

WHY I CRIED OVER THOMAS HARDY'S - JUDE THE OBSCURE

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1. INTRODUCTION

"Why did I cry over **Jude the Obscure**" seems rather a difficult question to discuss in public. But isn't it amazing, how authors manipulate their readers? How we are at their mercy to feel delighted or distressed? If this is so, we ought to ask ourselves how they do it, what their devices are.

So my problem really is: what elements are there in the narrative of **Jude the Obscure**, that provoke a sentiment of agonizing awe, which reaches its climax under the impression of Sue's decision to chastise herself and go back to Phillotson? A second question follows: why the reader accepts such a decision, i.e. how it fits the reality and characters created in this novel. I shall therefore analyse **Jude the Obscure** under the following aspects:

- a) representation of reality
- b) presentation of plot
- c) characterization of Sue Bridehead

2. REPRESENTATION OF REALITY - NARRATIVE DEVICES

Right from the very start and until the end **Jude the Obscure** emits depression. I believe that Hardy uses two main narrative devices to this effect - distortion of facts and bad omen - and shall try to show this in the following.

2.1. Distortion of Facts

Jude the Obscure begins "in medias res" with a somewhat distressing scene of departure. This first scene, however, serves the purposes of introduction as it defines the subject - social mobility - and sets the mood of the novel - black.

What is so distressing and black about this scene is not

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the parting itself, but the air of futility that is evoked in it. The person leaving, schoolmaster Phillotson, has very few personal belongings: the only big objects being his box of books and a piano, both symbols of the schoolmaster's aspiration to scholarship and culture. In this case, however, they are no objects of pride, as one might expect. The piano is but a cumbersome article in house moving and even shames Phillotson as it reminds him of his failure to learn this instrument. In spite of this frustration Phillotson is still attracted by learning, and therefore he intends to live in the university town of Christminster, where he hopes to improve his education and finally graduate.

This means that he is really full of plans for his future. But Hardy won't allow such signs of self-confidence. He turns the plans into something shameful, that must be kept a secret. Thus the remaining impression is not that of a man setting out towards self-realization and accomplishment, but that of doubt and failure menacing. Later the reader will realize that this menace does not only refer to Phillotson, but also to the main character of the novel, Jude Fawley.

Jude is in fact the only person, who actually learns about Phillotson's dreams. He admires the schoolmaster and shares his preference for book work. In this first scene Jude is still a child, but not a happy one. Being an orphan, he thinks his presence a burden for everybody. To help the aunt who brings him up, Jude is sent to earn a few pennies by scaring birds off the fields. This is an adequately easy job for a boy and could even be entertaining, if he took it as a sport. But not with Hardy. He turns scaring the birds into "labour"¹ and peoples the fields with dismal ghosts of betrayed lovers and dead ancestors, who have nothing in common with Jude's present situation, but help to create the wanted morbidity. So the thrashing, Jude receives at the end, adds but a last touch to the already established mood.

Later Jude seems to cope with the situation in which he is obliged to live. He works hard and systematically to satisfy both his own intellectual as well as his aunt's economical interests. Still, Hardy does not grant him any kind of victory: his achieve-

¹Thomas Hardy "Jude the Obscure", New American Library of the World Literature, Inc., New York, 1961. p. 18.

ments for his aunt's bakery barely "make his presence tolerable to his maiden aunt"² and the remarkable progress he makes in his studies is mainly reported in the context of Jude's doubts or even remorse over the pagan character of his readings. The reader is actually meant to forget how successful Jude is at this stage, as the images accompanying the tale are images of death, old age and dissatisfaction:

"While he was busied with these ancient pages, which had already been thumbed by hands possibly in the grave, digging out the thoughts of these so remote yet so near, the bony old horse pursued his rounds, and Jude would be aroused from the woes of Dido by the stoppage of his cart and the voice of some old woman crying, "Two to-day, baker, and I return this stale one."³

Jude's enthusiasm for books suffers a long interruption when other interests enter his life in the form of Arabella. When he is finally allowed to return to his ideals, he does so with much ardour and energy and soon achieves the fulfillment of his dreams: his transfer to Christminster. Hardy describes Jude taking this supposedly victorious step towards a new life with the following sentence:

"...he appeared gliding steadily onward through a dusky landscape..."⁴

This is by no means the atmosphere that would surround somebody who is likely to conquer the world, as Jude's dreams suggest. Again Hardy's imagery undermines a promising event in his tale and makes the sense of futility prevail.

Such undermining occurs again when Hardy illustrates the love and understanding that has developed between Sue and Jude during their short conjugal life. We watch the lovers as they visit an exposition, absolutely absorbed in mutual responsiveness. But we follow them around in Arabella's company, and her nagging comments soon spoil the delightful impression the couple makes.

"'He's charmed by her as if she were some fairy!'" continued Arabella. 'See how he looks round at her, and lets his eyes rest on her. I am inclined to

²Th. Hardy, op. cit., p. 36.

³Th. Hardy, op. cit., p. 36-37.

⁴Th. Hardy, op. cit., p. 79.

think that she don't care for him quite so much as he does for her. She's not a particular warm-hearted creature to my thinking, though she cares for him pretty middling much - as much as she's able to; and he could make her heart ache a bit if he liked to try - which he's too simple to do."⁵

So far we have seen how Hardy artfully dims any light that might arise in his tale. Thus he not only creates the gloominess, that probably corresponds to his view of the world, but also prepares the reader for later reverses: Arabella's observation foreshadows Sue's turning away from Jude. Which takes us to another narrative device that Hardy uses abundantly: bad omen.

2.2. Bad Omen

Right at the beginning of the story the reader learns that Jude comes from a family in which marriages have repeatedly broken up. Taking this as a bad omen, Jude and his aunt believe that he should never marry. Hardy apparently shares such belief in pre-determination, as he makes the omen come true when Jude's first marriage - with Arabella - ends in a disaster. Thus it gains an almost fatal influence on Jude's life. He is so conscious of it, that it affects his attitude towards Sue and helps to prohibit any decisive step towards their union.

When they have finally overcome all prejudice and live together, Hardy raises new apprehension, menacing their happiness with an experience on Sue's side: she once lived with a student friend, towards whom she behaved so coldly, neglecting the physical side in a relation between man and woman, that it accelerated his decline. Suffering from Sue's austerity, Jude repeatedly remembers this man, wondering whether he shall be the next.

All this, however threatening, is not enough to satisfy Hardy's desire for presentiments. So he introduces blunt images foreshadowing mischief: he depicts Jude and Arabella having their first beer together vis-a-vis a painting of Samson and Delilah, thus anticipating Jude's humiliation through Arabella, and marks the first date between Jude and Sue "at the cross in the pavement,

⁵Th. Hardy, op. cit., p. 288.

which marked the spot of the Martyrdoms"⁶, thus anticipating Sue's religiously inspired self-chastisement as well as Jude's readiness to suffer.

Bad omen is also used concerning what could be called Jude's third love: Christminster. And again it is used on two levels: subtly and rather bluntly. It is used subtly a long time before Jude actually goes to live at Christminster. He glorifies the city to such an extent, that the gleam of its lights look like a halo to him. One day, however, he reaches the spot from which he usually admires this halo in Arabella's company, and this day the shining on the horizon turns out to be not a halo but the light from a house on fire.

There is bad omen again on Jude's aforementioned arrival at Christminster, when Jude intuitively anticipates the fact that he will never make himself heard or seen in this community, will never be one of the scholars.

"Knowing not a human being here, Jude began to be impressed with the isolation of his own personality, as with a self-spectre, the sensation being that of one who walked but could not make himself seen or heard."⁷

In the same chapter Hardy dooms Jude's social success less artfully, accomodating him in a district nicknamed "Beersheba".

Sometimes Hardy's sense for predetermined hard luck goes as far as to identify forebodings explicitly. For example when Jude sets out to have tea and chat with Sue at Phillotson's school:

"The trees overhead deepened the gloom of the hour, and they dripped sadly upon him, impressing him with forebodings - illogical forebodings; for though he knew that he loved her he also knew that he could be no more than he was."⁸

Let me mention one last instance of bad omen in **Jude the Obscure**. It is Little Father Time, who as a character seems to personify menacing disaster. His introduction into the story happens very unexpectedly and his role seems to be reduced to the constant upholding and final fulfillment of doom. He never does anything

⁶Th. Hardy, op. cit., p. 102.

⁷Th. Hardy, op. cit., p. 82.

⁸Th. Hardy, op. cit., p. 111.

very much but look sad and frightened and make disillusioned remarks until he finally kills Sue's children. This murder initiates Sue's submission to Christian morality and ruins her own as well as Jude's life. So Little Father Time, as a vehicle of fatal accident, changes the course of action and is not, like other instances of bad omen, needed mainly to reinforce the sense of futility and gloom in the world of Jude the Obscure.

3. PRESENTATION OF PLOT - RAISING AND DESTROYING OF HOPE

The most effective way, however, in which Hardy creates a feeling of hopelessness and despair in the reader is the way in which the plot is set up to raise hope only to crush it again. As the reader identifies with Jude, his hopes are the reader's and his disappointments are the reader's, too. Hardy makes very skillful use of this when concerned with the major events in Jude's life, but he also employs the device on a small scale, so that the tension is almost omnipresent.

As we know, there are two forces pushing Jude. One being his intellectual ambition, his desire to learn and be successful, the other his emotional or sexual needs.

3.1. Jude's Career

Although the rural society in which Jude grows up is not favourable towards booklearning, he realizes that knowledge is a possession which might help him to move on. So studying is a must for Jude and not a game as it is for Sue. He dedicates all his energy to it, almost as if he were obsessed. So Phillotson's departure is a blow for Jude not so much because he loses a friend, but because he needs advice and help to continue his studies, which Phillotson had been able to offer. Now the only educated person around is Dr. Vilbert, and Jude's hope promptly focusses on him. But he is to be badly disappointed and discovers that Vilbert is but an irresponsible quack-doctor, who uses the boy for his own ends.

Jude, little as he is, does not give in, though. He ex-

hausts himself in attempts to get hold of a Latin Grammar, which shall enable him to learn on his own. When the book finally arrives, Jude is absolutely euphoric. But the blow is sure to come. This time in the form of the difficulty and unintelligibility of the foreign language.

"The charm he had supposed in store for him was really a labour like that of Israel in Egypt. What brains they must have in Christminster and the great schools, he presently thought, to learn words one by one up to tens of thousands! There were no brains in his head equal to this business; and as the little sunrays continued to stream in through his hat at him, he wished had never seen the book, that he might never see another, that he had never been born."⁹

Years later Jude actually knows this language, has read its literature and feels that the acquisition of a respectable position is within his reach. Accompanying his reveries the reader shares Jude's enthusiasm and hope and believes in his future - when all of a sudden Arabella's appearance introduces a very different reality which captivates Jude and annihilates what used to be his world. By and by he sinks into the baseness of everyday struggling, without any hope for an improvement of his situation.

But then confidence stands up again: Arabella disappears, Jude is free. His rediscovery of his carvings on the milestone "Thither J.F." does not only light "in his soul a spark of his old fire"¹⁰ but also kindles an expectation in the reader, that Jude might be intellectually and socially successful after all. This hope is reinforced by Jude's actual move to Christminster.

In the following chapters, however, we watch this gleam of hope grow dimmer and dimmer as it becomes evident that a man in Jude's social and financial position will - in spite of all his learnedness - never gain entrance to one of the colleges. The rector's letter finally extinguishes the flame of hope and confidence and causes Jude's complete breakdown.

Yet Hardy's pattern continues: Jude is too stubborn to give up definitely. As he slowly recovers from the blow that destroyed his life's aim, new plans begin to shape. He thinks about entering

⁹Th. Hardy, op. cit., p. 35.

¹⁰Th. Hardy, op. cit., p. 78.

church as a licentiate, picturing himself not exactly as an intellectually successful but as a well respected, law-abiding citizen. Again the reader is inclined to accept his ideas and feel encouraged, until the next impediment appears: Jude's passion for Sue Bridehead.

It has been left very clear throughout the story, that a married man's passion for his cousin is incompatible with the moral views of his time. Now that Jude decides to enter church as a licentiate the pressure to live up to these standards becomes even stronger. At the same time Sue's attitude towards him becomes more confidential, if not promising. Jude is unable to endure this tension for along time. Accepting his attraction to Sue as something natural and good, he can no longer profess the moral standards imposed by the church. He proceeds to burn all his religious books and abstains from a clerical career.

Having experienced a large number of ups and downs Jude is now as he began: a poor stonemason without any professional prospect.

3.2. Jude's Love Affair With Sue Bridehead

The other instance where Hardy's plot follows the pattern of raising hope to destroy it again, is in Jude's relation to Sue. From the beginning Jude is tormented between intuitive attraction towards Sue and rational acceptance of the fact that their liaison is undesirable. This indecision is agonizing for the reader, as it paralyses Jude and makes it impossible for him to force a favourable development in his relation to Sue. He silently endures Sue's perpetual vacillation between encouraging and rejecting his love, thus allowing for a never ending line of ups and downs which generate the novel's depressing mood.

One of the reasons why Jude moves to Christminster is his wish to be near his cousin Sue, whose photo has made such a deep impression on him. Eager as he is, he soon discovers her dwellings and sees all his expectations fulfilled as he watches her charming ways. But it wouldn't be Hardy's novel, if he allowed the protagonist to enjoy this discovery. Jude is made to obey his

aunt's order and keep away from Sue, suffering terribly under this self-imposed restraint. But suddenly there is hope for him: Sue unexpectedly inquires after him in the workshop and, not finding him there, sends a letter to his quarters - the very content of which, instead of reinforcing Jude's expectations, tends to choke them:

"They might have had such nice times together, she said, for she was thrown much upon herself, and had hardly any congenial friend. But now there was every probability of her soon going away, so that the chance of companionship would be lost perhaps for ever."¹¹

Still, a first meeting is arranged between the two and it so happens that they go for a long walk to see Phillotson, Jude's old teacher who now lives in a near village. During this walk Sue behaves so naturally towards Jude and they find so much to talk about, that at the end of this chapter (Part 2, Chapter 1) the promising image of a mutual attraction between Jude and Sue has been established. But this promising impression is heavily counteracted in the following chapter, which reports a whole series of unfavourable incidents.

Hoping to be able to maintain close contact, Jude has found Sue a job as a student teacher at Phillotson's school. She now spends the evenings studying with Phillotson and it soon becomes palpable for the reader that Sue flirts with Phillotson.

"Sometimes as she figured - it was arithmetic that they were working at - she would involuntarily glance up with a little inquiring smile at him, as if she assumed that, being her master, he must perceive all that was passing in her brain, as right or wrong. Phillotson was not really thinking of arithmetic at all, but of her, in a novel way which somehow seemed strange to him as preceptor. Perhaps she knew that he was thinking of her thus."¹²

Although Jude is granted another sign of approval from Sue - when, during their meeting at the exposition, she turns to him for understanding, reproaching Phillotson's critical remark on her cleverness his star is fading. The next scene shows Sue as she allows Phillotson to adopt the role of her protector and hold her

¹¹Th. Hardy, op. cit., p. 102.

¹²Th. Hardy, op. cit., p. 108.

hand; and at the end of this chapter not only the reader, but Jude himself witnesses a scene that chokes his secret wish to be more than a cousin to Sue: he watches Sue and Phillotson walking along the street with his arm around her waist.

But Sue's interest in Jude has not really died. Finding the subduing and rigid atmosphere at the training school difficult to endure, she remembers him and sends a passionate letter, asking Jude - as her "only friend" - to help her and keep her company. Jude follows immediately and at their first meeting the reader is surprised to see Sue's ways with him as naturally warm and friendly as ever. But neither Hardy nor Jude himself allow the lover to rejoice in this: Phillotson's existence menaces Jude's happiness and finally destroys it, as Sue confesses her engagement to the old teacher.

As Jude is still trying to adjust to this new situation, he is surprised by Sue's remark: "what does it matter about what one is going to do two years hence!"¹³ And really, more and more does her behaviour towards him betray affection; She invites him for a day's outing, does not worry when they get lost and have to spend the night at a lonely farm; offers him her photo as a present; flees to him in the middle of the night when repression in the training school becomes unbearable for her; and finally sends a letter explicitly accepting his love.

"What I really write about, dear Jude, is something I said to you at parting. You had been so very good and kind to me that when you were out of sight I felt what a cruel and ungrateful woman I was to say it. And it has reproached me ever since. If you want to love me, Jude, you may: I don't mind at all; and I'll never again say you mustn't!"¹⁴

But then there is a face-about. Sue begins to pay heed to the rumours that have been going on about them; claims never to have thought of Jude other than as a cousin and comrade and takes a reproachful, almost resentful attitude towards him. At this point luckless Jude decides to obey his conscience and tell Sue about his marriage with Arabella. This confession disturbs Sue so much that she runs off and marries Phillotson.

However, the momentum of ups-and-downs which characterizes

¹³Th. Hardy, op. cit. p. 135.

¹⁴Th. Hardy, op. cit., p. 155.

Hardy's plot has not exhausted itself yet. In part 4, chapter 1 Jude goes to see Sue at Shaston, where she and her husband teach. Their very special attraction to each other revives and leads to a confidential conversation, which culminates in Sue's confession:

"I am called Mrs. Richard Phillotson, living a calm wedded life with my counterpart of that name. But I am not really Mrs. R. Phillotson, but a woman tossed about, all alone, with aberrant passions, and unaccountable antipathies."¹⁵

This and her invitation to come again gives room to all sorts of fantasies on Jude's side, and Hardy encourages the reader to think in the same way as he makes him watch Sue as she secretly kisses a photo.

As so often, the reverse comes with the beginning of the following chapter. And as so often in chapters or paragraphs of this novel, the very first word - but, yet, however - indicates the contradiction of the before described and experienced feelings. This time it begins with "however" and what it holds for Jude is the destruction of his dreams in the form of a letter from Sue, telling him very decidedly not to come.

Finally Sue opts to live with Jude and persuades Phillotson to let her go. It is assumed, of course, that she goes to live with him as his wife, and the reader is preparing himself for some happy scenes between the lovers. But no!! Sue administers another blow to Jude's self-esteem, telling him that she's come to live with him as a friend only, sharing but the meals and the house.

Again hope has been cherished and destroyed. A big and courageous step has been taken, but instead of relieving tension, it is only creating new grave problems - in keeping with the gloomy reality Hardy depicts.

Later, under the impression of Arabella's sudden appearance, Sue allows their relation to come to normal terms. But as it is jealousy that produces Sue's change of mind, it promises little success. And really, Hardy promptly begins the yes-no-game again. This time concerning the legalization of their situation: the wedding.

It is Sue who cannot overcome her fear of the love-killing

¹⁵Th. Hardy, op. cit., p. 204.

qualities of an officially registered marriage, whereas Jude sees such bonds as a desirable public recognition of their attachment to each other. But Jude is not the right man to convince Sue. On the contrary, he obeys her whims without questioning: has the bans put up or down; takes her to church or to the registry office to see what a wedding feels like; agrees to a fictive marriage in London - and never loses his temper. His loving patience is inexhaustible and in the combination with Sue's wavering quite fit to give the reader nightmares. So they continue unmarried, and are looked upon as an immoral, unrespectable couple, which initiates their professional, financial and social decline.

Their love, however, continues in spite of all these difficulties. To destroy this one positive fact that so far survived in the life of Jude Fawley, Hardy produces a complete change of personality in Sue Bridehead. From a rebellious libertine she turns into a submissive moralist and can no longer tolerate the personal freedom to choose a second husband. So she goes back to Phillotson, leaving Jude in complete misery which can only be ended by his early death.

So far I have tried to show how Thomas Hardy in his novel **Jude the Obscure** deludes the reader into a mood of depressive fatalism and helplessness. He puts a gloom over almost everything, making abundant use of bad omen; he reinforces the gloom as he distorts positive facts, adorning them with invisible flaws; he plays skillfully with the reader's emotion, raising hope only to disappoint it. Thus he prepares the reader to accept any stroke of fate and even Sue's decision to go back to Phillotson seems a probable incident in this malevolent world. But is it not at the same time a violation of Sue's character? This shall be my next question.

4. CHARACTERIZATION OF SUE BRIDEHEAD

4.1. Sue's Moral Views

When Sue enters the stage in Part Second, Chapter Two, it is like a light that suddenly shines in the darkness. At this moment Jude lives through a difficult phase of his life, as he is in the

painful process of understanding that social barriers will thwart his professional plans. Although Sue is theoretically in a similar situation - in spite of her learnedness, acquired in years of intense reading and studying, she cannot succeed professionally, as her social status limits her - she has remained confident and lively. What distinguishes her from Jude is that being superior to her contemporaries in erudition enables her to defy their social and moral categories. She seems free and admirably independent, having led an almost bohemian life in London, where she shared a flat with her student friend and broke free from her father, who would not accept this. Continuing on the unconventional track after her companion's death, she now lives essentially on her own, supporting herself as a humble designer in an ecclesiastical shop.

Her delightful air of self-assurance cheers Jude up and radiates into his frustrating reality. But it only radiates and enlightens, by no means does it fight this reality. On the contrary, deep down inside Sue seems to accept the moral code of her society in spite of all her heretical talk. Why else should she regard Jude's getting desperately drunk over the rector's rejection as a trespass? She reacts to it by seeking shelter from such disturbing emotion in the arms of convention and gets engaged to Phillotson.

Later the same sort of feeling that the protection convention offers her is one of the elements that induce her to fulfill this thoughtless promise and actually marry Phillotson.

"Then you know what scandals were spread, and how I was turned out of training school you had taken such time and trouble to prepare me for and get me into; and this frightened me, and it seemed then that the one thing I could do would be to let the engagement stand."¹⁶

She expects a lot from this marriage, not only protection against social disgrace. As Phillotson physically repels her, the marriage with him also mortifies her senses, which seem to push her towards and "immoral" conduct. We learn that the marriage is arranged straight after she has heard about Jude's unsolved marriage with Arabella, which seems probable as the revelation obviously shocked Sue.

¹⁶Th. Hardy, op. cit., p. 220.

"Here I have been saying, or writing, that - that you might love me, or something of the sort! - just out of charity - and all the time - oh, it is perfectly damnable how things are!' she said, stamping her foot in a nervous quiver 'You, such a religious man. How will the demigods in your Pantheon - I mean those legendary persons you call saints - intercede for you after this? Now if I had done such a thing would have been different, and not remarkable, for I at least don't regard marriage as a sacrament. Your theories are not so advanced as your practice!"¹⁷

The very harshness of Sue's reaction indicates that marriage **is** a sacrament for her, that she recognizes the Christian dogma, which says that marriage lasts a lifetime. This really means that for Sue any kind of union with Jude is an intrusion into his marriage, hence an infliction of accepted religious laws and most impious. So she flees into a marriage with Phillotson to escape further temptation. This assimilation of Jude's confession betrays her true belief and shows Sue as a daughter of her time, captive of its moral views.

There is a confusing double-facedness in Sue, which the narrator explains as follows:

"Sue's logic was extraordinary compounded, and seemed to maintain that before a thing was done it might be right to do, but that being done it became wrong; or in other words, that things which were right in theory were wrong in practice."¹⁸

This ambiguity in Sue's behaviour troubles both Jude and Sue, and becomes a real problem after Sue's separation from Phillotson, when she is not inclined to respond to Jude's passionate love. Sue tries to dispel Jude's doubts about her affection for him: "Assume that I have not the courage of my opinions."¹⁹ But Jude thereupon observes:

"I have sometimes thought, since your marrying Phillotson because of a stupid scandal, that under the affectation of independent views you are as enslaved to the social code as any woman I know!"²⁰

And really, there is more in Sue's double-facedness than a simple split between unconventional opinion and conventional behaviour.

¹⁷Th. Hardy, op. cit., p. 166.

¹⁸Th. Hardy, op. cit., p. 216

¹⁹Th. Hardy, op. cit., p. 139.

²⁰Th. Hardy, op. cit., p. 239.

When she leaves Phillotson to be Jude's companion, she proves that she can behave unconventionally, is not concerned about appearances and has little regard for public opinion. Yet she is extremely austere in their personal relation. Her ideal is a serene connection of congenial souls, without the disturbances of eros or sex. Not that Sue does not feel the excitation. Quite on the contrary. She plays with it at a distance, but any corporal contact must be avoided. Sue claims "female timidity"²¹ as an explanation of her behaviour. But that would soon vanish in the housing conditions she accepted with Jude.

The true reason seems to be that she has absorbed the ecclesiastical anti-sex dogma. Indoctrination has been so successful, that the observance of its rule is no longer a conscious but an unconscious act. Under the cover of advanced emancipation she repeats the very maxims of church dogma: repress sexuality and you will be saved from baseness and achieve a higher level of existence.

Talking about how conservative Sue really is, we should not forget to mention that Hardy often sees Sue and Jude as one person split in two. As Jude's values are radically traditional and his recognition of church dogma total before he mixes with Sue and adopts more liberal views, it cannot be surprising to the reader that his second self should be marked by the same spirit. When Sue leaves Jude and goes back to Phillotson, pleading that only he can be her rightful husband, this does not so much signify an exchange of positions, as it shows that Sue finally lives up to the principles which the reader always felt to be hers.

There is no break in her personality. On the contrary: the reader has been led to agree with Sue that professing openly what have always been her subconscious beliefs is the only way to save her soul. What she wants is not happiness but righteousness.

4.2. Sue's Lack of Compassion

In the last chapter we have seen that, however incredible a conversion like Sue's seems theoretically, it is absolutely authentic

²¹Th. Hardy, op. cit., p. 237.

to the character as well as to the mood created in this novel. Yet, there is something else in its occurrence to worry the reader.

Sue's sudden preoccupation about her spiritual welfare is by no means her private matter, as it affects other people's lives very strongly. Deserting Jude, Sue deprives him of his life-essence and delivers him to moral and physical decline. Jude forces her to realize this

"O Sue!... Do not do an immoral thing for moral reasons! You have been my social salvation. Stay with me for humanity's sake! You know what a weak fellow I am. My two archenemies you know - my weakness for womankind and my impulse to strong liquor. Don't abandon me to them, Sue, to save your own soul only!..."²²

but she does not falter.

It is this hardness that Sue shows towards herself as well as to the person she claims to love, which is almost too much to take - especially as Hardy puts a lot of emphasis on the suffering. To judge the verisimilitude of her behaviour we shall again have to go back to earlier parts of the novel.

We have seen before that Sue is moody in her comportment. This is a sign not only of her indecision but also of her recklessness. As her whim induces her, she flirts with Jude or flirts with Phillotson, apparently without much consideration for the feelings involved on their parts. She even goes so far as to ask Jude to give her away to Phillotson. What teases her into doing this cannot be simple whimsey but must contain a fair amount of sado-masochism.

Hardy reinforces this impression when he makes Sue take Jude into church some hours before her wedding to Phillotson and rehearse the ceremony with him.

It is, however, not only Jude who suffers from her recklessness. Phillotson is not served much better. Just as she leaves Jude to his torments did she leave Phillotson to social humiliation when she wished to separate from him. Her desire to be morally in the right - in Phillotson's case - or to comply with moral and ethical laws - in Jude's case - help to close her eyes and do what

²²Th. Hardy, op. cit., p. 348.

she considers best for her.

Vibrating and loveable in her uncompromising temperament she obviously has very little sympathy for her fellow creatures. When Jude and his family find it difficult to get into lodgings at Christminster, Little Father Time starts a gloomy conversation with her, holding that children are most burdensome for poor people. Instead of seeing into the child and soothing his trouble with some cautious remarks, Sue agrees with him that maybe he should never have been born. Her gift to feel with others is so undeveloped, that even in this situation she sticks to her maxim of truthfulness and tells the boy about the next baby. This news aggravates his state of despair to such an extent that the murder and suicide on the following day become possible.

5. CONCLUSION

I have tried to explain why "I cried over **Jude the Obscure**", that is, why the novel raises a feeling of despair and awe in the reader. We have seen that Hardy's tale depresses the reader as it creates a gloomy reality full of forebodings and mischief, where unmolested happiness or success are unknown. Thus prepared the reader accepts Sue's mutilating search for redemption and Jude's resigned sufferance. He continues identifying with the main characters as this behaviour has been laid out as a possibility within the range of their personalities.

Yet Hardy's preference to paint in black tends to exaggerate and does so abusively in the case of Little Father Time's murder of Sue's children. The image of three little corpses hung on a peg on a door is so gruesome that it is likely to exceed the reader's patience. He might step aside and smile, instead of showing the wanted reaction and surrender to Hardy's lacrymose vision of merciless fate - as I did.