area of personal freedom' within the expectations of conventional relationships (Jacobus, 1975: 311). As Jacobus succinctly sums it up:

She will live with the Christminster undergraduate—but on her terms, not his. She is happy to go to Phillotson 'as a friend'; it is as a husband, with rights over her body, that she rejects him. In the same way - as critics have often noted - she is at her most forthcoming to Jude when she has put between them an engagement, or a marriage, or a window, or simply man's clothes, as on the evening of her flight from the Melchester teachers' training college. When she asks the bewildered Phillotson to let her go, she has found in John Stuart Mill the intellectual basis for her instinctive assertion of individuality (Jacobus, 1975: 312).

As Jacobus points out, what Sue 'discovers in marriage itself is the independent sexual identity which survives this property transaction' (Jacobus, 1975: 308-309). Though her body and her person is signed off to another person in marriage, her unique sense of self remains intact, which is at direct loggerheads with the concept of belonging to someone else:

[...] she no longer expresses a feminism that is only intellectually related to herself. She has now experienced, in a way too personal to tell anyone else, what 'belonging' to Phillotson actually means. As so often in the dialogue he gives Sue, Hardy holds the balance between her beliefs (the echoes of Shelley and Mill) and feelings which she has to articulate for herself—guiltily owning up to a sexual repugnance which 'the world in general' would refuse to recognize (Jacobus, 1975: 309).

Sue succumbs to Jude's sexual desire for her after separating from Phillotson, even though her aversion towards it is strong, worn out by his persistence and guided by her jealousy of Arabella. Her distress is evident in the way her language breaks down when she tries to communicate her confusion between wanting to hold on to Jude's love at any cost and not let him go back to Arabella, and the realization that she was going against her better judgement in doing so. Jacobus traces this fragmentation of Sue's selfhood reflected first through her language, and then through her silence. She emphasizes how Hardy 'allows us to enter Sue's consciousness – to hear her point of view first hand, and, when we no longer do so, to speculate about it' (Jacobus, 1975: 307). Jacobus' analysis posits Sue's characterisation with the function of a Rorschach test that invites and encourages readers to conjecture about her innermost thoughts and desires, drawing on their own empathy, cognitive skills and suppositions. Where the authorial narration stops, the critical 'speculation' begins aided by different modes of literary criticism:

Dialogue plays a central part in *Jude*, translating its underlying ideas into subjectively perceived truths [...] Sue's attempts to articulate her changing consciousness – whether explanatory or penetrating, tailing off into uncertainty or toppling into neurotic self-blame – make her a vital counter-part to Jude. When we no longer hear her voice, it is because Sue is alienated from herself as well as us. Her retreat from emancipation to enslavement, from speech to silence, balances Jude's progress from idealism to bitter, articulate disillusion in a double movement which identifies the novel's protest (Jacobus, 1975: 307).

Jacobus analyses the politics of language (both spoken and unspoken) that intersect with the narrative form to create a nuanced, complicated presentation of the protagonists, particularly Sue who is portrayed as simultaneously suppressed and liberated, the paradox operating on the subliminal level of the unconscious. Jacobus emphasizes how Hardy 'probes the relationship between character and ideas' through Sue's obscurity 'in such a way as to leave one's mind engaged with her as it is engaged with few other women in

fiction' (Jacobus, 1975: 325-326). In "Men's Words and Hardy's Women," Adrian Poole discusses Sue's language too, which she 'has to borrow' as the 'anxiety she feels and causes is to do with the rights and taboos that hedge round linguistic property. These are *men's* words in her mouth: is it theft, loan, or permanent appropriation?' (Poole, 1981: 328-345). Poole's article throws light on Hardy's keen sensitivity to the 'effort of men's words to circumscribe and describe, confine and define, women's *bodies*' as an attempt at 'linguistic appropriation, of male aggressor and female victim' as well as an endeavour to 'try to control and contain' (Poole, 1981: 329).

Jacobus focusses on a very symbolic episode of the novel when Jude and Sue are depicted wandering around a flower show, Sue's

[...] usually pale cheeks reflecting the pink of the tinted roses at which she gazed; for all the gay sights, the air, the music, and the excitement of a day's outing with Jude, had quickened her blood and made her eyes sparkle with vivacity. She adored roses [...] and put her face within an inch of their blooms to smell them (*Jude*: 285).

Jude's encouragement to Sue to touch the roses, playfully pushing her face into them (which she desires to touch but is also hesitant about because it might be 'against the rules') becomes emblematic of Jude's gentle but steady persistence in trying to shake Sue out of her apparent sexual passivity. Jacobus writes how this episode becomes symbolic of 'the extent of her [Sue's] sexual awakening, and we gain enough sense of a shared sexual happiness to make its betrayal by Sue herself, at the end of the novel, a tragic one' (Jacobus, 1975: 315). Jacobus demonstrates how Hardy portrays 'the tragic defeat of exceptional individuals' Jude and Sue, not just at the hands of repressive societal forces, but also 'Nature', which 'conspires against them. Fulfilling natural laws, they have to face natural consequences – children' (Jacobus, 1975: 317). Jacobus' comment leads to an important question: does she consider Sue's tragedy to be caused by the society, or by her

biology, 'Nature'? From the inception of feminist critical thought and understanding, while defining the terms 'female' and 'male' in denoting biological categories of sex, women have suffered from a long tradition of what is called 'biological essentialism' – the belief that a woman's 'nature' is an inevitable consequence of her reproductive role. Feminist criticism has concerned itself primarily with the way in which the experience of being male or female in a particular time/society informs, and is reflected in, the literary output. Sue's tragedy then, according to Jacobus, does not just stem from being out of place in a society that fails to accommodate her, but also her 'femaleness which breaks her', making it apparent that Jacobus considers Sue's biology to impact on her destiny alongside other external forces (Jacobus, 1975: 305).

Jacobus' feminism evolves in the subsequent years; where she rejects analyses that are structured around gender essentialism, instead favouring more nuanced and advanced analyses. In her essay, "Is There a Woman in This Text?" (1986), Jacobus discusses how Anglo-American feminism biologizes the female experience, be it of a woman reader, or a woman author or a female character in a text. The fact of being 'female' becomes the primary source of meaning, and the focus is on the 'woman's experience' as a differentiating factor that becomes manifest in female writing as well as female representations (Jacobus, 1986: 83-109). To break free from this idea of biology as destiny, Jacobus takes recourse to sociological modes of analysis of perceiving gender as a consequence of imposed social conditioning.

Jacobus' analysis of Sue is significant as she establishes Sue as the main point of contention in *Jude*, providing a detailed study of her personality that emerges through speech and silence. The points that Jacobus raises about the characterisation of Sue and the confusion surrounding her personhood is analysed in greater detail soon after by Patricia

Stubbs, in her book, *Women and Fiction: Feminism and the Novel, 1880-1920* (1979). The ongoing debate surrounding the role and position of women can be seen in Stubbs' assessment of the literature of the Victorian era through examining 'the relation between literary forms, known experience and desired change' (Stubbs, 1979: xvi).

In "Thomas Hardy: A Study in Contradiction", Stubbs discusses the conflict at the heart of Hardy's women, 'the tension between idea and received form', 'an uneasy co-existence between an intensely modern, even feminist consciousness and what are essentially archetypal patterns of feeling and relationship' (Stubbs, 1979: 59). She scrutinizes the link between fiction and life, and the way fiction at times reflects and at times distorts or ignores the socio-cultural reality. Stubbs studies the way the Victorian novelists tried to break free from the image of the retiring, passive, chaste woman, held as the ideal, to present them as sexual, intelligent, emancipated, outspoken beings who faced problems because of their non-conformity. However, she highlights that ultimately this criticism of the double standards operative in society, with its focus on female sexuality and the need for agency and autonomy over one's body, falls back on the tradition of defining a woman through her interactions and relationships with the men in her life. While this inherent conflict in Hardy's women has been discussed by other critics too, the significant aspect of Stubbs' study is that she does not attribute it to Hardy being a male author and thus incapable of breaking free from the gender-stereotypes. Instead, she points out how the female authors of the time could not disengage entirely from the deeply ingrained gender binaries of the times either. The 'persistence of underlying cultural and fictional stereotypes of women and female experience', the 'received images and patterns' were 'remodelled, largely to accommodate female sexuality' but were 'not transformed, even by feminist novelists' (Stubbs, 1979: 59).

Stubbs considers Hardy's women to be thought-provoking representations of gender, and Sue his most challenging character, through whose portrayal he poses important questions about the status of women in contemporary society:

One aspect of Hardy's characterization of Sue which is particularly interesting, even remarkable for its time, is his almost prescient understanding of the psychological contradictions which independent thought and action could set up in a woman who has come to consciousness from within repressive assumptions. Sue is devastatingly critical of moral and religious orthodoxy, yet at the same time she is still emotionally bound by it. It is this co-existence of intellectual emancipation with emotional dependence which makes Sue such a perverse and contradictory, yet prophetic figure [...] The Christian concepts which she ridiculed in *Jude* finally drive her back to her living death with Phillotson. Hardy understands how this kind of mental, and in Sue's case sexual masochism can grow up in a woman who cannot break free emotionally from an ideology which her mind tells her is damaging (Stubbs, 1979: 64).

Stubbs praises Hardy's strong criticism of the 'brutal belief' that if a woman showed any hesitancy about sex once married, then she should be 'broken-in', and shows how Hardy supports the idea that 'sexual compatibility was a vital part of marriage, and no woman should go against her sexual nature' (Stubbs, 1979: 61). She lauds Hardy for being a 'unique' figure 'in the English nineteenth-century novel in that he creates women who are sexually exciting' (Stubbs, 1979: 65). The primary instance of this is Arabella who seduces Jude in the manner the male villain would normally seduce the virtuous and innocent heroine. Stubbs also points out the 'anxiety about women's sexuality' that manifests itself continually in *Jude* where the 'pliable hero' is caught between 'the scheming seductress [Arabella] and the fascinating, tantalizing prude [Sue] [...] a split image of female sexuality which is neatly re-enforced by class 'characteristics' – sexy Arabella is a labourer's daughter, inhibited Sue is an intellectual' (Stubbs, 1979: 81).

Stubbs attributes the 'unevenness in tone' in Hardy's characterizations to the 'struggle in fiction between available literary and sexual images and Hardy's efforts to

portray real women, characters who are individualized and yet demonstrate convincingly women's predicament in society as a whole' (Stubbs, 1979: 87). She thinks that Hardy never really managed to resolve the problem, 'though in Sue Bridehead he perhaps came as near to doing so as possibly any writer could have done at the historical moment at which he wrote' (Stubbs, 1979: 87). The most important aspect of Stubbs' analysis of Sue's portrayal is that she brings the focus very categorically on the anti-realist aspect of Sue.

The three main feminist analyses of Thomas Hardy's works published in close succession to each other in the 1980s are the works by Penny Boumelha, Patricia Ingham and Rosemary Morgan: *Thomas Hardy and Women: Sexual Ideology and Narrative Form* (1982), *Women and Sexuality in the Novels of Thomas Hardy* (1988), and *Thomas Hardy* (1989) respectively. These studies of Hardy's women breathed new life into Hardy scholarship by incorporating new and more radical modes of analysis, drawing from sociological, Marxist, psychoanalytic and feminist frameworks, and also tracing how Hardy's gender politics changed over the course of his novelistic career.

Boumelha's study achieves iconic status in feminist studies of Hardy's works as she locates Hardy's radicalism in his female representations that resist reduction to any static/accepted assumptions of his time. She discusses how socially received assumptions concerning women enter into works of fiction, and studies Hardy's treatment of these assumptions as a male author writing about women. She focusses on the question of 'ideology' surrounding Hardy's perception, ideas and representations of women, aligning herself with French Marxist Philosopher Louis Althusser's (1918-1990) form of structural Marxism. Boumelha describes what she means by ideology to be 'a complex system of representation by which people are inserted as individual subjects into the social formation' (Boumelha, 1982: 5). For Boumelha, 'ideology' encompasses power relations

and the various forms of dominance, incorporating class struggles as well as the domination of women by patriarchal forces. She discusses how Hardy's novels represent ideologically constructed experience instead of 'real' history. She sees *Jude* as 'a novel that threatens to crack open the powerful ideology of realism as a literary mode, and throws into question the whole enterprise of narrative' (Boumelha, 1982: 153). The complex interweaving of the discourses of gender and class that Boumelha explores becomes central to materialist/Marxist analyses of Hardy's work, like those of Wotton and Goode. The key points of her study are both gender oriented and sociological.

Boumelha points out the interesting gender divide in the opinion about Hardy's women among his contemporary critics. While female critics are more disposed to be negative in their opinion of Hardy, construing him as sexist, male critics are more inclined to seeing him as empathetic towards women. She discusses how Hardy wilfully created this divided opinion on his works by using different novelistic techniques to prevent easy reader resolution, which generated deliberate ambivalence. Boumelha also discusses the 'more recent' feminist critical thinking that reads Hardy's women in terms of a certain lack - 'an image of what is missing, or lost, or repressed, in the acquisition of masculinity' (Boumelha, 1982: 3). She primarily investigates the relations between Hardy's fiction, and nineteenth-century ideologies of sexual difference and the nature of women.

Boumelha structures her analyses of Sue Bridehead around the idea that though multiple critics have linked Sue's characterization back to the trope of the New Woman in fiction, there are important differences which deserve to be considered:

Sue Bridehead, with all her hesitations, evasions and tentativeness, has none of this messianic sense of purpose which distinguishes her contemporaries, and in fact she consistently refuses to speak for women as a group, posing herself always as a special case (Boumelha, 1982: 137).

She stresses the uniqueness of the character portrayal of Sue that makes critics unable to fit her into any particular mode of analysis. The other important distinction she notes is that the plots around New Woman and the idea of free union in 1890s fiction are ‘firmly rooted in the upper middle class’, while *Jude* ‘is unique’ in placing Sue and Jude ‘at the conjunction of class and sexual oppression’ (Boumelha, 1982: 137), reinstating the idea of Sue as a member of the proletariat. She points out how Hardy makes use of the contemporary pre-occupation with the marriage question and the New Woman novel, to structure *Jude* around the complexities of sexual relationships and to use marriage as the crux on which the tragedy of *Jude* turns. Instead of trying to fit Sue squarely into the mould of the New Woman, Boumelha studies her portrayal in the more intellectual context of ‘the ascendancy of the philosophies of relativism and pragmatism’, analysing the contradictory forces at play between the rigid social bounds of morality and knowledge, and the more fluid and flexible nuances of individual, personal experiences (Boumelha, 1982: 139). She observes how Hardy, for the first time in his novelistic career, subverts his usual trope of imbuing the female characters with a strong sexual element and the male characters with an intellectual aspect – in creating Sue, a female character remarkable for her intellectual prowess and Jude, a male character distinct for his sexual desire. This marks a new approach in his ‘final double tragedy’ where he moves away from the ‘nature and culture’ polarity to an exploration of the ‘intellectual component to the tragedy of the woman – Sue’s breakdown from an original, incisive intellect to the compulsive reiteration of the principles of conduct of a mid-Victorian marriage manual [...]’ (Boumelha, 1982: 140-141).

Boumelha’s analysis challenges the critical readings that regard Sue as ‘sexless or frigid, whether as an accusation of her, in the Lawrentian tradition, or as an accusation of

Hardy, as in Kate Millett' (Boumelha, 1982: 142). She points out how Sue is continually seen 'as a representative of her sex in this sense alone, that her sexuality is the decisive element in her collapse' (Boumelha, 1982: 142). She argues instead that Sue's battle is not against her lack of sexual impulses, but rather the idea that male-female relationships must necessarily have a sexual element to them and that the legal institution of marriage is a sexually binding contract. As she sees it, 'Sue is forced into a confused and confusing situation in which she wishes at one and the same time to assert her right to a non-sexual love and her right to a non-marital sexual liaison' (Boumelha, 1982: 143). She perceives Sue's withholding of her body as a marker of her liberal individualism that eventually succumbs to conventional, social and religious mores, also pointing out the very important reason why:

[...] Sue is right to equate her refusal of a sexual relationship with her freedom, in that it avoids the surrender to involuntary physiological processes which her pregnancies entail. It is in this respect that women are at the very junction of the 'flesh and spirit'; the point where mind and body are in potential conflict – this is the crucial area of that dominance of the material over the intellectual in the duality which is characteristic of the ideology of the period. It is Sue, and not Jude, who is the primary site of that 'deadly war waged between flesh and spirit' of which Hardy speaks in his Preface (p 27) (Boumelha, 1982: 145).

In the depiction of the downfall of Sue and Jude, Boumelha notices Hardy's strong vocalization of a number of social issues in an oppressive and conservative social structure. She explores the way *Jude* is 'heavy' with the 'sense of the ceaseless shiftings and modifications of the apparently stable material world', the rift between the 'public' and the 'private' realms becoming visible through the way speech and silence are used by Jude and Sue:

Sue and Jude take divergent paths with regard to language and the literary culture. Sue moves into silence; in her last two appearances, she stops her ears to avoid

hearing Jude and clenches her teeth to avoid addressing Phillotson (Boumelha, 1982: 140).

Boumelha also analyses the narratorial technique employed by Hardy to distance Sue from the novel's 'centre of consciousness' by deliberately manipulating the point of view, though she is 'at the centre of this irreconcilability of 'flesh' and 'spirit'' (Boumelha, 1982: 147). There is always a shadow between her and the readers – a 'variety of interpreters', in the forms of 'Phillotson, Widow Edlin, even Arabella; but chiefly of course, Jude', which creates a perpetual distance, providing readers with teasing glimpses and sudden insights into her psyche without revealing her personality in totality. A key observation made by Boumelha regarding the difference in Hardy's handling of 'the histories of Jude and Sue', though similar, is the way Sue is 'made the instrument of Jude's tragedy, rather than the subject of her own' (Boumelha, 1982: 148). Boumelha, in a similar vein to Eagleton, notes Hardy's use of different literary forms – melodrama, realism, tragedy – to create a fragmented narrative that keeps the ambiguity and the intrigue alive.

It is interesting to note the approach of the feminist scholars of the 1980s towards the ideology of realism, which they continued to examine in an attempt to seek alternatives to the existing structure of oppression and patriarchal domination. This phase of feminist scholarship that witnessed many different approaches to realist ideology reshaped the subsequent critical reception of realism. As Francis O' Gorman points out, these approaches attempted to determine 'how classic realist texts appropriated forms of non-realist writing', or 'emphasize absence in the realist text [...] to expose the significant silences' (O'Gorman, 2002: 134). Boumelha, in a later essay "Realism and the Ends of Feminism" (1988), stresses that instead of assuming that the realist novel only reinforced the status quo, it is important to consider how the realist novel might also offer resistance to dominant ideologies.

Six years after Boumelha's study, Rosemary Morgan explores 'Hardy's less-than typical Victorian view of female sexuality: his complete lack of puritanical censure, his complete faith in the healthy, life-giving force of free, unrepressed sexual activity [...]' and points out the Victorian critics' discomfiture with the same (Morgan, 1988: x). Morgan is very firmly in the camp that perceives Hardy as a feminist, a radical critic of Victorian sexual standards, intentionally creating sensual and sexually expressive female characters in a socio-cultural setting where the general belief, held on medical authority, was that women were incapable of sexual feelings and perceived sex purely as a means of reproduction and motherhood. She perceives Hardy as an author who does not shy away from portraying the 'flesh-and-blood reality of women's lives', even at the cost of appalling the Victorian critics with their 'voluptuousness' (Morgan, 1988: xiii). Morgan traces Hardy's emphasis on the physicality of his female characters even in the portrayal of Sue, who is often regarded as sexless/frigid or ethereal. She notes the narrator's emphasis on her body and her sensuality – something that evades the attention of her suitors, but interestingly, does not go unnoticed by Arabella:

It is solely through Jude's ascetic eyes that the ethereal, sexless Sue is apprehended, although by establishing alternative sightings, conflicting perspectives, notably Arabella's and his own, Hardy ensures that a proper distinction is drawn between the respective points of view (Morgan, 1988: 138).

In the chapter "Passion denied" Morgan shows how Hardy adopts 'a more openly heterodox stance', and 'stands openly and defiantly' behind the character portrayal of Sue, whom he imbues with a rare 'foresight' as well as a 'hindsight wisdom available to few educated Victorian women: that of a divorced wife' (Morgan, 1988: 111). According to Morgan, Sue is Hardy's weapon to launch a 'rigorous, radical and militant' attack on the institutional aspect of marriage, the notion that 'sexual relationships should still require

institutionalism in a modern society pioneering in its radical quarters the dissolution of rigid role demarcations and sexual inequality' (Morgan, 1988: 111-112). Morgan, like critics before her, studies the split in Sue's personality, her instinctive manipulation of others to fulfil her needs, and identifies it to stem from her social conditioning that creates a zone of 'enforced dependency' and the 'desire to compete for attention and approval from those in authority over her' (Morgan, 1988: 116). Morgan considers Hardy's creation of a female protagonist with sexual inhibitions to be deliberate, an intentional departure from his other female portrayals, who are luxuriant in their sensuality and sexuality, to keep the focus very markedly on 'his most polemical attack upon Victorian sexual codes and practices' (Morgan, 1988: 137). This 'marked severity' also lends Hardy the 'clear, dispassionate focus upon the mind and psycho-sexual make-up of a highly intelligent young woman prone to neurasthenia and subjected to unremitting stress' to depict 'the harsh codes that govern the lives of women struggling for independence, for autonomy, for ways and means of governing their own lives' (Morgan, 1988: 137). Positioning Sue with an apparent lack of interest in sex, according to Morgan, reflects Hardy's attempt to keep the focus on Sue's commitment to her desire for freedom and equality, and to prevent the perception of her intellectuality and rationality as the passionate outbursts of an emotional woman.

Morgan develops Jacobus' discussion of the centrality of language and speech in the depiction of Sue's morphing sense of self over the course of the novel. She points out how Sue adopts a male language to speak about her female experiences, argue her points, and rationalize her views to the male characters. Morgan's analysis falls in line with the tenets of French Feminist theory that contributes significantly to the feminist debates surrounding not just female oppression and the construction of sexual difference, but also

the specific trope of women's relationship with language. Luce Irigaray discusses the nature of the looping, circuitous language of women, not in seeking to inverse the power structure between the sexes, but to deconstruct the existing, and establish a new language:

When a girl begins to talk, she is already unable to speak of/to herself. Being exiled in a man's speech, she is already unable to auto-effect. Man's language separates her from her mother and from other women, and she speaks it without speaking in it (Irigaray, 1992:101).

This idea is iterated by another Hardy woman, Bathsheba, who comments in *Far from the Madding Crowd* that, '[i]t is difficult for a woman to define her feelings in a language which is chiefly made by men to express theirs' (Hardy, 1874). Morgan, in a later book, *Cancelled Words: Rediscovering Thomas Hardy* (1992), emphasizes how Hardy had phrased Bathsheba's statement as 'it is difficult for a woman to define her feelings in words [my emphasis] made by men', which he later went on to rephrase, changing 'word' to 'language'. This brings the focus far more succinctly onto the deeper feminist concerns that Hardy addresses through Sue's speech; her feelings of being oppressed and stifled by the idea of marriage and being considered a man's property – an inevitability of the legal implications of the institution of marriage for a woman in the Victorian Age (Morgan, 1992: 128).

Morgan is quick to point out that Sue's desire for 'total reconstruction of bonded relationships along equitable lines [...] was theoretically neither revolutionary nor even new', as it is entirely reminiscent of the ideals of the nineteenth-century radical socialists. What she finds surprising however, is that Hardy chooses to keep out the 'more socialist critical influences that might have prompted his characterization of Sue, instead bringing J.S. Mill to the fore' (Morgan, 1988: 113). She explains this as Hardy's attempt to 'soften the radicalism of her anti-marriage views (which Mill did not hold)', to have a higher

acceptance from his readership, a section of which were ‘middle-class women [who] still held strong to the liberal feminists’ idealization of marriage and their redemptive emphasis upon woman’s calling to devotional wifeness’ (Morgan, 1988: 113).

Like Boumelha before her, Morgan too contextualizes Hardy’s female characterizations in contemporary feminist thought and idea. She points out the problem with certain feminist studies of Hardy that consider androcentric literature to be naturally oppressive and debasing, for women characters as well as readers; readings that become reductive and essentialist. She perceives Hardy’s women to be an ‘admixture of qualities – transcending the stereotypes of madonna and whore’, who are confusing for the readers as they cannot be neatly categorized. As she puts it, ‘Hardy abhorred what he called the “perfect woman” in fiction [...] his heroines best faculties are presented in the context of their less-than-perfect natures in a less-than-perfect world not yet ready to take them at face value’ (Morgan, 1988: xiv). Morgan perceives Hardy as a feminist who mourns the loss of the agency of his heroines in a restrictive society, and makes a compelling study of his characterization of Sue, to bring renewed attention to Hardy’s innovative use of narrative structures in depicting different points of view and female sexuality.

Patricia Ingham’s study, published in 1989, begins with the suggestion that the ‘pluralism’ of feminist readings of Hardy ‘arose in part from a historically shifting viewpoint whose progression has not been linear’, to explain the continued interest as well as the many differing viewpoints about Hardy’s presentation of women (Ingham, 1989, 6-7). She analyses both the historical context that goes into the production of Hardy’s novels as well as ‘the context of Hardy the man’, to trace the ‘subtle subterranean shifting taking place’ in Hardy’s exploration of the female psyche through his characterizations (Ingham, 1989: 7). She follows in the footsteps of Boumelha, in studying the ideology which formed

the sign 'woman' to analyse Hardy's accounts of 'woman/women/the feminine' that remain fluid and susceptible to multiple critical opinion. Ingham concerns herself primarily with the cultural representations of 'woman', which are created by ideology and the way they are represented through narrative and language. In "Women as Signs in the Later Novels", Ingham discusses how the social limitations on women were starting to loosen with new laws coming into place to improve the status of married women, particularly with regard to divorce laws, child-custody and property ownership, alongside better educational opportunities for women. However, as she points out, this improvement in legal status did little to 'displace the traditional signification of woman' as the 'meanings of woman/hood/ly, perpetuated as signs served to reinforce the real and imaginary relation to the world which is ideology' (Ingham, 1989: 62). But this movement towards greater social rights for women was not entirely without benefit as it served to bring greater attention to the 'linguistic constraints' on novelistic practice or 'a stated set of signs, restricted narrative patterns, a specified semantic range' or that novelists like Hardy were consciously moving away from to develop a new paradigm (Ingham, 1989: 62). This becomes visible in Hardy's range of female characterizations from novel to novel, from Grace Melbury, the 'womanly' woman in *The Woodlanders*, to Tess, the 'fallen woman', to Arabella, 'the fallen woman who refuses to fall', to Sue, the 'New woman': portrayals that directly challenge the acceptable idea of literary female representations (Ingham, 1989: 68-75).

Though Ingham's study of Hardy is influenced by Boumelha's critical stance on his women, she demurs from Boumelha in clearly categorizing Sue as a New Woman, stressing that she is 'immediately identifiable as a New Woman, by her explicit awareness of herself as a member of an oppressed sex rightly seeking autonomy' (Ingham, 1989: 75).

She sees Sue as ‘a replacement for the womanly woman [...] marginal as well as a self-conscious formation, a coding of the privileged few: ostentatiously well-read if not well-educated, and high mindedly opposed to marriage, which was rigidly defined as legal prostitution’ (Ingham, 1989: 74).

Ingham’s study of Sue is particularly important as she points out how ‘the multiple and contradictory critical interpretations’ of Sue’s portrayal act as ‘a series of points at which different readings intersect’, stating that within the multiple readings/misreadings of Sue ‘lies the possibility of change in the subject created by language’ (Ingham, 1989: 75). Her statement reinforces the idea of Sue as a Rorschach test, and the plurality of analyses of her portrayal, a sign of the success of Hardy’s strategic use of language by the time he was authoring *Jude*, where ‘the rigid signification of *woman/womanly* has disappeared, leaving a fruitful ambiguity’ (Ingham, 1989: 78). Ingham effectively highlights the way Hardy manipulates existing plot structures to depict female characters in new roles and avatars, breaking free from the existing moulds.

What sets the critical output on Sue’s characterization in the 1980s apart from the preceding decades is the strong intervention of critical theory, intellectualizing the reception of her portrayal at a completely different level. As Kramer puts it, ‘[a]s theories of gender and methods of interpretation have grown more complex, Sue has become ever more of a cultural marker, a “test” of the hermeneutic adequacy of theory and a given era’s manner of adopting literature for its needs [my emphasis]’ (Kramer, 1999: 173). This period marks a shift from evaluative assessments to more strongly analytical ones, shifting the focus of critical inquiry to more challenging ideas that do not sit comfortably within a simplistic assessment of Hardy as just a rural realist. As can be seen from this chapter, feminist and Marxist criticism has been especially useful in expanding the understanding

of the significance of the convergence of issues of gender and class in Hardy's fiction. Poststructuralist studies of Hardy's works have also enabled new modes of engaging with Sue's portrayal, seeing her not as a creation of an 'artistic genius actively creating texts that manifest his complete understanding of actual women' but as 'an unstable conduit for the proliferation of various and conflicting discourses about power and gender' (Brady, 1999: 101).

Sue through the critical eyes of the late twentieth and
early twenty-first centuries

*“We have found us already shunned, disdained,
And for re-acceptance have not once striven;
Whatever offence our course has given
The brunt thereof we have long sustained.
Well, let us away, scorned, unexplained.”*

The Recalcitrants – Thomas Hardy

As discussed in the previous chapter, by the 1980s the complexion of critical studies on Hardy was changing significantly, from the pre-existing approaches (realist, sociological and Marxist) into increasingly more theorized analyses building on feminist, materialist and New Historicist approaches. In this chapter, I will show the extent of the chasm between pre and post 1980s critical scholarship on Hardy, and concurrently, the analysis of Sue’s portrayal. The 1970s witnessed the cultural turn, a shift towards a ‘wide array of new theoretical impulses coming from fields formerly peripheral to the social sciences’; new modes of literary criticism, cultural studies, and varied forms of linguistic analysis that stressed the ‘causal’ role that ‘cultural processes and systems of signification’ play (Steinmetz, 1999: 1-2). This cultural turn is reflected in a steadily developing analytical shift in academia too, placing the concept of culture, and the associated notions

such as meaning, affect, cognition and symbolism, at the heart of the theoretical and methodological focus.

§4.1

Psychoanalysis and Sue Bridehead

In this section, the primary focus is on psychoanalytic modes of analysis and the way they have influenced and shaped the critical perception of Sue Bridehead's characterization. One mode of psychoanalytic study analyses the way a literary text depicts psychological conflicts within an individual. It focusses primarily on the tussle between the 'id', the instinctive, primitive component of an individual's personality that incorporates the inherited/biological aspects present at birth, and the 'superego', which emerges from lived experiences, values and morals learned from social and cultural mores to control the id's impulses. The focus of analysis is the conflict between conscious personhood and internalized norms. In this mode of analysis, which stems from the application of the theories of Sigmund Freud (1856 - 1939), a text can be discussed as an insight into the mind of the author, a depiction of their psychological state and a manifestation of their particular neuroses. Textual interpretation in this nature of analysis, therefore, takes into account the author's childhood experiences and psychological coherence/inconsistencies, alongside analysing the psychological makeup of the characters depicted within the literary work. Freudian criticism, though often criticized for being reductionist, can be transformed into a mode of psychoanalytic textual criticism to assess and analyse the complex nature of literature and literary texts; a method that Peter Brooks claims would help to go beyond the limitations of applied psychoanalysis. Brooks shows how traditional psychoanalytic

criticism falls broadly under three categories, depending on the object of analysis – the author, the fictional characters in the text, or the reader (Brooks, 1987). The first category of psychoanalytic interest and research, the author (who was the classical point of focus) is the subject of many debates about its viability as a method, yet it resurfaces repeatedly as a part of psychoanalytic studies. Assessing the psyche of a fictional character is also problematic, as, like the author, ‘the fictive character has been deconstructed into an effect of textual codes, a kind of thematic mirage’ (Brooks, 1987: 335). Brooks discusses how the third tenet of traditional literary study, the reader, becomes the most celebrated point of analysis

[...] since the role of the reader in the creation of textual meaning is very much on our minds at present, and since the psychoanalytic study of readers’ responses willingly brackets the impossible notion of author in favor of the acceptable and also verifiable notion of reader (Brooks, 1987: 335).

Brooks’ general scepticism about ‘psychoanalytic literary criticism’ becomes obvious as he refers to it as ‘something of an embarrassment’, as the ‘legitimacy and force that psychoanalysis may claim when imported into the study of literary texts’ is controversial even when it aids the movement of critical thought ‘beyond the static formalism of structuralist and semiotic narratology’ (Brooks, 1987: 334). He considers ‘literature and psychoanalysis’ to be ‘mismatched bedfellows’, or unsuited ‘playmates’; the first and basic problem being that ‘psychoanalysis in literary study has repeatedly mistaken the object of analysis, with the result that whatever insights it has produced tell us precious little about the structure and rhetoric of literary texts’ (Brooks, 1987: 334). The main problem of psychoanalysis then, as Brooks observes, is that it ‘displaces the object of analysis from the text to some person, some other psychodynamic structure’ (Brooks, 1987: 335). The main attempt of literary psychoanalytic criticism according to Brooks should remain textual,

with greater emphasis on narrative theory and textual rhetoric, to keep the text as the focal point.

With the emergence of Lacanian theory, the idea that the subconscious is structured like a language, a completely new dimension was added to psychoanalytic criticism as propounded by Jacques Lacan (1901 - 1981). The Lacanian mode of analysis draws upon the theories of linguistics and semiotics put forward by Ferdinand Mongin de Saussure (1857 - 1913), whose ideas became the foundation for many significant developments in the fields of linguistics and semiology in the twentieth century.²⁶ An important aspect of psychoanalysis for a literary critic is the extent to which literary works, and the experiences of fictional characterizations, tap into the fear/insecurity/desires of readers to elicit reactions and responses from them, causing the readers to become the main subjects of psychoanalysis, and not the author. The basis of most psychoanalytic studies is to understand motives, particularly disguised motives in literature that can operate on multiple levels: the level of writing, the level of the action of characters within a text, and the level of reader responses that a text generates. While, on the level of practice, psychoanalytic approaches to literature may sometimes be reductive, on the level of theory, psychoanalysis is of considerable importance.

Perry Meisel's book *Thomas Hardy: The Return of the Repressed* (1972) is an early psychoanalytic study of Hardy. Meisel begins with a discussion of Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859), and the way the evolutionary ideas explored therein influenced and

²⁶ Lacan links Saussurean ideas of structuralism and semiotic theory to the study of literature. This enables psychoanalytic criticism to examine the ways in which narrative structures reflect the unconscious or the subconscious of a character, through the flow of the narrative sequence or the lapses in them, when a character is unable to narrate in a linear fashion.

informed subsequent discussions of the psychological aspects of being. Meisel discusses *Jude* as a novel that is ‘modern in its assumptions’:

[...] for Wessex is now as barren a home for its inhabitants as a city. The novel works toward its one test of human fulfilment, perhaps the final test in Hardy’s fiction, in Jude and Sue Bridehead’s experiment. The test is failed and we must ask why in order to discover the artist’s underlying statement about the dialectic of men and nature in the form of society (Meisel, 1972: 136).

Meisel focusses primarily on the creeping sense of isolation that the protagonists of *Jude* feel in a rapidly changing society, the sense of un-belonging or rootlessness that pervades the ethos of a novel ‘in which plot, the essence of Hardy’s fiction in the past, is superseded by what the artist himself calls “a series of seemings”’ (Meisel, 1972: 138). He considers the central question in *Jude* to be one about the plausibility of human relationships – if inter-personal human bonds are at all possible, or if individuals are condemned to remain trapped in their own psyche or private consciousness; a question that Hardy raises in *Jude* but does not offer a satisfactory answer to. Meisel demonstrates this psychological isolation through his elaboration on the modernity of *Jude* as exhibited in Jude’s portrayal:

[...] Hardy has combined, in a single figure, the intellectual needs of Angel and the fleshy humanity of Tess. The conditions of his isolation are, as in our first views of Tess, already latent in his family history and early life. His gradual and painful discoveries are those of the wandering ego whose consciousness of its own anchorlessness defines the meaning of *modern* (Meisel, 1972: 139).

What is interesting to note about Meisel’s study is that even though his focus is primarily on the notion of a conflicted sense of self and the fictional representations of the inner trappings of the human mind, he chooses to leave Sue out of this analysis almost completely. He sees Sue ‘merely as the catalyst for the tragedy that was potential even before her appearance; the only element needed to transform the existing conditions of Jude’s life into explicit modern tragedy [...]’ (Meisel, 1972: 146), discounting the idea that

Sue's own personality and trials could have the potential to lead to an individual tragedy of her own:

Sue's narcissism and her fear of the physical become known to us mostly through their effect upon Jude. Still Hardy's grants us small glimpses of direct insight into her, such as her early unawareness of her attraction for both Jude and Phillotson [...] (Meisel, 1972: 148).

He notes how Hardy 'most forcefully explores the possibilities of human relations in the context of the given nature of consciousness within the present social mould', perceiving Father Time as 'the product of a civilization that has bled humanity from Sue and that has imprisoned each of the lovers in his own private world' (Meisel, 1972: 149,152). Meisel perceives 'social mechanism' as the main culprit that ruins the lives of Jude, Sue and their children as it is not in harmony with nature, and sees Hardy as a forerunner who was far ahead of his time, engaging with concepts and rhetoric that would develop and evolve properly decades later in 'Freud's generation' of modernist authors:

To find the set of concepts that correspond to Hardy's directing dramatic insights, one must look to Freud's generation – the generation that also gave birth to Joyce, who was to find a corresponding structural solution to the conflicts in Hardy's imagination [...] (Meisel, 1972: 167).

Meisel focusses primarily on the inner turmoil of Jude and, in association, Sue, to identify and resolve dormant anxieties portrayed in their characterisations, downplaying the intentionality of the authorial process. He is interested in Hardy's handling of narrative voice and perspective, but his concern with matters of development and evolution, and his lengthy discussion of the way they impacted on social structure and their significance in Hardy's novels, detracts from his main argument and leads him to oversimplify the deliberateness of the authorial process of Hardy. Meisel's study of Hardy's novels from a psychoanalytic perspective is insightful in parts, but as a whole can be best described as a

crude, early attempt at psychoanalyzing Hardy that employs more romantic psychology than actual psychoanalysis of his works.

Meisel's study focuses on the core belief that human beings have lost touch with nature, which gives rise to many of their conflicts - both internal and external. His analysis can be considered to be part of the long romantic tradition; an exploration of the changes in the relations between individual and community in nineteenth-century Britain, alongside the changes in the very nature of community itself. The sense of alienation and the romantic desire to return to a more stable and familiar mode of life experienced by the individuals of the late nineteenth century is explored systematically in Ferdinand Tonnies' book *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (1887), where he discusses the two models of social organisation: *Gemeinschaft* (community) and *Gesellschaft* (society). *Gemeinschaft* is considered a 'living organism', built on kinship ties, joint ownership of land, shared work and common beliefs; while *Gesellschaft* is a 'mechanical aggregate and artifact', a collection of otherwise disparate individuals, bound together by self-interest, 'isolated, and there exists a condition of tension against all others' (Tonnies, 1955: 34, 49, 74, 88). Tonnies describes how 'in the *Gemeinschaft*', human beings 'remain essentially united in spite of all separating factors, whereas in the *Gesellschaft* they are essentially separated in spite of all uniting factors' (Tonnies, 1955: 74). Roger Ebbatson asserts in his essay "Hardy and the Sociological Imagination":

The entire trajectory of Hardy's work as a novelist, from the communal portrait of *Under the Greenwood Tree* to the *existential anomie* of *Jude the Obscure*, is a richly imagined elaboration of the ambiguous implications of Tonnies' sociological thesis (Ebbatson, 2013: 204).

Barbara A. Schapiro points out in her essay "Psychoanalysis and Romantic Idealization: The Dialectics of Love in Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd*" (2002) how the

characters in Hardy's novels are 'driven by a romantic infatuation with an idealized other'. She discusses how this infatuation can be regarded as stemming from 'primary narcissism', from a Freudian perspective, in the infant's original experience of omnipotence and blissful merged union with the mother (Schapiro, 2002: 3-26). Schapiro traces Hardy's 'fascination with an idealized, erotic other' back to 'the dynamics of infantile narcissism and in the author's highly dependent and enmeshed relationship with his mother' (Schapiro, 2002: 4). She stresses that the focus of her paper is on the 'psychodynamics of Hardy's texts, not on his life', but suggests that a brief insight into his early life provides greater context for studying the issue of idealization in his works (Schapiro, 2002: 4). She provides an account of Hardy's early childhood as documented by Millgate, as a weak infant who was rather neglected by his parents, a factor that might have contributed to the slow development of his maturity and extreme emotional dependency on his mother, which lasted well into adulthood. She surmises that these glimpses into his early childhood provide explanation for his propensity towards becoming infatuated with idealized, unattainable women, and his difficult marital relationship with his first wife Emma:

Narcissistic conflicts and idealizations may have hampered Hardy's actual relationships with women in his life, but they inspired his creative imagination and are worked out in complex and instructive ways in his art. Much contemporary psychoanalytic theory indeed suggests that the ideals, fantasies, and illusions of early narcissism are at the very core of the self and its capacity for emotional depth and creativity throughout the lifespan (Schapiro, 2002: 5).

Schapiro opines that Hardy's best novels demonstrate this creativity and explore the dialectical tension between passionate idealism and harsh reality, as seen through Jude's unwavering love for the vacillating Sue, or Tess' unflinching devotion for hypocritical Angel. As she puts it:

Narcissistic idealizations and fantasies, in other words, are necessary to the experience of passion and to the ability to live an emotionally rich, creative life. What we need is not to renounce illusion or fantasy in favor of reality, as Freud would have it, but rather to hold both in a delicate, taut balance - a dialectical tension (Schapiro, 2002: 6).

Schapiro's essay on Hardy is a classic example of psychoanalytic criticism being used to decode authorial intent and the impact of the author's own childhood and lived experiences on their literary output. Hardy's tragic characterizations then become an extension of his own ideals, fantasies and desires. While this kind of reading is reductive, as it takes away from the autonomy of a literary text as an independent agent open to multiple readings and analyses, Schapiro defends her stance by stating that:

Hardy is well aware of the dangers of narcissistic solipsism; nevertheless, he is equally aware that idealized fantasies are intrinsic to romantic passion, and passion in Hardy's universe is ultimately what gives meaning to life (Schapiro, 2002: 7).

Schapiro perceives Hardy's literary creations to be his attempts to reconcile his innermost thoughts and feelings to the harsh realities of the external world, which find manifestation in his creation of one tragic character after another.

Meisel develops his argument on Jude and Sue's portrayal further in a much later work, *The Literary Freud* (2007). In this more advanced and theorised study, Meisel divides *Jude* into two parts to facilitate his analysis. He keeps the focus very tightly on Jude's characterisation again, devoting the first part entirely to assessing his portrayal and the readers' response to him, but advances the focus in part two to include Sue in the discussion. According to Meisel, *Jude* 'irritates Hardy's reader, almost neurologically, into resisting anything and everything because of the absurdity any presumption to authority has' by directly engaging with 'questions of its own intellectual origins' (Meisel, 2007: 156). Hardy accomplishes this feat by destabilizing through criticism the hegemonic institutions of his time – higher education (the University of Oxford, on which

Christminster is modelled), organised religion, the institution of marriage, and expected gender roles and behaviour following social codes. As Meisel puts it:

The novel's contentiousness, manifest in the ebullient relationship between Sue and Jude, finds its counterpart in the reader's own Barthelmean confusion of response that may begin in the moral sphere but that eventually becomes epistemological (Meisel, 2007: 156).

Jude, according to Meisel, is a perfect example of a novel that 'takes its power' from what he refers to as 'counterrepresentation' (Meisel, 2007: 156). The characters of Jude and Sue engage in a game of lead and follow, balancing off each other's portrayal, counterrepresenting each other 'both intellectually and emotionally', which in turn leads to the reader counterrepresenting them 'as the price of the slowly exhausting relation to be established with them over the course of the novel' (Meisel, 2007: 158). Meisel, like Miller, revisits *Jude* and Sue's portrayal in it multiple times in his career as a literary critic, revealing his own intellectual journey through his analysis by engaging newer theoretical modes to engage with the same novel and characters to yield more nuanced analysis.

Linda Ruth Williams too reads *Jude* as a text that resists psychoanalysis in *Critical Desire: Psychoanalysis and the Literary Subject* (1995). She echoes Brooks' reservations about the efficacy of psychoanalytic theory and criticism when engaging with a literary text. As Williams puts it:

If we find access to this text through the channels of psychoanalysis initially difficult, this maybe an effect of the fact that the text itself is also about the inaccessible. It is story of denial – a whole system of denials [...] In a resistant text, it is Sue who resists most (Williams, 1995: 188).

Her study of Sue is particularly interesting as she shows how the recalcitrance of *Jude* as a text, and Sue as a character, makes it 'most appropriate to a psychoanalytic reading, most appropriable by psychoanalysis' through 'a strategy of reversal – as perverse, perhaps as

Sue herself' (Williams, 1995: 195). Williams reads *Jude* as a paradoxical text, which through its resistance lends itself to psychoanalytic readings, primarily based on the tropes of resistance and negation. She locates the ongoing critical interest in Sue's characterization over the decades in 'her resistance, her unavailability', and the way she is capable of evading and saying 'no', possessing the voice and vocabulary to critique everything surrounding her except herself and her own choices. Williams shows how Sue resists the limitations imposed on her by the Victorian social structure by her desire for higher education, for equal employment opportunities, and for agency and autonomy over her body and her choice of partners. She does not hesitate to say 'no' to social and conventional expectation in making her decisions, conflicting as they are, until she ultimately starts negating her own sense of self. Williams describes Sue's characterization as a 'psychic and social impossibility, a repeated failure of identity' (Williams, 1995: 192):

So what happens when a woman says 'No'? And is Sue's negativity entirely perverse? However clear she is about the fact that she is misunderstood, Sue is nevertheless unable to make any more positive statements about what she *is*. If any form of self-definition emerges, it is only through a web of negatives (Williams, 1995: 192).

The important question that Williams tries to address in her book is how 'psychoanalysis, or feminism (or both)' can grapple with Sue's 'mutual articulacy and silence', as Sue's verbal proficiency in 'speaking up *for* herself' does not translate into an ability to 'speak *about* herself' (Williams, 1995: 193). She analyses this fragmentation between Sue's eloquence and her silence, conceding that Sue's use of 'no' to assert herself could also be perceived as her embracing the linguistic strategy of the New Woman by refusing to conform to patriarchal constructs and affirming her position as an equal. Williams uses Freud's concept of a negative statement, what he describes in his essay "Negation" (1925) as a means to understand a subject's admission to something, an insight into their psyche:

Were we engaged in a character analysis of Sue here, this would allow us to read in reverse her negatives, (negating the negative), so that each 'No' about herself becomes a 'Yes'. It seems that in psychoanalysis two negatives *do* make a positive [...] For Freud, and for Hardy too by the time he writes *Jude the Obscure*, 'Yes' doesn't necessarily mean 'Yes', and 'No' certainly doesn't always mean 'No' (Williams, 1995: 194).

Williams shows the ways in which the text of *Jude* is structured around the 'images of being shut out', being denied access to knowledge, or true understanding of the self or other, or the most important conundrum, Sue's sexuality and sexual choices:

One kind of search for knowledge in the text is replaced by another: when Jude cannot gain access to formal education, he moves on to not getting access to Sue. Sue's uncanny femininity thus takes over the text's key epistemological puzzle (Williams, 1995: 188-189).

Sue's 'femininity' is structured around her speech and silence, ultimately resulting in an unravelling of herself as a 'complete woman' (Williams, 1995: 191). Williams perceives Sue as a 'puzzle' a 'problem', a 'construction of contradictory discourses, or a discourse of contradiction', who manages to build 'a wall against critical delineation or intrusion' (Williams, 1995: 188).

In "The Spirit Unappeased and Peregrine: *Jude the Obscure*" (1984), Philip M. Weinstein invites Hardy's readers to continue the critical conversation surrounding his obscure character portrayals, and discusses how reader-response theory can help and advance interpretation of characters in literary texts. Weinstein considers *Jude* to be a text that is particularly interesting as he feels that the 'proliferation of spoken words in *Jude*, frequently co-opted from other texts', fails to actually convey the needs of the characters, as 'at the center of their being, they are mute' (Weinstein, 1984: 230). Weinstein urges the readers to engage with, and respond to, the idea that 'words at their best [may] reveal the inadequacy of other words' to assess *Jude* 'which accommodates the awkward silence at the core' (Weinstein, 1984: 240, 230). This silence, or absence, of words necessitates

greater reader participation to interpret the silence as well the spoken words of characters like Sue and Jude, who:

[...] are there, given in their completeness, before they are empowered with speech [...] The spoken words proliferate in *Jude the Obscure* like cartoon utterances, cascading like soap-bubbles from the already finished figures who remain mute beside their utterance (Weinstein, 1984: 230-231).

The use of the archaic ‘peregrine’ by Weinstein in the title of his essay, meaning foreign or outlandish, becomes an indicator of the displaced status of Sue and Jude in their external as well as internal lives. Weinstein muses that in *Jude Hardy* uses ‘discourse in a thoroughly modern way, unique in Hardy’s novels; the words a character uses appear less as the transparent bearer of private spirit than as the opaque, already motivated property of a public culture: the words have already been coopted’ (Weinstein, 1984: 229). Therefore, Hardy creates a conscious imbalance between the effusion of words spoken and the proportion of meaning actually conveyed, leading to obscurity. Weinstein demonstrates how Hardy uses language as a tool to initiate and provoke thought and debate, raising issues and leaving them unresolved in a self-aware fashion to invite the readers to continue speculating on them in active performative involvement.

Subsequent readers and critics have taken Weinstein up on his invitation to continue to study Hardy’s works critically, a significant demonstration of it being Dale Kramer’s collection, *Critical Essays on Thomas Hardy: The Novels* (1990). Kramer starts by providing an overview of the dominant trends in the critical output on Hardy in “‘Thomas Hardy’ Then to Now”, in which he strives to distinguish the main modes of critical analyses and methodologies used to analyse the central issues in Hardy’s novels. Not only does Kramer provide a comprehensive review of the existing scholarship on Hardy, he also signposts the areas of literary theory which need to be explored and used

more to further the knowledge and information on Hardy's works; fresh textual analysis, better exploration of feminist angles and a furthering of phenomenological studies. Kramer focusses on the role of the readers and their engaged participation with Hardy's texts as expressed through their interpretations and shows how this critical interest in turn leads to the 'methodologies' of the critics becoming more enriched through the 'interpretive ingenuity' they develop to critically engage with Hardy's texts (Kramer, 1990: 2). This circle of active reader participation that Kramer highlights is especially interesting where the desire for greater critical understanding of literary characters leads to more engagement with literary critical theory, which in turn leads to readers becoming better and more informed critics. The emphasis is on the trajectory of the readers, who feel encouraged to develop better critical acumen to fully engage with and explicate an otherwise inscrutable character presentation like Sue and also become responsible for coming up with new and novel ways of analysing her portrayal.

Reader-response theory is particularly apposite to examine while tracing the changing critical perception of Sue. It recognizes the reader as an active agent who bestows 'real existence' to a literary piece and adds meaning and value to it through interpretation. Within the gamut of the theoretical overview of reader-response criticism there are multiple approaches, but the common strand running through is the belief that the meaning of a text is gleaned from the reader through the reading process (Cahill, 1996: 89-97). This line of enquiry makes it possible for literary works to be seen as performing art, allowing space for the reader to have their unique text-based response and performance of it. Since reader-response criticism is closely related to both experimental and psychoanalytic psychology, psychologists of reading and perception align themselves with the notion that the reader is the main generator of meaning in a text. Since reader-response

critics focus on the activity of the reader, they share the concerns of feminism, Post-Colonialism, and Gender and Queer Theory, serving to open up further lines of critical enquiry and analysis.

T. R. Wright discusses the importance of the visual in the construction of identity in Hardy's works in *Hardy and the Erotic* (1989). He is particularly concerned with the way Hardy's treatment of desire can best be understood from a poststructuralist perspective, as both a cultural product and as literary discourse. His analysis of *Jude* is structured around the problematic portrayal of Sue, to reveal her not as an old-fashioned flirt but rather a proto-feminist. But he concedes that even while Hardy portrays her as a New Woman figure, non-compliant to Victorian codes of femininity, Sue is ultimately unable to escape from her status as an erotic object, a price she pays for being female. Wright's study shows the compelling influence of Lacan's psychoanalytic ideas on him in the development of his argument that desire is established through seeing and is subject to displacement. Sexuality thus becomes associated with the fantasising associated with voyeurism, leading to the perception of Hardy's narrator as scopophilic, a line of enquiry that has been explored further in subsequent critical studies on Hardy.

Jane Thomas also explores the concept of desire in Hardy's works from a poststructuralist perspective in *Thomas Hardy and Desire: Conceptions of the Self* (2013), building on the argument laid out by Miller (1970) and Wright (1989) among other critics. Thomas explains desire as 'an essential yearning that defines the human condition, as the energy that drives individuals to seek recognition in relation to a social and symbolic order which pre-exists them' (Thomas, 2013: 2). In her study, she emphasizes the role of 'desire in relation to the constitution of the human subject, that anticipates and supplements some

of the defining elements of Lacanian theory' observable in Hardy's works (Thomas, 2013: 2-3).

James Kincaid deepens the discussion surrounding Hardy's narrator as a scopophilic in "Girl-watching, Child-beating and Other Exercises for Readers of *Jude the Obscure*" (1993). Kincaid offers a fascinating and thought-provoking discussion of the psychology behind the reader responses to *Jude*. He approaches characterizations of Sue and Jude from the thematic standpoints of voyeurism, child beating and sadomasochism.

Kincaid states that the 'readerly experiences of most or all of us' while reading *Jude* is that of 'homicidal voyeurism and sadism' (Kincaid, 1993: 132). He compares the nature of the reader participation that the portrayals of Jude and Sue generate: sadomasochism in Jude's case (the readers feeling sympathy tinged with pleasure at the plight of the male victim), and voyeurism in Sue's case (taking pleasure in watching the female victim's plight from a distance). He argues that the readers of *Jude* assume the identity of a 'pornographer/pervert' and exemplifies this by using certain scenes from the novel, one being Jude's aunt Druisilla telling a story about the twelve-year-old Sue (Kincaid, 1993: 133):

Many's the time I've smacked her [Sue] for her impertinence. Why, one day when she was walking in the pond with her shoes and stockings off, and her petticoats pulled above her knees, afore I could cry out for shame, she said, "Move on, aunty! This is no sight for modest eyes" (quoted in Kincaid, 1993: 133).

Kincaid claims that scenes of this kind in *Jude* become 'paradigmatic of the activity not of the novel but of readers, representing something happening not in the book but in us', suggesting that the active engagement of the readers with the scenes narrated in the text lead to 'erotic readerly projection into the scene' (Kincaid, 1993: 133). In the instances like that of the beating Jude receives as a child at the hands of a farmer, or the portrayal of

Sue's defiance of her aunt as a little girl and the consequent punishment, the readers 'do not simply watch'. As Kincaid puts it:

We are playing with children here, with empty constructions; and we do with them what we will. The child, a recent social and linguistic invention, can be filled in any way we like; in *Jude*, we stuff the child with pain and with desire. We make the child represent, fill it with meaning; and we do so in ways that both confirm and resent the child's distance from us. The child is Other, desired and detested, fawned over and spanked. The woman as child is distanced twice over, a double zero and thus double-denied and double-desired. She cannot come close to us, not even close to our hand or hairbrush or whip. She is merely a creature of fantasy, an actress-victim in a flagellation of drama that never ends, the object for the voyeur (Kincaid: 139).

Kincaid sets up an interesting contrast between the level of 'otherisation' that Jude faces as a male child, evoking a sadistic but involved response from the readers, and that Sue faces as a female child who is doubly removed from her readers, first for her innate obscurity, and second, for the readerly distance proffered to her for her gender. Jude is a solid, physical presence, being physically held captive and whacked by the farmer, while the pornographic reader looks on voyeuristically. Meanwhile, Sue the child, like Sue the adult, remains a dim presence, 'more removed into memory, less settled in form and thus even more available to objectification' (Kincaid, 1993: 139). Thus, the torment she feels becomes an interiorised force from the very beginning, not clearly expressed, perpetually teasing the imagination of the voyeuristic reader and never properly satisfying their curiosity. Kincaid sees Sue as the main victim of the 'pornographic reader going into his erotic projection', not Jude (Kincaid, 1993: 144):

Sue is deeply wary of being fixed, set, photographed once and for all. She dodges brilliantly, and courageously creates for herself possibilities where we thought there were none [...] Married or unmarried, copulating or not, Sue is not allowed to come into being, never allowed actuality (Kincaid, 1993: 144-145).

Kincaid offers a carefully scaffolded explanation of what evokes the consistent desire to understand and explain Sue ‘felt both by the characters within the novel – from Gillingham to Jude to Arabella – to those without, from Hardy himself, to D.H. Lawrence, to every recent critic and commentator’ (Kincaid, 1993: 145). The ‘pornographic distancing’ with which Sue’s portrayal is carefully presented becomes the basis for the desire to explain her being, ‘explanation’ being in itself ‘a form of control, of fixing and pinning the other on some distant and alluring horizon’ (Kincaid, 1993: 145). Kincaid’s essay is provocative and invites reader introspection, to gauge if their reactions to literary characters and their experiences are influenced by the gender of the characters. He emphasizes how Jude’s portrayal evokes empathetic sadomasochism in the readers, while the voyeuristic distance with which Sue is presented leads to greater curiosity, but less compassion for her suffering and more pleasure in spectating her torment.

Suzanne Keen’s book *Thomas Hardy’s Brains* (2014) is a valuable resource while assessing the psychoanalytic studies on Hardy in spite of its limitations – her overt focus on Thomas Hardy’s (actual) brain rather than his (fictional) brain, as she turns to biographical information as a way to return to a discussion of influences. She details Hardy’s personal turn to ‘strategies of disassociation and self-alienation,’ during a dark phase of his life between 1882 and 1892, a period that also marked tremendous literary productivity from him, leading Keen to suggest that Hardy’s personal struggles forced him ‘to square the facts of individual existence with his developing sense of human psychology’ (Keen, 2014: 138). Keen suggests the use of ‘cognitive narratology’, a theoretical approach that focuses on the ‘mental states, capacities, and dispositions that provide grounds for – or, conversely, are grounded in – narrative experiences’, as

described by David Herman in his article in ‘The *living* handbook of narratology’.²⁷ This approach emphasizes the way narration (stories) interact with the interpreter’s emotional state, thus leading to a narrative experience that goes beyond just the narrative text. Cognitive narratology can be used as an effective tool, particularly in the analysis of *Jude*; arguably Hardy’s most controversial, most debated and most psychoanalysed novel, which makes it curious that Keen, in her evaluation of Hardy’s works leaves it out entirely. She limits her discussion to the narrative techniques of four novels of Hardy: *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874), *Return of the Native* (1878), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), and *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (1891). However, *Jude* is the novel that uses the aforementioned narrative technique of ‘thought report’ the most, particularly in the portrayal of Sue, generating a lot of psychoanalytic interest and criticism in the decades after its publication.

While most psychoanalytic studies of Hardy, of the kind that is being explored in this chapter, apply the theories of twentieth-century psychoanalysts, particularly Freud and Jung, to Hardy’s works from a revisionary viewpoint, Keen throws light on Hardy’s documented readings of the psychological theorists of his time including Henry Maudsley, Théodule Ribot, Herbert Spencer and Charles Darwin, among others. Keen shows how Hardy differs from other Victorian novelists like Dickens, Trollope, Thackeray and Eliot, in breaking from the *bildungsroman* tradition to use ‘cognitive narratology’ to represent ‘fictional consciousness, including intermental thought’ (Keen, 2014: 55):

Hardy used psycho-narration, also called thought report, to provide by far the majority of his narrators’ generalizations about the inner feeling states, thoughts, desires, private responses, and most importantly, their lack of awareness of their own motivations (Keen, 2014: 55).

²⁷ Sourced from <http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/>

She discusses Hardy's use of 'empathetic narrative strategies', which reveal '*bounded strategic empathy* for his fictional creations, Wessex countrymen and women; his *ambassadorial strategic empathy* for animals and select members of despised outgroups; and his *broadcast strategic empathy* for feeling humanity in an indifferent, Gothic universe' (Keen, 2014: 170). Keen's observation addresses an important contemporary debate regarding the role that fiction plays in developing empathetic readers and the extent to which that empathy can lead to direct action. Her study is an important commentary on the convergence of nineteenth and twenty-first century ideas on the purpose of fiction and the role of psychoanalytic study in achieving that purpose, marking her work as an important step in the field of cognitive narratology, as well as in Hardy studies.

The wealth of criticism on Hardy's portrayal of Sue from different psychoanalytic perspectives reiterates the way she functions as a Rorschach test. Psychoanalysing Sue in effect becomes an exercise in revealing how reader response to a text transcends the bounds of the text and becomes reflective of the readers' own suppositions born out of their own lived experiences, socio-cultural contexts and setting. Critics have repeatedly documented Hardy's interest in the psychological output of his time, and he used the limited psychological vocabulary of his time to address issues and character traits that have since been revisited from more structured and formalized psychoanalytic viewpoints to yield very interesting analyses on the confusing portrayal of Sue.

§4.1A

Motherhood and Sue

As I have outlined in the first chapter, the latter part of the nineteenth century was heavily influenced by Darwin's theories of evolution and sexual selection, and his hypothesis that women had a say in the 'selection' of their sexual partner. This idea, alongside the development of Francis Galton's theory of Eugenics, had a significant impact on the intellectual, social, cultural and political climate of Britain and led to heightened anxiety, elevating motherhood to a nationalist cause. In the first chapter, I have discussed how the ideological formation of the emancipated New Woman, who was positioned as the 'other', a contrast to the maternal woman, influenced the contemporary critical commentary on Sue's portrayal after the publication of *Jude* in 1895. In this section, I will examine the way the critical commentary on Sue as a mother has changed to become more complex, with the implementation of more sophisticated psychoanalytic and feminist theoretical criticism in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

Geoffrey Thurley states in *The Psychology of Hardy's Novels: The Nervous and the Statuesque* that 'no one ever wrote worse' than Hardy about children, as Hardy's representation of children in both *Jude* and *Tess* is 'an embarrassment, an irrelevancy – worse – a sign of the curse over mankind' (Thurley, 1975: 168). Gillian Beer offers a different opinion in "Responses: George Eliot and Thomas Hardy", published in *Darwin's Plots* (1983). According to her, Sue and Jude as parents 'see themselves as precursors, and can achieve their full value only as precursors of a "new" order' and when they lose their children, they lose their value as human beings and become 'monstrous':

The death of their [Sue and Jude's] children (murdered by little Father Time in a late-Malthusian tragedy, 'Done because we are too menny') leaves Jude and Sue as aberrant, without succession, and therefore 'monstrous' in the sense that they can carry no cultural or physical mutations into the future and must live out their lives merely at odds with the present (Beer, 1983: 240).

The focus shifts from the children to the parents, showing how the deaths of the children make Sue and Jude lose self-worth and value as human beings. This is an important analysis, as the narrative of *Jude* clearly marks the death of the children as a catastrophic moment for Sue, precipitating a significant shift in her personhood.

John Holloway considers the scene of Father Time's murder of his siblings and his suicide to be 'an unparalleled literary disaster [...] because the whole incident interrupts the novel almost like a digression, since it seems a far more elaborate disaster than any reader needs to prepare him for the only significant result, Sue's fit of remorse' (Holloway, 1965: 249). Ian Gregor echoes Holloway in lambasting Hardy for the same scene, describing it in "An End and a Beginning: *Jude the Obscure*", as 'the most terrible scene in Hardy's fiction, indeed it might reasonably be argued in English fiction', as it is 'brutally disturbing in a way which the novel can hardly accommodate' (Gregor, 1987: 52). A significant number of critical voices are unified in seeing the scene of the death of Sue and Jude's children as not just horrifying, but horrifying to the point that is unnecessary and lacking a bigger purpose than to bring Sue remorse and shame. Suzanne Edwards, in her article "A Shadow from the Past: Little Father Time in *Jude the Obscure*" counters this argument, stating:

Holloway is mistaken when he claims that Sue's fit of remorse is the only significant result of Father Time's unfortunate solution to his parents' problems. To begin with, the hanging scene – admittedly grotesque and melodramatic – is, nonetheless, an outgrowth of the dark tone of much of the novel. In fact, from the second chapter of Part VI in which the deaths of the children are described until the end of the book, the grotesqueness and melodrama, which only periodically affect the characters earlier in the novel, are unrelieved. If anything, in Sue's unnatural

submission to a husband she finds repulsive and in Jude's lonely and miserable death, these features are intensified (Edwards, 1987: 36).

Edwards sees Father Time's symbolic presence in the novel and his act of murdering his siblings before taking his own life as a turning point in the novel, indicating the end of Sue's brief happiness with Jude. As she points out, for Sue and Jude, the horror of losing their children signals a self-destructive repetition for them of their earlier mistakes:

Sue voluntarily gives herself to Phillotson a second time, and Jude is duped into repeating his marriage to Arabella to once more preserve her honor. Sue transformed by her grief, concludes that she and Jude have been punished for "loving each other too much [...]" (p. 356). The couple cannot see their misfortune for what it is – a lesson from the past, but equally a lesson about the harshness of reality (Edwards, 1987: 37).

Edward echoes Beer's analysis of Sue and Jude in tracing the loss of their children, a death of their own value as human beings, as they become 'monstrous' and incapable of rational thought and action, particularly observable through Sue's subsequent actions in the novel.

Rosemary Sumner in *Thomas Hardy: Psychological Novelist* (1981) studies Sue's portrayal analytically, her evaluation of Sue ranging from sympathetic, to perceptive, to at times, harsh, urgently slotting Sue into the mould of the clinical diagnosis of neurosis (discussed later in the chapter), even when some of her actions can be construed as fairly natural given her circumstances. One such instance is Sumner's analysis of her engagement with her children. As she puts it:

[...] Sue only shows an interest in her children when they are dead. She attends to their physical needs, but otherwise seems to have little contact with them. She talks to Little Father Time who is old enough to take part in an intellectual discussion, but the total impression, created largely by omission, is of a cool, detached mother. It is only when they are dead and buried that she becomes passionate about them, struggling hysterically to get to them in their coffins. This is characteristic of all her human relationships. When there is a barrier (Jude is outside the window, or she is communicating with him by letter, or he is departing for the last time), she can feel affectionate, even passionate (Sumner, 1981: 170).

While Sumner is accurate in noting Sue's perpetual vacillation in her behaviour towards her lovers, her assessment of Sue's response to her children, when alive and when dead, appears to be a simplistic, black and white analysis. There are temporal gaps in the novel during Sue's pregnancies that allow critical imagination to fill them with interpretation. However, there are some direct insights into Sue's characterization as a wife and a mother that can serve to refute this kind of a claim, as has been discussed by other critics (such as Jeffrey Berman's study of certain aspects of Sue's portrayal that show her as a caring mother). Not showing emotions is not a straightforward indication of not feeling any emotions, which seems to be at the core of Sumner's analysis regarding Sue in the role of a mother. Sumner herself points out the indecipherability of Sue's characterization in stating how Hardy 'deliberately avoids giving the impression that she is a finite being whose personality can be wholly explained or encapsulated in words' (Sumner, 1981: 183).

Jeffrey Berman offers a deep insight into Sue's psyche by focussing primarily on her role as a mother and her relationship with Father Time, in "Infanticide and Object Loss in *Jude the Obscure*" (1989). Berman structures his argument around a particular theory in psychoanalytic psychology called 'Object Relations', based on psychodynamic theory, that surmises that the development of an individual psyche in childhood is dependent on family ties and experiences during infancy, which then influences and impacts on the way individuals relate to others and situations in their adult lives. These internalized 'objects' from childhood, which get projected onto adulthood, do not always correspond directly to external reality, instead retaining a link to the complex inner world of fantasy experienced by most children (Greenberg and Mitchell, 1983). Berman points out that Sue's background is not described in detail in *Jude*, but there are definite suggestions of a parental lack. She grows up in a broken household shuttling between divorced parents

which seems to have a direct bearing on her largely negative attitude towards marriage and family life, eventually filtering into the nature of her relationships with others as an adult.

As Berman puts it:

Object loss is a central theme in *Jude the Obscure*, and Freud's seminal essay, "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917), casts light on many of the baffling psychological dynamics of Hardy's characters. Freud's definition of melancholia, which today is called depression, accurately describes many of Sue's conflicts [...] (Berman, 1989: 168-169).

Freud, in his essay "Mourning and Melancholia", compares the process of mourning over the loss/death of a loved one to that of experiencing melancholia or depression, as he perceives them to have a similar impact on the subject and to be caused by similar environmental influences (Freud, 1917: 237-258). However, the main differences that he points out between melancholia and mourning is that in melancholia there is no apparent 'object-loss' that the subject can directly identify, and there is often a loss of self-esteem. The 'loss' that the subject experiences in melancholia is unconscious as opposed to mourning which is a conscious process to enable healing. Sue's characterization and the depiction of her state of mind in the novel remains ambivalent as she displays symptoms of depression without any apparent 'object-loss', until the demise of her children. This makes it possible to see her fitting the mould of Freud's description of melancholia, which eventually turns into the source of her internalized aggression.

Berman sees Father Time as 'an allegorical, not a realistic character', whose suicide, though 'artistically contrived', reveals 'many of the characteristics of real-life suicides' (Berman, 1989: 156). Contrary to popular critical belief, Berman does not perceive Sue as lacking warmth and affection entirely as a mother. He analyses the little glimpses that Hardy offers into the family unit of Jude, Sue and their children: 'Jude obviously recognizes that a child's healthy development depends upon loving parents and a

friendly environment. Sue intuitively empathizes with Father Time's situation, and she is moved to tears when he calls her "mother" (Berman, 1989: 158).

Berman points out the eerie resemblance in temperament between Father Time and Jude – as well as Sue, the 'adoptive mother' – calling him the 'true heir' to their 'gloomy philosophy' (Berman, 1989: 156). He sees Jude and Sue as 'loving, conscientious parents', though they suffer social ostracism as unwed parents (Berman, 1989: 158). Berman's analysis of Sue, however sympathetic, does not discount the 'empathic failure' on Sue's part in not realizing the frantic nature of Father Time's statement when he says "I think that whenever children be born that are not wanted they should be killed directly, before their souls come to 'em and not allowed to grow big and walk about!" (Jude: 323, quoted in Berman, 1989: 159). He discusses how it is possible to view Father Time's murder of his siblings and his suicide not just as a result of his 'incurably sad nature', as stated by Jude, but also 'as a logical result of a series of narcissistic injuries involving defective parenting' (Berman, 1989: 156). This interpretation brings the focus squarely on Jude and Sue's faulty parenting as a major contributing reason behind the death of their children. As Berman surmises, '[a]lthough the novel implies that suicide runs in families, like a defective gene passed from one doomed generation to another, a more plausible explanation lies in environmental and interactional causes' (Berman, 1989: 160).

Father Time's frantic questioning of Sue regarding the responsibility of him and his siblings for their homeless situation is a 'cry for help and restoring his wounded self-esteem' (Berman, 1989: 159), which Sue fails to realize, caught up in her own despair and, instead of allaying his worries, ends up validating them through her curt responses to him:

[...] he expresses his fear of becoming a burden to his family, a fear intensified by the fact that Sue is not his biological mother, therefore under no obligation to care

for him [...] Here is the perfect moment for Sue to reassure him that he is indeed loved by his parents, and that if they didn't want him they never would have consented to adopt him (Berman, 1989: 159).

Sue's failure to console Father Time and reassure him about his rightful place in the family unit stems from her mistaking his 'pessimism for profundity', which results in her being "honest and candid" with him, as if he were a mature adult rather than a terrified child' (Berman, 1989: 160). It is this same misguided confidence in Father Time's precocious emotional maturity that leads her to share with him that she is pregnant again – a piece of information that completely sends him over the edge: 'The next time she sees him, he and the other two children are hanging from their necks. Devastated by the sight, Sue prematurely goes into labour and suffers a miscarriage' (Berman, 1989: 160).

Sue's emotional and physiological reaction to the gruesome sight is not just indicative of her neurotic self as discussed by Sumner, which makes her react passionately only when there is a barrier separating her and the others in her life, but is quite a plausible response to trauma of this magnitude. Berman points out the central contradiction between the empathetic act of Jude and Sue in adopting Father Time to 'avoid exposing him to further parental neglect', and the 'final dialogue between mother and son', that becomes a shocking exposé of 'Sue's empathic failure' (Berman, 1989: 160-161). Berman attributes this pattern of 'inconsistency of love and self-distraction' in Sue's behaviour to 'her own unresolved inner conflicts' that makes her treat Father Time as a 'selfobject, an extension of herself' (Berman, 1989: 161).

Berman borrows liberally from the psychoanalytic concepts of Echo and Narcissus to portray and depict Sue's neurosis that he considers to be primarily hinged on narcissism. In using terms like 'selfobject' to refer to Sue's treatment of Father Time, Berman focusses on her constant hankering for the unattainable and the elusive, only to go from

‘idealization to devaluation’, to show the narcissistic aspect of her portrayal. Interestingly, Berman also sees qualities of the ‘Echo’ in her tendency of ‘denying her own independence and free will’ (Berman, 1989: 164). By analysing the recurring motifs of love and mourning that pervade the novel, he seeks to unpack the divided subject of psychoanalysis, Sue, whose

[...] pattern of defiance followed by blind submission suggests, clinically, the child’s ambivalence towards the parents: the rejection of the mother, the original love object, followed by the need to recover the lost unity of infancy. Sue and Jude return to the wrong marital partners of course, and the attempt towards reparation is doomed. From an object relations point of view, Sue and Jude’s inner world is precarious and unstable. Each returns to a despised marital partner, suggesting the child’s inability to separate from an ambivalent love object [...] Both Sue and Jude regress to infantile modes of behaviour (one is creed drunk, the other is gin-drunk) and obliterate themselves in a fatal union with hated love objects (Berman: 168).

Berman’s study of Sue’s characterization is incisive, a central merit of which is his detection of the way Sue identifies herself with Father Time, which leads to her making the colossal mistake of having that mistimed, un-empathetic conversation with him. Berman’s clinical assessment of her presentation makes the retrospective reading of Sue through the theories of Freud insightful in deciphering the motivation and behavioural patterns of a highly unusual and unique literary representation.

Sally Shuttleworth, in “The Psychology of Childhood in Victorian Literature and Medicine”, published in 2003, also studies the portrayal of Father Time with great interest, seeing him as ‘a literal enactment of the anthropological vision of the child as the embodied history of his race. More specifically, he becomes the expression of all the mistakes enacted in the relations of Jude, Arabella and Sue [...]’ (Shuttleworth, 2003: 98). Though she does not discuss Sue, or her role as a mother to her children in detail in her essay, she makes interesting observations about the way *Jude* ‘follows the more pessimistic model of childhood,’ offering in Father Time a terrifying example of a child

‘burdened by history’ (Shuttleworth, 2003: 98). Father Time becomes emblematic of the degeneration of his parents – both biological and adoptive. She uses the argument of Crichton Browne, a friend of Hardy, to show how ‘dreamy mental states’ can ‘create in the second generation problems with ideas of space, and in the third and fourth, the loss of a sense of personal identity’ (Shuttleworth, 2003: 98). She sees Father Time’s actions to be explainable by the ‘psychology of the time’, his ‘morbid temperament’ that Jude identifies in him (Shuttleworth, 2003: 98).

Shuttleworth considers Father Time’s portrayal to fall in line directly with the theory of a Victorian British psychiatrist, Henry Maudsley (1835 - 1918), who espoused that the ‘inheritance’ or the parentage of children determined their suicidal propensities. Maudsley linked children’s psychology to the mistakes of their parents that ultimately led to generational degeneration. The struggle with trying to gain a clear sense of self and a personal identity, which Shuttleworth observes and analyses in Father Time’s characterization, is observable time and again in Sue’s portrayal too, which makes her assessment of Father Time particularly relevant in the context of critically assessing Sue.

JoAnna Stephens Mink, in her essay “Three Generations of Unhealthy Family Relationships in *Jude the Obscure*” provides a glimpse of the ‘three levels or three generations of family relationships’ in *Jude* to show how the ‘most critical of these strata is formed by sibling relationships’ (Mink, 2008: 68). She gives an insight into the marriages of Jude and Sue’s parents through a study of Great-Aunt Drusilla’s ‘mutterings and comments about this reprehensible aspect of the family history’, not depicted in the novel. Then she moves to the two other generations actually shown in the novel, Sue’s relationship with Jude and ‘the significance of their cousinship, itself an extended sibling relationship’, before offering an analysis of little Father Time’s ‘melodramatic killing of

his half-siblings and himself” (Mink, 2008: 68-69). As Mink puts it, the ‘Fawley family history is given in bits and pieces, primarily through Drusilla’s forebodings’ and through Widow Edlin’s comment that even further back (than Sue and Jude’s parents’ generation), their family had been unlucky in marriage (Mink, 2008: 68). Mink highlights the fragmentation in the family units of the Fawleys through the generations, the bad marriages reflecting on ineffectual parenting and unhappy children who grew up to perpetuate the tragic circle with their own kids. Mink evaluates Sue in the role of a mother, keeping the focus primarily on the portrayal of Father Time seeing him as the representation of the ‘struggle to know oneself within the nuclear family’ (Mink, 2008: 66). He seeks Sue out for her affection, hoping that she will be able to provide him with the emotional security he needs to feel like a desired and loved member of the family. As Mink puts it:

Like his father, Father Time needs and seeks Sue’s love, but, like Jude, he seeks love in the wrong person. When Father Time believes himself and the other children a burden to her, he loses all hope and commits fratricide and suicide, foreshadowing Jude’s realization that without Sue’s presence, his life is hopeless.

The hanging scene, compounded by the stillbirth of Sue’s third child, is morbid and melodramatic but not perverse. It is Time’s tragic solution to the problem of dysfunctional family relationships (Mink, 2008: 66).

Mink sees Father Time’s suicide and murder of his siblings as a desperate search for self-identity when he feels unsure of his place within the family unit. He turns to the nearest adult, Sue, for reassurance, and Sue’s inability as a mother to reassure him leads to a chain of events that mark the death of the children, the death of Sue and Jude as parents – the death of the little ‘dysfunctional’ family unit of the Fawleys.

As is evident through the different critical perspectives discussed in this section, Sue’s competency as a mother in *Jude*, the scene of the hanging of the children and her subsequent surrender to the socio-religious traditions she fought against for her whole life

prior to the event, have raised many a critical eyebrow over the years. The critical commentary on Sue's depiction as a mother has particularly gained in complexity and nuance with the use of psychoanalytic theory and criticism. What is particularly interesting to note is Hardy's contribution to this ongoing critical debate and deliberation by maintaining stoic narratorial silence on Sue's thoughts and feelings while she is presumed to be undergoing pregnancy and childbirth. There is a jump in the narrative of 'two whole years and a half' from Chapter VI to Chapter VII of Part Fifth, 'At Aldbrickham and Elsewhere' (*Jude*: 298). During the window of this unrecorded time, Sue bears two children of her own and is pregnant with a third while being a step-mother to Arabella and Jude's son Father Time.

What Hardy does provide, are brief, teasing, inconclusive glimpses into Sue's psyche, through her conversations with the other characters that display her nervousness and apathy towards pregnancy and maternity, both before *and* after becoming a mother herself. In an earlier instance in the novel, Sue discloses her fear of consummation and pregnancy in a little note to Phillotson stating, '[n]o poor woman has ever wished more than I that Eve had not fallen, so that (as the primitive Christians believed) some harmless mode of vegetation might have peopled Paradise' (*Jude*: 216). Then, later in the novel, after having experienced motherhood herself, she concedes that she is not 'ashamed' of being a mother, but she considers bringing other lives into the world to be a 'terribly tragic thing' to do (*Jude*: 301). However, it is also important to note Brady's more positive take on the scenes that depict Sue as a mother:

In the scenes in which Sue is portrayed as a mother, her relationship with Jude seems without serious tension, and the two of them continually address each other in terms that suggest sexual closeness. Biological motherhood, it seems, has at least partially repressed the New Woman in Sue, imposing on her the conventional role of the wife whose body and desire belong to her husband (Brady, 1993: 99).

Brady goes on to add that ‘the narrator never describes Sue as manifesting nervous, contradictory, or hysterical symptoms during the time of her motherhood’, an argument I would counter by pointing out that Hardy the narrator does not offer much of a glimpse into that phase of Sue’s life, leaving a gap in the narrative. Brady considers Sue’s ‘apparent equilibrium’ to be ‘upset only by the gruesome death of her children, after which she abandons both her sexual relationship with Jude and her progressive ideas about woman’s role’, stating that ‘[t]he loss of reproductive and nurturing activity destroys Sue’s intellect, causing a hysterical reversal that exceeds all her earlier inconsistencies’ (Brady, 1993: 99).

Be it before, during or after, most of the textual details and critical opinions suggest that it is inherently problematic for Sue to cope with pregnancy, childbirth and motherhood. From analysing the critical commentary on Sue’s portrayal as a mother, it may appear that motherhood as a concept is at direct loggerheads with her drive for self-mastery. It is against her better judgement that she finally gives up ‘struggling against the current’ (*Jude*: 268), to accept Jude and Arabella’s son ‘Father Time’ into her family, which is her first taste of maternity, subsequently followed by children of her own born out of her free union with Jude. Father Time’s sad, little suicide note, ‘[d]one because we are too menny’, becomes a symbolic reflection of his internalized self-conception, his fear that he was a burden and an excess to Sue’s independent identity, the formation and disintegration of which is discussed at length in the next section.

The causal connection between the tragedy that befalls the family and Sue’s resultant breakdown is undeniable. In depicting Sue’s collapse, Hardy assimilates the rhetoric of inferior female organization and mental difference but does not simply represent it as fact, instead choosing to delve deeper into the psychosexual and not just merely sexual aspects of difference. Though Sue’s nervous disintegration takes the form of

a reversal to prescribed forms of womanhood, the capitulation cannot be considered a concession to the evolutionary argument against emancipation. Instead, Sue's belief that the catastrophe is a punishment for her aberrant notions is presented unequivocally as a sign of her succumbing to multiple interrelated factors, psychological, physiological, social, cultural and environmental.

§4.1B

Identity politics, gender, sexuality and Sue

In the latter part of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first, studies of Thomas Hardy's works demonstrate the use of psychoanalytic methods to analyse the issue of female identity, signalling a shift from sociological explanations of gender that restrict the understanding of an individual's identity to the socio-cultural context of their upbringing and life. The reluctance to associate qualities of being female or feminine with the notion of biological essentialism, that identified the qualities culturally identified as 'feminine' with female biology, becomes more apparent. To move away from naturalized accounts and engage more with the issue of 'gender', which is subjective, and sexuality, which cannot be neatly slotted into the existing categories of masculine and feminine, some feminists start to turn to psychoanalytic theories to offer more nuanced analyses. This liaison between feminist literary theory and psychoanalysis creates the grounds for some original and powerful readings of Thomas Hardy's female representations, offering intriguing insights into new ways of studying the link between language and the construction of the feminine identity: an essential aspect of feminist literary criticism.

Psychoanalytic criticism of Hardy's works is met with opposition from feminists like Kate Millett, who perceive Freud's theories about the human psyche and sexuality to perpetuate the patriarchal notion of masculine dominance and superiority over the feminine (Millett, 1970). Juliet Mitchell, in her book *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (1975), challenges this notion, instead seeing psychoanalysis as a way of understanding and contending with the patriarchal system, not a means to propagate and enhance it:

The greater part of the feminist movement has identified Freud as the enemy. It is held that psychoanalysis claims women are inferior and they can achieve true femininity only as wives and mothers [...] However it may have been used, psychoanalysis is not a recommendation *for* a patriarchal society, but an analysis *of* one. If we are interested in understanding and challenging the oppression of women, we cannot afford to neglect it (Mitchell, 1975: xv).

With Michel Foucault's development of his model of sexuality, discussed as a product of historical and socioeconomic contingency in his work *The History of Sexuality* (first published in 1976), the question of how best to theorize historical discourses of sex starts to receive more enhanced critical attention (Foucault, 1978). Foucault's account, alongside historicizing sexuality, also helps to sharpen the discussion surrounding the politics of sexuality, by arguing that Victorian culture, far from repressing sexuality, helped to produce, multiply and disperse it, which in turn led to a perception of sexuality to be at the core of a private identity; problematic and potentially dangerous when exposed in public. While Foucault's approach has been criticized for marginalizing issues of gender, it has served the purpose of paving the way for lively investigations of the complex interconnectedness of sexual behaviour and concepts of gender, with particular emphasis on the many facets of female sexuality. Subsequent feminist critics have since called for a more complex picture of Victorian sexual politics and sexual practice than has been explored through the Foucauldian paradigm.

Richard A. Kaye, in his essay "Sexual identity at the fin de siècle" (2007), offers an insight into the way the literature of the fin de siècle is studied with renewed interest by current critics who see that period to be marked by 'a perilously risqué epoch in attitudes about sex, sexuality and sexual identity'. As he puts it:

[...] the last decades of the century were dominated by controversies over declining birth rates and New Women, as well as sex scandals [...] At the same time, we find at the end of the century such visionary enterprises as the Free Union and Birth Control movements, along with considerable utopian thought on sexuality [...] the

deprivations of modern marriage and erotic longing with an explicitness, boldness and experimentalism that would have been impossible in a mid-Victorian context (Kaye, 2007: 53).

Kaye brings up the concept of 'sexual inversion' in his essay, originally studied at length by sexologist Havelock Ellis in collaboration with John Addington Symonds in *Sexual Inversion* (1897), a work that focussed on same-sex eroticism, also describing female inversion. As Kaye notes, theorists and literary authors and critics of the nineteenth century like Richard Krafft-Ebing, Havelock Ellis, Olive Schreiner and Madame Blavatsky were actively contributing to discussing and debating over new sexual theories:

Historians of sexuality have often noted that the 1880s and 1890s were a period of intense legal and medical theorising on sexuality, much of it rigidly given over to sexological 'types' whose sexuality was not only perverse but constituted their very identities (Kaye, 2007: 62).

Ellis' study made the examination of female sexual inversion a focal point of discussion of the structure of homosexuality related scandals of the 1890s. Richard Dellamora explores this too in his study *Masculine Desire* (1990). As Dellamora puts it:

[...] for Sue, Hardy sketches only two alternatives: a disabling normalcy or degrees of deviance. His position foreshadows the formulation of the lesbian type two years later by Havelock Ellis. Signs of gender inversion in Sue's behaviour and later criticism of her as "frigid" make her a fictional occasion of scandal. The more authentic base of scandal, however, exists in the fact that for as long as she can, she speaks intellectually and that she aspires to be a different sort of woman – even if neither she nor Hardy can say what feminine difference means (Dellamora, 1990: 215).

Kaye discusses how Ellis, alongside other sexologists of nineteenth century Britain, saw same-sex erotic pathology to be jeopardising the institution of marriage and strongly advocated that if either partner of a heterosexual marriage is identified as a 'sexual invert', they should be allowed to live free of the pressure to marry and produce children. Kaye construes Hardy's novels to be the 'period's most ferocious critique of Victorian

matrimony’, whether based on ‘momentary sexual attachments’ or ‘true affinity’, offering a deeply pessimistic view about ‘accomplishing a sexual revolution in his own time’, which reveals itself through the defeat of ‘sexual visionaries Jude and Sue’ by ‘social opprobrium and a soul-destroying fate’ (Kaye, 2007: 67).

Even though Kaye describes the marriage between Jude and Sue to be based on ‘true affinity’, the mismatch in their physical desire for each other is made apparent, and Hardy’s nebulous portrait of Sue’s sexual needs and desires leads to a lot of critical discussions about her sexuality. As Kaye puts it: ‘[w]here same-sex desire was before considered as “a temporary aberration”, the homosexual was now considered to be a “new species”; and thus, no matter the public opinion, to be inherently different from the normal, heterosexual body – hence, a threat’ during the late nineteenth century (Kaye, 2007: 62). Heike Bauer, in her essay “Theorizing Female Inversion: Sexology, Discipline, and Gender at the Fin de Siècle” describes ‘female inversion’ to be an idiom for ‘same-sex sexuality’ – the behavioural opposite of societal expectations of one’s gender and sexual preference:

[...] female inversion was largely tied to issues of social rather than sexual difference, at least initially, and to the mapping of distinctly configured roles for men and women. Accordingly, a notion of inversion also played a role in broader cultural discourses around the so-called woman question of the 1880s and 1890s. Critics have documented how misogynist responses to emerging feminism typically focused on what they perceived to be the ‘mannishness’ of the so-called New Woman. I suggest that feminists in turn appropriated a notion of female inversion understood as a form of rational female masculinity, formulating an affirmative feminist project that politicized gender but marginalized female same-sex sexuality (Bauer, 2009: 85-86).

Bauer, in her examination of the history of ‘female inversion’, like Kaye, discusses how homosexuality was considered a social problem, and had to succumb to public scrutiny and legal authority. Bauer also points out the problems inherent in ‘female inversion’. Whether

viewed misogynistically or as an appropriation for the cause of feminism, female same-sex sexuality continued to be marginalized.

In her 1993 essay, “Ruinous bodies: women and sexuality in Hardy’s late fiction” Lyn Pykett examines the characterizations of both Sue and Tess, Hardy’s two most problematic female representations, to provide a historical context for the close relationship between the male gaze and the construction of female fictional bodies in Hardy’s novels in her essay. Pykett starts her essay with a quotation from Sue that sums up Sue’s predicament in one short, plaintive sentence: ‘This pretty body of mine has been the ruin of me already’ (*Jude*: 382). Pykett focusses primarily on the shift in the perception of Hardy’s women in his later works to explore the way these ‘works tend both to focus on women as bodies, and to constitute the body (especially, although not exclusively, the female body) as a problem’ (Pykett, 1993: 158). She describes the scene of Sue buying the statues of Venus and Apollo from a strange foreigner on the streets to smuggle them back to her bedroom in detail, seeing it as a depiction of ‘a furtive encounter with alluring foreign bodies’ (Pykett, 1993: 161). Pykett construes that scene to be ‘an important moment in the representation of Sue as a creature of contrasts – a powerfully desiring female who desires not to desire, or desires a world in which sexual desire and bodily relations did not complicate relationships between men and women’ (Pykett, 1993: 161). Pykett argues that the supposedly ‘perverse sexuality’ of Sue ends up making her the embodiment of contemporary feminist arguments about sex relations, manifested through her disdain for the state-led institution of marriage that reduced women to the heteronormative biological functions of sex and reproduction.

The portrayal of Sue, according to Pykett, demonstrates the ‘limitations of the representational codes’ within which Hardy, alongside other New Woman novelists like

Sarah Grand and George Egerton, was working to shape the New Woman figure and make their voices heard. However, while other novelists tried to experiment with ‘new, often anti-realistic, techniques for mapping and exploring women’s interiority and articulating a distinctively feminine voice’, Hardy continued to ‘work within the representational codes of a realism’ that rendered women as ‘a series of (usually eroticised) fetishised physical parts, the enumeration of which gave a privileged access to feminine interiority’ (Pykett, 1993: 165).

Thus, according to Pykett, Sue’s portrayal remains contained within her female body, the site of her problems. Though Hardy ‘modernises realism’ in his portrayal of Sue, her female body becoming ‘not just a sign but a symptom, the hystericised expression and embodiment of a tormented psyche’, ‘the dominant narratorial perspective remains one of framing and distancing as it represents the spectacle of the hysteric’ (Pykett, 1993: 165). As Pykett succinctly puts it, ‘Hardy’s narrative gaze must, it seems, either look at or away from the female body. It must appropriate the female body, or risk appropriation by it’ (Pykett, 1993: 165).

Judith Mitchell, in her essay “Hardy’s Female Reader”, follows from Pykett’s argument in seeing Hardy as ‘one of the most scopophilic novelists in the nineteenth century’, stating that what makes his vision so ‘personal’ is the ‘eroticism that informs it’ (Mitchell, 1993: 174-175). However, the similarity in her analysis with Pykett ends there as she states that ‘Hardy did attempt to go beyond the scopophilic objectification of his female characters’ in his portrayal of Sue, who ‘commands a very different sort of attention’, ‘both from the male characters in the novel and the reader’ (Mitchell, 1993: 179). According to Mitchell, Sue is ‘an effective mouthpiece for much of Hardy’s polemic;

more importantly than this, her physical appearance, her status as an aesthetic and sexual object, is de-emphasized' (Mitchell, 1993: 179). As she puts it, Sue

[...] does not function solely as a female object in *Jude*; and yet, curiously, the reader seems to have no readier access to Sue's consciousness than to that of Hardy's other female characters. The reason for this, I would submit, is that none of Hardy's heroines including Sue, functions as a fictional subject (Mitchell, 1993: 179).

The deliberate obfuscation that Hardy creates around Sue's portrayal and her identity formation becomes the reason for her achieving more than just a fictional status in engaging the critical focus of the readers. Mitchell emphasizes how the readers are 'never given access to her consciousness, so that she remains an enigma rather than a true subject' (Mitchell, 1993: 179-180).

In *Hardy's Fables of Integrity: Woman, Body, Text* (1991), Marjorie Garson sees the female representations in *Jude* to be scapegoats, constructed almost as mythic subtexts in congruity to the masculine desires of Jude and his fears of dissolution and disillusion. Garson demonstrates how the narrative patterns in *Jude* formulate the female figures as symbols of the 'other' – not whole or complete themselves, but figures who expose the fragmentation in the male characters. Garson assesses *Jude* to be one of Hardy's best works as his repressed anxiety about the dissolution of the body is manifested in the main plot, not directly but obliquely, in figurative ways. Garson uses feminist appropriations of psychoanalysis in her study, particularly Jacques Lacan's concept of the mirror stage, *corps morcelé*, and the perception of woman as 'other' – the radical counterpart to the self, with particular associations to language (Garson, 1991). *Corps morcelé* is a Lacanian concept that literally means 'the body in pieces', or 'fragmented body', which Lacan uses to explain 'those primal (and largely unconscious) images of the fragmented body that

remind us of our earliest experiences of bodily discord, before we had gained a sense of our body as a whole, singular unit' (Watts, Cockcroft, Duncan, 2009: 266-267).

The 'mirror stage' is a part of the developmental state of the ego, and fundamentally dependent upon external objects - the other - which is then reflected in the social interactions and relations that an individual enters into with others through language, and the development of their unique personalities.²⁸ Lacan proposes that human infants go through a stage when the external perception of the body, reflected in the mirror or through the eyes of the primary caregiver, leads to the formation of the first mental representation of 'I'. Lacan discusses how the notion of 'the body in pieces' can be disturbing for the adult brain to process, accustomed as they are to being in control of their own limbs, and being able to distinguish themselves from others. An infant on the other hand, according to Lacan, has no proper sense yet of themselves as 'a unified anatomical whole' and are thus unaware of where their body ends and where the rest of the world begins. Garson uses Lacan's theory as the framework to explain 'somatic anxiety', 'anxieties about wholeness, about maleness and particularly about women', that finds expression in Hardy's novels (Garson, 1991: 1).

In her section on *Jude*, Garson identifies language to be more of a focal point of anxiety than even the body. She sees Jude as 'temperamentally logocentric', perpetually on the hunt for a transcendental reality that he assumes must be embedded in every word or sign, which is in direct contrast to actions of the more widely read Sue, who uses words and speech ironically and often inconsequentially, leading to a conflicting pull in opposing directions (Garson, 1991:153). She sees Sue's 'aggressively scatterbrained' conversation to

²⁸ From Lacan's essay on the Mirror stage (first printed in *Revue Francais de Psychanalyse*), Jean Russel published the first English translation in *New Left Review* (September/October 1968): 63-77

be a weapon that she uses more than her petite body, unlike Arabella, who openly uses her sexuality to crush Jude's desires and ambitions, both professionally and personally (Garson, 1991: 164). Ultimately, Garson perceives both Sue and Arabella as emblems of the 'castrating woman', agents of Jude's destruction, thwarting him 'by drawing him down into the body and then dismembering him' (Garson, 1991: 158, 153). Garson perceives Sue as a powerful antagonist to Jude's aspirations, victimized though she herself is by the expectations and perceptions of her held by the men in her life. She shows how Sue becomes a symbolic embodiment of Jude's dreams of an educated, cultured life – a revered aspiration. In putting Sue up on a pedestal alongside his dreams of studying in Christminster, Jude re-creates Sue in his mind as a spiritual, bodiless being, while expecting her to satisfy his sexual desires too. The clash between Jude's idea of Sue, and the actual personality of Sue as portrayed in the novel, results in Sue ultimately becoming an antagonistic force towards Jude's academic aspirations too, even if she is not depicted in the text to be attacking and destroying Jude's books physically, as Arabella is shown to do. Garson points out how Sue and Arabella, despite the differences in their portrayal, both on physical and emotional terms, end up being interlinked in their relationships as mother to Father Time and as partner to Jude, becoming causal forces in a chain of events that result in the deaths of both (Garson, 1991: 172-174).

Garson investigates the structural function served by Sue and Arabella, depicted as two halves of a whole, in some kind of a secret pact with each other, the action of one directly affecting and leading to the action of the other. However, this depicted collusion between them, as pointed out by Garson, does not have true basis in the actual relationship portrayed between the two characters by Hardy. She shows how the portrayal of Sue in *Jude* evokes pity on the one hand, as she seems to be trapped helplessly in the flesh/spirit

dichotomy, and frustration and anger on the other, for her impulsive actions, which keeps her presentation challenging, fresh, provocative, and consistently interesting to critics.

Kristin Brady, in her essay “Thomas Hardy and matters of gender” offers a ‘schematic summary’, a broad historical overview, of ‘the most significant responses to representations of sexual difference in Hardy’s texts’ (Brady, 1999: 93). She discusses how sexuality is intrinsically linked to gender, and perceives Hardy’s works to be ‘explicitly and obsessively associated with matters of gender’ (Brady, 1999: 93). In evaluating late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century responses to Sue’s portrayal, Brady points out the essentialist and biologically determinist nature of the critical perception of her, stating that:

For many nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century readers [...] Hardy’s women were organisms in varying degrees of health, with an unstable relationship between body and mind. Female rather than feminine, they took readers back to the “primitive” roots described by Darwin and other scientific thinkers of the period (Brady, 1999: 97).

Through the course of the essay, Brady traces the shift in the history of responses to issues of gender in Hardy’s texts over mid to late twentieth century. Brady demonstrates how the terms of analysis have become ‘both technically and ideologically complex’:

We no longer have a one-dimensional understanding of Hardy’s authorial role, nor do we assume that his texts are perfectly unified. Hardy, his characters, his plots, his language, his images, his narrative devices, his actual and inscribed readers - not to mention his relationships with other texts and with pressing issues of his own time - all are seen to operate in an association of conflict and contradiction: Hardy’s texts like women and dislike them; they depict and evoke both pleasure and pain, both arousal and anxiety; they are the source for female readers of frustration and fascination (Brady, 1999: 104).

Brady then asks the important question, ‘[w]hat more, then, is to be said about Thomas Hardy and matters of gender?’ (Brady, 1999: 104). She wonders if Hardy’s texts would continue to function as ‘one of the richest and most complex sources of feminist commentary in the realist Novel’, as Judith Mitchell puts it (Mitchell, 1993: 186), or if we,

the readers, have ‘exhausted their potential (or they ours) to make us think again about sexual difference’ (Brady, 1999, 104). Brady contends, as I have also been demonstrating in this thesis, that the readers have most certainly not yet exhausted the potential of reading Hardy’s depiction of psychologically complex female representations like Sue, from increasingly more complex critical and theoretical frameworks. As critics and readers alike have found, Sue cannot be reduced to any single idea or opinion, or analysed through any one theoretical framework.

§4.2

The New Woman, Aestheticism and Sue

§4.2A

The New Woman Revisited

In this section, I will revisit the concept of the ‘New Woman’, focussing on the modern feminist re-evaluations of the problematic phrase that is used as a collective term, variously applied to multiple ‘types’ of female figures who shared the common desire to attain gender equality, and yet rarely shared political viewpoints or agreed on key issues.²⁹ As discussed briefly in the first chapter, Sally Ledger demonstrates in her historicist study how the British New Woman was not an ‘easily definable stock character, but a composite of conflicting, contradictory, and discursively constructed ideas about women’s rights at a time of social and political uproar’ (Ledger, 1997: 1-2). Ledger focusses particularly on the relationship between Sue Bridehead and the politics of the New Woman, looking at the multiple identities of the New Woman in both social and textual contexts as well as the cultural movements of the period, including decadence, socialism, imperialism, notions of

²⁹ Studies like Ann Ardis’ *New Woman, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism*, (1990), Lyn Pykett’s *The Improper Feminine: The Women’s Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing* (1990), and Angelique Richardson’s *Love and Eugenics in the Late Nineteenth Century: Rational Reproduction and the New Woman* (2008), bring the focus back on the New Woman again in the late twentieth and early twenty first century.

homosexuality and the growth and development of a more urban landscape. She emphasizes how the New Woman posed a major ‘representational problem’ in fictional and cultural works and suggests that this is nowhere more evident than in *Jude*. Sue, according to Ledger, exemplifies the characteristics of the New Woman to the fullest in being ‘anti-marriage, well educated and sexually recalcitrant’ (Ledger, 1997: 182). Ledger also traces in the ultimate fate of Sue, where she is reduced to a ‘a mere cluster of nerves’ and fully succumbs to social expectations, another significant sign of her being a New Woman as this eventual mental breakdown and ultimate conformity were the usual fates of the previously pioneering fictional representations of the New Woman. Ledger sees ‘the problematic, elusive status of Sue’s identity’ to be the factor that distinguishes her most emphatically, ‘both as a New Woman and as a challenge to the realist fictional aesthetic’ (Ledger, 1997: 182). Sue, with ‘the unintelligibility of her actions’, and her perpetual vacillations ‘between rebellious Voltairean modernity and a cowed submission to social convention – defies the usual plot conventions of the nineteenth-century novel’ (Ledger: 182). Ledger sees *Jude* to be ‘*all about* [...] that very instability of identity’ of Sue, ‘which has troubled so many readers’ (Ledger, 1997: 184). She harks back to Hardy’s narrator as well as the other characters, who refer to Sue as a ‘riddle’, ‘one lovely conundrum’, ‘perverse’, of ‘colossal inconsistency’, ‘elusive’, possessing a ‘curious double nature’, ‘puzzling and unstateable’ (*Jude*: 128, 130, 127, 167, 356, 200, 215) to demonstrate that ‘such an abundance suggests a level of overdetermination’ (Ledger, 1997: 183-184).³⁰

³⁰ Interestingly, the paperback edition of Ledger’s book features a photograph of actress Kate Winslet enacting the role of Sue Bridehead in the 1996 film adaptation of Hardy’s *Jude* which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. This linking of Victorian literature and contemporary popular culture illustrates the way the ‘New Woman’ has retained interest over the decades and remained a relevant point of consideration while studying Victorian feminism as well as in the development of contemporary feminisms, furthering critical explorations in the fields of gender and sexuality.

An early study of Sue as a New Woman figure is Kathleen Blake's "Sue Bridehead, 'The Woman of the Feminist Movement'", where she argues that Sue represents 'a type, however brilliantly individualized' (Blake, 1978: 704). She discusses the many accounts that Hardy provides of 'what weakens Sue': her 'inhibition of sexuality', 'attenuated sexual nature', 'oddly excessive guilt', 'unexpected invocations of convention' (Blake, 1978, 719, 720, 716), to contend that

[...] even when Sue appears to act conventionally, she often does so out of the most unconventional of motives. This makes inadequate the idea that she exposes at the end an ordinariness that has only been covered over with daring theories. Sue may be overpowered, she may fall short of her promise, she may buckle to the letter of the law, but she is never ordinary. Just as her sexual repression comes from her feminism, more than from the Victorian commonplace of feminine purity which it externally resembles, so does much of her behaviour represent tactics in a highly individualized feminist program, sometimes just when it looks the most externally conventional (Blake, 1978: 721).

Blake's analysis of Sue is compelling as she suggests that Sue's feminist method is to remain a virgin, which is her means to escape the pain and sufferings attendant upon her gender. As she puts it:

Sue attempts a daring and dangerous combination of gravitation and rejection. This is her method. She says that she owes all of her advantages to a certain peculiarity that has shaped her life. It is that she has no fear of men and can mix with them freely. She removes the sexual barrier by as much as possible removing the sexual element from the relationship. This she does by repressing sexual invitation in herself (Blake, 1978: 709-710).

Blake studies Sue's comment 'Until [a woman] says by a look "Come on" he is always afraid to, and if you never say it, or look it, he never comes' (*Jude*: 141), to infer that Sue's sexual self-restraint stems from a deliberate repression of her sexual impulses in order to widen her opportunities, not frigidity, as many critics believe.

A number of essays that appear in different academic journals in the 1990s continue to show the ever-growing trend of vigorous critical interest in Sue's portrayal, particularly in seeing her as a proto-feminist and aligning her with the 'New Woman' tradition. Cedric Watts, in "Hardy's Sue Bridehead and the 'New Woman'" (1993), contests the idea espoused by a German reviewer of *Jude* that Sue 'was the first delineation in fiction of the woman who was coming into notice in her thousands every year – the woman of the feminist movement [...]'.³¹ Watts traces the history of the inception of the tradition of the New Woman and shows how the 'woman question' had gained momentum due to the avid literary interest and output on the same during the late nineteenth century:

Repeatedly, the fictional New Woman is portrayed as intelligent, lively, articulately forthright, capable of pursuing her own career, sexually daring (whether in seductive action or defiant abstinence), and resistant to the conventional claims of marriage (Watts, 1993: 153- 154).

Though Watts refutes the claim that Sue is the first literary depiction of a 'New Woman', he still considers Sue to be a fascinating representation of the New Woman; a flagbearer of new enlightenment born out of the educational opportunities she receives, more 'vivid, intense and moving' than any other female characterization by Hardy (Watts, 1993: 156). Sue, according to Watts, is made more interesting by Hardy's ambivalence in his portrayal of her, his allegiance veering 'markedly between sympathy for the independently minded young woman who seeks to elude stereotyping' and 'endorsement of some traditional stereotypes' (Watts, 1993: 156). This is visible in the way 'part of the time the narrative shows keen sympathy with Jude's sexual frustration and his tantalisation by Sue's mixture of the seductive and the resistant; part of the time it sympathises with Sue's endeavour to preserve an integrity unviolated by the claims of the flesh' (Watts, 1993: 154).

³¹ See *Jude the Obscure*, ed. C. H. Sisson (London: Penguin, 1985) p 42.

Watts considers Sue's portrayal to possess 'a stronger reality than the fictional New Woman customarily acquires', as Hardy's stance as a narrator 'shifts between the general and the particular, between theoretical debate and the concretely realised details of life, and his strongly dialectical imagination which repeatedly generates ironic contrasts and juxtapositions' (Watts, 1993: 156). Watts construes Hardy's representation of Sue to be his contribution and the extension of his influence to the cause of the suffragette movement, the precursor to modern day feminism.

The avid critical interest in Sue, which continues long after its publication, is a point that critic Michael Thorpe emphasizes in his essay "Sue the Obscure: Hardy's Female Readers" (1995). Thorpe's essay focusses on the 'woman novel' of the late nineteenth century. He points out that not even Grant Allen's notorious and hugely popular *The Woman Who Did*, published the same year as *Jude* so vigorously outlived its time as the male Hardy's 'Sue novel'. He elaborates on Patricia Ingham's claim that *Jude* is the 'most feminist of all Victorian novels', while also pointing out how deeply divided feminist critics are as to what this feminism entails. This continued critical dissent becomes a driving force in the continued interest in and dissection of Sue's portrayal.

William A. Davis Jr., in "Reading Failure in(to) *Jude the Obscure*: Hardy's Sue Bridehead and Lady Jeune's 'New Woman' Essays, 1885-1890" (1998), continues the tradition of studying Sue's portrayal as a 'New Woman' figure and considers the controversy surrounding the depiction of Sue to stem from Hardy's own ambivalent feelings towards contemporary feminist ideas (Davis Jr, 1998: 53-70). Davis Jr. discusses the way Hardy showed clear interest in the works of 'New Woman' writers like Sarah Grand and Olive Schreiner, while also being a long-standing friend of Lady Susan Mary Elizabeth Jeune. Lady Jeune was a baroness and socialite, who was renowned for penning

notorious anti-New Woman articles like “Revolt of the Daughters” and “Women of Today, Yesterday and Tomorrow” that showcased her concern and anxiety for the ‘perfectly unnatural’ life led by the New Women (Jeune, 1889-90: 558). Davis leads his argument by raising a central question:

Hardy’s ambivalent approach to Sue Bridehead might best be introduced by posing a central question: does Hardy like the New Woman, and was *Jude the Obscure* written to support her at a time when journalists like Lady Jeune were enthusiastically criticizing her? (Davis, 1998: 65)

Davis Jr. tries to ascertain the extent of Lady Jeune’s influence on Hardy’s characterization of Sue and concludes that neither is Hardy a reactionary like Jeune, nor an outright advocate for the cause of feminism (Davis, 1998: 67-68). Hardy’s confusion is observable in the portrayal of Sue, whom he shows to be intelligent, educated and intentionally and clearly resistant to the conventional social and sexual practices of the Victorian era. However, he also paints her with the negative stereotypes of the New Woman figure, shown through her coldness towards her lovers, her problematic maternity, and her utter inconsistency of thought and action.

Davis’s essay reveals why it is important to recover Lady Jeune’s anti-New Woman essays when critically engaging with Hardy’s portrayal of Sue. Davis sees Lady Jeune’s ideas to be symptomatic of the voice of ‘the critical traditionalists’ that tried to ‘stall the progress of real New Women from the mid-1880s and into the early twentieth century’ (Davis, 1998: 65). The ‘internalized version’ of this ‘voice’ becomes the root of Sue’s ‘uncertainty, her self-accusation, her tendency to contradict herself, and her guilt’ (Davis, 1998: 65). This analysis provides a direct insight into Sue’s uncharacteristic capitulation to the social and religious conventions of the nineteenth century by the end of the novel, and her turning into ‘an ironic spokesperson’ for the ideas championed by anti-New Woman

writers, after revolting against them her whole life (Davis, 1998: 65). Davis picks up from the idea espoused by Watts before him that Hardy uses a ‘theoretical debate’ as a structure to create the ‘concretely realised details of life’ that he then names Sue Bridehead (Watts, 1993: 156). Davis adds to the idea, seeing Hardy’s conversations with Lady Jeune and his perusal of her essays to have merged with his knowledge about the contemporary politics of his time that featured real and literary New Women figures, and that this shaped his characterisation of Sue.

Davis’s analysis offers a possible explanation for the movement away from reading *Jude* just as a social realist novel that depicts Hardy’s criticism of social forces and the restrictions of rigid morality, implying that the struggle of the protagonists is external and that with a more reformed and liberal social structure, they would thrive. Davis suggests an alternative line of enquiry; an idea discussed previously by critics like A. R. Cunningham, that the ‘New Woman’ figure possesses some inner defect to begin with, an innate characteristic that makes them break down emotionally eventually. As Davis puts it, even when Hardy presents Sue in a sympathetic light, there is a potential way of solving the conundrum presented by Sue’s portrayal which is ‘fix Sue, and Sue will thrive’, shifting the focus from external forces to internal ones (Davis, 1998: 66). Davis’s essay continues from previous studies of Sue that see her as ‘abnormal’ and can also be seen to anticipate future critical readings of Sue that consider her portrayal from a more medicalized viewpoint, seeing her characterization to have diagnosable mental health issues.

Amanda Claybaugh explores the link between law and literature, studying Sue as a ‘New Woman’ and the marriage laws of the Victorian society in her interdisciplinary essay “*Jude the Obscure: The Irrelevance of Marriage Law*” (2013). Claybaugh contextualizes the ‘New Woman’ as ‘less a program’, more ‘a controversy’, as a consequence of which

‘the New Woman genre is a remarkably capacious one, including male as well as female writers, proto-modernists and decadents as well as realists; essayists and playwrights as well as novelists [...]’ (Claybaugh, 2013: 53-54). She considers Sue to be a ‘paradigmatic New Woman’ and *Jude* to be a work that studies the changing marriage and divorce laws. Claybaugh sardonically discusses the trajectory that the novel follows: both Sue and Jude marrying the wrong partner for them, both desperately wanting to leave their spouses but somehow not considering divorce. Then, two-thirds of the way through the novel, Arabella asks Jude for a divorce, leading to Sue asking Phillotson for one; all the characters are suddenly shown to be familiar with the Matrimonial Causes Act. Jude and Sue’s divorces from previous partners are then followed by them living together without getting married, facing social ostracism because of it, encountering the horrifying deaths of their children and, ultimately, both Jude and Sue returning to, and remarrying, the spouses they had divorced previously in the novel. This chain of events leads a confused Claybaugh to exclaim:

How to make sense of this ending? The novel attempts to place it within three literary modes. From the perspective of tragedy, Jude and Sue suffer because they are destined to do so [...] From the perspective of naturalism, Jude and Sue are simply superfluous [...] Finally, from the perspective of a modernity that is aligned with the novel’s proto-modernism, Jude and Sue are simply the first victims of a modern disease, what their doctors refers to as “the coming universal wish not to live” (337). Tragedy, naturalism, modernity: these are the accounts that the narrator and the characters give [...] The novel’s more serious literary engagement is elsewhere, with a specifically fin-de-siècle genre, New Woman writing (Claybaugh, 2013: 53).

The most interesting observation and input from Claybaugh lies in her analysis of Hardy’s denial that he had created a New Woman in Sue, or used her portrayal as his mouthpiece on contemporary marriage debates. Claybaugh asks:

‘How to make sense of these denials? To some extent, they were entirely typical of Hardy. From the beginning until the end of his novel-writing career, Hardy both courted and defied his readers, equally canny in his sense of what would please and what would shock. The young Hardy who plaintively asked the editors who rejected his manuscripts what “sort of story” he “could do best” would become the older Hardy writing his last novel in the most popular genre of his day. And the Hardy who wrote with such unprecedented frankness about sexuality and then asked why his readers were shocked was the same Hardy who drew on all the tropes of New Woman (Claybaugh, 2013: 60).

Claybaugh’s analysis highlights Hardy’s deliberate creation of controversy and obfuscation, designed to surround the plot and characters of *Jude*. Claybaugh suggests that a cunning Hardy knew just what he was doing and played his audience, being aware of the controversy and response it would stir up. But the continued critical interest in reading Sue reveals that *Jude* has moved past authorial intention to being a medium that shapeshifts with its different readers and their different analyses.

In her book, *Seeing Women as Men: Role Reversal in the Novels of Thomas Hardy* (1995), Ellen Lew Sprechman studies Hardy’s depiction of the ‘female hero’, his consciously engineered subversion of the traditional hero/heroine tropes, disengaging the characters from their gendered associations and expectations. She studies Hardy’s consistent creation of controversial female characters, who champion their rights to be regarded as individuals instead of being the supporting ‘other’ to their male relations – father, husband or child. While the individuality of these fictional female characters is at times shown as innate, Sprechman also discusses how the liberal ideas in Hardy’s women were sometimes learnt. She shows the difference between Hardy’s portrayals of Tess and Sue based on their life circumstances and varying levels of exposure to the world:

Tess’s experiences in life were limited to a simple rural existence; she knew little of social issues. Sue, on the other hand, has her education and this gives her greater possibilities. For this reason, Hardy is able to show that she possesses a strong will, which allows her to take a much stronger stance against marriage (Sprechman, 1995: 112).

In showing the difference between Tess and Sue, Sprechman suggests that Hardy highlights the role that education and an increasingly urbanized existence play in the development of Sue's liberalism and individuality. She shows how Sue becomes 'the standard-bearer for Hardy's causes', portrayed to idolize 'Mill, followed by Shelley, whom she sees as an intellectual rebel', which 'contributes to her ambivalence concerning the traditional role of women in marriage and society' (Sprechman, 1995: 120, 116). Sue, according to Sprechman, 'remains a symbol of the early feminist who retains not only her free will and independence despite the difficulties it causes her, but her contradictions, unpredictability, and inconsistencies combine with intelligence and determination to make her the most intriguing hero in Hardy's fiction' (Sprechman, 1995: 120).

Sprechman herself acknowledges that the nature of her study in seeing Hardy's women as the strong, active forces and his men as the passive ones is not original. She does not analyse his novels chronologically to show the change and progression in Hardy's approach and authorial process in the creation of his female protagonists alongside the cultural processes they confront, instead choosing to read each novel to be telling the same story of a 'female hero'. Her analysis takes the focus away from the contradictions that make Hardy's female representations stand out from each other, aided by the variability of the narrative voice that portrays them.

In *Ethics and Narrative in the English Novel, 1880-1914*, Jil Larson too sees Hardy as a 'New Woman' novelist, who can be compared to Sarah Grand and Olive Schreiner because he 'seeks to forge new definitions of what can constitute gender identity and sexual morality' (Larson, 2001: 49). Larson discusses how critics like John Kucich (1994) attribute 'the ethical contradictions of Hardy's novels to his gender', perceiving him as 'significantly less feminist than his female contemporaries', and demurs, stating that

‘preconceptions about women, emotions, and ethics’ have prevented critics from seeing the similarity between Hardy and ‘New Woman’ writers like Schreiner and Grand (Larson, 2001: 48). While Kucich sees Hardy as a ‘detached aesthete who scapegoats women and who distances himself from emotion, sexual desire, and subjectivity, thereby safeguarding his own moral position’, Larson points out the assumption inherent in Kucich’s reading, ‘the belief that emotion and desire interfere with responsible ethical choice’ (Larson, 2001: 49). Larson opines that the central idea of Hardy’s fiction is that reason and emotion are not separate spheres divorced from each other. Instead, Hardy chooses to construct a ‘contextual ethics of particularity’, questioning stereotypes and seeking to vindicate ‘the ethical and cognitive potential of emotion’, associating emotion with women without attaching a derogatory connotation to it (Larson, 2001: 49). Larson’s discussion about the ‘complex body of fin-de-siècle literature’ is particularly relevant while analysing Sue’s portrayal, as she studies how ‘this fiction often contrasts women whose intellect and education arm them with direct methods of self-defence to women who rely more exclusively on emotions and desires that lead them to indirect forms of influence and manipulation’ (Larson, 2001: 49). A classic case in point is the contrasting depictions of Sue and Arabella in *Jude*. Larson deliberates on the manner in which this paves the way for the dramatization of a new kind of flirt – who, unlike the ‘traditional coquette’, is a ‘Victorian feminist’ who flirts ‘not only to attract attention and indulge her desires but also to experiment and learn’ (Larson, 2001: 50). Larson discusses flirting as a feminist action that has the potential to act as a ‘new ethics of possibility’, before the proto-feminist character is given a tragic fate (Larson, 2001: 59-60).

Larson praises Hardy for subverting the ‘separate spheres of ideology by creating men, such as Jude and Phillotson, who are as tender hearted and emotional as the female

characters, and women who are intellectuals' (Larson, 2001: 54). As she puts it, 'Sue, the novel's New Woman, educates both Jude and Phillotson through her intellectual superiority' (Larson, 2001: 54). While her role as an influencer on the men in her life remains a rather traditional aspect of Victorian female representation, the main difference between other Victorian heroines and Sue, as pointed out by Larson, is that:

[...] her moral influence is not only as intellectual as it is emotional: it is thoroughly unconventional. Her collapse at the end of the novel into guilt-ridden hysteria is a symptom of her emotional susceptibility [...] After this breakdown, she unsuccessfully attempts to reverse the ethical education she has provided for Phillotson and Jude. Only as a force of conventional influence is Sue ineffectual (Larson, 2001: 55).

Larson sees Sue as the agent of Hardy's subversion of the 'paradigm of traditional feminine influence' and discusses how that influence is an important consideration, while contemplating the ethics of the novel.

An interesting, albeit brief, discussion of Sue's characterization appears in Richard Kaye's *The Flirt's Tragedy: Desire Without End in Victorian and Edwardian Fiction* (2002). This book is worth noting when considering the Aesthetic and Decadent movement of the nineteenth century and its influence on literary readings. Kaye's study is structured around Darwin's book *The Descent of Man* (1871), focussing in particular on Darwin's theory of sexual selection, which 'implicitly questioned prevailing Victorian conceptions of the passive female [...]' (Kaye, 2002: 90). He asserts that Hardy and Eliot are among the major Victorian novelists who 'consciously acknowledge and assimilate Darwinian structures of thought throughout their writing', being:

[...] absorbed by the latent, prickly subtextual predicament raised by *The Descent of Man*: what might occur if the female grew to relish too greatly the initial stages of sexual selection, protracting choice and thus perversely honoring, but also disturbing, the "rules" of nature? (Kaye, 2002: 118).

He stresses the interwoven issues of ‘*female dominance and male beauty*’, that made Darwin’s theories of sexual selection so controversial during the nineteenth century as they ‘not only emphasized the role of female choice’ but also ‘suggested that in the heightened sexual contest of courtship, female judgment would determine the fates of particular men’ (Kaye, 2002: 96). Kaye’s use of Darwin’s theory to throw insight into the power play at the heart of heterosexual courtships, where the ability of a woman to flirt becomes an indicator of the amount of power she wields, leads to a fascinating argument surrounding the sexual and hence social power that can be enjoyed by women in courtships.

Kaye, in his discussion of Hardy’s novels, focusses on the interesting relationship between flirtation and sexuality that seems to be fraught with difficulty. According to Kaye, Hardy depicts flirtation as ‘inherently social, distinct from an eros that exists in a wholly personal realm’, clearly displaying his fascination for ‘women whose allure grows – and, indeed, whose very characters are formed – through an increase in the number of men vying for their approval’, as can be seen in Sue’s portrayal (Kaye, 2002: 19). Kaye begins his study by discussing how flirtation ‘represented a useful paradox not only because it was tragically and comically resonant but also because it reflected the self at its most intensely sociable and most frustratingly secret’ (Kaye, 2002: 13).

He substantiates his study of flirtation and the narrative politics surrounding it by covering a massive range of literary output, ranging from Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, Henry James, Edith Wharton, Gustave Flaubert and Oscar Wilde to E. M. Forster and D.H. Lawrence. Kaye discusses how, by the end of the nineteenth century, novelists like Hardy (case in point, *Jude*) were increasingly depicting ‘the female flirt as a social menace, her strategies not only perniciously insincere, a threat to customary methods of unravelling identity, but unnatural as well’ (Kaye, 2002: 151).

This line of enquiry is particularly interesting in Kaye's study of Hardy's presentation of Sue, who according to Kaye is 'self-punitively aware that she is caught between the ideals of Hellenic culture and Christian values', and is frantically acting out her 'neurotic confusions' (Kaye, 2002: 153). According to Kaye, Sue should have flirted less as she plays the waiting game so long with her potential suitors that it becomes detrimental to all the parties involved. As Kaye espouses in the introduction to his book, flirtation has a distinct function; it teaches an individual, maybe otherwise shy and introverted, to be socially more savvy and sexy, which leads ultimately to finding and securing a mate. Sue violates this function entirely. She uses flirtation to keep the romantic suitors interested in her, without intending to consummate the union.

The main problem with this otherwise engaging and suggestive study is that Kaye moves too quickly across too many authors and texts. Consequently, he does not manage to offer a conclusive analysis of the conflict between flirtation and sexuality that he points out in his rich study of the narrative politics surrounding the act of flirtation and the literary characters who practise it. His theoretical capaciousness works against him as he flittingly offers interesting insights into literary characterizations without giving any particular character the narrative and critical space that they deserve. But Kaye's study still remains interesting and relevant, as it highlights the way the fictional depiction of Sue's flirtatious nature can be seen as a symptom and reflection of both her personal, as well as political, position in the private and public spheres of the nineteenth century.

§4.2 B

Aestheticism and Sue

The line between sexology and aestheticism can be quite blurred, as Kaye notes in his essay “Sexual Identity”:

Partly as a mode of defence in the wake of the new criminal and medical establishment, the Aestheticist and Decadent movements propagated coded, positive conceptions of erotic life and sexual identity [...] For many late-Victorians, an imagined past represented a fertile area in which to think about sexuality (Kaye, 2007: 67 -68).

During the fin de siècle, art, politics, science and society were radically transformed by the emergence of new theories and challenges to tradition, arguably the most significant of them being the change in the perception of the role of women. The new opportunities available to women in public spheres shook the inevitability of the pattern of marriage followed by motherhood as the ultimate and the inevitable route towards securing financial security. Though controversial, sexual freedom, desire and the importance of pursuing new sensations, at the heart of many debates at the turn of the century, were being addressed in a candid manner, for instance, Sue’s portrayal in *Jude*. This explains why the ‘New Woman’, with her undermining of the traditional view of the feminine, and the ‘dandy’ with his challenge to the accepted view of masculinity, became fashionable cultural icons of the time.

Aestheticism became prominent during the nineteenth century, as an intellectual movement, propounding the idea of ‘Art for Art’s sake’, valuing the aesthetic and pleasing quality of art more than its deeper significance (the projection of individual, social and political ideology within literary works). The prose style associated with aestheticism was

often condemned as ‘purple prose’ for its elaborate and ornate nature, influenced as it was by the stylistic techniques of imaginative, allusive and metaphoric writing. Oscar Wilde is a particularly important example of the mode of writing of the Aesthetes, who relished playfulness and paradox over Victorian ideas about earnest and serious argument, teasing readers with the idea that life imitates art rather than the other way round. During the 1890s, the term ‘Decadence’ also became associated with Aestheticism, literally meaning a process of ‘falling away’, or decline. Arthur Symons, in his essay “The Decadent Movement in Literature” (1893), describes decadence as ‘a new and beautiful and interesting disease’ (Symons, 1893: 859). Norman Page writes in “Art and Aesthetics”:

Some of Hardy’s most striking dicta seem designed to make it difficult to speak of his aesthetics – seem, indeed, to embody a dogged or defiant anti-aestheticism. For while some of his finest work, including two of his greatest novels and his first volume of verse, appeared in the 1890s, he was decidedly not *of* the nineties and while he would never have come out in favour of “art for *my* sake” as aggressively as D.H. Lawrence, he would surely have given this stance his quietly firm endorsement (Page, 1999: 38).

Considering Hardy’s position within his socio-cultural context and his literary ideology as expressed in his personal notebooks, Page surmises that Hardy’s ‘self-depiction as one with “fugitive impressions” rather than a coherent philosophy suggests that he may have more in common with the Aesthetic Movement than has sometimes been supposed’ (Page, 1999: 52).

In *Women and British Aestheticism* (1999), edited by Talia Schaffer and Kathy Alexis Psomiades, the aesthetic novel is analysed as a significant alternative to New Womanism and naturalism. The essays in the first section focus on the fiction of the fin de siècle, and discuss Aestheticism as a movement founded on cultural and not formal concerns. Schaffer and Psomiades show a clear interest in the concept espoused by Regenia Gagnier, who merges the ideas of the ‘economic man’ and ‘aesthetic man’,

marking a shift from Aestheticism to a more socially inclusive ideology, that ‘for feminist critics of economics and aesthetics the economic life and the aesthetic life should be one’ (Gagnier, 1993: 149). This kind of a reworking of the literary culture of the late Victorian era from a cultural materialist viewpoint, as pointed out by Schaffer and Psomiades, ‘enables us to rethink historical constructs of nineteenth-century culture and to revise our own contemporary critical paradigms’ (Schaffer and Psomiades, 1999: 19).

This literary approach becomes particularly interesting while reading and analysing a literary figure like Sue, as can be observed in Schaffer’s book *The Forgotten Female Aesthetes* (2000). Here, Schaffer develops her ideas on Aestheticism further, focussing on the female aesthetes who have heretofore been neglected as the focus has primarily been on the ‘New Woman’ or male aesthetes, who shared significant common ground. Schaffer discusses how the phrase ‘New Woman’ indicated a highly diverse group of ideas and values, thus reflecting the non-homogeneity of the late-Victorian women’s movements, also studying some non-fictional New Women like George Egerton and Mona Caird, who intentionally remained loyal to both feminism and aestheticism by adopting the New Woman’s values, but dressing like women of the Pre-Raphaelite era.

In her chapter on Lucas Malet (Mary St. Leger Kingsley Harrison), who was a vital but hitherto unrecognized part of British aestheticism, Schaffer argues that Hardy was inspired by Malet’s book *Wages of Sin* (1890) while writing *Jude* (1895). Schaffer sees Sue’s portrayal as a satire of Malet’s fictional presentation of a ‘New Woman’, Mary Crookenden, and her relationship with her teacher Colthurst, a platonic love affair until his premature death. A reading of Sue in the context of studying female aesthetes is particularly interesting as Schaffer attempts not only to restore the legacy of the lost female writers of the late-Victorian generation, but also examine what it means to develop a

different version of a literary genre and Sue's place in it. Multiple critical studies, like Regenia Gagnier's *Idylls of the Marketplace: Oscar Wilde and the Victorian Public* (1986), Jonathan Freedman's *Professions of Taste: Henry James, British Aestheticism, and Commodity Culture* (1990) and Richard Dellamora's *Masculine Desire: The Sexual Politics of Victorian Aestheticism* (1990) have highlighted the link between aestheticism and commodity culture. Schaffer builds upon these studies to throw light on the way aestheticism blurs the boundaries of high art and mass culture, showing how portrayals like those of Sue retain critical interest and continued relevance. Analysis of this nature, which is also a satire of the presentation of the 'New Woman', reveals the other side of the coin: the lively debate surrounding the 'New Woman' label that also made it a figure of ridicule and caricature. Schaffer, in a later essay "Nothing but Foolscap and Ink: Inventing the New Woman", leads with the question 'Did the New Woman really exist?' (Schaffer, 2002: 39). In her essay she studies the inherent tension between the media caricature of the 'New Woman' as 'the unsexed, terrifying, violent Amazon ready to overturn the world' and real 'New Woman' figures, addressing why such caricatures appeared, and what kind of compromises progressive feminist women had to make around the 'New Woman' icon (Schaffer, 2002: 39). In confronting these issues, Schaffer asserts that the claim that the 'New Woman' existed only in 'foolscap and ink' does not relegate her to a 'safely marginal space', or diminish her importance (Schaffer, 2002: 50, 44). On the contrary, she considers the fictionalization of the 'New Woman' to turn her into a powerful symbol with a unique identity in her social, cultural, economic and imperial context to address broader concerns regarding class, gender, race and nation.

§4.3

Hysteria, Neurosis, Neurasthenia and Sue

In 1897, Havelock Ellis declared sex to be ‘the central problem of life’, voicing and confirming a vast general tendency in European and North American thinking of the time when, in Foucauldian terms, knowledge and power were the linking forces between truth and sexuality, and sexuality was inevitably linked to pathology. The ‘hysterization of the female body’, as described by Foucault, referred to a state in which ‘the body, qualified and disqualified by doctors and by the political and social structure’ became ‘identical to the negative image and the blameworthiness of the “nervous woman”’ (Foucault, 1978: 104).

The New Women of the Victorian era challenged and exposed the vacuity of patriarchal norms and notions by firmly claiming their own space in the fields of literature, science and political activism, which provoked male scientists into asserting that active female intellect is the breeding ground for psychological diseases. The aspirations of women to move beyond the scope of the home and the hearth into the male-dominated world of external affairs started to be linked with a rise in the incidences of nervous disorders such as hysteria, anorexia and neurasthenia. This is noted by Sigmund Freud and Joseph Breuer in their *Studies on Hysteria* (1895), where they propounded the theory that

hysterical girls were likely to be ‘lively, gifted, and full of intellectual interests’, women of ‘powerful intellect’ and ‘sharp and critical common sense’ (Showalter, 1990: 40-41).

The ‘New Woman’ was frequently represented as psychologically precarious, with a tendency towards depression that at times led to mental breakdown, or even premature death. The medical studies of the 1890s indicated that for every one hysterical man in England, there were twenty hysterical women, and for every neurasthenic man, fourteen neurasthenic women (DuPlessis, 1985: ix). These unbalanced ratios became the grounds for the perception of the woman of the feminist movement as psychologically unstable, and a threat to the conventional community. Associating the pejorative stigma of psychological instability with the women of the feminist movement became the crux on which the New Woman’s advances in the field of education were undermined, often to convincing effect. This can be seen from the example of the Oxford Union that voted overwhelmingly against admitting women to the B.A. degree in 1896, despite the widespread public opposition. This denial became emblematic of a society that defines women’s primary function as reproduction, a duty that was threatened by the desire to cultivate her mind by education or a professional role in the world. The ‘New Woman’ was perceived as someone who nurtures her brain cells instead of her babies, thus taking up and utilizing in her own life all that was meant for her descendants, which was considered to be the apotheosis of selfishness from the standpoint of every biological ethic (Russet, 1991).

Sue’s portrayal represents an instance of enlightenment linked to educational opportunity. Her natural intellect is often revealed through her ideas; after leaving school she educates herself further through her liaison with the student at London, making the progressive choice of living with him, but (to his frustration) in celibate companionship. She teaches for two years in the city before meeting Jude, and after meeting Phillotson she

wins the Queen's scholarship to enrol herself in the Training College at Melchester to qualify fully for a teaching career. Her academic pursuits thus far, where her educational ambitions meet with easy fulfilment, are in sharp contrast to Jude's futile endeavours to secure candidature at Christminster.

The act of educating oneself, however, carried associations of heightened mental stress, which was linked to neural disorders; an over-excitation of the nervous system to a level of sensitivity, which overpowered the 'corporeal' conditions to which it was still functionally bound. This created the grounds for the 'deadly war between flesh and spirit' and set the stage for the clash between the higher cerebral and neural functioning of humankind, and the corporeal instincts of Darwin's 'past and lower state of civilization' (Darwin, 1871: 564). The dilemma as to whether Sue's ideas and behaviour show signs of an extraordinary refinement of the senses, or an aberrant psychology, is somewhat hastily resolved by Hardy by linking the two together so that her intelligence is presented as inseparable from 'the perverseness that was part of her' (*Jude*: 127). If the conjunction of intelligence and perversity was a necessary requisite for exceptionality, it was also, most particularly for women, potentially injurious. Directly after *Jude*'s publication, Gosse set the tone for the subsequent pathologized readings of Sue's portrayal by referring to her as a 'study in pathology' (Gosse, 1896: 388). Another late nineteenth-century critic, R. Y. Tyrell, put Sue's intellectual curiosity down to a 'fantastic green-sickness' and her frantic need to analyse relationships down to her 'warped and neurotic nature' (Tyrell, 1896). The link between originality of mind and nervous instability has a long history; Hardy himself made notes on how individuals 'of a distinct, neurotic strain' sometimes had 'a strain of madness in their families' (Bjork, 1985: 198-201). Hardy explains this 'neurotic strain' in

terms of female nervous organization, as Sue is depicted to suffer for her ‘ethereal, fine-nerved, sensitive’ character (*Jude*: 210).

An early psychoanalytic approach to Sue’s characterization is Michael Steig’s essay “Sue Bridehead”, published in 1968 (Steig, 1968: 260-266). His essay offers an analysis of Sue’s characterization based on the rather unconvincing psychoanalytic model of the ‘hysterical character’ created by Wilhelm Reich (1897-1957), a second generation psychoanalyst after Sigmund Freud, who wrote several influential studies on psychoanalysis, most significantly *Character Analysis* (1933) and *The Sexual Revolution* (1936). Reich, and his theories of sexual liberation, were heavily contended and controversial in the world of psychoanalysis, and his works post 1932 were primarily self-published. Steig’s analysis of Sue is based on Reich’s explanation of the hysterical character to explain Sue’s inconsistencies.

Steig begins his essay on Sue by discussing the critical opinion of his contemporary literary theorist and scholar, Norman N. Holland, on the application and impact of psychoanalytic theory in literary studies. He refers to Holland’s book *Psychoanalysis and Shakespeare* (1966), focussing on his dismissal of two of the strong trends of psychoanalytic criticism: ‘criticism-psychoanalysis of the author, because one cannot usually verify “psychobiographical” conclusions, and psychoanalysis of individual characters, because this involves inferences about the unconscious life of imaginary people, and hence a confusion between literature and life’ (Steig, 1968: 260). Both are very important points to consider, particularly while studying the critical reader responses to Sue, as both strands of analysis can be observed in the psychoanalytical evaluations of Hardy’s characterization of Sue. Steig highlights Holland’s viewpoint that the most productive direction for psychoanalytic criticism to aspire towards comes through studying

the reader/audience's mind, investigating the way our responses as readers can provide an insight into the different psychological dynamics at play in the creation/reception of a work. This is a crucial point to consider in analysing the critical reader responses to a characterization, like that of Sue, which has provoked so much critical debate and dissension over the decades. Steig follows Holland's insistence upon 'total readings' – a form of analysis that takes into account 'the interaction of conscious and unconscious elements' while focussing on a character portrayal that is made manifest through adult behaviour rather than 'infantile conflicts', which may or may not have been explored in the novel (Steig, 1968: 260). The most interesting aspect of Steig's essay on Sue is his central argument, that contrary to most critical opinion on Sue, he considers her characterization to be 'psychologically coherent', despite 'the apparent inconsistency of her character' (Steig, 1968: 260).

Steig's focus remains particularly on Reich's 'emphasis on the role of sexual repression and anxiety', finding his theories to be relevant for a characterization like that of Sue, whose basic conflicts Steig identifies to be 'clearly sexual' (Steig, 1968: 260). Steig discusses Sue's psychological coherence in clinical terms and attempts to unravel her duality by employing Reich's *Character Analysis* to resolve 'whether Sue is "sex-less" or not – and if not, in what her sexuality consists' (Steig, 1968: 261). He highlights Hardy's own ambivalence in describing Sue as sexually 'healthy', while depicting her sexual vacillation to be a potentially destructive force in the novel:

Does Sue's combination of sexuality and sexlessness make sense in terms more coherent than Hardy's and Jude's rationalizations, and in terms more concrete than Lawrence's male and female principles? It is in answering this question that Wilhelm Reich's work becomes a valuable aid (Steig, 1968: 263).

Reich, in his book *Character Analysis*, discusses the Hysterical character type, an analysis influenced by the times he lived in and his mentorship by Freud.³² He expanded upon Freud's concept of libido, or biological sexual energy, to attempt to validate scientifically the existence of biological energy that he named Orgone Energy, a coinage of the words "orgasm" and "organism", while Freud moved away from his earlier concept of libido to reduce it to a psychic concept without physical basis. Psychoanalytic studies of the early twentieth century recognized inhibited sexuality to be a primary cause of psychological symptoms and a major contributor to hysterical manifestations. Steig uses Reich's description of the hysterical character to depict the way indications of hysteria can be observed in the sexual behaviour of women in the form of 'disguised or undisguised coquetry in gait, gaze and speech', along with 'a more or less outspoken apprehensiveness' (Steig, 1968: 263). This becomes 'particularly evident when the sexual behavior seems close to attaining its goal; then the hysterical character regularly retreats or assumes a passive, anxious attitude' (Steig, 1968: 263). Steig uses this model of hysteria and applies it to the portrayal of Sue to analyse her perpetual vacillation and confusing behaviour in her inter-personal relationships, particularly with Jude and Phillotson.

Her attachment to Phillotson stems more from a desire to have the protection of a father figure in her life than to have a true romantic partnership, a quality that Reich identifies to be an aspect of the hysterical character; 'the extraordinary capacity to form sexual attachments of an infantile character' (Reich, 1962: 190). Steig considers Sue's

³² Reich identified neurosis to be rooted in socio-economic alongside sexual conditions – merging psychoanalytic theory with Marxism in his understanding and espousal of neurosis. As a medical doctor, he visited patients in their homes to assess their living conditions and developed a mobile clinic to take to the streets and disseminate information on sex and sexuality, and the importance of contraception, abortion and divorce when required – provocative views that were met with hostility in his native Catholic Austria (See: Grossinger, 1982: 278).

‘inconsistencies and vacillations’ to be based more on a ‘specific psychic need, the defense against anxiety’; her sexual behaviour, and even direct advances, not an indication of genuine sexual readiness (Steig, 1968: 265). However, Steig struggles to explain Sue’s turn to religion and the normative moral structure to which she reverts by the end of the novel, when she returns to Phillotson within the terms of Reich’s theory. He attributes her sexual anxiety and masochism, heightened by the death of her children, to the hysterical pattern:

Masochistic self-denial becomes, then, a second line of defense against sexual anxiety and especially against the guilt feelings which have been increased by the children's deaths. One might say that the source of anxiety has shifted from the id to the superego, requiring a new kind of defense (Steig, 1968: 265).

Steig defends the central argument of his study of Sue by showing how her characterization falls in line with the attributes of the hysterical character, thus proving her portrayal psychologically plausible and not just a whimsical, random caricature. But he recognizes himself, that he has fallen into the trap of ‘illegitimate speculation about a fictional person’s unconscious’ (Steig, 1968: 265), not managing to completely clear himself from Holland’s warning of not confusing literature with life while conducting psychoanalytic studies.

While the critical debate surrounding Sue as a nervous, neurotic and hysterical woman had begun shortly after the publication of *Jude* in 1895, as has been detailed here as well as in the first chapter, the discussion on Sue’s presumed pathology took a more theorized and medicalized turn from the 1980s onwards. One reason behind this can be surmised from Cecily Devereux’s study, “Hysteria, Feminism, and Gender Revisited”, where she writes:

When the third edition of the American Psychiatric Association’s (APA) *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM III)* appeared in February 1980, hysteria, while it appeared in the index, had apparently lost the

status it had held through the first and second editions, as an identifiable and specific clinical disorder.³³ Like some other historically familiar and, crucially, saliently “female” conditions, hysteria had shifted to another category of reference. [...] In fact, however, at more or less the same moment hysteria was removed from the *DSM*, it was emerging at the centre of a new discourse of academic literary feminism that had taken shape as a critical and political practice, as Jane Gallop suggests, ‘around 1981’ (Devereux, 2014: 19-20).³⁴

Elaine Showalter documents this occurrence in the 1980s to be ‘a new twist in the history of the disorder’, to indicate how hysteria was being ‘reclaim[ed] [...] in the name of feminism’ (Showalter, 1993: 286). She discusses how the ‘New Woman as neurotic feminist intellectual had become a recognizable type by the 1890s’ and ‘a standard figure in literature’ (Showalter, 1993: 306). She notes in *The Female Malady*, that ‘sexual frustration was a significant cause of hysteria’ (Showalter, 1990: 132). Since Sue’s portrayal of her sexuality and sexual choices does not fit into the pre-ordained category of compulsory heterosexuality, her ‘cold-natured, sexless’ behaviour becomes a disruptive force for the conservative Victorian ideas of sex and nature (*Jude*: 256). Showalter explicates how Victorian doctors treated the female body as a site for medical exploration and experimentation, one extreme example, ‘cliterodectomy’³⁵, a brutal procedure intended to control the minds of women by surgically removing parts of the female sexual organ (Showalter 1993: 74-75). Hardy’s depiction of Sue provides scope to explore the politics of

³³ Hysteria was described by the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) I* (1952) as ‘conversion hysteria’, and in *DSM II* of (1968/1974) as ‘hysterical neurosis’.

³⁴ Devereux refers to Jane Gallop’s study of anthologies of feminist theory and their context in the U.S., *Around 1981: Academic Feminist Literary Theory* (1992).

³⁵ The extent to which the female body was pervaded, penetrated and intruded upon in the name of medicine was both horrifying and verging on comical. A Victorian physician Isaac Baker Brown was particularly renowned for performing the horrifying procedure of clitoridectomies between 1859 and 1866. Dr. Joseph Mortimer Granville, on the other hand, came up with another novel idea to treat hysteria; the vibrator. He patented the first vibrator in the 1880s as a means to induce speedy orgasms in female patients who were being treated for hysteria, as orgasms, or ‘hysterical paroxysms’, were considered a temporary relief to the symptoms of the disease.

reproduction, family structures and cultures, which are organised around naturalized gendered arrangements.

Rosemary Sumner (1981) relates Hardy's psychological insights manifested through his characterizations to the definition of Neuroses as explicated by Freud, alongside another twentieth-century psychoanalyst, Carl Jung (1875 - 1961), who founded analytical psychology.³⁶ Sumner follows Freud's definition of neurosis more in her assessment of Sue's neurosis, linking it back to Sue's past, that contributes to, and affects, her present neurosis. What stands out the most in her analysis of Hardy's works, particularly while studying Sue's portrayal, is her clear sexism and biased manner of appraising the male and female portrayals in *Jude*.

Sumner lauds Hardy for challenging contemporary thought and opinion by creating debates on controversial topics like sexuality, and for making Sue, a female character, his mouthpiece. However, at the same time, she pathologizes Sue's state of being immediately, perceiving her to be psychologically damaged by the conflicts that she has to undergo. What is interesting to note is her assessment of Jude on the contrary. She sees Jude as being interpreted too often 'as a weak character, an easy victim of society and rapacious

³⁶ Freud defined neuroses as the consequence of anxiety on the unconscious, not thought of consciously but in need of a means of expression. He believed that neurosis was rooted in early disappointments or traumas, particularly in childhood, and neuroses were individual representations of frustrations encountered during a psychosexual phase of development, and therefore sexual in nature. He considered repression of any kind, of thoughts, feelings, grief or traumas to manifest themselves later in life as neuroses. Jung's theory of neurosis, on the other hand, is based on the premise of a self-regulating psyche composed of tensions between opposing attitudes of the ego and the unconscious. A neurosis, according to Jung, is a significant unresolved tension between these contending attitudes and each neurosis is unique, which makes each case different such that no therapeutic method can be arbitrarily applied. Hence, while Freud focused on a patient's past, Jung concentrated on the patient's present and what they were avoiding in the present. Freud and Jung clearly disagreed on what created neuroses and, consequently, approached treatment of neuroses differently. However, their definition of neuroses as an unresolved tension that causes anxiety to the unconscious has found continued usage in psychoanalysis. (See Lindgren, 2015, C.G. Jung, 1966).

women', when he is actually struggling to cope with 'both his own strong passions and ideas and with the external world in a resilient and tenacious way' (Sumner, 1981: 147-148). Sumner does not spot any indications of neurosis in Jude and perceives his breakdown and traumatic death by the end of the novel to be 'a fairly reasonable reaction to the loss of everything that makes life meaningful to him' (Sumner, 1981: 148). Jude's family history that Hardy offers brief glimpses of, his mother's suicide, the strain of depression and unhappiness that Hardy makes evident, does not make Sumner offer a diagnosis for Jude's state of mind as having a neurotic bent. Even the episode of Jude attempting to commit suicide by walking into the middle of a frozen pond, jumping on the ice, and then returning to the bank having realized that it was an attempt in futility, is perceived by Sumner as 'something that a sane and rational man could experience' in a moment of distress (Sumner, 1981: 151).

This distinction in her assessment between Jude's behaviour, with her readymade, sympathetic explanation for his actions, and that of Sue, who is instantly diagnosed with neurosis, reverts back to the gendered notion of hysteria, neurosis and associated behaviour to be afflicting particularly women. In a damning indictment of Sue, Sumner writes:

Once Jude has become involved with Sue, the chances of continuing with this pattern of survival and renewal after disastrous events are considerably diminished, not because of his character but because of hers. She damages or destroys all the men she encounters [...] (Sumner, 1981: 151).

Sumner's sympathy is limited to only the trials and tribulations of Jude; not Sue. This is especially noteworthy as the societal condemnations and pressures that they both face as a couple affect both of their states of minds negatively, Sue arguably more than Jude, for facing greater physical challenges too due to her frequent pregnancies. As Sumner puts it:

Sue's neurotic, relentless determination to punish herself leaves Jude with nothing. His mental stability is not undermined, but his will to live is. His death becomes inevitable. This is not a collapse brought about by psychological weakness, but the disintegration of a man whose strong healthy impulses and lofty aspirations have been destroyed by a hostile environment (Sumner, 1981: 153).

The strength of Sumner's analysis, on the other hand, lies in seeing Sue as 'simultaneously a suitable case for analysis, and a living, changing, "unstatable" woman, evoking vivid and changing responses from those who know her' (Sumner, 1981: 168). This analysis brings the focus back again to Sue's portrayal functioning as a Rorschach test, displaying as much about the reader/critic analysing her characterization as it does about her portrayal. Sumner's analysis of Sue is detailed, incisive and a huge leap into looking at Hardy's works through a psychoanalytic perspective, but it is sexist in its diagnosis of Sue's portrayal as 'neurotic', while detecting anxiety, early disappointments, frustrations and unconscious repressions in Jude's portrayal too, but not pathologizing it or labelling it 'neurotic'. Sumner is quick to point out that the novel, being an imaginative medium, does not provide a direct correlation between societal demands from individuals and their harmful effects on them, as the character's individuality as portrayed by the author comes into play as well. This shows her awareness of the limitations of her own analysis as Sue remains a fictional creation – a textual space into which the critic's presuppositions and prejudices can come into play.

For Sumner, Hardy's deep insight into the sexual behaviour and choices that become the basis for psychological conflict and dissonance makes him a precursor of the line of thinking that Freud made popular in the early twentieth century. She considers Hardy's characterisations to be extremely modern, which finds manifestation in the various forms of neuroses that they display:

Many of Hardy's central characters can accurately be described as psychologically disturbed. This is often seen as arising from the fact that they are "modern" men and women. They are frequently intelligent young people who have difficulty in finding harmony of mind and body and who are also attempting to adjust to "the loss of faith in a beneficent deity" and to a sense of rootlessness. Here lies the immense importance of landscape in Hardy's novels. Those characters who retain a sense of oneness with Nature stand a greater chance of survival than those who, like Sue, have completely lost this contact (Sumner, 1981: 3).

Sumner credits Hardy for having made great advances in exploring psychological problems, dealing with topics that were taboo in the Victorian society with blatant honesty, and raising important questions about mental health and the need for psychological balance and well-being; issues that went on to become important points of concern in the next few decades. Sumner makes a clear link between Hardy and Freud by stating that in *Jude* there is a desire 'for the acceptance of human sexuality', and that Hardy is 'examining some of the same problems as those Freud dealt with in his more general writings, such as "Civilised" Sexual Morality and the Neuroses and Civilization and its Discontents' (Sumner, 1981: 160). She sees Hardy's mouthpieces Sue and Jude to be almost pre-emptive of the issues and concerns that Freud would go on to discuss at length in the first part of the twentieth century, concerning the problems with standardized sexual and domestic expectations from individuals. As she puts it: 'Indeed it would not be an exaggeration to say that "Civilized" Sexual Morality and the Neuroses puts in theoretical terms a very large part of what Hardy has stated in imaginative terms' (Sumner, 1981: 161).³⁷

Sumner observes that Hardy's 'exploration of psychological problems and unconscious motivation is concentrated mainly in the characterization of Sue', and one of

³⁷ Freud's analysis of neuroses in "Civilized" Sexual Morality and Modern Nervousness", that was published in 1908, drew upon ideas of evolutionism, the history of development and recapitulation, that eventually went on to form the bedrock of the psychoanalytic study of neuroses. He studies the psychological damage caused by sexual repression, perceiving neuroses as a direct consequence of the restrictiveness that is imposed on an individual during their cultural development in the 'civilized' social order.

Hardy's earlier ideas for a title, "The Malcontents" or "Hearts Insurgent", would have been more apt in conveying the central concerns of the novel (Sumner, 1981: 147). She makes it very clear that she considers the portrayal of Sue to be an integral tool for the purpose Hardy is trying to achieve through *Jude* and not just as a supporting act to Jude's tragedy, as described by previous critics like Meisel. She elaborates that

In *Jude the Obscure* Sue carries equal weight to Jude in the structure of the novel [...] With this fuller treatment, Hardy has space to present Sue dramatically [...] Most of the analysis of Sue is done by herself, or by Jude and Phillotson as they grope towards an understanding of her, or by Arabella, in her limited but shrewd assessments (Sumner, 1981: 166).

Sumner draws parallels between Freud's "parable" about two girls' and Hardy's characterization of Sue and Arabella, to show how 'Hardy and Freud in their portraits of contrasting women are pinpointing precisely the same point of contrast' (Sumner, 1981: 175), the intelligent, educated, sexually repressed woman versus the more grounded, sexually active and practical woman.³⁸ She detects in Sue qualities of narcissism, in her desire to be loved without loving back in return:

Freud maintained that masochism is an element in narcissism since "masochism is actually sadism turned round upon the subject's own ego". As we have seen, Sue continually tortures first her lovers, then herself for having caused them pain (Sumner, 1981: 176).

Sumner's central argument is structured around the belief that the psychological insight that Hardy offers in *Jude*, particularly through the portrayal of Sue, is entirely conscious and stems from his study of the available psychological theories of his time. Sumner bases this idea on the evidence she finds in Hardy's notebooks of his interest in Charles Fourier,

³⁸Freud's 'parable', quite reminiscent of Sue and Arabella, is his story of two little girls - one a daughter of a landlord, the other the daughter of a caretaker, who grow up together. While the landlord's daughter is brought up to be educated, intelligent, refined and sexually repressive, the caretaker's daughter is uneducated but sexually emancipated. Through the creation of these antithetical characters, Freud shows how life is easier for the sexually active woman, when compared to the intellectually superior woman.

a philosopher and early socialist thinker of the nineteenth century who is credited with coining the word 'feminism' in 1837, and Augustus Comte, also a philosopher, who founded the doctrine of positivism and is regarded as the first philosopher of science.³⁹

Sumner points out how by:

Jude the Obscure, if not before, he [Hardy] has achieved a profound and sympathetic understanding of the mind, including some of its more disturbing aspects; he has ventured into those areas of sexuality which many of his contemporaries found so alarming. His analysis is sometimes so minute that Sue Bridehead, for instance, has been said to "move away from being a figure of Tragedy to a clinical 'case'" (Sumner, 1981: 1-2).

She notes how the 'pattern of *Jude* is similar to the previous novels; "all is contrast –or was meant to be", and the central contrast is between well-balanced, resilient Jude and neurotic, vulnerable Sue' (Sumner, 1981: 147). Sumner considers Hardy's creation of Sue to be the 'furthest point of his exploration of complex, psychologically disturbed personalities' (Sumner, 1981: 147). As she puts it:

A close reading of *Jude the Obscure* makes it clear that Hardy with great insight and sympathy, is carefully building up a picture of a personality precariously balanced on the edge of sanity [...] Sue is the culmination of several attempts of this kind – Boldwood, Knight, Angel, possibly Clym – but she is the most complex and the most vital and, as he said to Gosse, exceptionally difficult to depict (Sumner, 1981: 170).

Sumner agrees with Lawrence's evaluation of Sue that she has 'sex in the head', but rejects his theory that she is sexless by stressing Sue's obvious enjoyment in discussing love and sex, and being desired by suitors, which turns to fear every time a relationship reaches the point of actual physical consummation. She derides the possibility of decoding

³⁹ The law of Positivism holds that learning and understanding based on natural phenomena and information derived from sensory experience, interpreted through reason and logic, forms the exclusive source of knowledge (See Macionis and Gerber, 2010). Positivism espouses the idea that society, like the physical world, operates according to absolute laws, thus rejecting introspective and intuitive knowledge as well as metaphysics and theology.

Sue's complex characterization through direct yes/no questions. As she puts it, 'Lerner and Holmstrom's suggestion that Hardy ought to have answered the question, "Is she frigid? Yes or No?"' has something of the crudity of a sex manual or a lawcourt beside Hardy's complex rendering of Sue's conflicting emotions' (Sumner, 1981: 174). She makes a succinct analysis of Sue's marriage to Phillotson, finding the most surprising aspect of it to be Sue's absolute horror and dismay when Phillotson tries to consummate their marriage.

She is educated, emancipated, independent, and presumably is not simply ignorant of the facts of marriage. Yet she repressed all thoughts about this aspect of it until it was too late. This suggests a tendency to repression which is often a feature of neurosis and throws some light on her return to Phillotson's bed at the end of the novel (Sumner, 1981: 172).

The question of whether this horror stems from Sue being frigid and averse to any sexual contact, or from her being in the unfortunate position of facing sexual expectations from a man she does not desire sexually, remains open ended and up for debate as Hardy intended it. Sumner's resolution to this question is to see Sue as psychologically vulnerable and bordering on neurotic, which becomes the explanation for many of her trials and tribulations in the novel.

In stark contrast to the early-nineteenth century, when the body (particularly the female body) was considered personal and kept behind closed doors, the late nineteenth century focussed on the female body in its pain and pleasure, for both scientific and social debates. As Sally Shuttleworth points out, there was 'a near-hysterical male anxiety focused on the flow of female secretions, and in particular those of menstruation – a hysteria whose impact on the female psyche must inevitably have been to create the sense of existing in an almost permanent state of pathology' (Shuttleworth, 1990: 61). Shuttleworth's comment is particularly interesting as it highlights the nineteenth century *need* to medicalize and pathologize the functions of the female body, almost as a means to

assuage the male anxiety and nervousness about the same. Lorna Duffin writes in her essay “The Conspicuous Consumptive: Woman as an Invalid” that when dealing with middle-class women, the prevalent presupposition of the medical establishment was to diagnose them with hysteria, neurasthenia, and chlorosis, the three great diseases of the Victorian woman; all classed as ‘nervous disorders’ arising from some frequently undefined disturbance to the all-determining reproductive system:

The importance of the reproductive system was extended to cover a whole range of so-called ‘nervous disorders’ from the trivial to the severe. Woman’s nervous system, it was argued, was particularly susceptible to any disturbance in the reproductive system. Therefore any nervous disturbance must be caused by disturbance in the reproductive system. It seems to have been irrelevant that no independent malfunctioning could be found (Duffin, 1978: 36).

Neurasthenia as a concept was popularized and consolidated by a Victorian physician George Miller Beard, who brought widespread attention to the malady with his study *American Nervousness* (1881). Beard’s assertion that the root cause of Neurasthenia can be located in ‘modern civilization’ (Beard, 1881: vi) seems to be echoed in Hardy’s postscript to the 1912 edition of *Jude*, where he states that ‘Sue Bridehead [is] the intellectualized, emancipated, bundle of nerves that modern conditions [are] producing’.

The ambivalent attitude of the ‘New Woman’ towards marriage and motherhood often found manifestation in the form of nervous disorders, that became indicative of the divided loyalties and anxieties that the women experienced while trying to assert their own distinct identity in a socio-cultural forum that demanded unequivocal assimilation to the domestic ethics. As Beard put it, new ideas and heightened intellectual activity led to mental strain for both men and women, and the ‘extending complexity of modern education’ (Beard, 1881: 100) drove more and more people to their breaking point. Beard states:

The causation of sexual neurasthenia, as of all the other clinical varieties, and of modern nerve sensitiveness in general, is not single or simple but complex; evil habits, excesses, tobacco, alcohol, worry and special excitements, even climate itself [...] [and] the one great predisposing cause – civilization (Beard, 1905: 15).

Sue is read and discussed as Neurasthenic by critics Jane Wood in “‘Aberrant Passions and Unaccountable Antipathies’: Nervous Women, Nineteenth-Century Neurology and Literary Text” (2001), and Sondra M. Archimedes in “‘Shapes like our own selves hideously multiplied’: Sue Bridehead, Reproduction, and the Disease of ‘Modern Civilization’” (2005). Both Wood and Archimedes study the link between the pathologization of the female body and the construction of the social body in Victorian fictional works, to reveal the extent to which the fiction of the late nineteenth century is permeated by biological, medical and evolutionary discourse. Wood and Archimedes concur on the idea that neurasthenia, ‘the nervous ailment which became causally and symbolically linked to the era’, underpins ‘Hardy’s portrayal of Sue Bridehead’s nervous collapse’ (Wood, 2001: 51). Wood links Sue’s neurasthenic condition to her sex-life, or the wilful lack thereof. She demonstrates how Sue is depicted in *Jude* to feel ‘antipathy’ towards a sexual relationship with her husband Phillotson. Wood perceives this ‘repugnance of proximity’ to be the dread of unwanted intrusion into the private space of the self, a dread that repeatedly manifests itself as the physical pain of strangling and suffocation, familiar as ‘globus hystericus’ or the ‘choking sensation of hysteria’ (Wood, 2001, 49).

While Wood does not make a distinction between ‘hysteria’ and ‘neurasthenia’, diagnosing Sue to be a sufferer of both conditions, Archimedes makes a clear differentiation:

Alongside neurasthenia, hysteria occupied a central place among discourses of nervous afflictions. Often confused with neurasthenia, hysteria had a slightly less

genteel connotation. Both maladies had similar symptoms, including headaches, insomnia, depression and a host of other vague complaints. But while neurasthenia was a problem affecting both men and women, hysteria was envisioned more specifically as a female condition. During the 1870s and 1880s, Jean-Martin Charcot, a French physician famous for his work with hysterical patients, had demonstrated that hysteria could also affect men, yet it continued to be identified with women throughout the century (Archimedes, 2005, 129).

Thus in reading Sue as neurasthenic and not just hysterical, as she has been labelled repeatedly by critics over the decades, Archimedes removes Sue's diagnosis from her sex. She still analyses Sue as a pathologized body, but not just a female pathologized body whose condition stems from the fact of her being female. Archimedes suggests that in *Jude*, Sue's:

[...] assorted pathologies are symptomatic of a larger cultural malaise affecting the reproductive future of the entire social body. *Jude the Obscure* posits not one pathological figure, but many: an entire culture threatened with the hereditary transmission of nervous disease. Not only Sue, but also Jude and his son, Little Father Time, exhibit the effects of what was then labelled neurasthenia – an umbrella term for a range of problems related to nervousness (Archimedes, 2005: 126).

These pathologized bodies become interconnected with the urban culture through Hardy's depiction of a modern culture, where the aspiration and desire for education among the classes become the breeding ground for debilitating nervousness and depression. The general population seem to be at a risk of decline through the combination of premature deaths and falling reproductive rates. As Archimedes puts it:

[...] it is Sue Bridehead who carries the weight of the reproductive failure that *Jude* augurs. Through a series of displacements made possible through biomedical discourse and the trope of urban modernity, Sue's body stands in for and contains the problems of a pathologized social domain (Archimedes, 2005: 126).

Archimedes also points out the latent sexism inherent in a significant number of critical readings of Sue as neurotic or hysterical, while most of the same critics gloss over the 'clear indications of neurotic behaviour on Jude's part', at times referring to it but not

engaging with it at length or actively pathologizing his symptoms. Archimedes considers the study of Jude's neurosis to be relevant, as according to her 'Sue's problems are symptomatic of a larger cultural malaise which afflicts others: Jude, his son, and modern urban society' (Archimedes, 2005: 130).

Kristin Brady, in her 1993 essay "Textual Hysteria: Hardy's Narrator on Women", offers a succinct, balanced analysis of the reason behind the pathologization of the female body in the nineteenth century, and the construction of Sue as a hysterical woman through Victorian medical discourses. She sees hysteria as:

[...] ultimately a textual rather than a physiological or psychological phenomenon, emerging from an ongoing nineteenth century masculine discourse that seeks to evade by a process of projection and dissociation its own uneasiness about the body: woman is again the empty sign filled with a masculine fear of absence, of lack, and of corruption. *Her hysteria is the projection of his* (Brady, 1993: 102) [my emphasis].

Brady supplements her compelling argument by showing how Jude keeps reverting to 'increasingly stereotypical Victorian assumptions about woman's nature in general and about the pathology of the New Woman in particular' in his endeavour to 'fill the gap of Sue's mind and heart with his own interpretations'. As Brady surmises:

This doubling of stereotypes provides him [...] with an answer to the question, of the extent to which Sue's behaviour can be attributed to her own personality and the extent to which it can be linked up with her biological state as "woman" (Brady, 1993: 97).

While Archimedes' study links Sue's pathology to that of the social domain, seeing the malaise of one as the reflection of the malaise of the other, Brady focusses on nineteenth-century medical discussions about female nervous disorders to show how Hardy's works engage with concepts that go beyond theoretical literary discourses. She sees Sue as a focal point of the interrogation of hysterical behaviour that is characterized by her 'tone of

detachment and clinical precision that mimes determinist scientific discourse of the period about “women’s nature” (Brady, 1993: 9). Brady draws upon the historical backdrop of nineteenth-century medical discourse about the female body, and the biological status associated with it, to highlight Hardy’s contradictory and shifting narrative stance about the same. She considers the ‘textual hysteria’ to be more of a product of this ambivalent narrative stance of Hardy than a hysterical female characterization. She demonstrates how Hardy often depicts his female characters in visual terms, a technique that turns them into ‘icons and stereotypes’, constructed in radically conflicting terms: ‘she is both corrupt and pure, both victim and victimizer, both feminine and not feminine’, a perpetual contradiction that is reflective of the ‘instability in the nineteenth-century’s discourse of feminine sexuality’ (Brady, 1993: 89). She quotes from Foucault to contextualize this ‘instability’ as a product of the ‘*hysterization of women’s bodies*’ and the consequent male projections onto the female body seeing it as ‘all that was frightening or repulsive’, which leads to the ‘construction of hysteria as a female disease’ to ‘keep masculinity free from corruption’ (Brady, 1993: 89). Brady considers the existing antithetical opinions about Hardy, which often divide themselves into two camps, Hardy the feminist, or Hardy the misogynist, to structure her main argument:

[...] at the levels of characterisation and of plot an enormous difference exists between the first novels, where women generally adhere to the role of the romance heroine, and the last, whose women lead lives that call those same romance roles into question (Brady, 1993: 87).

However, she points out that ‘remarkable parallels’ can be observed in the narratorial stance through the range of Hardy’s novels, which depict the ‘narrator’s continual engagement in the ongoing nineteenth century discourse about “Woman’s Nature”’, and the ‘synchronic network of moral, aesthetic and medical constructions of female sexuality

and its destabilising function' (Brady, 1993: 87). As Brady shows, Hardy's novels become a zone of projection for this hysterical discourse about the female body:

The characterizations of Hardy's women thus have all the contradictoriness of hysterical symptoms. The narrator, even as he constructs his women in opposition to the standard norm of woman as the weaker vessel, reverts all the more strongly to that same cultural imperative; like Sue Bridehead, his most hysterical symptom, he ultimately submits to the oppressive codes he has set out to challenge (Brady, 1993: 90).

Sue's eventual capitulation to her reproductive function leads to the inevitable collapse of what Brady terms her 'weak female body', debilitated by the burden of a nervous disorder, heightened by the issues of sexuality, pregnancy, childbirth and motherhood (Brady, 1993: 99).

In a recent study, Zane Linde diagnoses Sue's sexual pathology to be asexuality, adding to the list of Sue's presumed sexual malfunction of being frigid or hysterical (Linde, 2012: 81-88). Linde points out multiple instances of the way prior critics including Sally Ledger, Kate Millett, Kathleen Blake and Michael Steig among others have diagnosed Sue with some symptom like frigidity, or hysteria, or similar negative psychological associations. Linde goes against the general critical trend in offering an asexual reading of Sue to suggest that the significance of Sue's actions and decisions, as well as the tragic culmination of the novel, can be better understood if Sue's condition is judged to be asexuality. She references the sexologist Anthony F. Bogaert's study *Understanding Asexuality* (2012), to explicate the difference between 'sexual' and 'romantic' attraction, as the definition of asexuality can otherwise be misleading because asexuality does not automatically mean an inability to feel romantically about someone. As she puts it:

The desire for an emotional but not sexual relationship is what Sue Bridehead struggles with throughout the novel. Sue repeatedly emphasizes her longing for a comradeship instead of a traditional relationship between two members of the opposite sex (Linde, 2012: 82).

Linde bases her analysis of Sue's complicated personality and her diagnosis of Sue as asexual on the repetitive patterns of 'guilt and denial' in Sue's behaviour, (Linde, 2012: 84).

From all the critical appraisals of Sue discussed in this section, the picture that emerges is that the pathologization of the problematic female body from different critical discourses ultimately serves as a 'projection', as Brady puts it. The female body takes on the role of the 'empty sign', to be filled with the varying critical voices that try to justify its irrationality (Brady, 1993: 102). As Elaine Showalter explains, these forms of pathologization, especially hysteria, can be understood in the emerging critical feminist discourse, not as a medical condition that needs diagnosis and treatment but a cultural one, an embodied index of forms of oppression, that she describes as 'a specifically feminine protolanguage, communicating through the body messages that cannot be verbalized' (Showalter, 1993: 286). This 'feminine protolanguage' could then act as the medium to distinguish and indicate feminist reaction against the patriarchal oppression that generated it in the first place. T.R. Wright observes in his study *Hardy and the Erotic* that:

Hardy's depiction of Sue's sexual relations with Jude is necessarily indirect. When she finally capitulates, for example, Jude 'kissed her on one side, and on the other, and in the middle, and rebolted the front door.' The rest is left to the reader's imagination (quoted in Wright, 1989: 129).

I argue that this is another instance of Hardy practising narrative discretion in his depiction of Sue, to allow for different critical voices and opinions to fill the void with their own suppositions and individual response to the text. Sue fulfils her function succinctly yet again as a Rorschach test, drawing out from the readers what they want to see in her, with

their own cognition, personality variables and perceptions coming into play in their analysis.

§4.4

Homosociality, Masculinity, ‘Sapphic Spaces’ and Sue

An area of particular critical interest in Hardy studies since the 1970s has been the discussion of masculinity as a social construct. While Hardy’s male protagonists like Jude have always received critical attention, the rise of feminist and queer theory has signalled the perception of masculinity itself as a morphing concept, instead of being a normative, fixed one. It is important to record the impact of masculinity studies on Hardy’s works alongside the feminist modes of analyses when assessing Sue’s portrayal and reception, as Hardy’s narrative technique in *Jude* consciously depicts and enacts complicated gendered relationships that have fascinated readers over the decades.

Elizabeth Langland in “Becoming a Man in *Jude the Obscure*” explores the way ‘Hardy engaged profound social dislocations in ways that disturbed the stability of gender classifications’ (Langland, 1993: 32). She keeps her focus centred on Jude, and the way his self-definition is determined by the historical and cultural setting of his life. However, she emphasizes Sue’s importance by assessing Jude’s desire for Sue to be embedded in his desire to break free from his cultural/social expectations and pursue ‘an elusive superiority and gender neutrality figured by his middle-class cousin [...]’ (Langland, 1993: 37). Sue, for Langland, is a symbol of ‘that which his [Jude’s] culture forbids’, ‘an alternative to authoritative discourses’ and an embodiment of ‘the internally persuasive voice’

(Langland, 1993: 34). She shifts the focus from the dominant line of critical enquiry about Sue's characterization, which raises questions about the authenticity of her portrayal, to query instead 'Sue's place in the construction of Jude's masculinity, her role as a catalyst for the text's trenchant critique of gender and class paradigms' (Langland, 1993: 32). She shows how *Jude* is interestingly poised between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and holds up a mirror to the clash between the opposing forces of the rural and the increasingly large urban worlds, the different classes and the gendered expectations that society inflicts on the individual. Langland sees Hardy's representations 'of the social and material construction of masculinity and femininity' in *Jude* to be revelatory of 'something that feminist and gender critics are only beginning to explore: the extent to which patriarchal constructions of masculinity become constrictions and, when inflected by class, create contradictions for individual males' (Langland, 1993: 32). The contemporary construction and inculcation of ideas of gender in the nineteenth century is reflected in the representation of Jude's internalization of his masculinity. This leads to the inconsistency in thought and behaviour of the protagonists of *Jude*, and while critics have mostly focussed on reading Sue as an inconsistent, whimsical woman, Langland proffers that the inconsistency resides in Jude rather than Sue, who exists in the novel as a reflection of 'Jude's psychosocial investment in her' (Langland, 1993: 39).

Langland builds on an argument she had started developing in "A Perspective of One's Own: Thomas Hardy and the Elusive Sue Bridehead", identifying Hardy's narrator to be aligned with Jude's point of view, in regarding Sue variously as 'childish, selfish, sadistic, masochistic, narcissistic, and frigid [...]' (Langland, 1980: 13). Langland attributes the fact that Sue has 'resisted satisfactory analysis' to the elusiveness of the

narrator, who is ‘omniscient’ and ‘should be a guarantee of reliability’, but is instead evasive. Langland writes:

And, for the first time Hardy lets the perspective of a single character, Jude Fawley, dominate the story. To complicate matters further, it is not clear to what extent Jude’s perspective is judged by the narrator, or even as criticism has made clear, to what extent Hardy himself is involved in his narrator’s and character’s perspectives (Langland, 1980: 12-13).

Langland attempts to disentangle Sue from the male narrative point of view, ‘a man’s perspective on an unconventional woman’, but concedes that ‘any effort to resolve questions about Sue’s personality must take into account the relationships among mimesis, narrative technique, and character development’ (Langland, 1980: 13). Brady surmises that Langland’s study might have ‘benefitted from such narratological concepts as focalization and free indirect discourse, which allow for precise analysis of how a supposedly “omniscient” narrator can articulate the visual and ideological perspective of a character’ (Brady, 1993: 101). But she acknowledges that Langland’s linking of Sue’s inconsistency to the narrator’s close identification with Jude is useful, as it makes it apparent that, though Hardy’s narrative technique is sympathetic to women, it does however retain a male perspective. Sue’s entrapment within the scope of Jude’s limited point of view, hindered by his gendered perception, then becomes an explanation for why Sue comes across as so inconsistent to her readers:

We attempt to judge as a personality in her own right a figure intended to serve merely to define another personality. Often, when Jude looks at his cousin, he in fact gazes into a mirror which reflects the image of his own ambivalence (Langland, 1980: 14).

The difficulty in analysing Sue stems from her refusal to be read just as a ‘device’ to aid the investigation of Jude’s portrayal, and Langland points out that while the ‘critical literature’ on Sue ‘acknowledges limitations in Jude’s point of view, it rarely accounts for

the resultant distortions in its judgment of Sue' (Langland, 1980: 15). Langland demonstrates how Sue is perceived as a 'schematic character, not a whole personality', read as 'one half of an equation', who changes place with Jude in the course of the novel and is read in contrast with Arabella, in a dialectics of 'spirit/flesh, ego/alter ego, reason/feeling, intellect/emotion, selfishness/selflessness' (Langland, 1980: 15). She shows how Hardy's indecisiveness in creating a standard by which to judge Sue results in him structuring all of her problems around her gender. Langland revisits Sue and Jude's portrayals again in a later essay, "Hardy and Masculinity" (2013), and uses Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's structure of male 'homosocial' desire to study the erotic triangular relationship comprising Jude/Phyllotson/Sue in *Jude*. Sedgwick explains the theory of 'Gender Asymmetry and Erotic Triangles' and highlights the 'many and thorough asymmetries between the sexual continuums of women and men, between female and male sexuality and homosociality' (Sedgwick, 1985: 115). Langland seeks to analyse Sue's place within this structure:

It is ultimately through kinship and twinship with Sue that Jude seeks a more satisfying alternative to the frustrating constructions of his masculinity that his culture holds out. Sue represents what is in him but also what he is not to seek in himself, which is here coded as feminine (Langland, 2013: 376-377).

She arrives at the conclusion that '[e]ven when those men love or desire the same woman, as is often the case in Hardy's novels, that common bond does not serve [...] as a mediator of male "homosocial" desire' (Langland, 2013: 375). Langland comes to the conclusion that the 'lingering sadness' of *Jude* lies in its:

[...] apprehension of the way destructive cultural self-constructions of masculinity and femininity ultimately reach out to claim them, the ways, indeed, they are always already within, crucial to the formation and development of individual subjecthood and therefore perilous to reject (Langland, 2013: 378).

Richard Dellamora, in his study of Hardy, *Masculine Desire: The Sexual Politics of Victorian Aestheticism* (1990), like Langland sets out to analyse a gender structure within which women become the mediating link between men, though his focus is primarily on male homosexual/homoerotic relationships. He reads *Jude* in the context of Victorian pedagogical culture of male friendship, especially that of mentor and protégé, as seen through the relationship between Jude and Phillotson, to discuss the latent erotic implications and the male homosexual/homo-social desire as seen in the literary output of the nineteenth century through such relationships.

He discusses the plot and characterizations of *Jude* in detail in “Homosexual Scandal and Compulsory Heterosexuality in the 1890s” (1990). According to Dellamora, *Jude* becomes emblematic of the anxiety concerning gender, sexuality and sexual choices – particularly in the climate of the newly emerging consciousness of homosexual desire. Dellamora also addresses the reason why Hardy’s works persist in garnering critical attention in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, as critics continue engaging with the various accounts of gender/gender roles in his works that remain contemporary and of interest, even decades after their publication. He bases the framework of his study primarily on Foucault’s study *A History of Sexuality*, to build on his discourse on the emergence of the idea of homosexuality during the nineteenth century. Dellamora provides a study of what he refers to as ‘micropractices’; a method used by Victorian writers whereby they deployed particular coded signifiers or a selection of words with hidden meaning within the homosexual tradition. These coded signifiers were then used across other theoretical movements, such as gender studies, symbolism and poststructuralism to demonstrate the way individuals respond in the moments when codes of sexuality are either being induced or imposed.

Dellamora shows how sexologists of the nineteenth century like Havelock Ellis labelled those ‘who resisted conventional gender expectations – individuals like New Women or feminists or fictional characters like Sue Bridehead – as abnormal, neurotic, or even perverse’ (Dellamora, 1990: 212). He studies the way Ellis categorized celibate women as lesbians; not as an indication of their sexual preference but as a consequence of their performance of ‘gender inversion’, by not conforming to standardized social rules and ‘invading public (male) space, by living with each other and apart from men, and by working and earning in new ways’ (Dellamora, 1990: 195). The central problem with Ellis’s definition, as Dellamora points out, is that it negates ‘women’s struggle for emotional, professional, and economic autonomy by defining being-in-the-place-of-a-man as sexually perverse’ (Dellamora, 1990: 195). Dellamora identifies the main reason behind the huge negative backlash that *Jude* received from critics post publication to be Hardy’s subversion of the trope of male privilege, and the sense of entitlement of husbands towards their wives in marriages. As Dellamora puts it regarding Hardy and other contemporary feminist authors:

These writers resisted male control of women’s bodies – whether as the object of sexual advances or as bearers of children. Male homosexual polemicists, New Women, and feminists in their different ways all posed a challenge to male prerogatives and to the appropriation of women’s bodies for purposes of social production (Dellamora, 1990: 212).

Dellamora studies Hardy’s depiction of ‘one prime element of compulsory heterosexuality’ – the way women are socialized to believe that male sexual desire for them is equivalent to a ‘right’ (Dellamora, 1990: 212-213), observable in the confused relationship between Phillotson and Sue. Hardy makes their marriage an interesting case study, where the wife (Sue) initially refuses to conform to societal expectations and beliefs surrounding marriage, but ultimately reveals herself to be subliminally socialized by the end of the novel as she

returns to what she considers her rightful place – the home and bed of Phillotson. Dellamora also observes, like Llangland, how the narration of *Jude* marks a ‘glaring contrast between Hardy’s ability to empathize with Jude’s point of view and his inability at times to enter imaginatively into Sue’s’:

[...] for Sue, Hardy sketches only alternatives: disabling normalcy or degrees of deviance [...] Signs of gender inversion in Sue’s behaviour and later criticism of her as ‘frigid’ make her a fictional occasion of scandal. The more authentic base of scandal, however, exists in the fact that for as long as she can, she speaks intellectually and that she aspires to be a different sort of woman – even if neither she nor Hardy can say what feminine difference means (Dellamora, 1990: 215-216).

Dellamora considers Sue’s characterization to be a crux of the ongoing debates about gender and sexuality, and a conscious effort on Hardy’s part to grapple with the concept of ‘sexual inversion’. He substantiates his claim by referring to Hardy’s letter to Edmund Gosse that there is ‘nothing perverted or depraved in Sue’s nature’ (Purdy and Millgate, 1980: 99). Dellamora points out that Hardy’s defence of Sue in the socio-cultural climate, wherein the novel is written and based, is particularly interesting as Victorian England was renowned for labelling individuals who resisted gender stereotyping as ‘abnormal’ or ‘neurotic’.

Tim Dolin sees Hardy’s dissatisfaction with conventional models of masculinity to stem from his contention with the Victorian realist forms of narrative, which Hardy considers to be inherently masculine and focussed on stories of male self-development. *Jude*, as Dolin argues, is Hardy’s conscious undermining of the *Bildungsroman*, that invokes and finds unsatisfactory both the myths of transformation and the ‘ideal of realist narrative development’ through its hero’s incessant disillusionment and its episodic plot (Dolin, 2000: 214). Dolin identifies the main quandary in *Jude* to be Jude’s inability to

become the New Man, 'the sexual *new*', that Sue wants him to be, as male sexuality for the Victorians was a fact fixed and unchangeable (Dolin, 2000: 212-213).

Phillip Mallett also examines the male bonds and homosocial relations in Hardy's works in "Hardy and Masculinity: *A Pair of Blue Eyes* and *Jude the Obscure*" (2010). He focusses on the Phillotson/Jude mentor/pupil relationship that explores the boundary between the homosocial and the homoerotic. He analyses Jude's dismayed realization, 'to live in a man's world is not the same as to live in one which answers men's needs' (Mallett, 2010, 397), which refers to the conflict between Jude's spiritual and academic aspirations, and his sexual and romantic needs. Mallett notices that both Jude and Phillotson show discomfiture with conventional models of Victorian masculine identity:

Neither he [Jude] nor Phillotson is at ease with conventional modes of masculine identity; both to different degrees, seek to disown the authority over women that society gives them. Neither, finally, is able to find an alternative (Mallett, 2010: 397).

This is a particularly interesting angle in Hardy's depiction of his male characters in *Jude*. He depicts Jude and Phillotson not as embedded in patriarchal values and using the system to their benefit, but suffering alongside the woman in their lives, Sue, within the restrictions of a society where their supposed male privilege does not make them feel any more at ease. As Mallett shows, Hardy's *Jude* is an exposé of the position of the non-patriarchal man in the Victorian era too. He highlights Jude's comment to describe his suffering in his social context:

Still, Sue, it is no worse for the woman than for the man. That's what some women fail to see, and instead of protesting against the conditions they protest against the man, the other victim; just as a woman in a crowd will abuse the man who crushes against her, when he is only the helpless transmitter of the pressure put upon him (quoted in Mallett, 2010: 396).

Mallet's essay makes a strong case for releasing Hardy from the charge of 'misogyny' often directed at him by revealing through his analysis of his suffering women *and* men, that Hardy saw the collective of the social pressures to be far more powerful than any one individual transmitting them, or caught in them.

As seen in this section, there is a lot of critical discussion and debate surrounding the male relationships in *Jude*, from homosocial and homoerotic perspectives to the problematic place of a non-patriarchal man in a patriarchal social structure. Jane Thomas offers the flip side of the coin in "Desire, Female Amity and Sapphic Space" (2013), in broaching the concept of a 'sapphic space' as an alternative option for Hardy's female characters, to express desire in new and radical ways that are otherwise suppressed by patriarchal and heteronormative structures. Thomas highlights the total lack of companionate female relationships, or sapphic spaces, in *Jude*. She indicates the friendlessness of Sue when it comes to members of her own gender. Her relationship with Arabella is 'sexually competitive' and the 'women-only communities, such as the ecclesiastical establishment where Sue initially works and the Teacher Training College at Melchester, are heavily implicated in the proscription of female desire' (Thomas, 2013: 42). In another essay, "Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure* and 'Comradely Love'" (2007), Thomas analyses Sue's failed attempts to reconfigure the heterosexual relationship to 'privilege the companionate over the conjugal' as 'paradigmatic of a male same-sex relationship in which "the sense of sex" functions as a defining problematic' (Thomas, 2007). Within the scope of masculinity studies on *Jude* and its impact on the analysis of Sue, Thomas' essays shift the focus from the male-male relationships portrayed in *Jude*, Jude's idealisation of Phillotson and Phillotson's friendship with Gillingham, to the lack of any female-female bonds between Sue and any other woman in the novel. Moreover, as

Thomas points out, Sue is shown to repeatedly try and fail to maintain companionate relationships with the male figures in her life, who cannot seem to move away from her 'sense of sex', as Jude admits, to have her as a true comrade.

A perusal of the existing critical work on masculinity and homosocial/homoerotic relationships highlights Hardy's criticism of patriarchal ideals of masculinity from a different perspective. The critical debate and discussion pertaining to Hardy's depiction of the destructiveness of nineteenth-century male gender identity also serve to throw new light on Sue's portrayal and reception through examining masculinity in relation to desire and the feminine, homosocial and homoerotic relationships and discursive and linguistic constructions of masculinity.

§4.5

Sue and Imperialism

The emergence of the ‘New Woman’ ideology coincided with the expansionism of the Second British Empire in the final decades of the nineteenth century. Sally Ledger writes in “Unlikely bedfellows? Feminism and imperialism at the fin de siècle”:

Victorian culture was underpinned by a strong sense of national and racial superiority, which was in turn based on Britain’s imperial status. Middle class Victorian feminists generally shared these assumptions, often identifying their cause with the British imperial mission [...] Women’s roles as nurturers, child-carers, preservers of purity, could all be put to use as part of the wider imperialist project (Ledger, 1997: 64).

A primary cause of the tremendous critical censure that Sue’s portrayal receives is rooted in her reluctance initially to yield to the socio-cultural demands of the time on women to embrace maternity and childbirth, and subsequently in her inability to be a nurturing and caring mother to her children. This makes it even more relevant to study the link between the ‘New Woman’ figure and the empire, and delineate the relationship between the politics of the empire and gender politics to discuss the impact this had on Hardy’s portrayal of Sue and in the critical perception of her characterisation thereafter. Social and cultural theorists and critics have ruminated over the years upon the extent to which the influence of the empire had filtered into and affected British domestic culture. However,

critical studies on Hardy's works in a postcolonial vein are few in number despite the fact that Hardy was writing during a time when Britain was preoccupied with its major imperial expansion.

Ideologies of the empire can be seen to be embedded in nineteenth-century fiction, as has been observed by literary critics like Daniel Bivona. In *Desire and Contradiction: Imperial Visions and Domestic Debates in Victorian Literature* (1990), Bivona writes that imperialism is at the hidden core of the 'unconscious' of nineteenth-century English identity that made its presence felt obliquely, 'lurking under the surface of a variety of discourses' (Bivona, 1990: viii). Bivona studies the ways in which imperial ideology could be detected in the silences and gaps of textual representation or implied through allegorical portrayals, seeing Hardy's *Jude* to be a 'parable of the exercise of the imperial power to exclude translated into the terms of social class' (Bivona, 1990: xii).

In *Jude*, Hardy perpetually challenges the domination of those who exist on the margins of established society, suffering under a 'social system of organised domination' that, according to Bivona, characterised English social structure at the end of the nineteenth century, and which was replicated in the other colonized countries of the Empire (Bivona, 1990: 95). Bivona unpacks *Jude* as a novel about colonization; the internal conflict and colonization of the characters, exacerbated by their external colonization in the form of class struggles, the life-long subjugation of 'two individuals by an alien yet monolithic system of social rules' (Bivona, 1990: 95).

Bivona construes Hardy as the only late nineteenth-century writer to have studied the disruptive effect of rapid change on traditional communities at length, exposing 'a society committed to colonizing its rural lower classes as it is colonizing the dark races of the world' (Bivona, 1990: 93). Bivona's views on the colonizing forces and the resultant

hierarchy, nationally in the form of class and gender segregation, and globally in the form of racial, alongside class and gender discrimination, is reflected in a later work by P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins in their book *British Imperialism, 1688–2000*. Cain and Hopkins highlight the power that the small group of wealthy, capitalist, patriarchal landowners, ‘who also occupied the highest positions in the law, the Church and the army as well as in the City’, exerted within the domestic unit of the home (Cain and Hopkins, 2002). This group also attempted to control any groups of ‘other’ who might threaten their dominant position, which included the working classes and women at home, as well as those native inhabitants of the colonies who opposed colonial rule. While Hardy documents the decline in power of the landowning class, which resulted from various social, economic and political changes in the latter part of the nineteenth century, his novels also reflect the way the hierarchy and power structures created by this class were still very much operative. The paternalism practised by members of this class in the colonies was reflected within domestic structures at home. This reveals the many levels at which colonization comes into play: internally (the conflicting feelings and emotions of a torn psyche), externally (the individual against class, social and gender norms), nationally (the wealthy elite versus the poor and underprivileged, male versus female) and internationally (the colonizing country versus the colonized country). This forms a pyramidal structure of different forms of colonization, internal, external, national and international, feeding off and into each other.

Bivona constructs his criticism of Sue’s portrayal as the scaffolding to his analysis of Jude, to whom he devotes most of his critical attention. He analyses the push and pull of attraction that Sue creates with Jude by flirting with him, then pushing him away, choosing to marry Phillotson while being aware of Jude’s feelings for her, asking Jude to rehearse her wedding with her (with him playing her husband), and then asking him to give her

away (with him playing her father). He sees Sue's actions as deliberate; she keeps herself from Jude 'while simultaneously establishing an intimate distance between herself and him' (Bivona, 1990: 104). Bivona stresses how these 'combinations of distance and intimacy which these charades produce not only feed Jude's desire for her, but they do so by drawing his attention, again and again, to the unpleasant fact that he is up against a wall as formidable as any in Christminster' (Bivona, 1990: 104). Bivona sees Sue and Jude to be 'two lovers' who 'come to stand metonymically for the process of definition by alienation', family members who are 'bound by ties of sublimated sexual passion, yet unable to take any real comfort in this relationship because of its torturous ambiguity' (Bivona, 1990: 105). According to Bivona:

Hardy conjoins both political and psychological themes: the history of the individual enacts the history of the race; both are narratives of conquest and domination, characterized by purely provisional (and ultimately fruitless) attempts to master the 'instinctual' or the 'barbaric' by enclosing it within the circle of knowledge. Jude's ultimate failure to master his own history has wide implications for English history [...] Jude is the 'original', exteriorized by the English class system but seeking admission to the interior of English life (Bivona, 1990: 98).

Bivona offers an innovative reading of *Jude* in relation to British imperialism, opening up new lines of inquiry about the significations of the portrayals of Sue, Jude and the narrative of their life journey, alongside offering valuable insights into nineteenth-century British culture and society.

In *Thomas Hardy and Empire: The Representation of Imperial Themes in the Work of Thomas Hardy* (2012), Jane L. Bownas picks up where Bivona left off in seeing Hardy's fiction to contain imperialist traits, as well as to put up a resistance to the same imperialist controlling forces. Bownas suggests that this can be observed in the depiction of the internal colonization of some of Hardy's protagonists and their confused sense of selfhood and identity formation, as is particularly visible in the portrayal of the protagonists of *Jude*.

She argues that Hardy's views on class, gender, institutionalized religion and power struggles against Victorian societal norms were impacted by the colonization occurring within national boundaries. As Antoinette Burton put it in her 1994 essay, the history of the empire was 'an integral part of British social, political and cultural history' as the 'empire itself was the product of British national institutions'; the 'external empire' having a direct influence on 'domestic British culture' (Burton, 1994: 486-7). Bownas argues that the evidence of the influence of imperialism can be seen in Hardy's works, not just superficially but thematically, through his reactions to the 'economic and cultural circumstances which prevailed at the time he was writing' (Bownas, 2012: 3). She considers *Jude*, alongside *Tess* and *The Well-Beloved*, to be Hardy's 'critique of all forms of ideological oppression', by exposing 'the power structures operating within Britain [...] when imperial expansion was at its height', to make apparent his dissatisfaction with the notion that imperial countries bring civilization to primitive peoples (Bownas, 2012: 8). Bownas surmises that Sue can be perceived as 'the colonialist missionary in reverse'; a 'negation of civilization who attempts to bring true, natural values to her own civilization', and on failing in her endeavour, laments, 'Who were we, to think we could act as pioneers!' (*Jude*, 152, 371, quoted from Bownas, 2012: 20). Bownas refers to a letter Hardy wrote to Arnold Bennett at the end of the First World War to demonstrate how he himself echoed similar sentiments to his portrayal and mouthpiece Sue: 'I do not think a world in which such fiendishness is possible to be worth the saving. Better let Western "Civilization" perish, and the black or yellow races have a chance' (Purdy and Millgate, 1980: 5, 278, quoted from Bownas, 2012: 20). Bownas dwells on the effects of colonialism and on the relationship between the metropolis and the colonies in her study. The propensity of some of Hardy's characters to escape to foreign and exotic lands is seen as an

opportunity to explore an ambiguous morality. Bownas uses Arabella's portrayal as a case study to discuss this 'new theme in Hardy's use of the colonies [...] the idea that travel to these distant lands enables a character to rethink their feelings, their beliefs and even their morality' (Bownas, 2012: 8). Bownas writes:

[...] Arabella tells Jude that she has married the Sydney hotel manager 'Regularly – legally – in church', and when the shocked Jude refers to her bigamous marriage as a crime, she says 'Crime! Pooh. They don't think much of such as that over there! Lots of 'em do it [...] we lived honourable enough, and as respectable as any married couple in the Colony!' (Jude, 193). Arabella's life is run by 'instincts' and 'impulse', and in the colonies she is not concerned with the moral, or 'civilized' restrictions which would apply at home. Before her departure for Australia she had suggested to Jude that 'A woman of her sort would have more chance over there than in this stupid country' (Jude, 118). Arabella does not suffer the agonies and torments of Sue, who constantly attempts to live by her own principles, particularly in relation to her ideas of a 'natural' marriage, but finds herself in conflict with the norms of society as a result of these views (Bownas, 2012: 18).

Through her analysis of Hardy's presentation of the shifting moral values of Arabella during her stay in Australia, whom Hardy depicts as self-serving and resourceful throughout, Bownas suggests that:

Hardy is not encouraging his readers to make value judgements about the behaviour of his characters in these colonial countries, but rather implying that there are different ways of behaving and these may be equally valid. He readily admits in a letter to the novelist Maurice Hewlett in 1909 that any 'moral and social teaching' that might be obtained from his writings is not 'of the correct and accepted pattern', and that 'I am determined [...] to show that what we call immorality, irreligion, etc., are often true morality, true religion, etc' (Purdy and Millgate, 1980: 4, 28, quoted from Bownas, 2012: 18).

The institutions dominating Britain in the late nineteenth century were the very structures exerting power in the colonies, to the extent that the concepts of gender, class and race applied to the colonies were deeply influenced by the domestic visions of them. Hardy depicts how the 'instruments of power' that Foucault discusses, state institutions like the church, the family, schools and universities, acted as 'factors of segregation and social

hierarchization' (Foucault, 1978: 141), in the lives and struggles of characters like Sue and Jude. These forces that thwart Sue and Jude's private and public desires and aspirations become emblematic of what Foucault refers to as the West practising an 'internal colonialism' on itself (Foucault, 2003: 103). Thus, a non-conforming female representation like Sue, who does not see marriage and motherhood to be the ultimate goal of her life, and an autodidact like Jude whose academic aspirations are far superior to what his social class allow him, perish under the heavy-handed system.

Bownas harks back to Widdowson's study, *Hardy in History* (1989), where he writes that in the years before the outbreak of the First World War:

[...] there is an attempt in England to establish a cohesive national consciousness in a period deeply riven by domestic and international tensions. There is a perceived need for a national culture to oppose social anarchy. Crucial to this is a literary culture in which there is a complex relationship between forms of romanticism and patriotism, and the formation of a pastoral myth of rural England – often recalling a past more glorious heritage – which is the true 'essential England' of national identity (Widdowson, 1989: 16).

Widdowson's analysis indicates that Hardy has been deliberately critically constructed to be an integral part of the national cultural heritage, and that his works have sometimes been misinterpreted and misread by a social structure eager to maintain its position of power. Through her analysis of *Jude*, Bownas too demonstrates that Hardy's works contain imperialist themes, as can be perceived particularly in the internal and external conflicts of Sue, and agrees that Hardy's views on Christianity, class, gender, and Victorian power structures were influenced by a domestic vision of life that was shaped by imperialism. However, she directly contests the line of critical enquiry which perceives Hardy to be a part of the national cultural heritage and establishment, arguing instead that Hardy's handling of the imperialist motifs in his works serves the purpose of challenging the ideology at the root of imperialism by exposing its problems, not supporting and

reinforcing it. Though the exploration of the relationship between the dominant and the dominated, as shown through gender and class struggles in *Jude*, is not a new approach and has been engaged with at length by critics over the decades, as has been demonstrated in this thesis, the ideas Bownas explores in her study are engaging and thought-provoking. The theory that Sue's oppression in a patriarchal social structure and Jude's struggle in a hierarchical class-based social system holds up a mirror to the relationship of the colonized with the colonizer, and reflect the impact of the imperial spread throughout the world, has significance and relevance.

Bivona and Bownas' critique of Hardy's works, especially *Jude*, is clearly influenced by Edward Said's *Orientalism* (Said, 1978).⁴⁰ Said's theory, when applied as a model of analysis to a text like that of *Jude*, transforms the academic trajectory of researchers in literary theory and criticism, assessing not just the text in question but also the way academics engage with, examine, describe, and define the cultures that they study. According to Said, *Jude* was a novel that marked the end not only of Hardy's career as a novelist, but also the 'dynastic principles' of nineteenth-century narrative itself (Said, 1975: 84). Studying *Jude* and Sue's presentation in it from imperialist and postcolonial perspectives is still relatively niche. While the period of Hardy's literary production and that of Britain's imperial history are contemporary with one another, more attention and research is needed on the link between the two to generate substantial arguments and enable newer modes of engaging with Hardy's works in general, and Sue's complex portrayal in particular, from a postcolonial perspective.

⁴⁰Edward Said, a founder of the academic field of postcolonial studies and a literary theoretician, developed the theory of Orientalism, a critique of the cultural representations and the way the Western world perceives the Orient, in his seminal book, *Orientalism* (1978).

§ 5

Sue, transculturalism and diverse identity formation⁴¹

*“In the third-class seat sat the journeying boy,
And the roof-lamp’s oily flame
Played down on his listless form and face,
Bewrapt past knowing to what he was going,
Or whence he came.”*

Midnight On The Great Western - Thomas Hardy (Moments of Vision, II. 262)

Having been critically examined and analysed for over a hundred years now, what is the way forward in Hardy studies? Why or how will Sue’s characterisation still have any critical interest and global reader appeal? Miller writes in “Speech Acts, Decisions, and Community in the *Mayor of Casterbridge*”:

Should we read Hardy’s work differently from the way it was read thirty or forty years ago? If so, what would those new ways be? In a sense, these are non-questions, since it is natural that a major writer like Hardy will be read anew in different ways by each new generation of critics (Miller, 2004: 36).

Miller discusses how Hardy has been studied over the decades from multiple literary and theoretical perspectives: ‘Lacanian, feminist, new historicist, Foucauldian-Marxist,

⁴¹ A part of this chapter was previously published in 2015: Sreemoyee Roy Chowdhury, “Sue Bridehead, Transculturality and Diverse Identity Formation”, *Thomas Hardy Society Journal* Vol 2, No 2, (Summer, 2015) eds. Phillip Mallett. P 36-42

inspired by cultural studies, and so on' (Miller, 2004: 36). The way forward in Hardy studies may well be rooted in Eagleton's assertion that 'for Hardy as for Ibsen, there is no present which does not open up into a burdensome past, which may then weigh in to stymie the future' (Eagleton, 2004: 18). Eagleton contends that Hardy 'would have no problem with the assertion that there is nothing outside the text', which leads to the next logical postulate that 'nothing in the world stands free of its historical imbrication with other things' (Eagleton, 2004: 18). The text then becomes a web, 'central as the world-historical', which is woven into 'our very flesh', merging the past and the present, interweaving with the network of the future (Eagleton, 2004: 18).

Raymond Williams, in his seminal work *The Country and the City* (1973), traces the transformation of a rural feudal Britain to an increasingly unified urbanized one during the late nineteenth century. He considers the notions of 'identity and community' to have become more complex and problematic during that time as 'the scale and complexity of the characteristic social organisation increased' (Williams, 1973: 165). In his words; 'the traditional relationship between city and country was [...] rebuilt on an international scale. Distant lands became the rural areas of industrial Britain, with heavy consequent effects on its own surviving rural areas' (Williams, 1973: 280). The pre-existing urban-rural dichotomy was reduced to a permeable boundary, but it also led to a clear division between 'politically dominant landowners and dependent labouring poor' which, far from being restricted to English society, 'formed the model for the relationship between Britain and her colonies in the nineteenth century' (Williams, 1973: 279). Literary and fictional works are a reflection of these changes, which go beyond geographical, racial and socio-cultural boundaries, particularly in the context of the empire, which enabled an 'extension to the whole world of that division of functions which in the nineteenth century was a division of

functions within a single state' (Williams, 1973: 279). This keeps the critical interest in a fictional representation of a white British woman like Sue living in the late nineteenth century still topical and worthy of study in the twenty-first century, particularly in exploring the complexities of identity formation in a transcultural framework, as will be discussed in detail in the next section.

§5.1

Transculturalism

Peter Widdowson muses in “Hardy and critical theory” that:

Hardy has been subject to a variety of the newer critical approaches and has been radically reshaped in the process. Never a primary site for new theory, he has nevertheless proved a fertile testing-ground for theoretical practice (Widdowson, 1999: 79).

In this chapter, I examine Sue’s portrayal as a ‘testing-ground’ for the theoretical praxis of transculturalism as a constructive way forward in Hardy scholarship. Transculturalism is a feature of globalisation that has allowed for the zones of collective and individual identities to merge; an important development in the analysis of human behavior.⁴² As Donald Cuccioletta defines it, transculturalism is a mode of ‘seeing oneself in the other’, a concept that allows an exploration of shared interests and common values across cultures and borders, and across space and time (Cuccioletta, 2001/2002: 1). Cuccioletta builds on the suggested structure of transculturalism by Lamberto Tassinari, to discuss it as:

[...] a new form of humanism, based on the idea of relinquishing the strong traditional identities and cultures which in many cases were products of imperialistic empires, interspersed with dogmatic religious values. Contrary to multiculturalism, which most experiences have shown re-enforces boundaries based on past cultural heritages, transculturalism is based on the breaking down of

⁴² The term ‘transculturalism’ was first coined in the 1940s by anthropologist Fernando Ortiz.

boundaries. [...] Transculturalism, places the concept of culture at the center of a redefinition of the nation-state or even the disappearance of the nation-state. This process of recognizing oneself in the other leads inevitably to a cosmopolitan citizenship. This citizenship, independent of political structures and institutions, develops each individual in the understanding that one's culture is multiple, métis and that each human experience and existence is due to the contact with other, who in reality is like, oneself (Cuccioletta, 2001/2002: 8-9).

In a rapidly globalising world, cultures as well as societies and identities are 'less irreducibly different', less homogeneous and self-contained, and a lot more fluid (Schulze-Engler, 2007: 27). As a research paradigm, the concept of transculturality opens up the possibility of studying fictional characterizations from hitherto unexplored angles, studying the diverse identity formations which arise from the various cultural encounters as a result of greater mobility and better access to education and information. As Wolfgang Welsch emphasizes in his essay "Transculturality – the Puzzling Form of Cultures Today":

Cultures today are extremely interconnected and entangled with each other. Lifestyles no longer end at the borders of national cultures, but go beyond these, are found in the same way in other cultures [...] The new forms of entanglement are a consequence of migratory processes, as well as of worldwide material and immaterial communications systems and economic interdependencies and dependencies (Welsch, 1999: 197-8).

The nineteenth century is a particularly important area of study in this regard, as we seem to have inherited our modern anxieties, unlimited aspirations and visions from the many changes and shifts of that period. It was a time of flux, a time marked by industrialization, urban expansion, the growth of the railways and the mechanization of the workplace which increased the gap between the material and the human. Globalisation led to increased mobility and interconnectedness on the one hand and new identity formations on the other. Contemporary literature reflected the shifts and changes that increased globalisation brought in its wake through the combination of migrant experiences and a questioning of traditional, cultural and social value systems and expectations. As Sumner writes in

“Discoveries of Dissonance: Hardy’s Late Fiction”, *Jude* represents ‘a grid of criss-crossing ideas’ and a perpetual concern about ‘the uncertain crossing and invasion of identities’, be it of gender, class, culture or race (Sumner, 1995: 82). Sumner’s analysis of *Jude*, particularly in her assertion that the novel generates debate and discussion not just about gender or class but also culture and race, strongly recalls Homi Bhabha’s assertion that the use of the terms race and gender involves ‘an articulation of forms of difference’ essential to the maintenance of a powerful political elite (Bhabha, 1994, 96). Judith Butler supports Bhabha’s claim in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, stating that identities are produced under conditions of domination and arguing that gender is the performance of sexuality within culture (Butler: 1990). Butler asks ‘Does being female constitute a “natural fact” or a cultural performance, or is “naturalness” constituted through discursively constrained performative acts that produce the body through and within the categories of sex?’ (Butler, 1990: xxviii - xxix). She continues this line of enquiry to engage with the debate surrounding gender identity and sexuality, asking:

What performances where will invert the inner/outer distinction and compel a radical rethinking of the psychological presuppositions of gender identity and sexuality? What performances where will compel a reconsideration of the *place* and stability of the masculine and the feminine? And what kind of gender performance will enact and reveal the performativity of gender itself in a way that destabilizes the naturalized categories of identity and desire? If the body is not a “being,” but a variable boundary, a surface whose permeability is politically regulated, a signifying practice within a cultural field of gender hierarchy and compulsory heterosexuality, then what language is left for understanding this corporeal enactment, gender, that constitutes its “interior” signification on its surface? (Butler, 1990: 189-190).

These questions, and the concerns raised by them, have repeatedly surfaced in the critical analysis and engagement with Hardy’s female characterizations over the decades. For a characterisation like Sue, her identity formation, re-formation and subsequent disintegration is sometimes perceived to be because of her failure to keep up with the

gendered performance expected from her, even in the changing political and cultural climate of the fin de siècle, when paradigms of sexual difference were being contested and debated. Butler sees gender as a ‘performance with clearly punitive consequences’:

Discrete genders are part of what “humanizes” individuals within contemporary culture; indeed we regularly punish those who fail to do their gender right [...] Gender is, thus, a construction that regularly conceals its genesis [...] the construction “compels” our belief in its necessity and naturalness (Butler, 1990: 190).

Another factor, consistently compelling the changing identity formation of Sue alongside Jude, is their constant migration from place to place. Mikhail M. Bakhtin (1895-1975) has shown particular interest in the movements of the individual whose ‘wanderings’ lead to his/her transformation or metamorphosis (Bakhtin, 1981: 111-112). In his work, “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes toward a Historical Poetics”, he uses the word ‘chronotope’, meaning ‘time-space’, to discuss the scope of novels or epics in depicting the experiences of the protagonists and the impact of those experiences on them through their wanderings, nationally and/or internationally. In *Postcolonial Translocations: Cultural Representation and Critical Spatial Thinking*, Jude is mentioned as a fictional work that illustrates the connection between ‘the passage of time and space, and the sense of making new experiences by means of “transgression”’ (Munkelt, Schmitz, Stein and Stroh, 2013: xxiv). Jude and Sue are perceived as two characters whose ‘non-voluntary walking and crossing of boundaries (geographical, physical, social) within their own country’ is ‘enforced by the relentlessness of social and religious conventions’ (Munkelt et al., 2013: xxiv). The distinction made here between time and space, in asking will the time on the other side be ‘the same as time on this side’, gives voice to the ‘basic competition of space and time to grasp reality’ and the way it influences identity formation

and development (Munkelt et al., 2013: xxiv). This idea is explicated in the Introduction of *Postcolonial Translocations*:

The propositional contents of the concept of ‘translocation’ overlap with but also clearly extend beyond the terms ‘diaspora’, ‘transnationalism’, ‘globalization’, ‘transculturation’, and ‘multiculturalism’, terms which themselves are undergoing intense scrutiny and semantic shifts [...] All of them are related to praxes of social, cultural and economic mobility across a variety of borders, seeking to address processes of cultural, political, and societal change. This implies that notions of stability of institutions and durability of conventions are being interrogated (Munkelt et al., 2013: xviii).

In *Jude*, Sue describes the railway station as ‘the centre of the town life’ (*Jude*: 128), having replaced the Cathedral, emphasizing the changes within the Victorian world with the natural landscape being criss-crossed by the tracks of the artificial, industrial one. Simon Gatrell hails *Jude* as ‘Hardy’s essential railway novel’, where Hardy ‘shows himself quite clear about the imaginative and the real impact of the railway’, and ‘takes pleasure in showing how many moments in the lives of his characters in this novel are shaped by the mechanics of the railway timetable [...]’ (Gatrell, 2003: 233). Jude and Sue’s restless wanderings, aided by the rail-network, become a symbol of the ‘fiendish precision or mechanism of town-life’ (Millgate, 1984: 215) on which Hardy was making notes around the time he started drafting the plot of *Jude* in 1893. His concern about ‘modern civilization’ is reflected in the Postscript to *Jude*, where Hardy describes Sue as the ‘intellectualized, emancipated, bundle of nerves that modern conditions [are] producing, mainly in cities as yet; who does not recognize the necessity for most of her sex to follow marriage as a profession [...]’ (*Jude*: xxxviii).

The railway becomes a central force of ‘integration’, affecting both intra-national integration (connecting Britain’s outlying ‘fringes’ and rural regions to London and other centres), and colonial integration (the building of railways in Africa and India) (Munkelt et

al., 2013: xxviii). Peter Widdowson, in his essay “Postscript: The Film of *Jude*”, points out that the wanderings of Jude, Sue and Arabella are given central focus in the 1996 film version. The setting is not made clear in the film, as ‘*where* exactly in England the action was taking place’ was ‘a more difficult’ and ‘longer-lasting (perhaps never resolved) puzzlement’, but what ‘*would* have been clear [...] was that, wherever they were supposed to be, the main characters moved about a lot: that they were in perpetual motion - on foot, in horse-drawn carts and cabs, and especially in railway carriages’ (Widdowson, 1997: 188-189). The railways thus become representative not just of a means of transport, but of a leap in the sector of economic development and a marked shift from the rural to the urban. The characters are shown to be more and more migratory within this changing landscape, moving away from the rural setting of their childhood to embark on their many citified travels.

§5.2

Migration, Urbanisation, diverse identity formation and Sue

Migration is an inherently transcultural phenomenon that leads to the creation of multiple affiliations and identities that are new or acquired or, at times, even imagined. In an article entitled “Nervous Diseases and Modern Life”, published in 1895, the Victorian psychologist T. Clifford Allbutt discussed how ‘the unrest due to living at high pressure, to the whirl of the railway, the pelting of the telegrams, the strife of business’ caused anxiety and nervous disorders among individuals (Allbutt, 1895: 214). This state of being has only been exacerbated and made more visible by greater advancement, more progress and higher pressure in the modern and post-modern eras. As Nicholas Daly writes in *Literature, Technology, and Modernity 1860-2000* (2004), Victorian modernisation and technological advancements made the contact and dependence between human and machine a lot more explicit. This found expression in the literature of the fin de siècle, where the railway system became a symbol of the encroaching modern era (Daly, 2004). These new forms of mass transportation helped mobilise the growing numbers of migratory workers like Sue and Jude, which becomes particularly relevant when assessing Sue’s lifestyle changes.

Herbert Sussman, in his book *Victorian Technology: Invention, Innovation, and the Rise of the Machine*, discusses how the 1830s and 1840s were a time in Victorian England that blurred gender roles and ‘marked the loss of a central point of identity and social reference’, particularly for men (Sussman, 2009). The massive shifts in the organization and control of work and family life caused by the industrial revolution resulted in adjustments of class and gender relations across large sections of English society. These factors heralded greater female participation in jobs outside the domestic space. The working-class woman took on a pivotal role in a new machine orientated culture, working in the factories and retail premises that were being built to manufacture and then disseminate commodities (Sussman, 2009: 3). The period witnessed growing numbers of working class women entering the workplace, their bodies becoming assimilated into the capitalist model of labour, production, and commodity culture. This signalled a change in the way the female body was perceived and experienced: from a domestic body to a working one, from a private, maternal body to a public one. However, the change, far from being a profound reconsideration of the female body, merely reflected women’s status as commodities before the advent of industrialisation, as objects to be admired, owned and ultimately consumed. Hardy’s portrayal of Sue comes in a long line of working class women like Arabella, Bathsheba and Tess, who are shown in the capacity of trainee teachers, shop-girls, farm-owners, milkmaids and bar-maids, earning their keep, travelling unaccompanied at times, and attempting to lead relatively independent lives.

Judith Walkowitz explicates the trials of working class women in city spaces in the late nineteenth century in her study, when the city could be construed as a venue in which women could explore new roles within what she terms ‘a redefined public domain’:

London in the 1880s was a historic moment when middle-class women were enabled to speak publicly about sexual passion and about sexual danger, thanks to the new spaces, forms of social communication, and political networks available in a redefined public domain (Walkowitz, 1992: 9).

The city became a significant space in which middle-class women in Britain asserted their independence in the 1880s and 1890s. However, the city space also created new kinds of problems and struggles in being a complex entity that provided a larger sensory and experiential potential than maybe imagined or bargained for by wandering characters like Jude and Sue. Sally Ledger discusses this phenomenon too in her essay “Gissing, the Shopgirl and the New Woman”, seeing ‘the modern city at the *fin de siècle*’ turn into a ‘contested socio-cultural terrain, radically challenging the traditional masculine gendering of modernity’ (Ledger, 1995: 267). The ‘New Woman’ figures, be they fictional representations like Sue who are depicted as working women, or real life women, found a new freedom in the public domain within the work space of an ever-modernizing cityscape, an autonomy that was shadowed by its own brand of problems and contradictions.

Keith Wilson, in his essay “Hardy’s London”, provides a detailed study of Hardy’s intimate familiarity with the changing face of London through his multiple stays there, tracing ‘Hardy’s changing identity as Londoner, at the three distinct stages of his life: the mid-1860s, the late 1870s, and the first decade of the new century’ (Wilson, 2015: 385). Wilson discusses how Hardy watched ‘the city’s still living past giving way to its emergent future’, developing ‘an enduring awareness of the associational power of a city that spoke national history in its streets and buildings while undergoing changes that seemed overwhelming to many inhabitants’ (Wilson, 2015: 388). This is particularly interesting to consider while studying Hardy’s depiction of the morphing and evolving identities of Sue and Jude, shown through their perpetual urban wanderings and struggles. Adopting the

lifestyle of an urban dweller requires an ongoing accommodation to the ephemeral life and to the demands and opportunities it presents, a phenomenon that migratory global denizens of the twenty first century continually face too, making the trials and tribulations of the fictional Jude and Sue still contemporary and relatable. The city life is a constant test of the urban dweller's ingenuity, intelligence and adaptability, and while Sue's characterization indicates the presence of all these qualities in her personality, the lifestyle of an itinerant wanderer, alongside multiple associated social, emotional and personal challenges, ultimately becomes too much of an emotional strain. Sue's nostalgia for a simpler, rural past is made evident when she is described by Jude as the 'urban miss' who 'crave[s] to get back to the life of my infancy, and its freedom' (*Jude*: 132). Aunt Druisilla predicts darkly that Sue, the 'pert little thing [...] with her tight-strained nerves' and 'townish and wanton' ways (*Jude*: 104), is ultimately headed towards a disastrous downfall. The rural-urban shift, and then the constant wandering from place to place without any sense of stability or security is construed as one of the reasons behind Sue's perpetual restlessness and anxiety.

In this discussion of 'spaces', particularly through nomadic movements, it is important to consider the works of literary critics and intellectuals like Julie Kristeva, Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, who study the spatial reconstruction of theory in *Space in Theory* (West-Pavlov, 2009). The essays discuss the continuously changing notions of space to analyse them as social practices and cultural representations that occur randomly through history, constituted by psychological and material events. Thus, the concept of space does not remain confined to a pre-existing static unit in which history is made and in which cultural meaning materializes. For the main characters in *Jude*, migration is depicted as a way of life. While Jude, Sue and Phillotson limit themselves to national migration, Arabella embarks on a maritime journey to Australia after leaving Jude

for better prospects, before returning to England. Rena Jackson points out in her essay “Hybridity and Migrancy in *Jude the Obscure*: A Postcolonial Reading of Father Time” that while Father Time’s symbolic portrayal and brief but impactful presence in the novel have received a lot of critical attention, ‘most investigations into Father Time completely gloss over, downplay or misapprehend a key component of Time’s identity: his early connection with Australia’ (Jackson, 2009: 115). This is a strange critical oversight indeed as young Father Time’s identity formation and sense of self would be heavily dependent on his experiences of major international migration within his brief lifespan. As Jackson puts it:

Unlike Jude and Sue, Father Time is forced to wander not only from one English town to another, but from one continent to another and from one cultural identity to another. Living in between two cultures (an estimated six years in Australia and three in England) and belonging to neither completely characterizes the life of what Everett V. Stonequist terms the ‘marginal man’: ‘The marginal man’ is one who is poised in psychological uncertainty between two (or more) social worlds; reflecting in his soul the discords and harmonies, repulsions and attractions of these worlds (Jackson, 2009: 113).⁴³

In the cases of all the protagonists, migration is a direct result of both ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors; the ‘push’ coming from an urge to escape the drudgeries of the existing life, and the ‘pull’ coming from aspirations and hopes of a better future in a more advanced setting that holds the promise of greater opportunities. Father Time, being a minor and dependent on his mother Arabella’s whimsicalities, finds his situation to be even more helpless than the adult protagonists of the novel do. As Simon Gatrell notes:

[...] the most powerful of all the images of railway travel is that of ‘Little Father Time’ on his journey to his father, alone and separate, an isolation seems intensified by the idea of the train as a capsule of folk being drawn at speed by a

⁴³ Rena Jackson quotes from Everett V Stonequist’s book *The Marginal Man: A Study in Personality and Culture Conflict*, 1961.

machine on an invariable route through a landscape with which they have no contact (Gatrell, 2003: 233).

I begin this chapter with a quote from Hardy's poem "Midnight on the Great Western", which is clearly consistent with the scene of Little Father Time's solitary journey on the train to meet his father Jude that Gatrell finds so compelling. Brett Neilson muses in his essay "Hardy, Barbarism, and Modernity":

Neither Jude nor Sue has a stable origin, both having been abandoned by their families, who fought and consequently went their separate ways. For this reason, the pattern of repetition that marks their movements cannot be understood as a return to an undivided original state. Their nomadism is decentred since it is organised around provisional structures that are never permanent, always straying from one set of circumstances to another (Neilson, 2004: 75).

The perpetual urban wanderings play a crucial role in shaping the lives of Sue and Jude as well as their unfortunate children, but in none is it more pronounced than in Sue. Sue's character portrayal is without doubt a study in contradictory forces pulling her in opposite directions. She works at an ecclesiastical shop in the suggestively titled city of 'Christminster' while displaying an open disdain for organized religion. She craves male desire and love without wanting to submit sexually. She fights against the odds to educate herself and trains to be a teacher without really showing any true ambition for a career. A deliberate contrarian, her only consistency is in her inconsistent behaviour that makes an exasperated Jude burst out in a moment of impatience; 'I never knew such a woman for doing impulsive penances as you, Sue! No sooner does one expect you to go straight on, as the one rational proceeding, than you double round the corner!' (*Jude*: 349-350). Sue's 'nervous' disposition, 'tremulous' voice, 'quivering' demeanour and 'sensitive' temperament become signs that signal her eventual emotional collapse (*Jude*: 84, 94, 355, 388).

Through Sue's presentation, Hardy creates a compelling case-study of how overpowering and overbearing external and social pressures can be on the lives of individuals, particularly women, whose position and role in society is pre-determined without much room for uniquely individual thought and action. Sue alludes to herself as 'a woman tossed about, all alone, with aberrant passions and unaccountable antipathies' (*Jude*: 197). Her selfhood depends on her assumption of an identity that she has not freely selected but rather had bestowed upon her by the pressures of circumstance, family, society and the cultural setting. In "Ecological Hardy", Kerridge points out how Hardy enables the characters themselves to 'ceaselessly make and remake each other's identity', by his multiple and shifting narratorial voice that makes the readers active agents in his depiction of this 'interdependency' (Kerridge, 2001: 130). Kerridge asserts that it is the, '[...] frequent shifting, in spatial and social terms, of the reader's perspective that brings to life such a sense of responsibility. The reader may be positioned close to a character and then made to retreat to the perspective of a passing tourist' (Kerridge, 2001: 133-134). In "'The Immortal Puzzle': Hardy and Sexuality", Mallett writes, '[t]he narrator [of *Jude*] makes no claim to "understand" Sue as she struggles to come to terms with her identity as a woman – to learn how she is seen, what is demanded of her, the ways in which she is to represent and articulate herself' (Mallett, 2004: 196). He too comments on Hardy's narrative technique to ensure reader engagement and participation by rendering Sue 'through a series of gaps and hesitations' (Mallett, 2004: 195):

Often the narrator is silent where we might have expected commentary. Early in Part Fourth, for example, Jude watches from outside the house as Sue presses a photograph to her bosom and wonders if it is his; the narrator is either unwilling or unable to tell. After her wedding with Phillotson, Sue returns briefly to Jude's lodgings and seems about to speak: 'But she went on; and whatever she had meant to say remained unspoken' (p. 175). There the chapter ends, and neither Jude, nor the reader learns what she might have said. She herself attributes her reluctance to

sleep with Phillotson to ‘a reason I cannot disclose’ (p. 212) [...] (Mallett, 2004: 195-196).

The readers are invited to fill these ‘gaps and hesitations’, imbuing them with a ‘sense of responsibility’ and turning them into ‘active agents’ who discern in Sue’s portrayal what is available from the textual narration, as well as what they wish to see based on their own identification with her representation.

§5.3

Tranculturalism, Intermediality and Sue

Tranculturalism can also be understood as a mindset; an ability to simultaneously draw from several cultural repertoires, initiating a process by which mutual borrowings take place and give way to new cultural occurrences. This emphasizes the interconnectedness and changeability of cultural perceptions, which cannot be assessed in isolation. Literary adaptations create an interactive forum between film and literature, and attain an interdisciplinarity that is crucial to the understanding of transcultural visuality as expressed through the cinematic form. In *Thomas Hardy and Visual Structures: Framing, Disruption, Process*, Sheila Berger sees the process of creating reality from fragmented perception to be at the heart of Hardy's aesthetics:

Human beings find themselves in a world of flux and unknowns. To negotiate with this universe, they tend to enlarge experience into meaning: images become icons or symbols. In Hardy, this process is never finished or the icons eternally established. When an image is disrupted, meaning is dissolved and we have to find new metaphors and create new meanings (Berger, 1990: 15).

Sue's deliberately nebulous portrayal by Hardy never allows for the conversion of Sue from image to icon, and the process of reading, analysing and representing Sue remains an ongoing venture.

Peter Widdowson has shown particular interest in the way Hardy has achieved the status of a cultural figure over the decades, exploring through his *critiography* how Hardy's literary creations are reproduced and consumed within the significant cultural industry that his works have generated. The politics of adapting Hardy's works into other media is complicated as adaptations are often the first point of contact between audiences and works of Hardy. Widdowson writes '[w]hen I am faced with a film adaptation of a novel I know well, I play an impossible game which involves trying to imagine what someone would make of the film who knows nothing at all of the novel – nor, for good measure, of the author either [...]' (Widdowson, 1997). His attempt to see a film for its sake and not as an adaptation of a familiar literary work leads him to a discussion of the 'central problematic' inherent in the process:

Because the film is a version of a written text, and its 'point' must lie - not in how well or badly it reproduces for the cognoscenti the novel's 'themes' or philosophical standpoint, and so establishes its own absent point by referring us to the book's - but precisely in the fact that it is a version of the novel *Jude the Obscure*. If we are not in a position to read the intertextual relations between the two, the film may well, indeed, seem 'point' -less; but if we are in a position to do so, we may establish the film's point by seeing what it has had to do to the novel in order to make itself the film it is. That this work of strategic reproduction and refashioning reveals its affinity with other critical and cultural, social and ideological, processes of our time may not be unexpected (Widdowson, 1997).

Adaptations and cultural appropriations are important in contemporary cultures as they shed light on the value of critical analysis in order to understand the mechanisms of cultural production, distribution and consumption. Linda Hutcheon writes in *A Theory of Adaptation*:

Stories [...] propagate themselves when they catch on; adaptations – as both repetition and variation – are their form of replication [...] We retell – and show again and interact anew with – stories over and over; in the process, they change with each repetition, and yet they are recognizably the same [...] In the workings of

human imagination, adaptation is the norm, not the exception (Hutcheon, 2006: 197).

Hutcheon's comment signals a shift, from perceiving adaptation studies to be confined within the tropes of literature and film, to considering the cultural and aesthetic concerns surrounding the legitimacy of adaptive approaches. As George Steiner puts it:

A poem, a play, a novel can never be separated altogether from the illustrations or other pieces of art it inspires, from its settings to music, from the films, radio-versions, television treatments [...] Roman Jakobson called this motion of a text across other media 'transmutations' (Steiner, 1995: 16).

To understand the notion of 'transmutations' and adaptation studies as discussed by Hutcheon and Steiner, it is important to study the concept of intermediality. Intermediality can be understood as a state of in-between-ness. This is useful while analysing transcultural relations, as intermediality creates connections, interactions and interchanges between different forms of art and media as well as diverse cultures. As Irina Rajewsky writes, though intermediality studies lack a unified theory, they can help develop new ways of thinking about 'medial border crossing and hybridization':

The sustained success and growing international recognition of the concept of intermediality, therefore, point less to new types of problems per se than (at least potentially) to new ways of solving problems, new possibilities for presenting and thinking about them, and to new, or at least to different views on medial border-crossings and hybridization; in particular, they point to a heightened awareness of the materiality and mediality of artistic practices and of cultural practices in general (Rajewsky, 2005: 44).

Jude has been adapted to the screen twice. The first instance was in 1971 as a six-episode BBC television version by Hugh David, shot mostly on sets, with Robert Powell playing Jude and Fiona Walker playing Sue. This version follows the original plot of *Jude* closely with an eye to incorporating most of Hardy's original narrative and re-makes it in the mould of a classic literary BBC production.

The second adaptation is Michael Winterbottom's higher budget, gritty and powerful period drama film *Jude*, released in 1996, which is the main point of consideration in this section. Winterbottom's directorial interpretation of *Jude* earns itself an R rating with its graphic content that goes above and beyond Hardy's narrative in *Jude*, making it as much a product of Winterbottom's interpretation, and the critics and audiences' participation through their reaction to the film, as it is of Hardy's imagination. The film is shot in drab tones, Winterbottom and his cinematographer Eduardo Serra juxtaposing light and darkness, black and white scenes and scenes shot in colour, to convey an overall picture of a grim, dark and disapproving world.

Paul J. Niemeyer, in *Seeing Hardy: Film and Television adaptations of the Fiction of Thomas Hardy*, considers the decision to re-make *Jude* as a film in the 1990s to be a strategic ploy. He surmises that since the 'mid-1980s, many film adaptations of literary "greats" such as E. M. Forster, Jane Austen, and Henry James have been hits in England and especially in America [...]', Hardy's *Jude* was also considered to be a bankable prospect for directors and producers as being a 'big success on both sides of the Atlantic' (Niemeyer, 2003: 166). It is interesting to note Widdowson's opinion on the casting of Kate Winslet as Sue, which he considers is 'the film's biggest mistake – or, alternatively, its most devious strategy in reprocessing the novel' (Widdowson, 1997: 193). As he puts it:

Physiognomically, Kate Winslet has an inescapably modern face, and all her pert, flirty, self-confident, healthy-young- woman-of-the- 1990s mannerisms and expressions seem entirely inappropriate for the intellectually precocious and sexually repressed 'slight, pale [...] bundle of nerves' the novel represents Sue Bridehead as being. As a result of the extrovert charm of the actress, then, the disjunction in the film between the carefree and self-confident young woman marching up and down in the pub smoking her cigarette in front of Jude's work-mates, and the supposedly up-tight virginal girl who marries Phillotson to spite Jude and who abjures sexual relations with either of them until she finally gets jealous that Arabella will give Jude what he wants, is inescapable and strains

credibility to breaking-point. That young woman, you think, simply could not be the same person as this young woman (Widdowson, 1997).

This is an instance of a reproduction of Sue's portrayal in a more modernized context, in keeping with the 'media culture' that Douglas Kellner describes as an 'industrial culture, organized on the model of mass production and [...] produced for a mass audience according to types (genres), following conventional formulas, codes, and rules' (Kellner, 1995: 1). This highlights how cultural appropriation of literature in other media has the potential to become inaccurate and flawed in the attempt to pander to the expectations of the contemporary audience. Within this context, Winslet's casting as Sue makes perfect sense as a reflection of 'the producer's desire to cash in on a proven commodity, since she [Winslet] had won both critical acclaim and wide popularity for playing characters from the past' (Niemeyer, 2003: 166).

Winterbottom makes use of artistic license to make some significant creative departures from Hardy's *Jude*, inventing a few scenes featuring Sue. One example of this is a prolonged lovemaking scene depicted between Winslet's Sue and Christopher Eccleston's Jude. Niemeyer writes:

The way the scene is shot is unabashedly erotic: Winslet's nude frame occupies two-thirds of the right half of the screen and is softly lit by the gas lamp [...] This positioning makes Winslet's body the focus of the entire scene, and as she lies woodenly and supine, her hands awkwardly placed just above her breasts, she exudes erotic vulnerability. Her vulnerable position is enhanced by her nervous, oddly charming dialogue: "Do I talk too much? I'm doing it wrong! I'm intellectualizing!" (Niemeyer, 2003: 182).

While Hardy only insinuates the slow building up of a sexual relationship between Sue and Jude after Sue's initial reluctance, Winterbottom's interpretation presents it as a key visual insight into Sue's vulnerability. Hardy explores the idea of female sexual desire, or the lack of it, and Sue and Jude's relationship based on free love to show how problematic and

unrealistic it was deemed in the Victorian social context that insisted on controlling women's sexuality. Winterbottom on the other hand plays up the sexual aspect of the romance plot of the film, as a shrewd modern filmmaker who caters to the expectations of the audience of modern cinema. Rob Lapsley and Michael Westlake describe how the depiction of love interest leading to a union or the lack of a union, compounded by the obstacles in the way of its realization, count as good box office material (Lapsley and Westlake, 1993: 182). They also explicate in an earlier work, *Film Theory: An Introduction*, how 'the subject is at once the producer and the product of meaning' (Lapsley and Westlake, 1988: 53). This expounds the important idea that the meaning of the subject is not fixed but open to analysis, which makes the practice of discussion/interpretation significant. This reiterates the importance of the audience/reader in the construction of meaning and Sue's function as a Rorschach test. Depicting Sue and Jude's relationship as mostly platonic in the film, as in the novel, would find less favour with a modern audience, which is made clear through the perspectives of the director and the actors. In "Decadence Revisited in Michael Winterbottom's *Jude*", Britt W. Svenhard quotes from Kate Winslet's recorded interviews in 1996 to throw light on Winslet's interpretation of Sue:

In an interview, Winslet says she was willing to do the nude scenes "[...] because it is such a turning point for Sue. She fought so hard against falling in love because she believed that she would be giving up part of herself, part of her independence in loving Jude. And when she finally does say 'Well actually I do want you', it's a very brave thing to do and a tremendous turning point" [...] Winslet also describes Sue as very confused: "That comes out in the bed scene. We find out she hasn't got a clue" [...] (Svenhard, 2016: 17).

The directorial decision in lessening the obscurity surrounding Sue's sexual choices, in visually presenting her hesitant but happy sexual acquiescence, signifies that even in the context of the modern perception of women's desire and sexual choices in the 1990s, the

concept of sexual autonomy for women is best understood when depicted within the conventional framework of a ‘normal’ sexual relationship. Winterbottom and Winslet’s joint rendering of Sue as a sexually active, healthy woman demonstrates their desire as reader, director, actor and audience to assert control over the recalcitrant female character and her body by normalizing her. In an interesting contrast, Winterbottom exerts control over Sue’s characterisation by normalizing her and her actions, while multiple critics, as discussed in the previous chapters, extended their influence and control by diagnosing the representation of Sue with some form of sexual abnormality or psychological neurosis. Ultimately, the act of interpretation reveals itself as an act of control.

In “Adapting Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure* for the screen: a study in contrasts”, Robert Schweik also takes note of the significant differences in *Jude*’s transition from book to screen. Schweik notes that Winterbottom ‘creates two successive connected episodes – neither in Hardy’s *Jude*’ to ‘compress much of his [Father Time’s] characterisation into one vivid impression of the little boy’s premature vision of life’s terrors’:

In the first, Jude and Sue take the boy to a magic lantern show titled ‘Ghouls, Ghosts, and Apparitions’ where, it is threateningly promised, ‘Out of thin air the terrors come!’ [...] Then, from a hideous scream that dominates the final frames of this hallucinatory scene, Winterbottom abruptly jump-cuts to the spectacle of Sue Bridehead’s scream in the agony of giving birth, her gory vulva and the bed sheets drenched with blood – on which scene little Father Time looks wide-eyed (Schweik, 2006: 191).

The scene that Winterbottom invents between Sue and Father Time, where Father Time witnesses Sue giving birth, is the most startling example of his creative departure from Hardy’s narrative. The scene is horrifyingly graphic, with Sue’s (Winslet) screams ricocheting around the little room while the camera pans over the blood drenched bedsheets and the crown of the baby’s head, visible between her legs. Little Father Time is shown as being in the same room, wordless and wide-eyed, watching the gory spectacle.

This scene is a clear example of Winterbottom filling a narrative gap left by Hardy with the kind of drama and sensationalism that he thinks will engage the ‘homicidal voyeurism and sadism’ of the audience. In Kincaid terms, the audience takes on the role of the ‘pornographer/pervert’, voyeuristically partaking in the graphic, visual depiction of the characters’ plights (Kincaid, 1993: 132).

The final significant change that Winterbottom makes in his rendering of *Jude* is the last scene, where Sue leaves Jude while he opines that in time the world will change and know that ‘we’ve done nothing wrong Sue’. The words reveal Jude’s hope for a modern world that can give them a different ending. It is possible too for the modern audience to project their hopes of a better future onto the cinematic depiction of Sue and Jude, as Winterbottom leaves the ending of the film ambiguous. An audience of *Jude* who has not read the book would not be aware of the original conclusion, where Sue remarries Phillotson and Jude dies, leaving the readers no scope to imagine a possible happy conclusion.

The landscape of ‘media culture’ in the wake of media globalisation is highly complex, particularly with the increase of media communication across national as well as international borders. When the question of culture comes into consideration, it becomes especially significant to note that while certain forms of media culture remain national-territorial, confined within the context of the nation and its territory and are important reference points of their articulation of meaning, other forms of media culture can be deterritorial (Robins, 2006). This makes a transcultural research perspective imperative in the comparison and analysis of media cultures. Considering that media frequently travels between cultures, through displacement and translation from one culture to another, intermediality becomes a powerful strategy to reflect the potentials, limits and effects of

such cultural exchanges and transfers, affecting transcultural relations and connections. These are important points of consideration, especially in the context of globalisation that structures both the colonial and postcolonial world.

Winterbottom is a particularly apposite director to consider in the context of Hardy studies and transculturalism as his interest in Hardy's works does not end with adapting *Jude* on screen. He adapts Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1892) for the big screen too in the cross-cultural film *Trishna* (2011), making a transposition from nineteenth-century Wessex to contemporary India. Winterbottom boldly not only reconfigures era, setting, characters and actions, but also interlinks western filmmaking style with that of the Indian film industry, Bollywood, interspersing the film (which is not a musical) with song tracks that are an extension of the cross-cultural theme - British rock as well as Indian classical. The biggest change that Winterbottom makes to the plot of *Tess* is in conflating the characters of Alec d'Urberville, the rich and corrupt relative who rapes/seduces Tess, and Angel Clare, the spiritual, apparently kind and emancipated man Tess falls in love with, who eventually reveals his hypocritical double standards by leaving her on finding out that she is not a virgin. Winterbottom conjoins the two characterisations to create the character of Jay, born in India and raised in the UK, an emblem of the cultural hybrid. *Trishna* works for the spoilt, brazen, nouveau riche Jay, who uses his position of power over her to rape/seduce her. Winterbottom, like Hardy, leaves it ambiguous too as to whether the sexual encounter is rape or seduction, and depicts the subsequent social ostracism *Trishna* faces in contemporary India. In casting Freida Pinto, an internationally acclaimed Indian actor who also starred in *Slumdog Millionaire* (another popular cross-cultural project) as Tess, Winterbottom shows his savvy, businessman side again, playing the right cards to deliver a film that he hopes will be a financial success worldwide across different cultures.

As Ponzanesi writes in *The Postcolonial Cultural Industry: Icons, Markets, Mythologies*, investigating the ‘cultural economy of postcolonial literary adaptation by focusing on texts that have been transposed into movies’ is especially useful in analysing how the postcolonial message gets transformed, diluted or magnified in the process of adaptation (Ponzanesi, 2014: 109). Winterbottom’s adaptation of *Tess* in a contemporary Indian context exhibits the still prevalent class system and the corrupt duality operating at the heart of a deeply patriarchal social system. This is where intermediality comes into play, as Winterbottom directly establishes a link between Tess of nineteenth-century Britain and Trishna of twenty-first-century India, and also makes the media of different cultures interact, helping to make visible both the similarities as well as the differences between those media cultures.

Conclusion: Past and Present

Widdowson asks ‘what happens to “good little Thomas Hardy”⁴⁴ when he is subjected to such theorized criticism?’ (Widdowson, 1999: 87-88). Studying the reader-responses to Sue’s portrayal from the 1890s to now, from the changing theoretical praxes of the changing times, has displayed the extent to which Hardy’s works open up to and respond to the application of literary critical theory for their analyses. As Widdowson asserts, Hardy’s works become ‘a terrain of riven textuality whose major landmarks are faultlines which expose the substrata of cultural politics, class, sexuality, and gender, themselves striated by the unstable language of which they are composed’, turning him from the ‘Heritage Hardy’ into ‘Our Contemporary’ Hardy (Widdowson, 1999: 87-88).

In this thesis, I have demonstrated the main modes of literary and theoretical criticism used to decipher Sue’s obscure portrayal. Each chapter has analysed different strands of criticism, and has drawn attention to reading Sue through theoretical frameworks such as liberal humanism, formalism, New Criticism, structuralism, Feminism, Marxism, Materialism, New Historicism, Psychoanalysis, Postcolonial theory and Transculturalism. What has emerged from this study are the benefits and problems of using Sue’s portrayal as an experimental platform for disparate critical approaches. The thread running through the length and breadth of the thesis is the changing trajectory of the reader responses to Sue, to justify my primary argument that Sue’s portrayal acts as a Rorschach test. The

⁴⁴ It was Henry James who famously described Hardy as ‘[t]he good little Thomas Hardy’ while writing a condescending letter about *Tess* after its publication, finding it to be ‘chock-full of faults and falsity, and yet [with] a singular charm’.

varying criticisms on Sue's characterisation ultimately reflect that reading Sue draws out from the readers what they want to see in her; their own cognition and personality variables such as motivations, response tendencies, affectivity, and personal/interpersonal perceptions, coming into play in their analysis.

A late twentieth-century critic, Cedric Watts, identifies Jude and Sue's main plight in terms of human and social evolution, stating that they were too ahead of their time as far as their intellectual and emotional quotient was concerned. This sentiment is reflected in Jude's comment when he muses aloud about Sue and himself; '[o]ur ideas were fifty years too soon to be any good to us. Therefore, the resistance they met with brought reaction in her, and recklessness and ruin on me!' (*Jude*: 388). Re-evaluating these 'ideas' more than a century later, in today's globalised context, makes it evident how topically relevant they still are, how truly universal, cutting across the categories of geography and history. What is also interesting to note is Jude's belief that in a future era, their journey would not be quite so lonely and tragic. He expects that there would be many others with similar intellectually advanced viewpoints in a new and improved society that is better equipped to deal with individuals who have ambitions beyond the confines of their socio-economic class.

Sue, before her capitulation to the social and religious expectations on her, laments the social conventions of Victorian Britain to Jude concerning marital laws and the encoded sexual expectations: 'When people of a later age look back upon the barbarous customs and superstitions of the times we have the unhappiness to live in, what will they say?' (*Jude*: 206). Her protestation is compelling as it directs the readers to perceive Sue and Jude as afflicted symptoms of the malaise of the times they are portrayed in. In attempting to answer Sue's query, the readers need to connect 'then' to 'now', and

consciously or subliminally compare the social and cultural norms. This creates a link between past and present, fictional and real: the threads of connection superseding national and international boundaries to create a criss-crossing global and transcultural web of shared issues and concerns.

Judith Mitchell attributes ‘the pleasure derived from reading a Hardy novel’ to its ‘air of solid “reality” like the audience of a realist film [...]’ (Mitchell, 1993: 174). She adds that feminist critics point out that ‘this world seems real, is recognisable, partly because it parallels the patriarchal world we know, especially in its tacit assumptions about gender’ (Mitchell, 1993: 174). One episode in *Jude* that stands out almost as a visual memory is that of Sue jumping out of the window one night when a somnolent Phillotson unintentionally walks into her bedroom and absent-mindedly starts undressing for bed; such is her reluctance to consummate her marriage with Phillotson. Hardy portrays Phillotson as a kindly, mild-mannered man who never forces himself on Sue, but it is important to note that Hardy was well aware of where the Victorian law stood on female autonomy over one’s body, and that the discontent and fear that women of the nineteenth century harboured in their hearts about marriage was far from being unfounded. Joanna Devereux points out the inherent contradictions in the ‘Victorian view of the role of woman’:

Women were expected to be pure and virginal before marriage, then constantly available for conjugal sex once married [...] Sue does fulfill the first half of this rule; however, she at first refuses to comply with the second. Her consistency makes her a rebel because it shows how she resists the virgin/whore dichotomy prevailing in the contemporary views of women (Devereux, 2003: 124).

Given the expectations of Victorian society on a married woman, if Phillotson had so chosen to force Sue to have intercourse with him, Victorian law would not have come to her defence or identified it as marital rape. Hardy’s awareness of this is reflected in his

depiction of Sue's desperate bid to get away from Phillotson by jumping out of the window, as she is aware that she is legally obliged to be sexually available to her husband. As she puts it: 'what tortures me so much is the necessity of being responsive to this 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!' (*Jude*: 204). Phillotson shows himself to be forward thinking and liberal in letting Sue leave him, even helping her in the divorce proceedings to enable her to follow her heart and live with Jude; an act that Phillip Mallett lauds as his 'courageous attempt to become a New Man' (Mallett, 2010: 398). Events, however, take a very different turn after an emotionally broken Sue, following the deaths of her children, re-marries Phillotson. T.R. Wright records Sue's 'horrifying transformation of sexual relations with her husband into a form of penance, shuddering and clenching her teeth as she does her "duty"' and reads it as 'the failure of her attempted rebellion' (quoted in Wright, 1989: 130).

The uncharacteristic act of Phillotson, re-entering into a marital, sexual union with Sue in full awareness of her physical repulsion for him, draws derision from critics studying him. Dellamora states in "Male Relations in Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*" that 'Phillotson's marital rape of Sue [...] makes him a sadist' (Dellamora, 1991: 456). Even Mallett, who praises Phillotson initially for his progressive thinking, construes his act of taking advantage of Sue's emotional breakdown as him regressing into 'the patriarchal mould' and committing 'what amounts to institutionally approved rape in remarrying Sue' (Mallett, 2010: 398).

Issues of sexual and domestic violence within marriage and the family unit have received growing international attention from the second half of the twentieth century and yet, in many countries, like India and Pakistan, marital rape is still not recognized as a

legal offence despite new legislations and amendments. According to Section 375, the provision of rape in the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the clause; ‘Sexual intercourse by man with his own wife, the wife not being under 15 years of age, is not rape’; is included as an exception. Section 376 of IPC lays out the terms of punishment for rape *unless* the woman raped is the individual’s own wife or under 15 years of age. The dialogue surrounding marital rape and the need for female agency over, and ownership of, their own bodies can be traced back to the nineteenth century. British liberal feminists J.S. Mill and Harriet Taylor perceived marital rape as a gross double-standard in law and as central to the subordination of women. However, the English common law, in force in North America and the British Commonwealth, declared the very concept of marital rape an impossibility, historically providing a concept of spouses’ conjugal rights to sexual intercourse with each other.⁴⁵

These views of marriage and sexuality started to be challenged in most Western countries from the 1960s and 1970s, especially by second-wave feminists, leading to an acknowledgment of the woman’s right to self-determination and control over all matters relating to her body, and the withdrawal of the exemption of marital rape. It is troubling to realize that the marital rape exemption was abolished in the West as recently as the 1990s: England and Wales in 1991, the United States in 1993 (though criminalization of marital rape in the US started in the mid-1970s), and most other European countries in the 1990s too. This makes the struggles of a ‘New Woman’ figure like Sue still topical, still interesting, and still worthy of engaging with across cultures and time spans, as the present seems to keep reflecting back upon the past, even a fictional one.

⁴⁵ See "[Sex a conjugal right](#)" Retrieved 6 May, 2015.

As recently as May 2016, The Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) in Pakistan proposed a bill to legalize domestic violence by attempting to authorize husbands to exercise ‘limited violence’ at home if required. The proposal stated; ‘A husband should be allowed to lightly beat his wife if she defies his commands and refuses to dress up as per his desires; turns down demand of intercourse without any religious excuse or does not take bath after intercourse or menstrual periods’.⁴⁶ This contemporary report recalls a scene from *Jude* where Hardy uses his knowledge of the news of the English society of his times in his fictionalized account of *Jude* to create a dialogue between his two characters, Gillingham and Phillotson. When Phillotson confides in his friend Gillingham that Sue wants to leave him, her lawful husband, to live with her lover Jude, Gillingham reacts with horror, stating that Sue ‘ought to be smacked and brought to her senses’, and Phillotson should ‘put her virtuously under lock and key’ (*Jude*: 222). In “‘Smacked and Brought to Her Senses’: Hardy and the Clitheroe Abduction Case” (1992), Phillip Mallett discusses how the story of a wife who had been abducted and kept prisoner by her husband in 1891 might have influenced Hardy in his creation of this scene and his depiction of Gillingham’s attitude towards Sue. Even more shocking is Arabella’s advice to Phillotson on how to tame a ‘kicking’ wife, with reference to Sue. Arabella herself blazes through the novel, flaunting her different adoptive identities of being a wife, from the original Miss Donn, to Mrs Fawley, Mrs Cartlett, back again to Mrs Fawley, with suggestions at the end of *Jude* that she aspires to become Mrs Vilbert. While Arabella’s comment can be perceived as Hardy’s exploration of the issue of women’s oppression by women, a necessary but problematic territory for feminists to negotiate within the face of feminist realism, I contend that Hardy is ultimately channeling an indictment of the patriarchal social order

⁴⁶ See <http://edition.cnn.com/2016/05/28/asia/pakistan-women-light-beating/index.html> Retrieved 9 December, 2016.

through Arabella too, and not using her to exacerbate Sue's suffering. Arabella is the Darwinian survivor who has adapted to her socio-cultural setting in the manner best suited to her needs. She refuses to be a victim of her circumstances and strives to do what serves her best, while also being completely clear-sighted about the sexual inequality of her times, criticizing the patriarchal model of society where double standards can be traced back to Biblical times. She quotes from the Bible to assert her own feelings regarding the matter: "Then shall the man be guiltless; but the woman shall bear her iniquity." Damn rough on us women; but we must grin and put up wi' it! (*Jude*: 307).

What is more surprising to note is just how contemporary Sue's struggles still are in a twenty-first-century context. Hardy creates a lively dialogue in *Jude* between Phillotson and Gillingham to draw a contrast between the progressive Phillotson and the traditional Gillingham, products of the same age yet with vastly different ideological beliefs: the former challenging the set social norms in an understated, subdued way, the latter conforming to the same. Phillotson's decision to let Sue leave him to live with Jude is met with absolute horror by Gillingham; '[b]ut if people did as you want to do, there'd be a general domestic disintegration. The family would no longer be the social unit' (*Jude*: 185). Phillotson's progressive response 'I don't see why the woman and the children should not be the unit without the man', causes the scandalized Gillingham to exclaim in horror 'By the Lord Harry! – Matriarchy!' (*Jude*: 185). This exchange becomes symptomatic of what seems to Gillingham, and to most of Hardy's readers, a grotesque reversal of mid-Victorian domestic ideals: the idealized 'angel' figure gaining power and agency while the traditional marriage degenerates into a chaotic system of free love, organized under the wish of women.

The astonishing progressiveness of thought and intellect with which Hardy distinguishes Sue comes across in her comment on her reluctance towards marriage and reproduction:

Everybody is getting to feel as we do. We are a little beforehand, that's all. In fifty, a hundred, years the descendants of these two [a couple whose marriage Sue and Jude witness] will act and feel worse than we. They will see weltering humanity still more vividly than we do now, as

Shapes like our own selves hideously multiplied,
and will be afraid to reproduce them (*Jude*: 276).⁴⁷

The authorial struggle, however, is revealed ultimately in the way Sue is punished in the end. To go against the grain is to be a rebel, and to be a rebel is, in essence, to prepare oneself for eventual social damnation in the Hardyian fictional world. However, Hardy's novels and his fictional female characterizations have continued to find resonance with readers over the decades, acquiring what might be called a transcultural status. As Edward Said surmises in *Culture and Imperialism*:

No one can deny the persisting continuities of long traditions, sustained habitations, national languages, and cultural geographies, but there seems to be no reason except fear and prejudice to keep insisting on their separation and distinctiveness, as if that was all human life was about (Said, 1993: 407).

Certain fundamental issues and debates connect cultures around the world, however disparate, over human rights, feminism and ecological awareness etc.: concerns that are at the heart of most of Hardy's fictional works, particularly the works that he himself classifies under 'Novels of Character and Environment'.⁴⁸

⁴⁷"Shapes like our own selves hideously multiplied" is a quote from Shelley's "Revolt of Islam".

⁴⁸ Hardy introduced the ordering and the sub-genre categorisation of his novels into 'Romances and Fantasies', 'Novels of Ingenuity' and 'Novels of Character and Environment' in his Collected Editions.

The authors of *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World-Literature* (2015) exhibit how, in the context of ‘disciplinary rethinking and reorientation’, the notions of ‘world literature’ and ‘global literature’ emerge as ‘important nodes of discussion and research’ (WReC, 2015: 4).⁴⁹ ‘World Literature’ thus becomes an extension and remaking of comparative literature, a product of globalisation and transculturalism:

Within this context of seeing the world as ‘one’, ‘integrated’ if not ‘united’ ‘global’/‘world’ literature is discussed as a force that ‘pushes intrinsically in the directions of commerce and commonality, linkage and connection, articulation and integration, network and system (WReC, 2015: 5-6).

It is especially compelling to note the impact of colonialism in world literature, which becomes a reflection of the socio-cultural changes. For instance, western colonial rule generated paradoxical responses from the educated Indian middle class that came into prominence during nineteenth-century colonized India. The West was a world to be emulated on the one hand, yet disparaged on the other. While England was fighting her own battle for equality of the sexes detailed at length in the first chapter, western liberalism was seeping into colonized India too, aided by reformers from both the West and the East, such as William Carey and Raja Ram Mohan Roy. The missionaries advocated education of women and the abolishment of practices like sati, child marriage and maltreatment of widows.⁵⁰ The Indian middle class aided, generated, and participated in, debates on gender and culture; being ‘products of an English education introduced by the colonial masters’

⁴⁹ WReC is the acronym for the Warwick Research Collective. This book has been co-authored by Sharae Deckard, Nicholas Lawrence, Neil Lazarus, Graeme Macdonald, Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee, Benita Parry and Stephen Shapiro.

⁵⁰ Sati was an ancient funeral custom where a widow immolated herself on her husband’s pyre, which was abolished in 1829, and further criminalized in 1988 with the passing of the “Sati prevention Act”.

with a ‘Eurocentric view’ of modern society, while also feeling victimized by the same, suffering from a ‘feeling of historical denial’ (Chaudhuri, 2011: 12–13).

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838 – 1894), wrote the first Indian novel in English, *Rajmohan’s Wife*, in this socio-cultural climate (first serialized in 1864 and published as a book in 1935). *Rajmohan’s Wife* features the story of Matangini, depicted ‘as a new woman, who cannot just restrict herself to the social taboos’ (Dakua, 2014: 38). Matangini is shown to be trapped in a loveless, abusive marriage, torn between the two main male characters Mathur and Madhav, one vulgar and unscrupulous, the other progressive and erudite. Matangini’s situation calls to mind the trials of Jude trapped between the coarse and corporeal Arabella, and the ethereal Sue, or Tess’ tribulations between the wealthy rogue Alec, and the apparently kind and charming Angel.

It is significant to note that analogous to Hardy’s novels based in Victorian Britain, Chatterjee’s novel set in nineteenth-century India also focusses primarily on the themes of sex and sexuality, the distress of being trapped in loveless marriages, and the eventual punishment of the morally and sexually transgressive in the hands of society. Matangini’s female body, like that of Sue, is depicted as the primary object of desire and denial in the novel. Like Sue, Matangini too functions not just as an individual moral agent, but also as a victim and symptom of the larger socio-cultural malaise.

Frantz Fanon considers the latter part of the nineteenth century to be marked by intense cultural reformation that heralded the formation of what he refers to as a ‘national culture’, which he describes in *The Wretched of the Earth* as:

[...] the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence [...] It is the fight for national existence which sets

culture moving and opens to it the doors of creation. Later on it is the nation which will ensure the conditions and framework necessary to culture. The nation gathers together the various indispensable elements necessary for the creation of a culture, those elements which alone can give it credibility, validity, life and creative power (Fanon, 1961: 188, 197).

According to Fanon, this struggle to create a national culture mobilizes a society. This finds manifestation in literary works of the period, such as *Rajmohan's Wife* and *Jude*; the former 'closely realistic in its representation of East Bengal middle-class life' (Dakua, 2014: 36), creating a map of the Indian social structure of that period, the latter portraying the struggles of the nomadic British proletariat in a rapidly changing social order. Both novels are structured around complex ideological, political, social, and cultural coordinates. Matangini, like Sue, becomes emblematic of the negotiations and cultural choices of a newly emergent society; an allegorical representation of a 'new, albeit stunted' social structure, that arises out of the 'debris of an older, broken social order' (Paranjape, 2002). Matangini dies 'an early death' (Chatterjee, 1935: 126) by the end of the novel, while Sue lives, but as an empty shell of her former self, symptomizing the hesitant, distorted growth of the modern culture from a premodern one, that welcomes non-conformity but then punishes it.

Michael Valdez Moses, in *The Novel and the Globalization of Culture* (1995), traces 'the harsh, often calamitous, shift from the premodern to modern societies' in Hardy's novels (with a particular focus on *The Mayor of Casterbridge*) to suggest that the 'emergence of a world literature marked by peripatetic authors and multicultural intertextuality is a product of modernity' (Moses, 1995: xii). Moses perceives Hardy's situating of the action of his novels primarily in the South West of England in his exploration of social relations, while other novelists like Joseph Conrad, Rudyard Kipling and Rider Haggard were treating aspects of the empire as focal points of their fiction, to be

a calculated move, indicative of his silent objection to colonialism and imperial exploration. Moses suggests that Hardy's 'literary regionalism', which is 'usually conceived of in geographic terms, as representing a particular place', might be 'better understood in temporal terms' as

[...] the fictional presentation of a premodern fictional epoch that has effectively come to an end in the relatively recent past. Hardy's regionalism eulogizes a society whose distinctive features are gradually being effaced by the homogenizing influence of modernity (Moses, 1995: 30-31).

The authors of *Combined and Uneven Development* highlight the way 'some of the most significant literature from the core countries emanates from the semi-peripheries or peripheries of those countries: marginalised class, ethnic or regional positions, as in the case of Faulkner in the US context [...] or of Hardy, Lawrence and others in England' (WReC, 2015: 55). They ruminate over Moretti's supposition in *Atlas of the European Novel*:

[...] one day, who knows, a literary criticism finally transformed into a comparative historical morphology may be able to [...] recognize in the geographical variation and dispersal of forms the power of the center over an enormous periphery (Moretti, 1999: 195, quoted in WReC, 2015: 55).

The processes of 'centralisation' (becoming 'core') and 'peripheralisation' thus are 'multi-scalar, playing themselves out at multiple levels – neighbourhood, city, nation, region, macro-region – in addition to that of the world-system itself' (WReC, 2015: 55). Like Sue, whose representation has been analysed as symptomatic of the 'larger cultural malaise' that marked the end of the Victorian society and the beginning of the Modern, Matangini too is perceived as:

[...] the "spirit" or personification of modern India itself. This is an emergent, hesitant, yet strong-willed and attractive India. It is not the India of villages or the old India of feudal times. This India has been born near the capital, Calcutta, and is

full of new possibilities. But, this beautiful and powerfully drawn image of India is also shown as burdened by sorrow and anxiety. It is neither free nor happy [...] (Paranjape, 2002).

Angelique Richardson demonstrates in “A Global Hardy” how Hardy’s works operate ‘in a network of international exchange’, and explores the ‘part played by empire in his fiction, the value he placed on cultural dialogue, his objections to imperialism and patriotism’ (Richardson, 2016: 123). Richardson points out how ‘recognizing the resonance of Hardy’s Wessex, the *Illustrated London News* drew on global imagery in its response to *Jude*’, perceiving it to ‘move amid ideas and emotions of so large a significance that most of our fiction is to *Jude the Obscure* as a hamlet to a hemisphere’ (Cox, 1979: 276, quoted in Richardson, 2016: 123). As Richardson puts it:

As Hardy’s work has circulated round the world in the last one and a half centuries, new and diverse audiences in areas undergoing social, economic and political transformations have been able to find what they are looking for there. Hardy had emphasised the importance of not seeing in his work a single theory, arguing instead that it was a series of seemings or impressions (Richardson, 2016: 134).

Sue herself becomes an emblem of a mixed and uneven development, as seen through her portrayal within the changing context of the Victorian social order, to the modern, depicted through her proletarian nomadism, her sexual nonconformity and her intellectual advancement within the boundaries of a sexist society that perceived women as the sum total of their reproductive functions.

Another clear example of Hardy’s works acquiring a transcultural status, in connecting the past to the present across cultures, is the adaptation of *Tess* in an Indian context as *Trishna*, as discussed in the previous section. It is disconcerting just how contemporary the story of Tess’ misfortunes as a young village girl of the nineteenth century, raped/seduced and impregnated, and then faced with social ostracism, still is in the current day context of India, in a cross-cultural analysis. The exact nature of the assault

upon Tess by Alec D'Urberville, the pseudo aristocrat, who uses his class and money as tools of sexual domination, has been hotly debated for more than a century now. Was it rape? Was it seduction? As Juliet Grindle and Simon Gatrell note, Hardy's repeated revisions of the draft of *Tess*, the 'physical details' that he added and removed from the description of the assault in the 'Fifth Edition' of 1892, 'do not really help the reader to define for himself the nature of this consciously ambiguous happening; so much depends upon the degree of voluntary co-operation which we imagine Tess to have offered' (Grindle and Gatrell, 1983: 45). The authorial indecisiveness again opens the narrative up to the readers and audience, for them to use their understanding and discretion to analyse the scene. William Davis Jr., in "The Rape of Tess: Hardy, English Law, and the Case for Sexual Assault", analyses the narration of Tess' rape/seduction in conjunction with the legal writings and court cases of the nineteenth century and declares it to be an instance of criminal rape. The legal definition of rape in the nineteenth century incorporated the disclaimer: '[...] to constitute rape, it is not necessary that the connection with the woman should be had against her will; it is sufficient if it is without her consent' (Davis, 1997: 223). This definition puts Tess' case squarely in the camp of a criminal offence, as Hardy indicates in the narrative of *Tess* that Tess is asleep at the time of the perpetration. I consider the central dilemma in Hardy's *Tess* to be structured around the displacement of the main point of contention from the violation of Tess' body through rape, to the social stigma associated with the loss of chastity and the ramifications of the incident in her life thereafter, resulting in the morphing of her self-hood diachronically through the narrative. The stigmatized textual female body becomes symptomatic of the real world abrasions on a gendered body.

Victim blaming is an intrinsic part of the rape culture; an unfortunate practice which the modern world still denies on a regular basis, but fiction and non-fiction over the ages point to a very different reality. A case in point is the gang rape case that took place in New Delhi, India on the 16th of December, 2012. A 23-year-old woman was gang raped, critically wounded and left to die by her perpetrators. She succumbed to her injuries thirteen days later while undergoing emergency treatment in Singapore. Unusually for news of this nature, this story did not die a national death and went viral, receiving global attention. This episode threw a harsh light on the way ‘rape myths’ operate, positing the woman with the responsibility of victimization and relieving the perpetrator of some guilt by allowing ‘our culture to rationalize the prevalence of rape by offering explanations for its occurrence’ (Brinson, 1992: 160). One of the lawyers on the case, Manohar Lal Sharma, who was defending the rapists, said in a media interview that the victim was the one responsible for the assault, as she made the mistake of being out late at night. He also raised questions about the woman’s character in stating: ‘until today I have not seen a single incident or example of rape with a respected lady. Even an underworld don would not like to touch a girl without respect’.⁵¹ While it is possible to believe that a fictional Tess faced social ostracism as an unwed mother within her rural, nineteenth-century context, it is utterly shocking that this perverse attitude is still prevalent in the contemporary world, even in certain members of the revered upper echelons of the ‘educated’ masses. Terry Eagleton writes in his essay “Flesh and Spirit in Hardy”:

The triumph of a puritanical social order is to turn the body into the flesh, and this is what happens in both *Tess* and *Jude*. When the body itself becomes the locus of

⁵¹ See: ["Victims in Delhi rape case are to blame, defendants' lawyer says"](#). *The Sydney Morning Herald*. 10 January 2013.

oppressive power, all you want to do in the end is get rid of it as so much flesh, as what locks you into an exploitative world (Eagleton, 2004: 22).

Eagleton makes a distinction between flesh and spirit to show the inherent conflict in a social order that on the one hand is ‘obsessed with flesh, labour-power, material property’, while on the other is ‘in love with ghosts, spectres, high-minded ideals’ (Eagleton, 2004: 22). Characters like Sue and Jude become the textual embodiments of individuals caught up in the cracks of the faults in the system. Dale Kramer echoes Eagleton when he discusses *Jude* as ‘Hardy’s fullest analysis of the relationship between the individual struggling in the context of both universal and temporal forces that work in tandem to restrict happiness and freedom’ (Kramer, 1999: 175).

Read together, the various critical viewpoints tell a narrative not only of the reception history of Sue, the direction of growth and advancement of critical theory and its application to literary portrayals, but also of the readers grappling with their own social and cultural truths, ideas of identity, gender and class, and channelling them into their textual study and analysis. The thesis ultimately remains a selective overview and analysis of the critical scholarship on Sue’s portrayal, as even a concentrated study on the reception of a single characterisation like Sue by a major British writer like Thomas Hardy cannot provide a review of every article, every book, every critical mention of Sue ever published within a determined word limit. It bears eloquent testimony to the bulk of existing Hardy scholarship and the sheer volume of critical material on Sue, displaying her continued effect and impact on her readers over the years.⁵²

⁵² Jean Brooks discusses Hardy scholarship as a flourishing industry (Brooks, 1971: 7), an idea that Edward Neill builds on to sarcastically refer to it as the “‘Hardy Industry’ (even if only a cottage one)’ (Neill, 1999: 21).

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