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**The Conflict between the Ideal and the Social in  
Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure***

A Dissertation Submitted in a Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements  
for the Master Degree in British and American Studies

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## **Dedication**

To the memory of my mother

To my father, to my brothers and my sisters and to all my friends and classmates.

## **Abstract**

The purpose of my study is to show the conflict between idealism and society in Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*. In this novel, Hardy portrays the strife of the two individuals Jude and Sue to make their own ways in society by seeking to realise their ideals. He also reveals the difficulties met by the two idealists in front of society's attempts to thwart their ideals and to force them to surrender to its norms. This study allows the reader to have a deep understanding of the origin of the conflict, the climax of the confrontation between the two opposing sides and the result of the conflict. In this respect, the present study helps the reader to acquire a thorough knowledge of Hardy's thought and the values of the Victorian society to which he belongs.

## **Résumé**

L'objectif de cette étude est de montrer le conflit entre l'idéalisme et la société décrit dans le roman de Thomas Hardy *Jude the Obscure*. Dans ce roman, Hardy dépeint la lutte des deux individus *Jude* et *Sue* qui essaient de s'imposer dans la société en cherchant à réaliser leurs idéaux. L'auteur révèle aussi les difficultés que les deux idéalistes rencontrent en confrontant la société qui essaye à son tour de les entraver et de les forcer à se soumettre à ses normes. Cette étude permet au lecteur d'avoir une compréhension approfondie sur l'origine du conflit, le sommet de la confrontation entre les deux parties opposées et le résultat du conflit. A cet égard, mon étude aide le lecteur à acquérir une connaissance approfondie de la pensée de Hardy et les valeurs de la société Victorienne à laquelle il appartient.

## ملخص

تهدف دراستي إلى إظهار الصراع بين المثالية و المجتمع في رواية Thomas Hardy المعنونة ب : 'Jude the Obscure'. يصور Hardy في هذه الرواية كيف للأفراد أن يشقوا طريقهم الخاص بهم في هذا المجتمع عبر التطلع لتحقيق تصوراتهم و كفاحهم ضد المجتمع الذي يسعى إلى تثنيهم عن ذلك و إجبارهم على إتباع معاييرهم . و تسمح هذه الدراسة أن يكون للقارئ فهم عميق لأصل هذا الصراع و تأجج المواجهات و نتائج الصراع. و في هذا الإطار تساعد هذه الدراسة القارئ من اكتساب معرفة يتسرب من خلالها لفكر Thomas Hardy و قيم المجتمع الفيكتوري الذي ينتمي إليه.

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## General Introduction

Thomas Hardy is one of the greatest writers of the Victorian era, in his novels he seeks to diagnose human ills and then endeavours to find a remedy to them. The majority of his novels were set in rural England where the Industrial Revolution had already brought changes to the lifestyle of the countryside. As a result, the pastoral values had been swallowed by the new urban lifestyle, and people of the countryside began to shift to the cities seeking for jobs, education and means to share with the urban dwellers the progress and the optimism of the Victorian age. The invention of railways brought all the regions of Britain together with one culture and social system. All the ideas that had once been alien to once remote region became well known and easily to be acquainted with.

In this respect, in Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* the hero Jude, though a small boy living in a remote village knows that there exists somewhere outside his village, a city called Christminster which opens the opportunity for a university life to enthusiastic and hard working individuals like him. However, as an idealist, Jude finds the city he idealises is repulsive to him and his ideas and the university is snobbish and hostile to man of humble origins like him. Later on, his love of the urban New Woman Sue and their agreement to stand together against society fails after the resignation and submission of Sue due to the tragic death of her offspring. At the end, Jude dies unhappily alone without fulfilling his dreams.

The aim of this humble work is to show the conflict between idealism and society and to stress the impossibility of a harmonious relationship between them. The purpose of this endeavour is also meant to permit the reader to have a deep insight into the core of the conflict between the two opposed parties that is to answer the question of when, why and how is the conflict between the ideal and the social. In so doing, the study allows the reader to

have a thorough understanding of the origin of the conflict, its climax and how it ends. My work is divided into two chapters. The first chapter is a historical and literary background of the Victorian period. The second and the final chapter introduces the reader to the core of the conflict between idealism and Society with the result of this conflict.

The first chapter is devoted to the study of the Victorian society and values. First, it discusses the plight of the Victorian women that is the shift from domesticity and subservience towards emancipation brought by the development of the feminist movement. This chapter discusses also the progress and the optimism of the Victorian society then, it will treat the question of religious doubt and the shift from optimism to pessimism brought by the spread of Darwinism or evolutionism, which turned the Victorian values upside-down. This is followed with a discussion of class division within the Victorian society. Finally, the chapter moves to the discussion of the relationship between the Victorian novel and the Victorian society.

The second chapter is concerned with a presentation of the conflict between the idealism and society in Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*. It discusses the contrast between Sue or new Women's idealism and the requirements of the conventional marriage, and then it focuses attention on the clash between Jude's romanticism and Darwinism of social reality. In addition, it emphasises the contrast between Jude's academic aspirations and social obstacles that try to prevent him from realizing his dreams. The next stage of this chapter concentrates on the defeat of idealism and the characters who espoused this position. The rise of pessimism of Little Father Time, which changed the course of the novel and put an end to the optimism of Jude and Sue, brought a new mood of pessimism and finally resulted in the tragic end of the strife of the two idealists.

# Chapter One: The Victorian Society and Values

## Introduction

The Victorian age is an age of paradoxes. It was an age of religion and an age of irreligion, an age of progress and optimism, and an age of poverty and pessimism, an age of men's domination, but also an age of women's emancipation. Free from all these paradoxes, it is an 'Age of Novelists' *par excellence*. Therefore, Queen Victoria's reign is considered as an age where the impossible was possible and vice versa. This chapter of my study will discuss how Victorian men regard women's role and how women reacted and freed themselves from the exploitation and prejudices. Then it will discuss the Victorian optimism and belief in progress. After that, it will move to show how the Victorians lost their religious beliefs and how they switched to pessimism. I shall also deal with the class division and finally it will deal with the relation between the Victorian novel and the Victorian society.

### A. Women Plight in the Victorian Age

#### 1. Domesticity and Subservience

During the reign of Queen Victorian, the place of women was in the home. Domesticity and motherhood were considered as the ideal status for women, and for a woman to remain pure she has to keep herself far away from the public sphere. Most of Victorians cherished the idea of purity and femininity of women. Lord Tennyson (1809-1892) in his poem *The Princess* conveys the strong Victorian belief in the domination of men over women and the inevitability of the separation of their spheres of duty:

Man for the field, woman for the hearth,

Man for the sword and for the needle she:

Man with the head and woman with the heart,

Man to command and woman to obey. (qtd. In Briggs 284)

Moreover, the transformation of Britain into an industrial urban nation had a profound impact on the perception of female's role, and it had widened the gulf between man and woman. To gain the respect and the satisfaction of their husbands, Victorian wives had to create very sustainable conditions at home, and to provide their husbands with a kind of refuge in order to escape from the harshness and monotony of daily life. In addition, Victorian women were obliged to be sexually attractive and tireless to "soothe the savage beast her husband might become as he fought in the jungle of free trade" (Damrosch 579). More strikingly, most Victorian artist portrayed women as courteous, serviceable, submissive and fertile creatures. Coventry Patmore's popular poem *Angel in the House* (1854-1863) epitomises the way the Victorian man idealised the wife who was selflessly subservient and devoted to her husband. Furthermore, the medical science had also contributed to reinforce the common views on women. Women are a 'weak sex', because of their intellectual and physical inferiority and their inability to resist to strong passions, to think seriously or endure exercises, which demand strong physical efforts. Therefore, only as nurturers of their children and subjects to men's instincts, can women boast of their 'femininity' (ibid 579). Education played also a crucial role in the subjection and subservience of women. Victorian women received an education that taught them how to succumb to men's role and how to show decency to the social norms that dictated so.

With regard to this issue, Victorian women suffered not only from the prejudice that characterised this era, but also from the burden of the major responsibilities of the house. As a "chancellors of the domestic exchequer" (Liddington 32), working class wives were expected to be more frugal and thrifty so as not to cause bankruptcy to their husbands. Victorian men used all terms to refer to a good woman, such as patience, resignation, acceptance, submission, and son on. Men succeeded in surrendering women and in pushing them to accept docilely the despotic principles of the "patriarchal ideology" (Eagleton 43). In the

second half of the nineteenth century, there was half a million women more than men and there emerged the problem of “surplus woman” (Lerner 176). Consequently, the imbalance between the sexes pushed women who could not find a husband to prostitution in order to earn their own livings.

## **2. Towards Emancipation**

Around the turn of the nineteenth century, a growing number of the middle class feminists began to question women’s role and tried to redirect the opinion of the Victorian society towards a new implication of women in all domains of life, be it social economic, political and. John Stuart Mill, in his book *The Subjection of Women* published in 1869, stressed the inevitability of reform of women’s legal and voting rights. He claimed that “the legal non-existence of women... [was the principal cause of] their subordination”... (Harris 76). Mill protested against laws which favoured men and neglected women, and argued in favour of the principle of equality between the two sexes. He says:

... the principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes—the legal subordination of one sex to the other —is wrong itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and that it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power or privilege on the one side, nor desirability on the other. (3)

In addition, the expansion of services in late Victorian economy generated a need for women employment as secretaries and as office clerks, these in turn helped women to set feet in the men’s sphere of duty. Despite the fact that respectable jobs were given to Victorian women, their conditions did not improve well and the road to emancipation still seemed impassable. However, if Victorian education did its best to keep women submissive, it was the sole responsible of the creation of self-awareness in the ranks of women. Thus, women began to seek independence and freedom from the conventional role that they had traditionally been assigned. The feminists of the Langham Place Circle of the 1860s, Jessie

Boucherett, Adelaide Proctor and Emily Davies, who joined the circle in the 1860s, emphasised the importance of widening the scope of employment for women and most importantly, on education reforms and the improvement of the quality of secondary and higher education for middle class girls. The majority of the feminist during this era worked ceaselessly realise the dream of an independent and free women. First, they pushed women to believe and trust their own capacities so as not to feel degradability in front of men's achievements. Furthermore, to fight against "the established intellectual standards" and mock "the pseudo-scientific arguments" (Lerner 178-179) of their inferiority, women had to follow the aforementioned principles. Second, women were encouraged to acquire high and thorough education , which would permit them to shift from the periphery to the centre of society. The spread of women awareness was the result of the establishment of schools to train young girls how to be future self-reliant and self-confident women. Frances Buss opened The North London Collegiate School for Girls in 1850, Maria Grey and her sister Emily Shirref formed the Girls Public Day School Company in 1872. Therefore, all this schools epitomize women's willingness to throw off the yoke and lead a future life with more optimism.

Although the nineteenth century feminist movement was exclusively a middle class one and the working class women's question remained untouchable, from the 1860s onwards a growing number of middle class feminists spread the idea of converting this category of downtrodden women to the religion of the movement. However, with the advance of women's trade unions, the working class women sought to divorce themselves from the male's assistance and from the heavy reliance on the middle class women. The foundation of Women's Trades Council in 1882 by Emma Paterson was meant to make the detachment of working class women from reliance in all its forms real and absolute.

The acquisition of higher academic degrees and the occupation of key positions in society, made women of the *fin de siècle* more respected and revered not only indoors, but

also outdoors. At the height of the 1890s there was a lot of talk in the press of a more liberated and independent 'New Woman'. A term introduced by G.B. Shaw in *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* (1891), to celebrate the emergence of the 'Unwomanly Woman' who appeared more emancipated and modern in her behaviour (ibid 187-188). The 'New Women' found expression in many novels of the *fin de siècle*, among them Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*, in which the heroine Sue seeks not only to free herself from male's domination, but also from the conventionality of Victorian marriage. Therefore, the ambitions and the beliefs of Victorian women was a source of their strong will and not that of feebleness, and never in history had the male's supremacy been questioned in many aspects like this one (Gourvish 208).

## **B. Material Progress and Optimism in the Victorian Age**

The technical and material achievements of the Victorian Britain, due to scientific discoveries and technological inventions, made of Queen Victoria's reign uniquely an era that held much promises in its gleaming progress and optimism. Hence, the Victorians did not hesitate to welcome this age with their faces smiling and with their hearts aching with faith in the Industrial Revolution and in the philosophies on which it leaned. This stemmed from the fact that, the Industrial Revolution brought new and more effective techniques and led to the improvement of the living standards, the availability of goods, and made Britain the "hub of the universe" (Thomson 100).

The coming of railways in 1830s was one of the greatest achievements of the industrial revolution and was in itself a "revolutionary symbol" (Hobsbawm 55). Railways made travelling from once remote place to another easier, and the transportation and the distribution of goods, newspapers and letters faster and securer. In so doing, railways contributed to the creation of a 'national consciousness' by interconnecting all parts of the

country to a one region with one culture and economy. Furthermore, railways encouraged tourism, put an end to regionalism and opened ways to isolated areas (Damrosch 750-751). Thus, railways, as a symbol of progress, contributed not only to the economic boom, but also to the unification of Britain into one single region and culture. The booming industry continued to provide Victorians with more technologies, which accelerated the pace of their life and strengthened their self-confidence. Thanks to the first Atlantic steamship, the dynamism of foreign trade paved the way of businessmen to huge markets to export surplus product and import raw materials to feed local industries. The Victorian Age provided the middle class with a wide-range of equipments of modern life such as: washing and sewing machines, canned foods, skin creams, typewriters, illustrated magazines and newspapers, especially after the invention of the sun-picture, ready made clothes ....etc. (ibid 572). For the ambitious middle class, the inventions of the age provided them with all means of life and expanded the horizons of their 'culture of consumerism'.

With the decline of agriculture, many peasants flocked to the cities seeking for jobs and opportunities. This, in turn, led to the growth of cities, the increase of the industrial output and the spread of racial and cultural diversity. London became the target of many immigrants and visitors coming from Europe and from different parts of the world. Despite snobbery and social paradoxes, the city of London grew not only in size, but also in the diversity of cultures and races, a typical character which allowed her to be "the capital of human race" (Harris 22). The Victorians and especially the growing middle class, in addition to their selfless devotion to the "gospel of work" (Damrosch 569), were idiosyncratically tasteful of the revolutionary architectural styles and fashionable clothes. In architecture their houses featured distinctive styles such as: Gothic revival, Neoclassical, Egyptian and Moorish architectures. As to fashion, men and women wore stylish clothes such as: waistcoat, jacket and cravats for men, and women inside wore: crinolines, corsets and underpants (ibid 572).



The opening of the Great Exhibition at Crystal Palace in 1851 was an “opening of the golden age of Victorianism” (Thomson 100). The Crystal Palace witnessed the gathering of people from different parts of the world to see the technical and scientific achievements of Britain. Consequently, Britain became the “focus of the world.” (ibid 100) and the exhibition reflected its greatness in different aspects:

The rising merchant middle-class, the development and the triumph of liberalism, the growth of empire overseas generated a search for profits, a pride in the nation’s power, a veneration of the respectability and a form of material pragmatism which were among the characteristics of the British genius and were symbolized in 1851 by the Royal Exhibition, a hymn to the trade and industry. (Briat 204)

The implementation of the *laissez-faire* doctrine became something of a “necessary myth in the Victorian society” (Gilmour 12). Thus, “optimistic social” prophets [exorcised the government bogeyman and]<sup>1</sup> envisioned all classes reaping the fruits of the industrial revolution” (Damrosch 571). Samuel smile, one of the worshipers and ardent defenders of the complete *laissez-faire*, claimed that “competition was the great social law of god” (Briggs 135). It was a belief that government must not intervene in a way to shape economy, and that businessmen who espoused this religion are obliged to know how to “paddle [their] own canoe[s]” (Mathias 355) in the vast ocean of free trade, so as not to fall in the sharp tooth of sharks<sup>2</sup>. For those who possessed an “entrepreneurial ideal” (Claeys 235) and business qualities, the Victorian Age allowed them to again profits, status and promised them with an everlasting happiness. With a combination between materialism and religion, the Victorians and especially, the middle class sought to enjoy worldly happiness trough business profits and looked for another day in paradise through churchgoing. However, by the second half of the century there emerged new attitudes towards religion, which “shocked the godly” (Porter

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<sup>1</sup> It means they freed business from government interventions.

<sup>2</sup> Those businessmen who accepted free competition had to be thrifty so as not to be driven to bankruptcy.

298), and pessimistic views on life that opened the way to “pain and sorrow [to] knock at [the Victorian] doors more loudly than pleasure and happiness” (Huxley 31).

### C. Doubt and Pessimism in the Victorian Age

Despite their commitment to rigid morality and to “moral Puritanism”<sup>3</sup> (Hobsbawm 62), the Victorians were deeply affected by the doubts and uncertainties that characterised their age. For the first time in the 1840s, a minority of well prominent intellectuals began to question and doubt Christianity and dared to express their unbelief publicly. Charles Hennel’s *An Inquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity* 1838 and J.A. Froude’s *The Nemesis of Faith* 1849 can be taken as examples of the first intellectuals to convey doubt and “crisis of faith”<sup>4</sup> (Gilmour 85) of the mid-Victorian period. Moreover, the origin of the Victorian “apostasy”<sup>5</sup> (Lerner 155) can also be associated with the application of the new scientific methods to the study of the Bible, and it can also be attributed to the development of biology and geology, both of which contributed to “the discovery of the rational order which pervades the universe” (Huxley 7). The traditional and fictional character of biblical accounts of creation was turned on its head by the advance of science, which emphasized the belief in equations that are more accurate rather than in blind and orthodox beliefs in man’s made myths. Yet it is worth mentioning that, the first generation of Victorians to feel reluctance to Christianity, or to have what Tennyson called in his elegy *In Memoriam* “honest doubt” (Briat 205), did not lose faith in the optimism of their epoch. So, they endeavoured to find a new faith in the worldly religions like August Comte’s “religion of humanity” (Gilmour 88).

More disturbing to the Victorian ethos, was the publication of *The Origin of Species* by Darwin in 1859. Unlike other books of the Victorian period, *The Origin of Species* brought

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<sup>3</sup> The principles of Puritanism such as; hard work, thrift, religion, earnestness and so on.

<sup>4</sup> The Victorians were caught between progress and regress over religious matters, that is, whether to stick to religion or to relinquish it.

<sup>5</sup> The abandonment of a belief especially, religious one.

sudden and unexpected changes to the British society and came in to a “deliberate confrontation with the forces of tradition, conservatism and especially religion”( Hobsbawm 304). On one side, the book was received with too much scorn and criticism. In other side, many Victorians greeted it with a “hearty welcome” (Thornley 138) and made of it a substitute of the bible, which they no longer trust or believe in. After years spent in scientific observations and inquiries, Darwin realized that the world and the variety of the living beings within it were not the creation of a divine power, but a pure product of nature through natural selection. He says in *The Origin of Species*:

When we reflect on [the struggle for existence], we may console ourselves with the full belief, that the war of nature is not incessant, that no fear is felt, that death is generally prompt, and that the vigorous, the healthy, and the happy survive and multiply. (129)

Here Darwin stresses the idea that all the living beings are condemned to struggle for existence and that nature ensures only ‘the survival of the fittest’<sup>6</sup> and that the well-adapted are the happiest survivors. Thus, human beings, as their fellow beasts, are also included in this risky competition, and that if in the past they used to believe that they are protected by ‘the invisible hands of god’, now it became a matter of struggle “in a world bereft of the guiding hands of Providence” (Moore 1).

Darwin argues that man lives in indifferent and cruel universe and that those who can not endure the struggle “the world would not hold them.”(117). Darwin went so far as to claim in his *The Descent of Man* published in 1871,that man is descended from apes. A position, which appointed him the worst enemy of the most enshrined beliefs of his contemporaries. As a result, Darwinism echoed in all the corners of the Victorian society, and led to the overthrow of the literal truth of genesis, God’s Providence, the position of nature and the place of human beings as ‘the centre and raison d’être of creation’(Darwin 15). Indeed, Darwin succeeded in hypnotising the Victorian consciousness, and turned “firm

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<sup>6</sup> This phrase was coined by Herbert Spencer

religious conviction” (Harris 37) upside down, which led to the rise of Agnosticism. Agnosticism is a term coined by T. H. Huxley in 1869, to mean that the existence of God and the metaphysical world are unknown to human beings, due to the limitation of their knowledge (Lightman 326). The term Agnosticism used also to refer to the pessimistic mood that characterised the Victorian society after the spread of the ideas of evolution. Unlike atheists, agnostics did not declare their unbelief in God, and preferred to put themselves in a position of “not-knowing” (Gilmour) or not caring to know, in order not to waste time in the metaphysical labyrinths. The rise of Agnosticism contributed to the shift of emphasis from Victorian optimism to a feeling of pessimism, stoicism, resignation, and passiveness in front of an indifferent and passionless universe. Conclusively, the castle of the Victorian ethics, which had taken the ‘Victorian moralists’ so long to build, was reduced to dust by the Darwinian earthquake, and the shining optimism of Victorian society was swallowed by the darkening clods of Agnosticism.

## **D. Class Division in the Victorian Age**

### **1. The Upper Class**

During the Victorian period, the upper class or landed aristocracy were the first to reap the fruits of the industrial revolution. The development of industrialisation did not affect their status except for the better (Hobsbawm). In addition, the growth of the cities and the coming of railways reinforced their social and political predominance. The upper class monopolised parliament and created a ‘lobby groups’ within the British government. This position, in turn, paved them the way to hold absolute and “exclusive political sway” (Marx 3). As a result, they exerted a tremendous influence on institutions, through which they sought to direct law according to their vested interests. The upper class held conservative and orthodox traditions, that is to say, they were against reforms, be it political or social, and were for the existing

government with “monopolised and unreformed parliament” (Lerner 95). The only way for the upper class to secure the status quo, was to control not only parliament, but also the composition of the church, the civil service, the army, the two greatest universities, Oxford and Cambridge, principle public schools, local administration and justice.

This class owed their position to “landed hereditaments” (Harris 100) and to the government which gave them privileges and legitimised their coercive policies. Therefore, property played a crucial role in Victorian Britain, and it was the reason why the upper class enjoyed too much respectability and enshrined status.

[Property played a central role in shaping] ideas, values, politics, class relationships, and [in determining] public and private life.... A shared sense of proprietorship was an important element in a shared sense of social class; ... [and] the reformulation of class identity.... The laws relating to property had an important bearing on personal and family ties, and upon an individual’s relationship to the community and the state. (ibid 116)

Thus, the possession of lands opened the upper class the way to exercise an absolute authority in many domains of life during the Victorian period and, especially before the rise of the middle class. With the emergence of the middle class as a new and successful economic, social and political rival, the upper class realised that it was impossible to resist stubbornly the class antagonism. Therefore, they accepted the compromise, and “became more aloof and withdrew from sympathetic contact with the masses” (Hudson 203).

## **2. The Middle Class**

The emergence of the middle class, as an economically influential and a well-educated class; brought with it the reforming spirit of the age and turned the position of the upper class on its head, claiming that the landed aristocracy’s creed was not suitable to the needs of the new industrial society. In so doing, the middle class favoured competition and, following the Reform Act of 1832, championed “meritocratic political and economic system”, [and hold the

slogan] “*carrière ouverte aux talents*”,[they denounced]... “old corruption and family connection”[of the upper class].(Claeys 235). The middle class occupied business, professional and administrative sectors. Additionally, their preoccupation with education helped them to acquire skills and influence, and the huge investments in commercial and manufacturing sectors enabled them to earn colossal profits. Unlike the upper class, the middle class flowered as a result of the growth of industrialisation, the spread of education, the expansion of investments and trade.

The middle class were heavily indebted to the philosophical teachings of the age, which stressed “moral sternness” (Ford 60) and “the habits of thrift and prudence” (Lerner 93). The middle class held two ideologies that served them to accumulate wealth and reinforce their influence. These ideologies can be identified with Utilitarianism or Benthamism and Evangelicalism. The Utilitarians argued that the best government is the one which secured “the greatest happiness of the greatest number” (Hobsbawm 57). The middle class embraced this theory and through business, they sought to minimize pain and maximize pleasure. As a result, they left their business life to the guidance of “pleasure-pain psychology and the test of utility” (Webb124). In addition, evangelicalism helped them to silence and submit their employees under the assumption that “poverty was ordained” (Ford 30).

### **3. The Working Class**

Unlike the middle class, the working class did not have the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of business that had consumed their sweat and their health. Despite material progress and the improvement of social conditions during the Victorian era, the working class grew stoic in their behaviour and built their world far from the acquisitiveness and the optimism of the age. It is worth mentioning that, there was a big difference between the two classes within the working class, that is to say, between skilled and unskilled workers. If the first were given

the opportunity to acquire power through trade unions, the latter remained crippled and then harshly exploited. Before the reforms that improved their lot, workers in industry laboured for six days per week and fourteen or sixteen hours a day. In addition, factory workers were harshly treated by their employers and were asphyxiated by the rigid discipline at work characterised by “regularity, routine and monotony” (Hobsbawm 63). The working class in general did not have other sources of income other than a “callous cash payment” (Marx 3) they received as a reward of long hours of work and submission. The expansion of mechanization had made machines more valuable for employers than their human subjects and reduced the status of workers to an “appendage of machine” (ibid 7). Moreover, the life of workers was one of the most astonishing paradoxes of ‘The Gilded Age’ of Victorianism. The overwhelming majority of working class were “living [inside the house] in a cramped back-to-back terrace (Liddington 30), outside it was a ‘Waste Land’ with decaying slums, and overcrowded cities. The spread of smoke, filth, pollution and bad sanitary conditions led to the widespread of epidemics of cholera, typhoid, and respiratory and intestinal diseases (Hobsbawm 64).

The government turned a blind eye on the miserable conditions of workers and especially the conditions of the unemployed and the disabled. The majority of workers who lost their jobs and children without families had to take only one way, which was to go “down to the squalid obscurity of the pauper and criminal” (Huxley 22). These social ills when they first appeared were difficult for the government to diagnose, but easy to cure. When they spread widely in Victorian society they left their symptoms, but became irremediable and were shelved for the duration of the period. In addition, the spokesmen of the *laissez-faire* capitalism and the defenders of individualism and self-help resisted stubbornly to any attempt by different governments to fight against pauperisation. Samuel Smiles, the author of *Self-Help* (1859), had also opposed government intervention to improve the conditions of the poor.

In this respect he writes: “when people live in foul dwellings, let them alone, let wretchedness do its work; do not interfere with death” (Briggs 134).

However, the working class, during this period, developed a number of institutions such as: cooperative societies, friendly societies, saving banks and trade unions (Lerner 92) through which they aimed at gaining their legal right and improving their conditions. Most importantly, through the Chartist movement of 1838-1848, the working class formed an alliance of workers from different professions and called for extended reforms, including universal male suffrage, the secret ballot and annual elections (Damrosch 577). Even though the Chartist movement collapsed in front of government show of force, the movement remained a turning point in the development of working class attitude from stoicism to rebellion. Beginning with The Second Reform Bill of 1867, the working class strengthened their political power by extending the number of votes to all urban male householders. The legislation of trade unions in 1871 opened the doors for one and half million of trade unions to have representatives in parliament by 1890s. Additionally, Education Act of 1870 gave the working class children access to public education, and the Public Health Act of 1875 provided the working class areas with water supplies, food, slum clearance and protection against infectious diseases.

### **E. Victorian Novel and Victorian Society**

The Victorian era was seen as the greatest age of the English novel, comprising 40,000 titles produced between 1837-1901. The emergence of a new social, economic and political conditions helped shape the course of the novel and vice versa. The Victorian novel seemed to be closely linked with the conditions of people in an era of rapid urbanisation and industrialisation. Under such conditions, the novelists were expected to depict “life with fidelity” [and to be careful not to waste a single moment in paying] “particular attention to exact documentation, [and] to getting the facts right” (Cuddon 729-731). As a result, the



Victorian novelists broke with the Romantic traditions, and sought through their writings to play the role of social satirists and political reformers. Thus, Victorian novel became “an important source of moral instruction and social criticism.” (Kepos 288). Boris Ford in his book *The New Pelican Guide to English Literature: from Dickens Hardy* wrote:

... [The task of the Victorian novelists was very] limited and... [The social conditions obliged them to adopt] a pragmatic approach.... There was an obvious demand for their work,.... There were tasks to be done, causes to be championed.... The age demanded reassuring patriarchs and matriarchs, and writers vied with preachers and statesmen in providing this reassurance. (68)

From this quotation, we come to realise that the Victorian novelists did not have the opportunity and time to embellish their writings or to choose topics outside their sphere of duty dictated by social and political conditions. It is worth mentioning too, that the Victorian novelists were not only obliged to make their writings useful to society and politics, but they had also to be respectful to religion and morality.

Charles Dickens (1812-1870) is one of the greatest novelists of the Victorian era. He spent an unhappy childhood and was pushed to work at the age of twelve by the bankruptcy and the indebtedness of his father. A self-made-man, Dickens succeeded in becoming a journalist, contributor to periodicals and later on a novelist of international renown. Generally speaking, the novels of Dickens depict and attack workhouses, prisons of debtors, harsh schooling, the corruption of commercial enterprises, social hypocrisy and vice, blackmailing, snobbery and the exploitation of the poor (Blamires 304).

Dickens novels were written with the purpose to press on the authorities to improve bad social conditions. *Oliver Twist* (1837-1838) was a violent attack of the Poor Law of 1834 and of Workhouse set up by the Whigs in the 1830s. By combining between “physical hunger [with] emotional starvation” (Coote 452), Dickens creates a horrifying picture of workhouse in which the hero Oliver “was desperate with hunger, and reckless with misery.” *A Christmas*

*Carol* (1843) was a satire of Utilitarian and Malthusian attitudes. The first because it “prised usefulness above all else” (Claeys 231), and the second because it claimed, “the poor ought not to be assisted” (ibid 231). In *Hard Times* (1854) was a bitter criticism of Victorian educational system. Gradgrind’s children, as a sample, are brought up in an educational system which sought to load their minds with facts and kill their spirit of imagination. The novel is also a depiction of the conditions of workers at Coketown and a condemnation of Utilitarianism which paved the way to heartless businessmen like Bounderby to suck the blood of desperate workers. In *The Great Expectations* (1861), Dickens shifted from the indictment of societal corruption to the satire of individual corruption. In sum, the novels of Dickens give us a concrete and universal picture of nineteenth-century England and provide us with knowledge about the characteristics of ‘human nature’ in general.

Like Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863) started his professional career as a journalist then as a contributor to periodicals. His family education and his social experience provided him with a thorough understanding of the civilisation of his epoch (Blamires 305). Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair* (1847-1848) is a masterpiece of fiction and one of the greatest novels of the Victorian period. This novel is a denunciation of the corruption of the aristocracy and the middle class who sell titles and use dishonest means to reach their aims. It is also a criticism of the ‘double standard’ attitude of the middle class who are “servile to those above, tyrannical to those beneath” (Prawer 237). Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881) mixed between his career as a Tory politician and as a committed novelist. The best that can be said about his literary career is that it epitomised the desire of Victorians to make of their novels a means by which to criticise society and to enlarge ‘social theories’ (Ford 100). Then, it is clear that in his trilogy: *Coningsby* (1844), *Sybil* (1845) and *Tancred* (1847), Disraeli had a specific social and political role to play. *Coningsby* deals with purely political themes. *Sybil* treats social themes such as the gap between the rich and the poor and the miseries of

exploited and ill-housed workers. The author used *Tancred* in order to defend the cause of his political party.

Mrs Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-1866) was influenced by her experience of life in the cotton-spinning town of Manchester. This gave her the chance to have a deep observation of the life and the behaviour of the working people. Many of Gaskell's novels contributed to the 'condition-of England-question', and the struggle of the working people to get what they consider to be their rights (Coote 474). In the first published novel *Mary Barton* (1848), Gaskell gives us a truthful portrayal of working class life in large industrial town in the forties with a "satirical intent" (Attia 124). In *North and South* (1855), she shows the paradoxes between rural and industrial England, this novel is of a great importance and can be considered as a social document. One of the brightest literary figures of this period is Anthony Trollope (1815-1882), who in his novel *The Way We Live Now* (1875) exposes the corruption of commercial England and mourns the disappearance of old values. In addition, Trollope wages a violent attack on the idleness of aristocracy and on the 'cash nexus' relationship (Coote 487).

George Eliot (1819-1880) was among the first Victorian intellectuals to express religious doubt and to seek for new worldly religions in order to survive in their godless age. Her early reading of sceptical philosophers, determinist thinkers and biblical criticism shook her religious beliefs and drove her towards agnosticism (ibid 520). In addition to her readings, Eliot established a friendly relationship with the great thinkers of her age like, John Stuart Mill, Harriet Martineau, Herbert Spencer and G.H. Lewes with whom she made extra-marital relationship. These contacts, indeed, helped to shape the course of her literary life. *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) is a novel in which Eliot advises her audience to examine carefully the world, in order to find a moral consolation or a 'religion of humanity.' *Middlemarch* (1871-1872) is a novel, which treats the problem of endowed and idealistic Victorian woman who

wants to realise something in her life, but her dreams meets disillusionment and frustration. In this novel, Eliot tells her readers that in the absence of God only through the establishment of good human relationship can one find solace. All in all, the novels of George Eliot are didactic and have a moral purpose such as: the condemnation of ‘social ills’ and the rigid morality of Victorian society. Eliot’s novels put much emphasis on the possibility of redemption not through Christian salvation, but through worldly religions (Attia 123-124).

Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) was another Victorian author worthy of attention. He was born in Dorset into an upper working class family. Hardy is known for his pastoral novels and the majority of them are set in ‘Wessex’, that is the South West of England. At the beginning, Hardy worked as an architect for church restoration, but when his novel *Far from the Madding Crowd* met success, he left architecture and devoted his time to writing. Thanks to the success of the succeeding novels, Hardy established his reputation as the greatest and the most read novelist of the Victorian era. Like George Eliot, Hardy lost his faith in religion because of his reading of Darwin’s *Origin of Species*, J.S. Mill’s *On Liberty*, Herbert Spencer’s *First Principles* and Arthur Schopenhauer’s *The World as Will and Representation*. Unlike Eliot whose conversion to agnosticism was accompanied with ‘moral optimism’, Hardy’s agnosticism was often characterised by deep pessimism and ‘resignation’ (Gilmour 89). One thing worth mentioning is that Hardy broke with the Victorian belief in the optimism and progress and went so far as to explore the tragic character of human life. For him human life is under the determination of forces beyond individual control. These forces are represented by the outer pressures of society and the inner constraints of human character. The willingness to unfold the powers that drive the lives of his characters, led Hardy towards a realistic examination of love and sexuality. “The darkening tendency of [Hardy’s] writing” (Parker 24), hurt his readers and put in danger his reputation as a writer (Poupard 214). Even though many readers do not regard Hardy as a ‘social novelist’, the majority of his novels

deals with social issues such as; ‘working class education’, ‘agricultural conditions’, ‘the marriage laws’. Hardy believes that bringing ‘reform’ to these ‘areas’ is going to better ‘human condition’ (Barnard 133).

The first novel to be written by Hardy was *The Poor Man and the Lady* in 1867; it was a satire of class distinctions, but for many reasons it was never published and the manuscript had been lost forever. *Desperate Remedies* (1871) deals with class conflict and *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872) is a pastoral comedy, which shows Hardy’s feeling of sympathy towards people of the countryside. *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873) treats youthful love and class difference; it also expresses the Darwinian assumption that man lives in an uncaring universe. As it is mentioned above, the publication of *Far from the Madding Crowd* in 1874 brought a sudden financial and literary success to Hardy. In this work, Hardy wanted to contribute to Wordsworth’s belief that life in the countryside is as fertile as land for the fundamental ‘passions of the heart’ to reach maturity (Pollard 320). The story is about fate and the role it plays in shaping the course of human life. It also depicts the conflict between individuals with each other and between individuals with circumstances. *The Hand of Ethelberta* (1876) shows the tension between rural Dorset and urban England. *The Return of the Native* (1878) shows the struggle between man and the nature of the universe. *The Trumpet Major* (1880) reveals Hardy’s interest in the Napoleonic Wars, class difference and the exploration of romantic love and the reality of marriage. *A Laodicean* (1881) shows the impact of railway and telegraph on rural England. In *Two on a Tower* (1882), Hardy sought “‘to set the emotional history of two infinitesimal lives against the stupendous background of the stellar universe’” (Pollard 322). *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886) establishes the theme of crime and punishment. The plot is built upon fate and tragic coincidences. In Chapter 17, Hardy wrote, “character is fate” (88), that is, fate is the decisive element in the direction of characters’ lives. Here, Henchard the hero, because of the flaws of his personality, is driven

toward misery and destruction. In *The Woodlanders* (1887), the author treats the doctrine of “Unfulfilled Intention” (Coote 562) and the theme of thwarted love and class division. The next novel was *Tess of D’Urbervilles* or ‘A Pure Woman’ was published in 1891. In this novel, Hardy deals not only with the working of fate, but also with social conventions and what they dictate to individuals. Here, the author criticises the Christian view “that a girl who has an illegitimate child, though she may be pitied, cannot be forgiven” (Pollard 324).

Hardy’s last and finest novel, *Jude the Obscure* (1895) is the story of Jude Fawley, an orphan and poor, idealist and romantic in a godless world governed by the law of ‘the survival of the fittest’. As a boy, Jude’s heart is aching with love for a university life Christminster (Oxford), but he finds himself trapped into marrying the Darwinian Arabella. After a series of quarrels, the couple separates and each one of them leads a different way. When Jude travels to Christminster in order to fulfil childhood dreams, he meets his cousin Sue, ‘The Intellectual New Women’, whom he loves and idealises. After discovering that Jude is bound to another woman, Sue marries the old man Phillotson, the former teacher of young Jude, as a revenge. When Jude and Sue get divorce, they decide to live together, but without a conventional marriage. The couple and their children with them lead their life in miserable conditions. In addition, the appearance of the Schopenhauerian and the premature Little Father Time, Jude’s son with Arabella, deepens the sense of despair when this boy hangs his brothers and himself as psychological and physical response to the misery of existence. The novel closes with Sue’s resignation and return to her legal husband Phillotson, and Jude’s forced and unconscious escape to Arabella and then his tragic death. Unlike other novels by Hardy, *Jude the Obscure* treats life from different aspects, be it a Victorian life or a universal one. Among the most important themes discussed by this novel: the marriage question and the New Women, the will and resignation, aspirations and class prejudice, fate and the flaws of

personality and the conflict between the ideal and the social, which will be the subject of discussion of the following chapter.

## **Conclusion**

Through the component parts of this chapter, I have given the reader the chance to have a thorough understanding of the main aspects and values of the Victorian society. In so doing, this chapter helps the readers to contextualise Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* and to have a background of the topic of my discussion.

## Chapter Two: The Struggle between Idealism and Society

### Introduction

Thomas Hardy's *Jude the obscure* depicts the strife of the two characters Jude and Sue in order to make their own ways in the Victorian society. Jude endeavours to go beyond his class by aspiring to an intellectual life in Christminster. However, society does not allow such an idealist to cross its barriers and does its best to thwart the implementation of those ideals. In addition, Jude's attempt to impose his romanticism in a Darwinian society sharpens the conflict between what he perceives to be right and fair and what society maintains to be common and accepted. Moreover, Sue's ambition towards intellectualism and self-improvement leads her to reject conventional marriage, but no matter how she tries to impose her ideals, the Victorian society has already established some moral codes to silence women. Concerning the social side, Arabella is the only character who understands that to ensure one's survival it is required from an individual to conform to society's norms. Finally, the emergence of Little Father Time changes the mood of the novel and contributes to the defeat of idealism and the rise of pessimism as a response to the miseries of existence. This chapter attempts to discuss the New Women's ideals versus the conventional marriage and it will also focus on the contrast between Romanticism and Darwinism, this will be followed by a discussion of the conflict between academic aspirations and social obstacles. Another focus is on the defeat of idealism the case of Sue and Jude followed by the rise of pessimism of Little Father Time.



## **A. Idealism versus Social Reality**

### **1. New Woman's Ideals versus Conventional Marriage**

The breakthrough of the feminist movement toward the end of Queen Victoria's reign paved the way to the Victorian women to gain not only a respectable position in society, but also to aspire to a higher ambitions such as the questioning of the compatibility of the conventional marriage with women's ideal of self-improvement. However, the desire of Victorian women to materialise their ideals provoked the wrath of society and led to a sharp conflict between the two antagonistic sides. The coining of the term 'New Woman' epitomises the highest position the Victorian women reached and the new challenges they accepted because of the untouchability of some of the Victorian ethos they dared to criticise. In *fin de siècle* literature the 'New Woman's ideals was one of the most discussed topics especially, by feminist writers and those who sympathised with the women plight such as Thomas Hardy. Although, Hardy was not a committed feminist, he, "as an established novelist,... championed the struggle of the strong [and] intelligent... woman to achieve selfhood and social freedom" (Harvey 34).

In *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy creates of Sue Bridehead a character representing the strife of the 'New Woman' to reach freedom and self-improvement. In order to keep her moral and intellectual integrity, Sue strives throughout the novel to oppose the conventional marriage and the sexual submission to man. In the Postscript to *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy describes Sue as "the woman of the feminist movement-the slight, pale 'bachelor' girl- the intellectualized, emancipated bundle of nerves that modern conditions were producing"(ix-x). This means that Sue is the product of the feminist movement of the late nineteenth century Britain and as a free intellectual, she inclines toward modernity which is characterised by nervousness and mental unrest. Sue's ideal of freedom came from childhood and later on

from her reading of male authors like John Stuart Mill. Old Miss Fawley, Jude's aunt, depicts Sue to Jude as a rebellious and self-conscious girl. According to Miss Fawley, Sue experienced a childhood different from that of her fellow girls and that if the latter succumbed to the limits traced to their femininity, Sue surpassed those limits and managed to "do things that only boys do, as a rule" (134). In addition, Sue's reading of Mill taught her a masculine behaviour, enlightened her intellect, and facilitated her conversion to manliness as a source of "light, freedom and instruction" (Blake 212). In this sense, Sue follows her own ideals and becomes prototypical of the emancipated Victorian 'New Woman' or 'Unwomanly Woman'.

When Sue and Phillotson decide to marry, she sends a letter to Jude asking him to give her away in the church. Sue writes, "According to the ceremony as there printed, my bridegroom chooses me of his own will and pleasure; but I don't choose him. Somebody *gives* me to him, like a she-ass or she-goat, or any other domestic animal" (203). Sue makes no difference between marriage in the church and negotiation in the market place. For her women are seen as properties or other docile animals. Sue protests against the church morality which reduces the relationship between a man and a woman to a matter of "Property transaction" (Jacobus 202). In this sense, the British novelist D.H. Lawrence argues that Sue considers marriage as "a submission, a service [and] slavery" (qtd. in Guerard 71). After her marriage with Phillotson, Sue discovers that it is her ignorance and confusion which lead her to accept the compromise, she also realises how disgusting is marriage and how incompatible it is the relationship between being bound and wanting to materialise one's dreams. When Sue goes to attend the funeral of Jude's aunt Drusilla, she confesses to Jude that she is miserable in her marriage. After sacrificing herself to the morality marriage, Sue has a new perception of herself:

... Before I married him I had never thought out fully what a marriage meant, even though I knew. It was idiotic of me—there is no excuse. I was old enough, and I thought I was very

experienced. I rushed on ... with all the cock-sureness of the fool that I was!.... I am certain one ought to be allowed to undo what one has done so ignorantly! I daresay it happens to lots of women; only they submit.... (256)

After experiencing a bitter marital relationship with Phillotson, Sue decides to urge her husband to release her in order to return to her idealistic life. She quotes from J. S. Mill in order to impress her husband: “she, or he, “who lets the world, or his own portion of it, has no need of any other faculty than the ape-like one of imitation” (267). Even though, Phillotson responds indifferently to Sue’s demand saying, “What do I care about J .S. Mill!”(267), he agrees to let her live separately within their home. Phillotson seems to understand that there is a ‘moral code’ built on some principles other than existing laws or religious convictions (Youngkin 130). In so doing, Sue makes a step ahead in her struggle against some “accepted formalities of civilisation” (Howells 158). Like Sue, Mona Caird, an advocate of women’s rights, argues that the perfect marriage does not need legal ties to bind two individuals together and that any obligation imposed from law or society is ‘impertinence’ (qtd. in Moseley 8). Throughout the novel, Sue questions both legal and religious doctrines of the nineteenth century and she tries to envision different moral code, that is the one which is not based on religion or law but on the principle of individual happiness and equality for women.

Unlike Sue who strives to go beyond fixed opinions and prejudice, Arabella, not at all concerned with the feminist plight, is Hardy’s ‘stereotypical sexual adventurer’ who coarsely and hypocritically tends to soothe society’s established vision of women( Notgrass 44). That is, Arabella is not interested in whether she is free or not, but her only goal is to satisfy her sexual desires and flatters society so as not to be alienated from it. Arabella’s relation with men is a purely sexual one, and to show how lustful she is in her relationships with men, Hardy uses the passage of the pig penis where Arabella shows to Jude that she is sexually available. In so doing, Arabella sets out deliberately to catch a man by showing him

her sexual capacities and by trapping him into marrying her by false representation. Unlike Sue, Arabella is the character who represents social conventions, she conforms to ‘dogmas of marriage’ because she believes that only through marriage can a woman soothe her sexual desires and survive in the hypocritical Victorian society. Arabella regards a husband as someone who protects her and satisfies her sexually. When her friends asks her of the reasons behind the seduction of Jude, she replies “‘I’ve got him to care for me; I want him to more than care for me’” (56).

Throughout the novel Arabella remains constant in her attitude and seeks only for suitable means to realise her ends. She does not care whether succumbing to the morality of marriage represents a compromise to her moral integrity as woman. The feminist’s idea that conventional marriage enslaves women has nothing to do with Arabella’s policy of survivalism. She leaves Jude when she realises that he is not able to protect her. Then she marries Cartlett and when he dies, she remarries with Jude and when the latter dies, she has recourse to Vilbert. Arabella believes in the inevitability and usefulness of conventional marriage. She urges Sue to legally marry Jude because she thinks:

Life with a man is more business-like after it, and money matter work better. And then, you see, if you have rows, and he turns you out of doors, you can get the law to protect you, which you can’t otherwise .... I’ll advise you to get it the business legally done as soon as possible. You’ll find it an awful bother later on if you don’t. (320-321)

Arabella believes that only through conformism to conventional thought can one ensure his survival. As she, states she regards no difference between getting married and doing business. Arabella conforms to the legality of Victorian marriage as the only way for protecting herself from being thrown out of the house without having recourse to the protection of law.

As free spirit, Sue carries on the struggle against oppression of social norms. When she escapes from her husband Phillotson in order to live with her companion Jude, Sue

refuses to give her body to the latter. She loathes sexuality and regards Arabella lack of ideals and spirit, as being ‘fleshly and coarse’ and as ‘low-passionate women.’ Later on, when Sue and Jude decide to marry in the church, she feels a sudden repulsion for this kind of marriage by telling Jude “it spoils the sentiment” (334). Here Sue stresses the idea that all the emotional ties between her and Jude would become a ‘business-like relationship’ if not protected from the conventionality of the church. Her belief that “there is a little poetry [or romance] in a church” (334), conveys the same feeling expressed by the heroine Bathsheba in *Far From the Madding Crowd* that “all romance end at marriage (254). However, after the tragic death of her children especially, the unborn child, Sue gives up the struggle and returns to her husband Phillotson, and therefore, surrenders herself totally to “the Gospel of self-sacrifice”<sup>7</sup>(Showalter 29).

## **2. Romanticism versus Darwinism**

The spread of Darwinism in the second half of Queen Victoria’s reign had swallowed the idealism and the optimism of the Romantics claiming that “the instinctive, joyful response to the world... is not enough, because pain and death are realities which cannot be overlooked” (Williams58). Darwinism had swept away the feeling of optimism and brought a new mood of pessimism by maintaining that ‘life is no pleasure, but meanness’. Darwinism had also changed the views of nature and Darwin’s portrayal of life as a ceaseless and ‘competitive struggle’ between species brought about the end the Romantic’s depiction of nature as a compassionate, ‘nurturing force’ and spread an awareness of nature’s cruelty. Alfred, Lord Tennyson’s famous poetic description, “Nature, red in tooth and claw” demonstrates the Darwinian perception of nature (kepos 110). In Hardy’s *Jude the obscure*, the character Jude sticks to the ‘romantic sensibility’ of the early nineteenth century, but the

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<sup>7</sup> Sue succumbs to the role assigned by the Christian religion to women.

incompatibility of romanticism to the requirements of the new and passionless Darwinian society makes the conflict between him and his fellow humans sharp and enduring.

Despite living in a miserable village and experiencing the harshness of nature there, Jude espouses romanticism as the centrepiece of his daily conduct. At this point, Jude believes that the only way to reach his noble aims is to seek for an absolute detachment from the morality of the crowd. With a strong devotion to his romantic beliefs, Jude shows sympathy not only to his fellow human, but also to all the living beings. As a boy, Jude creates harmony between him and the living things around him and as a selfless person, he prefers to be punished and paid off by farmer Truthman, with whom he works, than to deprive the birds from eating the corns, because “his heart grew sympathetic with the birds’ thwarted desire”(11). He addresses them with a Wordsworthian poetical beauty: “Poor little dears! ...You shall have some dinner-you shall. There is enough for us all.... Eat, then, my dear little birdies, and make a good meal!”(11). Jude’s expression of the romantic feeling finds no harmony in the outer life. Instead of scaring the birds, because it is in reality a question of the “struggle [of species] with each other which shall get food and live”(Darwin 116), Jude observes the “face of nature bright with gladness”(Ibid 116) and “forgets that the birds which are idly singing around[him] mostly live on insects or seeds, and are constantly destroying life(ibid116). This is the contrast between Jude’s perception of the birds and what they really are to the disciples of Darwin like farmer Truthman. The birds which create a feeling of sympathy in Jude’s heart does have in reality any feeling of romanticism ,because like humans, they are mere beasts struggling for existence and suffering destruction from the more powerful than them and causing the destruction to the less powerful than them like insects and seed or corns of farmer Truthman. Jude’s romanticism is interrupted by the punishment of farmer Throuman . When Jude contemplates the world around him while lying upon his

back, “on a heap of litter near the pig-sty” (15), Hardy poses the problem of befriending Jude’s romanticism and society’s Darwinism. To describes Jude meditation, Hardy wrote:

Events did not rhythm quite as he had thought. Nature’s logic was too horrid for him to care for. [Jude realises] that mercy towards one set of creatures was cruelty to another sickened his sense of harmony. As you got older, and felt yourself at to be at the centre of your time, and not at a point in its circumference, as you had felt when you were little, you were seized with a sort of shuddering, he perceived. (15)

From his contemplation, Jude realises how conflicting is his feeling with the harshness of outer reality and how joyful is the feeling of childhood which is in the way to be devoured by realisations when he grows older. This sentiment can be associated with Wordsworth’s belief that wisdom is only found in childhood and that growing older and coming into contact with the reality of life corrupts ours innocence. Despite, this sudden epiphany<sup>8</sup>, Jude comes out again from the devilish thought and Hardy suggests, “All was well with him again” (13). To show how kind and how harmless is Jude Hardy writes:

... he was a boy who could not himself bear to hurt anything. He had never brought home a nest of young birds without lying awake in misery half the night after, and often reinstating them and the nest in their original place the next morning. He could scarcely to see trees cut down or lopped, from a fancy that it hurt them; and late pruning, when the sap was up, and the tree bled profusely, had been a positive grief to him in his infancy. (13)

Jude’s marriage with the Darwinian Arabella represents a sharp conflict between two opposing creeds, the one based on sympathy and the other based on cruelty. Hardy brings the two opposing characters together in order to allow his readers gain a deep insight to the core of the conflict and see by themselves how inharmonious is the life they are going to lead together. The scene of the pig killing opens the conflict between Arabella’s cruelty and Jude’s kindness. Jude sees the killing as “hateful business” (76), while Arabella replies simply by

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<sup>8</sup> A moment of sudden revelation.

“pigs must be killed” (76). When Jude says; “Thank god! He is dead” (76), Arabella responds “what’s god got to do with such a messy job as a pig-killing, I should like to know!” She said scornfully “poor folks must live” (76). Arabella calls Jude a “tender-hearted fool” (77). For Arabella the pig is just an object and its suffering does not produce any feeling in her, but for Jude as romantic his heart aches with grief for what they did to his fellow pig. Here each of the two opposing poles tries to defend his own ideology. If Arabella and society in general see the action of the pig killing as “an ordinary obtaining of meat” (76), because it is a matter of ‘big fish eat small fish’ business, but to Jude seeing the “blood of his fellow-mortal” (77) is the most dreadful thing.

Unlike Jude the romantic, Arabella has a pragmatic and realistic interpretation of things and she “recognises no value in man’s ability to personalise the world in way that define the ethical norms of his humanity” (Benvenuto 190). That is to say, she denies any attempt to give a romantic interpretation of the world and that when it becomes a matter of survival, human values must be put aside in order to pave the way to bestiality to prevail. Indeed, Arabella believes that the ends justify the means, she kills the pig in order to get meat and she marries Jude in order to soothe her bestial desires and ensure self-preservation. She gets rid of her child, Little Father Time, because she sees no interests in keeping him with her as a parasite. She reacts to Jude death exactly as she did to his fellow pig by claiming, “Weak woman must provide for a rainy day” (481). Arabella shows neither compassion nor mercy to the others, her sole goal is to be “victorious... in the great battle of life” (Darwin 127). Often in contrast with Arabella, Jude does not dehumanize his vision of life, though he suffers because of it. Indeed, regardless the suffering he endures throughout the novel, Jude tends to ignore the cruel and the “sordid crises of real life” (Ellis 163). Despite experiencing despair when dwelling in Christminster, Jude gets up in the middle of the night to help a rabbit so as not to suffer longer in the trap. No matter how society, Arabella as sample, tries to shake his



romantic and humanistic beliefs; however, Jude responds spontaneously by showing that his heart is still aching with sensitivity to the suffering of things around him. The heroism of Jude “derives in large measures from the suffering he endures because he does not dehumanise his vision into conformity with the impersonal laws of nature” (Benvenuto 193). Therefore, Jude clings to his romantic beliefs and carries on with the same course of action until his death at the close of the novel.

### **3. Academic Aspirations versus Social Obstacles**

Jude manages to endure his own life in creating ideals by which to live. From the opening pages of the novel, Hardy shows to us Jude as a child of eleven different from his fellow children. Jude starts to dream of an intellectual life in Christminster (Oxford), regardless of his age and his humble origins; Jude wants to invent his own path before becoming older. His determination as child is well expressed in his conversation with the schoolmaster Phillotson who quits the village Marygreen for the university city of Christminster to be a scholar and a clergyman there. When Jude asks the schoolmaster for the reasons behind his departure, the latter replies that he is not mature enough to inquire about such things, Jude responds by “I think I should now, sir” (4). This expresses Jude’s strong determination and reveals the “disparity between his imaginative world and the real world” (Davis). Jude’s, as an idealist, considers his relationship with the schoolmaster as the relation of all great scholars with their masters. Thus, the schoolmaster for Jude is the only person who is capable of helping him to implement the dream of becoming a scholar. As Hardy points it out “tears rose into the boy’s eyes, for he was not among the regular day scholars, who came... close to the schoolmaster’s life” (4). Despite the disillusionment after losing contact with his schoolmaster, Jude still keeps faith in his capacities to surpass social obstacle and reach the city of his dreams or the “heavenly Jerusalem” as he calls it.

Moreover, Jude's first vision of Christminster after waiting for the mist to disappear reveals his longing for the city and his clinging to the academic dreams upon which his life is built. The appearance of the city with its 'shining spots' sustains Jude in his miserable life in the dark and hypocritical village Marygreen and gives him a moral strength to carry on the struggle against the limits imposed by his origins and his class. In so doing, Jude separates himself from the rest of the villagers and creates an 'ideal city' in his inner life, but if his ideals are strong enough to resist the 'heavy blows', society has also an important role to play in trying to force him to abort his dreams before reaching maturity. Jude thinks that he "reconstitute the world, while in fact he only creates substitutes, and reality remains intractable" (Hasset 433). This reveals how far Jude is from the reality of social life in front of him. To show how obsessed is Jude with quest for an ideal life; Hardy makes the obsession clear in the following comment: "he suddenly grew older. It had been the yearning of his heart to find something to anchor on, to cling to-for some place which he could call admirable"( 24). Nevertheless, Jude is not crippled by his 'romantic drunkenness'<sup>9</sup> and works hard in assisting his aunt in the day and devoting the night to the acquisition of Greek and Latin language spoken in the university.

Society's first attempt to hamper the poor orphaned Jude comes from the trickster Vilbert, the quack-doctor, who forgets to provide him with Greek and Latin grammar that he promised him. Later on, Jude sends a letter to Mr. Phillotson asking him for grammars of Greek and Latin, but when the books arrive, he discovers that the books cannot be understood without a teacher, and that "the charm he had supposed in store for him was really a labour like that of Israel in Egypt"(31). It is through the incidents that society begins infiltrating the 'ideal city' of Jude and tries to thwart the pursuit of his ideals by redirecting his attention toward the bitterness and devilishness character of social reality. Despite receiving 'moments

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<sup>9</sup>A detachment from the real world.

of sight', Jude chooses to turn his back to these social realities and endeavours to study Greek and Latin until he succeeds to learn them alone. Another attempt from society to prevent Jude from sticking to his grand dreams comes from the fleshy, animalistic and the philistine Arabella Donn who seduces him and traps him into marrying her.

Although, Jude is aware that courting is "repugnant to his ideas" (50); however, he falls easily the victim of Arabella's sexual incitement. Later when Jude makes up his mind to go to Christminster, Arabella feigns pregnancy in order to trap him into marrying her. After his marriage with Arabella, Jude discovers that he will never materialise his dreams as long as he lives with the philistine<sup>10</sup> Arabella especially, when the latter dares to throw his books and smears them with the pig fat. As a result, Jude quarrels with his wife and breaks their relationship. Therefore, Jude sets himself free and decides to go to Christminster without knowing what the future reserves for him. When Jude arrives to Christminster he discovers how different is the real city from the one he idealises, and becomes aware also that "what at night had been perfect and ideal was by the day the more or less defective real" (99). The social reality deepens Jude's sense of despair when the college to which he applies, responds by advising him to give up his academic aspirations and cling to stone-masonry. The town does not give any sign of intellectual life and that the "struggling men and women before [Jude] were the reality of Christminster" (141). When Jude discovers that, the city that he idealises and trusts has deceived him by showing neither respect nor sympathy to him; he turns to alcoholic drinks and gives up his reading. However, Jude does not respond in the same way as Christminster treats him, and continues to consider it as the centre of learning. To show how consistent is Jude's love of the city, Sue says to Arabella:

Of course Christminster is a sort of fixed vision with him, which I suppose he'll never be cured of believing in. He still thinks it a great centre of high and fearless thought, instead of

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<sup>10</sup> A person who is hostile arts and culture, I used it here to refer to Arabella's way of treating the books of Jude.

what is, a nest of commonplace schoolmasters whose characteristic is timid obsequiousness to tradition. (371-372)

Therefore, Christminster is deeply engraved in the heart of Jude and although he discovers how contradictory his perception of the city is and what it really is, Jude sees it as a centre of learning which has produced many a man of thought. In this respect, he says:

I love the place-although I know how it hates all men like me-the so-called Self-taught, - how it scorns our laboured acquisitions, when it should be the first to respect them...Nevertheless, it is the centre of the universe to me, because of my early dream: and nothing can alter it.(381)

Jude's childhood dreams have a great impact on the rest of his life. No matter how he tries to dislike Christminster after a series of misfortunes there; however, Jude's early love of it urges him to love the city more and more.

## **B. Defeat of Idealism and Daybreak of Pessimism**

### **1. Sue's resignation**

After the death of her children, Sue relinquished her own ideals and realises that the struggle of the new woman to make her own way in society is futile. Thus, she is driven toward espousing resignation as psychological response to failure. She urges Jude to give up the struggle and conform to societies rules. Sue loses faith in the optimism New Woman's creed and embraces submission and acceptance of her role as an *Angel in the House*. Sue says to Jude after the disaster of the death of their children:

We must conform!.... [She continues] All the ancient wrath of the Power above us has been vented upon us, his poor creatures, and must submit.... It is no use fighting against God!.... I have no more strength left; no more enterprise I am beaten, beaten!.... (409-410)

Sue final resolution to conform and go to bend to her husband, suggests that the New Women's ideals still seemed impossible to realise. The lack of Sue's self-confidence and

perseverance is the principle cause of her weakness. More striking is the belief that rebelling against social norms is a blasphemy. It also suggests that there is no room for Sue in a society, which does not value nonconformist ideas. For Hardy “the chief source of man’s misery is his possession of consciousness” (Paris 3). Thus, it is also from this pessimistic outlook that we come to realise that the reasons behind Sue resignation is her realisation that possessing consciousness in her chaotic society is a fallacy. Jude is astonished of the sudden change of Sue’s position:

One thing troubled him more than any other; that sue and himself had mentally travelled in opposite directions since the tragedy: events which had enlarged his own views of life, laws, customs, and dogmas, had not operated in the same manner on Sue’s. She was no longer the same as in the independent days, when her intellect played like lambent lightning over conventions and formalities which he at that time respected, though he did not now (411-412).

Jude finds that it is unbelievable that Sue whom he adores and with whom he makes a coalition in order to fight some accepted ideas, has turned to be a mere she-goat in the ‘morality of the herd’<sup>11</sup>. That is, how can the intellectual, the New Women and free spirit Sue Bridehead be reduced to a submissive woman, knowing that her intellect is not made for docility. If in Troy the coward Paris succeeds to kill Achilles by targeting his weak heel, society has defeated Jude by taking profits from the fragility of the character of his allied Sue.

Therefore, the defeat of Sue in front of social conventions can be attributed to her vulnerability, “inconsistency and elusiveness in the light of formal difficulties” (Langland 225). The fall of Sue can also be attributed to the existence of two contradictory characters, the spiritual and fleshy, within her. Throughout the novel, Sue endeavours to reach a high intellectual or spiritual position by repressing her sexuality and submitting it to the logic of her intellect. When she lives with Jude whom she calls a companion, she does not give her

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<sup>11</sup> I borrowed the idea from the German philosopher Nietzsche.

body to him fearing that it would compromise her moral integrity, but when Jude threatens her by having recourse to the fleshy Arabella, Sue decides to give herself to him and paves the way to her second nature to prevail and replace the ideal or the spiritual one. In so doing, Sue is unable to “evade the woman’s status as an erotic object through her role of the New Woman” (Harvey 172). Mary Jacobus, a feminist critic, argues that “Sue is broken by her femaleness” (1). She adds “the cogency of [Hardy’s] general plea combines with his portrayal of Sue’s individual ‘obscurity’; the realistic sense of the gap between what she thinks and what she does[and]between[her] belief and[her]behaviour...(qtd. in Harvey 82). Often in contrast with the fragile Sue, Arabella’s consistency throughout the novel opens her way to stick to her ideology without provoking the wrath of public opinion. We as readers condemn Sue more than we do to Arabella, because the latter espouses conformism because it is the only way for her to survive in the Victorian society and if she does harm to our hero, the openness of her behaviour soon awakens Jude before wasting his time. Whereas, Sue who pledges allegiance to Jude in order to fight hand in hand with him against social norms, surrenders unashamedly to the common enemy and leaves Jude to fight alone and perish in the battlefield. Sue is contradictory in her behaviour, at first she says to Phillotson “I shall do just as I choose” and when her struggle is in vain, she returns to him saying, “when are we going to have the marriage? Soon? (435). When Sue remarries Phillotson, she “subjects herself fully to the legalistic... codes of the ideology of marriage” (Bomarito 232).

## **2. Jude’s Failure and Death**

Despite his perseverance and his herculean efforts to go beyond his origins and his class, Jude childhood’s optimism and dream of an academic life in Christminster is turned on its head by the tyrannical and apocalyptic pessimism of social reality. No matter how hard he tries to reach his noble goals; however, he receives a bunch of thorns rather than that of

flowers as reward of his honesty and his long-suffering. The outcome is so, because Jude finds himself in society where “the wicked [like Arabella] prosper and the good [like him] are cursed” (Whitfield 20). The tragic end of Jude’s life reveals how pessimistic is Hardy’s attitude toward life. For him, man cannot materialise most of his desires, because he is condemned at birth to lead a life with worthless suffering. The reality of life ridicules man’s hopes, dreams and what his reason expects. Fate, illness, age, death and all other natural events that cause great and sudden damage or distress makes of man a mere prey. Moreover, if man seeks for his fellow humans as a refuge from pain, he finds little solace. Love relationship is always sad due to disappointment, mismatching and faithlessness. In addition to nature’s cruelty, society is also not well adapted to our natures. Society’s laws, customs and conventions make our life harder than we wish it to be (Paris 3) by disturbing our desires. In *Jude the Obscure* the good-hearted Phillotson expresses the same idea when he says; “Cruelty is the law pervading... society; and we can’t get out of it if we would!”(379).

The failure of Jude can be attributed to “inadequate social mechanisms” (Langland 229), which do not value a man according to his work, but according to his origins and his class. It is through this novel that Hardy ardently satirises the Victorian society, which hinders the noble aspirations of the poor to go beyond his class under the assumption that ‘the poor is poor’. In *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy bitterly criticises a social system based on snobbery and nepotism, which reduces the noble aims of academic knowledge to a bread making degrees. Sue conveys the same idea when she addresses Jude whose attempt to enter the university is rejected:

You prove it in your own person. You are one of the very men Christminster was intended for when the colleges were founded; a man with a passion for learning, but no money, or opportunities, or friends. But you were elbowed off the pavement by the millionaires’ sons.  
(Hardy 181)

Here Sue victimises Jude and blames the colleges' system for showing a contradiction between what they aimed at when they were founded and how they work now. Sue attributes the failure of Jude to the inadequacy of social system. Despite his noble struggle to acquire knowledge, Jude gets no reward for this. Like Sue, Jude believes that he fails not because of the lack of personal efforts, but because "there is something wrong somewhere in [their] social formulas" (394). Here both Jude and Sue regard society as a bullying force and ungratefully prevents individuals from reaching their noble aspirations. Later on, Jude finds that "everything is against [him]..., [and] nothing encourages him in his struggle to carry on his noble aspirations" (Garwood 68). Sue leaves him in the middle of the battle, the Darwinian Arabella comes again to disturb his romanticism and the College, which refuses him instead of mourning the loss of a great self-educated man like Jude, is now '*en fête*' while he is lying on his deathbed.

Despite the common definition of what a success is, Jude realises that what he has done is heroic and worthy of attention and if he fails it is because of things beyond his own control:

I don't admit that my failure proved my view to be wrong one, or that my success would have made it a right one; thought that's how we appraise such attempts nowadays-I mean, not by their essential soundness, but by their accidental outcomes. If I had ended by becoming like one of these gentlemen in red and black that we saw in dropping in here by now, everybody would have said: "See how wise that young man was, to follow the bent of his nature!" but having ended no better than I began they say: "see what a fool that fellow was in following a freak of his fancy!".... It takes two or three generations to do what I tried to do in one.... (389)

Here Hardy criticises society's views that the success is the result of our deeds and that it reflects man's aspirations hard work and vice versa. Society does not understand the course a man has taken to reach his noble aims and believes only in what is tangible in the result of his



realisation. Hardy is one of the believers that the greatness of a man is not only the reflection of his deeds, but it is also the hidden aims behind these deeds or realisations. In this respect, he says, “The inevitable history of a man does not lie in what he did but in what he wanted to do.”

### **3. Little Father Time and Pessimism**

The emergence of the precocious Little Father Time changes the course of the novel and deepens Sue and Jude belief in the futility of their struggle. Little Father Time perception of existence is concerned only with its generalities rather than on its particularities:

It could have been seen that boy’s ideas of life were different from those of the local boys. Children begin with the detail, and learn up the general; they begin with the contiguous, and gradually comprehend the universal. They seemed to have begun with the generals of life, and never to have concerned himself with the particulars. To him the houses, the willows, the obscure fields beyond, were apparently regarded not as a brick residence, pollards, and meadows; but as human dwellings in the abstract, vegetation and the wide dark world.  
(Hardy 330)

Father Time seems to scorn life and because he does not disturb himself going into details while contemplating things around him, life for him is uninspiring and meaningless. This epitomises the darkening tendency of Little Father Time that the world in general is gloomy. Unlike Jude’s romantic childhood, Father Time’s childhood allows him to come directly into contact with the “stark reality of existing in this world” (Matz 527). Although he is not yet biologically mature to have a clear judgement of life, Father Time seems to consider it as a nauseating experience.

For father time life is full of anomalies and that individuals are put into conditions in which in “strife is unavailing” (Whitfield18). He tells Sue on the evening before his suicide:

“I would be better to be out o’ the world than in it, wouldn’t it?”

“Then if children make so much trouble, why do people have’em?”

“But we don’t ask to be born?”

“If we children was gone there’d be no trouble at all!”(399)

Father Time grows impatient in waiting death to come to relieve his parents from the burden of children. Father Time awareness of the conditions of life leads him to treat people as if they are no more significant than the conditions in which they live. He sees his existence and that of his brothers as unnecessary, he says “done because we are to menny” (401), Unlike Jude, Father Time has no time for romanticism he sees the universe as indifferent and inhumane. “Father Time’s perception corrupt his appreciation of even those few joys which sensitive minds can experience” (Benvenuto 192). His decision “it would be better to be out of the world then in it”( Hardy 398) expresses Father Time desire to die before experiencing the miseries of existence, because he can see no meaning of life in an ideal way. Father Time denies any possibility or value in the act of living and he does so with a ‘horrifying regularity’. The presence of Father Time in the novel embodies the pessimistic philosophy of the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer who believes that existence has no other cures than having recourse to suicide if its terrors grow more than a human mind can bear. In this respect he says: “it will generally be found that, as soon as the terrors of life reach the point at which they outweighs the terrors of death, a man will put an end to his life”(26). This is the reason why Father Time hangs his siblings and himself in order not to suffer a lot in the vomiting experiences of life.

## **Conclusion**

Throughout the component parts off this chapter, I have given the reader chance to a deep insight into the causes of the conflict between the ideal and the social. In so doing, I stressed the inevitability of the conflict between the two contrasting sides and how tragic is

end of the conflict too. After that, I have shown the forces that operate in order to make the conflict sharp and enduring. Finally, I have come to the result that society always triumphs on individuals by targeting the weakness that lie behind their character and that those who keep on struggling stubbornly against the social forces always ends up in miserable conditions.

## **General Conclusion**

I have done my best in this work to give the reader the necessary means in order to help him understand the topic of my discussion and the purpose behind it. First, I provided the reader with the most important aspects of the Victorian society and values, which have a close relationship with the topic of my study. The growth of the feminist movement in the later years of Queen Victoria's reign and women's desire to expand the horizon of their demands is one of the attitudes that make the behaviour of Sue. Some feminists and Sue want to go beyond their gender in order to surpass prejudices and limits imposed by society to them. The spread of Darwinism in the second half of the Victorian age is one of the chief reasons behind undermining the romantic Jude and leading him to live inharmoniously with the rest of society.

Moreover, the strife of the working class and the poor to better their conditions and acquire education in the Victorian society in order to surpass class prejudice reflects Jude willingness to enter the University of Christminster hoping for a future intellectual life. The emergence of new attitudes and outlooks of life like that of the premature Little Father Time foreshadows the unrest and the ache of modern life after the sunset of the Victorian Age and the sunrise of the Edwardian Age.

We have come to realise throughout this study that the conflict between the two antagonistic creeds idealism and society, is sharp and merciless. The strife of individuals to realise their ideals and aspirations in a society, which does not permit individualistic attitude, makes their life hard and tragic. Jude early dreams of becoming a scholar in Christminster widens the gap between him and the rest of children of his village and isolated him from the rest of his class while winning him no place in the class to which he strives to reach. In addition, Jude's romantic perception of things around him anticipated the separation from society and made him an easy victim of the Darwinian society to which he belongs.

Furthermore, Sue's ideals of freedom and emancipation from the conventionality of the Victorian marriage makes her suffer a lot because her attitudes incline more toward modernity than to the legend of respectability that most Victorian women hand down to their fellows. No matter how she tries several times to make her own way in society, however Sue finds herself dancing to the blinds and singing to the deaf ears. As result of her weakness and her lacking support from society, Sue chooses to assume here role as an *Angel in the House* by pledging allegiance to the Victorian norms. As for Little father Time, not at all concerned with the idealism of his father and his stepmother, regards life as a waste of time and that if striving turns to be futile, so it is best not to live at all than endure.

In Sum, Thomas Hardy is depiction of the struggle between idealism and society in *Jude the Obscure* makes of his portrayal life one of the most shocking experiences to his readers, which in turn led to his resignation as a novelist.

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