

GLIMMERINGS OF THE POSTMODERN IN THOMAS HARDY'S *JUDE THE OBSCURE*

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IN THEIR EVALUATION OF *Jude the Obscure* (1895), some earlier literary critics have justifiably (given the historical context) judged the text by the standards of the then dominant and sustained New Criticism trend, taking into account its symbiotic relationship with modernist aesthetics. The basic premise behind this conception was the aesthetic notion of structural and thematic unity as well as coherence and integrity of character. These notions were high on the agenda of the New Criticism of the 1940s and onwards.¹ The narrative was found most lacking in this respect. An article entitled, “Hardy and the Fragmentation of Consciousness” (1975) by Harold L. Weatherby, a foremost Hardy critic, serves as an outstanding example of such a critical view.² It makes the case that what ails *Jude* is its unruliness and disjunctiveness: “the brilliance of the novel’s peripheries can scarcely compensate for a profound weakness at its center. Indeed the centre cannot hold: the book falls into fragments” (“Hardy” 469). Weatherby continues, arguing that “There is no unified authorial consciousness” (470), that “Hardy as narrator contradicts himself repeatedly in his estimation of what is right or wrong, good or bad, for his characters” (470), and that it is “an artistic failure . . . failing to achieve unity and coherence” (479). Hardy, in addition, is undeservedly dismissed as “the old-fashioned man from Wessex” (483) – which reminds us of the well-known “good little Thomas Hardy” epithets of Henry James’s adverse judgment (Cox xxxi).³ The article also associates incoherence and contradictions in the narrative with attitudinal ambivalences in Hardy’s own mind (473, 476). Undeniably, *Jude* is permeated with incoherence. Who can disagree? It is deeply involved in sustained and unsettled opposition and what may be termed the play of Derridean *différance* (*Positions* 14). And, indeed, Hardy himself acknowledges the tangle of disconnections and self-contradictions disrupting the stability of character in a notebook admission (which shows it to be his design):

Of course the book is all contrasts . . . Sue and her heathen gods set against Jude’s reading the Greek testament; Christminster academical, Christminster in the slums; Jude the saint, Jude the sinner; Sue the Pagan, Sue the saint, marriage, no marriage; &c., &c. (*Life* 272–73)

As I hope to show, Weatherby’s article in the New Critical trend of its argument has underestimated the novel’s depth and complexities.⁴ These discrepancies, I assert, open the text to other angles of interpretation. Far from being a mark of failure, or a negative quality

as seen by the critic of 1975, they can be viewed now as a feat, a solid achievement in their own right. The weakness on one plane is a strength on quite another; critical fashions change and evolve. And as such, dissonances do not appear as a mark of failing craftsmanship in a confused and hopelessly muddled author of *Jude* but show that Hardy is a Postmodernist, or at least a precursor of postmodernist writing, genuinely forward-looking in giving us a confusing work. In this conception, these inconsistencies create a lively, dynamic rather than a static narrative, augmenting characterization and enriching the text aesthetically. They are paradigmatically a postmodern symptom as postmodern poetics puts the premium upon irreconcilable contradictions as well as heterogeneity of the text, and break away from the grip of logical coherence in narrative and the notion of the individual as a homogeneous, unified subjectivity.⁵ Much of postmodernist fiction, and in my view *Jude*, opens out into interpretative aspects of this fiction (representative works are cited below) has foregrounded deconstructive possibilities, decentred subjectivities, and multiple perspectives – all within the corollary uncertainties of existence, and epistemological and ontological instability or confusion. Contradictions, too, attest to the dialogic quality of the text. In this regard it is worth noting that Alain Robbe-Grillet in his discussion of the New Novel writes that it tries no longer to “impose the image of a stable, coherent, continuous, unequivocal, entirely decipherable universe” (32). In the same vein, Patricia Waugh notes summarily that the defining feature of Postmodernism is that it is “fundamentally contradictory” (4). Likewise, Joseph Natoli and Linda Hutcheon in their “Introduction” to *A Postmodern Reader* note that “Postmodern paradox, ambiguity, irony, indeterminacy, and contingency are seen to replace modern closure, unity, order, the absolute, and the rational” (ix). Additionally, J. Hillis Miller’s following statement speaks to the point:

One consequence of current narrative theory, at least of the so-called deconstructive sort, has been in various ways to put in question the concept of organic unity or wholeness which has been the central assumption guiding much interpretation of fiction. In place of wholeness has been the hypothesis of heterogeneity, indeterminacy, or open-endedness. (“From Narrative Theory” 3)

Also significant in this regard is the way Sue looks on both herself and Jude as precursors of subsequent generations, “We are a little beforehand, that’s all” (296; bk. 5, ch. 5), and again she tells him, “Perhaps the world is not illuminated enough for such experiments as ours! Who were we, to think we could act as pioneers!” (364; bk. 6, ch. 3). Jude endorses this understanding when he tells the “listening” Christminster crowd, “It takes two or three generations to do what I tried to do in one” (337; bk. 6, ch. 1), and again while lying on his deathbed, “Our ideas were fifty years too soon to be any good to us” (414; bk. 6, ch. 9) – this time to Mrs. Edlin. Both characters are, indeed, well-developed for their age. *Jude* is well-ahead of its historical moment, anticipating by some seventy years some aspects of postmodernist writing.

Along the way, the statement cited in the aforementioned article from Hardy’s Preface to back the argument that Hardy is “without a ‘philosophy,’ a coherent mode of intellection” is indeed grist to the mill of Hardy’s defence (478). The statement reads: “*Jude the Obscure* is simply an endeavour to give shape and coherence to a series of seemings, or personal impressions, the question of their consistency or their discordance, of their permanence, or their transitoriness, being regarded as not of the first moment” (v–vi). “Impressions” imply the primacy of feeling and are akin to postmodern relativism and inconclusiveness. They suggest

the differing and deferring of meaning that never becomes definitive by virtue of their being random, transient, flitting, fleeting, fluid, and independent of connection. Hardy means that he is eclectic, that he is disordered, and that he creates uncertainty and indeterminacy, not confident conviction and affirmation. With a little editing the statement could well come from the pen of any of the Postmodernists: say, John Barth, Thomas Pynchon, John Fowles, or Donald Barthelme in a Preface to *Lost in the Funhouse* (1968), *The Crying of Lot 49* (1956), *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969), or *Sixty Stories* (1981) – typical postmodernist fictions. Barthelme's indication of fragmentation and disjointedness in "See the Moon?" (1966) in his statement that "Fragments are the only forms I trust" (107) bears a latent significance which approximates Hardy's own. Of course, the world depicted in postmodernist writing allows for anarchical diversity. The messiness and disparateness of Oedipa Maas's world in *The Crying of Lot 49* is a case in point.

Not that there has been no interest in revisiting *Jude* in relation to postmodern critical thinking. There is quite a bit in a number of pre- and post-2000 specialized studies which constitute only a little supplement to the substantial body of *Jude*-criticism. Ralph Pite in "Recent Hardy Criticism" (2007) bears witness to this view as such attempts hardly come to sight in his survey. Margaret Elvy in *Thomas Hardy's Jude the Obscure: A Critical Study* (2000) draws attention to the fact as she writes, "There have been too few critical views of Hardy's works that use materialism, Marxism, deconstructionism, psychoanalysis, feminism or postmodernism" (26). This is not to suggest that I endorse the statement in its entirety; I limit my endorsement to "deconstructionism" and "postmodernism." In a chapter titled "The Letter Killeth: *Jude the Obscure*," Elvy rightly observes of Sue, "Her intellectual fluidity seems to be as perplexing, to the old-fashioned critic, as the ambiguity and flow of postmodern texts" (126). Noteworthy in this respect is Dale Kramer's "Hardy and Readers: *Jude the Obscure*" (1999) in which special weight is given to the role of the reader in probing the personhood of Sue. Simon Avery intermittently touches upon the postmodern in his wide-ranging account of lines of critical sense and tendencies from 1890 to the present in *Thomas Hardy – The Mayor of Casterbridge/Jude the Obscure* (2009). In the Introduction to *Thomas Hardy on Screen* (2006), T.R. Wright points out perceptively that Hardy "can be seen to share many postmodern anxieties and uncertainties" (4). Ramon Saldivar demonstrates the unstable relation between 'the spirit' and 'the letter' in "*Jude the Obscure*: Reading and the spirit of the Law" (1983). The authors of the essays grouped in *Jude the Obscure* (2000) edited by Penny Boumelha opt for relatively unorthodox topics, yet the outlook bearing on tenets of the postmodern, or even its spirit, that *Jude* appears to anticipate is hardly visible among them. In this vein, *The Ashgate Research Companion to Thomas Hardy* (2010) (the material is stretched far and wide in a hefty tome), edited by Rosemarie Morgan, has its preferences among refreshing topics, yet passing silently over what an analysis of pre-echoes of aspects of Postmodernism can bring to the study of Thomas Hardy. It would certainly have been welcome, in my view, to take *Jude*, for instance, for a deconstructive reading – a detailed reading of the play of *différance* – in any of these insightful collective works.⁶

As Hardy's *Life* statement shows, the narrative's oppositions revolve mainly around Sue and Jude. Hardy, like postmodernist writers, has decentred the idea of identity and allows the free play of differences in the individual – aporia of identity. Sue is conspicuous because of her decentred or indeterminate self. By virtue of "her curious double nature" (217; bk. 4, ch. 2), she in all her "colossal inconsistency" (183; bk. 3, ch. 7) is, in Derridean terms, a

“*pharmakon* figure” (*Dissemination* 99), which can act as both poison and cure. Because of this postmodern ontological instability, we cannot pin her down in some fixed position. She deconstructs gender division as she is a hybrid of male and female attributes – which points to postmodernist degendering. Through the little flashback that is given of her childhood (a gap in her identity), we know that she disrupted young females’ stereotypical practices: “She was not exactly a tomboy . . . but she could do things that only boys do, as a rule” (120; bk. 2, ch. 6). And, she unashamedly tells Jude about her androcentric drives, “I have no fear of men . . . I have mixed with them – one or two of them particularly – almost as one of their own sex” (154; bk. 3, ch. 4). To Jude, “she seemed to get further and further away from him with her strange ways and curious unconsciousness of gender” (156; bk. 3, ch. 4). Her cross-dressing – dressing up in Jude’s suit and great coat as her “sexless cloth and linen” (151–52; bk. 3, ch. 3) were drying after escaping, in her trouble, from the Training School through a back window and wading deep in a back stream – constitutes an act of transvestism. Her divergent subjectivities and upsetting turnabout from one state of mind to the other constitute one of the quintessential features designating her identity. The reader has evidence of a quicksilver swing in mood when she forbids Jude to fall in love with her; but only a day later, he is rehabilitated in her view and she veers back – she tells him in a letter that he can love her (162–63; bk. 3, ch. 5). This tug and shove, ebb and flow, bespeaks a contradictory state of mind.

Accordingly, she emerges with a level of postmodernist resistance to totalization, reflecting the uncertainty of Hardy’s vision of her. She inhabits a space in which she is early on a figure of resistance to normative female practices, making choices about her life and relationships and, later on, negating self after being forced into a most un-Suelike submission to the letter (logos, the Law of the Father) – “my theoretic unconventionality broke down” (231; bk. 4, ch. 3) and she abhors herself, wishing that “my every fearless word and thought would be rooted out of my history” (357; bk. 6, ch. 3). Jude remonstrates with her that she differs from her authentic self: “you go back upon yourself” (363; bk. 6, ch. 3). She emerges as the difference between her contesting of convention and compliance to phallogocentrism in her changed status – a movement of radical advance and cowering retreat. Neither identity is totally inhibited nor totally uninhibited, one overtaking the other without completely wiping it out. Like Jung’s “loving” and “terrible” mother archetype (*Psychology* 196, 201), with her linkage of destructive and procreative (nurturing) powers, Sue is, in a dialogic manner, a signifier of both life and death. The absence of an erotically fulfilling relationship, being wary of any kind of corporeal intimacy, brings about her undergraduate friend’s young death – he accedes to her resistant will. She is also life-giving, not infertile, as she gives birth to two babies and becomes pregnant with a third. She engages with the body as both absent and present. She simultaneously and alogically disavows and covets. She wavers between challenge and timidity, rebellion and acquiescence: she buys two nude pagan plaster statuettes but their nakedness excites her “nervous temperament” (101; bk. 2, ch. 3). She sets the two against a “Crucifix-picture” (103; bk. 2, ch. 3). This is a contradictory mixture of discourses. Sometimes she laments that she is the victim of fate – a paralysis of the will and mournful acceptance: “All the ancient wrath of the Power above us has been vented upon us. His poor creatures and we must submit” (354; bk. 6, ch. 3). At other times she acts freely and insists on the pre-eminence of her will to power. This is manifest in her companionate relationship with the undergraduate student. This lack of a stable identity, which leads to a general effect of inconclusiveness, emerges in the following elucidation:

Sue's logic was extraordinarily compounded, and seemed to maintain that before a thing was done it might be right to do, but that being done it became wrong; or, in other words, that things which were right in theory were wrong in practice. (227; bk. 4, ch. 3)

Within this context of changeability and alternating impulses, the text is highly suggestive; no wonder it was written against the backdrop of a period when women stood culturally at a crossroads. The self, as Derrida notes, is without "any center of absolute anchoring" (*Margins* 320); it is "non-cohering" and "split" (*Grammatology* 141, 163). In the same vein, Barbara Johnson holds that "self-difference" results in that "The search for wholeness, oneness, universality and totalization can . . . never be put to rest" (*World* 164).

The differential and discontinuous structure of the self also characterizes Jude. His attraction to Sue is alternately intellectual and sexual. Prior to revealing himself to her after his arrival at Christminster, we see that his attitude towards her is ambivalent: "To be sure she was almost an ideality to him still. Perhaps to know her would be to cure himself of this unexpected and unauthorized passion. A voice whispered that, though he desired to know her, he did not desire to be cured" (105; bk. 2, ch. 4). In the scene of his second encounter with her in church, we read that, "Though he was loth to suspect it, some people might have said to him that the atmosphere blew as distinctly from Cyprus as from Galilee" (99; bk. 2, ch. 3). This statement invites contradictory signification as it enacts two voices within Jude's psyche, a mixed reaction in both the spiritual or sacred and libidinal or profane sense. He is vulnerable to both the intellectual in Sue and her erotic appeal since they are charms that entice different parts of him. Inconsistency between his words and action is demonstrated in the fact that, although he acknowledges that Sue is "not worth a man's love!" (403; bk. 6, ch. 8), he continues to love her, and similarly he remains obsessively concerned with Christminster although he knows it "cares nothing for" him (331; bk. 5, ch. 8). Jude is aware of his own "inconsistency" (39; bk. 1, ch. 5).

For Jude, desire fills absence with simulacra. He nurses aspirations and takes flight into a para-world of representation and simulation (a postmodern marker), escaping the narrow confines of his dreary real world. His overriding passion is for both Christminster and Sue – she is a fine intelligence herself. He indulges in Baudrillard's simulation characterized by "substituting signs of the real for the real itself" (343). His simulacral, "phantasmal" (90; bk. 2, ch. 2) Christminster is more authentic and alive than the real Oxford. The process of the irreal is epitomized in the narrator's remark: "His idea of her [Arabella] was the thing of most consequence, not Arabella herself" (63; bk. 1, ch. 9). The simulacrum (a postmodernist image-based suspension of reality) has gained its own realness. He fictionalizes Christminster to the extent that he nullifies his ability to experience reality: "He saw nothing of the real city in the suburbs. . . . When he passed objects out of harmony with its general expression he allowed his eyes to slip over them as if he did not see them" (85; bk. 2, ch. 1). Jude is possessed by a hyper dream: "to be a university graduate" (14; bk. 1, ch. 1); "But his dreams were as gigantic as his surroundings were small . . . he was always beholding a gorgeous city – the fancied place he had likened to the new Jerusalem" (27; bk. 1, ch. 3). He takes true for false. The typographical gesture he carved in the milestone – a finger pointing to the site of Christminster with the inscription "THITHER J.F." (81; bk. 1, ch. 11) – is a signifier, a simulacrum of an unreachable signified.

Christminster comes into being as an epistemological object and as absent present taking on magical properties in misty-eyed Jude's magical trip to it while at Marygreen. It appeared

to him via a televisual mediation “miraged in the peculiar atmosphere . . . the vague city became veiled in mist . . . near objects put on the hues and shapes of chimaeras” (26; bk. 1, ch. 3). He has his vision impaired by the mist which connotes misperception that is supplemented by the illusion evoked by the operative word “miraged.” Within the network of simulations, Jude, who admits that he is “spectre-seeing always” (158; bk. 3, ch. 4), resurrects spectrally in his mind’s eye the deceased Christminster scholars after arriving at the place. In their presence-in-absence, a ghostly simulation, “Jude found himself speaking out loud, holding conversations with them” (87; bk. 2, ch. 1). Surprisingly, he visualizes “almost his own ghost” in the same scene (86; bk. 2, ch. 1). He self-satisfyingly accords wishes the status of actualities: “Yes, Christminster shall be my Alma Mater; and I’ll be her beloved son, in whom she shall be well pleased” (43; bk. 1, ch. 6). He, in Wallace Stevens’s words, looks for a “supreme fiction” (380) to face the frustrating reality around him.

Postmodernist writing casts doubt upon ontological certainties by mixing the real with the unreal. Christminster is beyond the reach of an obscure human. The matter-of-fact (things-as-they-are) logic of his aunt is evident in her fitting, common-sensical, razor-sharp remark: “We’ve never had anything to do with folk in Christminster, nor folk in Christminster with we” (22; bk. 1, ch. 2). Jude writes to Christminster masters for advice and the reply he receives shows that, in spite of his potential talents, he is barred by his working-class status which penetrates the mist of his imago. His reverence for the worthies, voices from beyond the grave, comes to a halt: “I seem to see them, and almost hear them rustling. But I don’t revere all of them as I did then” (406; bk. 6, ch. 9). Into the dyadic relationship, in Lacanian terms, between the “beloved son” and his “Alma Mater” (43; bk. 1, ch. 6), the Name or Law of the Father intervenes, creating separation. The Master of the College forbids the son access to the mother. Christminster then becomes “the infernal cursed place” (339; bk. 6, ch. 1), idealizing turns into cool cynicism. This failure generates a deflection of desire, a new dream of the ministry. Again, the expectations are dashed; the illusion is lost. In the real Christminster, the myopic Jude wakes to the grim reality – the spell is broken. Christminster becomes a concrete subject. Jude lapses into bitterness because of the accumulated failures of his life. He faces a nothingness within himself and without, and with his despairing depreciation of life and longing for death mutters the words, “Let the day perish wherein I was born . . . !” (284; bk. 5, ch. 3). Ihab Hassan maintains that “the cry of outrage, the voice of apocalypse” (3) is the characteristic sound of the postmodern. Education has been a compulsion with Jude; to blot out the passion for Christminster in him would leave nothing but stagnation and a timely end.

Jude revolves around an absence that features an overall loss of access on the part of Jude to Christminster, the priesthood, and Sue – an array of simulacra that define his world. He is drawn to Sue by his incorporative fantasy as irresistibly as to Christminster. He is disappointed by Sue’s failure to live up as a Jungian anima figure for him. Initially, he falls unrealistically in love with a seductive photo from which he conjures up a flesh-and-blood woman in his mind, “the photograph of a pretty girlish face, in a broad hat with radiating folds under the brim like the rays of a halo. . . . it haunted him (84; bk. 2, ch. 1). Later he “put the photograph on the mantelpiece, kissed it . . . and felt more at home. She seemed to look down and preside over his tea” (92; bk. 2, ch. 2). In like manner, his letters to Sue serve as simulacra.⁷ “you are often not so nice in your real presence as you are in your letters!” (172; bk. 3, ch. 6). Within the perspective of association and identification of Sue and Christminster, one cannot help recalling the image of Christminster as “a city of light” (30; bk. 1, ch. 3) on reading the somewhat akin image, “the rays of a halo.” When Jude meets

Sue for the first time, he speaks to her “with the bashfulness of a lover” (107; bk. 2, ch. 4) as he has spoken to Christminster: “he felt bashful at mentioning its name” (28; bk. 1, ch. 3). Sue is a case of optical illusion of his making, and “she remained more or less an ideal character, about whose form he began to weave curious and fantastic day-dreams” (96; bk. 2, ch. 2). As a fiction constructed “she appeared to him . . . living largely in vivid imaginings” (195; bk. 3, ch. 9). In Baudrillard’s view, the simulacrum is “the real” (343). Jude’s irreality compares with eroticized Arabella’s high sense of practical purpose. She only lives to satisfy her instincts; she, a temptress-figure, sees Jude as a sex object. The forward eroticism of the sexual-reversal scene of their first meeting rearticulates the active/passive binary within the male-female relationship.

Reading with an eye on Deconstruction, one finds that there is a deconstructive potential in the text. Hardy anticipates Derrida’s deconstructive blurring of binary distinctions, without ever knowing what Deconstruction is. One instance of a deconstructive overturning woven into the narrative is the differential and mutable interaction between exuberant natural law and its opposite restrictive social law (the basic binary opposition in the novel). There are respects in which the text fittingly prioritizes natural law, the arch referent, over social law, or what one may term law-as-logos. Sue, in her natural self, tells Jude, commenting on the condition of marriage, “that the social moulds civilization fits us into have no more relation to our actual shapes than the conventional shapes of the constellations have to the real star-patterns” (214; bk. 4, ch. 1). What the statement implies, besides the spurning of social moulds, is nature as a signifier of beneficence to the individual. Another statement, “Don’t you dread the attitude that insensibly arises out of legal obligation? Don’t you think it is destructive to a passion whose essence is its gratuitousness?” (281; bk. 5, ch. 3), evinces concern with the traumatized natural as well as the ephemeral emotional base. Sue expresses deep apprehension of “domestic laws” in telling her husband Phillotson, “What is the use of thinking of laws and ordinances . . . if they make you miserable when you know you are committing no sin?” (232; bk. 4, ch. 3). Phillotson brackets law and cruelty when he asserts to Gillingham, his friend, that “I wouldn’t be cruel to her [Sue] in the name of the law” (245; bk. 4, ch. 4). Sue tells Jude that an unhappy marriage is “a tragedy artificially manufactured for people who in a natural state would find relief in parting” (224; bk. 4, ch. 2). And in his speech to the Christminster crowd, Jude remarks that “I perceive there is something wrong somewhere in our social formulas” (338; bk. 6, ch. 1). On Sue’s decision to join Phillotson’s bed, he tells her, “Sue, Sue! we are acting by the letter; and ‘the letter killeth!’” (402; bk. 6, ch. 8). However, it turns out that there is harshness in “the inexorable laws of nature” (146; bk. 3, ch. 3) matching the brutality latent in social law. The heaven-like becomes hell-like; the high becomes low. In response to Arabella’s reproach that he should have been “rough on” Sue, not shunning his marital rights, Phillotson holds that “Cruelty is the law pervading all nature and society” (329; bk. 5, ch. 8). After Sue’s revisionist turn, the out-dated version of herself responds to Jude’s comment that their relationship is “Nature’s own marriage” by saying that it is antithetical to religion, unsanctioned sexuality: “But not Heaven’s” (363; bk. 6, ch. 3). The hierarchy works in deconstructive reverse; it is in Brian McHale’s words, written in another context, “reversible and re-reversible” (144). There is a constant shift between signifiers and signifieds – a play of deferral.

Another instance of the twist in the binary distinction is evident in Sue’s remark after setting the caged pigeons free; she justifies her action by saying, “O why should Nature’s law be mutual butchery!” (318; bk. 5, ch. 6). Also in negation to her early attitude, Sue dismally

tells Jude at the scene of the murder of the children what shows her disappointed perception of Nature:

I said it was Nature's intention, Nature's law and *raison d'être* that we should be joyful in what instincts she afforded us – instincts which civilization had taken upon itself to thwart. What dreadful things I said! And now Fate has given us this stab in the back for being such fools as to take Nature at her word! (350; bk. 6, ch. 2)

This remark is a powerful reminder of another by Jude early on in the novel. Following the occasion of his severe punishment at the hands of farmer Troutham for feeding the birds, he reflects that “Nature's logic was too horrid for him to care for” (23; bk. 1, ch. 2). To numb the pain of Sue's marrying Phillotson and feeling of abandonment and consequent vengeance, Jude shows resentment of the reproductive pattern of Nature: “the wilfulness of Nature in not allowing issue from one parent alone. . . hers solely” (185; bk. 3, ch. 8). He further laments “the scorn of Nature for man's finer emotions, and her lack of interest in his aspirations” (185; bk. 3, ch. 8). Nature, the comparatively superior term, exchanges positive for negative designation in the binary. It is a play of undecidable semantic difference and sameness which dismantles the position of the natural to the social. Any hierarchical privileging is deconstructed in back and forth shifts; the hierarchy dissolves into a play of signification. Natural law and social law, in terms of transvaluational attack, are interchangeable and amount to virtually the same thing. They mutually relativize and ironize one another; the either-or is replaced with the as-well-as.⁸ To deconstruct the binary opposition in a repetitive pattern, Derrida notes, is “to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment” (*Positions* 41). The dialectical switch between natural law and social law is reflected also in the deconstructive relationship between Sue's natural and social self. This generates an ever-changing, not a stable, finalized, or a centred text. One is led to say that if the novel as a text aims to articulate the superiority of nature over the Law of the Father (as “The letter killeth” epigraph to the novel suggests), then its instability ironically mutes this aim; it works against what the story seems designed to affirm. In a sense, this is an example of a “text's critical difference from itself” (Johnson, *Critical* 5).

There is more in *Jude* that carries interest to the postmodern reader. The oppositional and divergent pattern becomes, in the sense of Bakhtin, an important source of dialogic energy in the narrative. For Bakhtin, the defining characteristic of the dialogic is representing conflicting perspectives (*Dialogic Imagination* 76, 303–7). In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1984), he notes that, “from the viewpoint of some monologic canon for the proper construction of novels, Dostoevsky's world may seem a chaos, and the construction of his novels some sort of conglomerate of disparate materials and incompatible principles for shaping them” (8). The dialogic displaces the definitive, homophonic, monological, centric structure of narration, and in Bakhtin's own words: “closedness and one-sidedness” (*Speech Genres* 7). The dialogic also implies differing viewpoints and responses. A tributary of this process in *Jude* is the dialogic opposition between the various differential pairs or dualities that fund and structure the text and that play off against each other without resolution: spirit is juxtaposed against letter, life against death, expectation against disappointment, idealization against banality of lust, female abstinence against fecundity, upper- against lower-body functions, attraction against repulsion, involvement against detachment, concord against discord, resistance against acquiescence, avowal against disavowal, reality against irreality, ghostly voices against textual silences, closure against openness, and destruction against recreation.

Sexuality, too, articulates the dialogic potential. To Arabella, who is conspicuous in her bodily presence and who affirms her own erotic desire, it is matter-of-fact sexuality; to Sue, it is, in the main, transcendent. This engagement in and detachment from Eros touches base with the concern of the "Preface to the First Edition" of the novel with the "war waged between flesh and spirit" (v). Jude recognizes that, concerning Sue, "After all . . . it is not altogether an *erotolepsy* that is the matter with me, as at that first time" (105; bk. 2, ch. 4). The difference, as pointed out essentially by Michel Foucault, approximates that between Dionysian *ars erotica* (uncontrolled passion/carnal impulses) and Apollonian *scientia sexualis* (controlled sexuality, "to annex sex to a field of rationality" [78]).⁹ In this connection, Sue's tomboy flouting of the totalizing metanarrative of culturally scripted womanly deportment – her aversion to the prospect of a life of entrapment and curtailed independence in marriage and her discontent as a married woman – may be characterized as carnivalesque with its destabilizing potential. To Bakhtin, the suspension of "laws, prohibitions, and restrictions" and "the violation of the usual and the generally accepted" (*Problems* 122–23, 126) characterize the carnivalesque, and to Hutcheon disrupting established norms is a manifestation of Postmodernism ("Beginning" 246, 249).

At times the reader is presented with dialogic interactions – dialogicity of difference and sameness across certain statements. Between Jude and Father Time there is dialogicity of similarity – the thanatotic desire. Father Time's utterance, "I wish I hadn't been born!" (344; bk. 6, ch. 2) intersects semantically with Jude's "Let the day perish wherein I was born . . . !" (284; bk. 5, ch. 3). One finds a decentring, egalitarian principle that removes the gap between the child and the adult, the enigmatic and the normal. Conversely, there is dialogicity of difference between the shouts and hurrahs of the Remembrance games and Jude's simultaneous death. Further, Sue, in her distaste for Christminster, avers that she has "no respect for Christminster whatever . . . The mediaevalism of Christminster must go, be sloughed off, or Christminster itself will have to go" (157; bk. 3, ch. 4). In contrast, Jude at this point in the novel, erringly defends Christminster; its lustre is not lost although it has been indifferent to him: "I still think Christminster has much that is glorious; though I was resentful because I couldn't get there" (157; bk. 3, ch. 4). The narratorial view, at this level of dialogue, however, is aligned with Sue's negative judgment: "He [Jude] did not . . . see that mediaevalism was as dead as a fern-leaf in a lump of coal" (91; bk. 2, ch. 2). The narrator knows better; he perceives and understands realities beneath the surface of things, something that Jude does not see. It is Sue's discourse in the guise of the narrator's. The concurrent presence of two or three incompatible kinds of apprehension creates dialogicity and heterogeneity of discourses. Voices, moving in inverse directions, are balanced against each other, thus destabilizing the narrative. The reader gets dispersed knowledge; no univocal knowing centre is endorsed. Much the same is evident in the narrator's communal view of the binding bridal vow that contracts human desire and presupposes its stability:

And so, standing before the aforesaid officiator, the two [Jude and Arabella] swore that at every other time of their lives till death took them, they would assuredly believe, feel, and desire precisely as they had believed, felt, and desired during the few preceding weeks. (64; bk. 1, ch. 9)

Satiric irony aside, this statement, emphasizing the constant wedded relationship based on a passing affection, can be set in dialogue with that of Sue who pronounces the faultiness of the vow proclaiming love as it undermines natural inclination: "Don't you think it is destructive

to a passion whose essence is its gratuitousness?" (281; bk. 5, ch. 31), or one may say free-choosing. Marriage, in her view, is deconstructively annulled by the vow that establishes it. This practice anticipates, even on a much smaller scale, the tangled web of diversifying dialogicity in postmodern texts.¹⁰

Interestingly, slippage of meaning is built into statements that are as a consequence open to a plurality of readings depending on the kind of reading the reader is engaged in – a practice so welcome in postmodernist writing. This anticipates what Roman Ingarden terms "spots of indeterminacy" (246). The following cryptic statement, uttered by Jude to the crowd (on his return to Christminster, together with his family, on Remembrance Day) provides an example of strained semantics as it bears no single sense – perhaps something of an aporia evoking the reader's active engagement: "I may do some good before I am dead – be a sort of success as a frightful example of what not to do; and so illustrate a moral story" (337; bk. 6, ch. 1).¹¹ The following interpretations seem viable within an array of possibilities. There is the suggestion that "to be a sort of success" is bound by the requirement that complements it: to "be as cold-blooded as a fish and as selfish as a pig" (337; bk. 6, ch. 1). Such is not Jude's case; he would have soared high if he had been the insensitive and selfish man he did not become. There is another meaning that the statement may sustain: his vacuous academic drive, his mistaken adoration of Christminster, illustrates the case of a disadvantaged person who has deluded himself; he little understood the fact that he could not break through the walls of Christminster. He has no opportunity for personal academic fulfilment, and so he should accept his socially ordained place. It is also quite possible to read the statement as bearing upon Jude's realization of his own folly, as there is a tinge of self-recrimination. He should unwrite his rhetoric of self-deceptive fantasies and simulacra, the illusionist mode that played him false. Along with these implications, there is the sense that he should not have done what he did on the basis of his being susceptible to the grip of alcohol and its corollary, giving in to youthful lust – his Achilles' heel: "My two Arch Enemies . . . my weakness for womankind and my impulse to strong liquor" (366; bk. 6, ch. 3). They impeded him from his academic quest, a sort of derailment: "my impulses – affections – vices perhaps they should be called – were too strong not to hamper a man without advantages" (337; bk. 6, ch. 1). We are not in the end led to any definitive meaning; whichever sense we settle on can neither be affirmed nor denied. The statement approximates Barthes's "writerly" text, the reading of which incites the pleasure of *jouissance* (*S/Z* 4). And here is, again, the postmodern rub.

Along this line, Jude's questions in an exchange with Sue: "What I can't understand in you is your extraordinary blindness now to your old logic. Is it peculiar to you, or is it common to woman? Is a woman a thinking unit at all, or a fraction always wanting its integer?" (363; bk. 6, ch. 3) show his uncertainty of the ontology of woman. Another example of the confusion in Jude's discernment of his experience is a matter of self-interrogation as he sets himself up as a scapegoat: "Is it," he wonders, "that the women are to blame; or is it the artificial system of things, under which the normal sex-impulses are turned into devilish domestic gins and springes to noose and hold back those who want to progress?" (226; bk. 4, ch. 3). This follows the repression of his yearning for both academic and clerical fulfilment and the desperate situation he finds himself in. Such epistemological questions seem to have no conclusive answers (yes and no); however, the reader is entreated to judge.

Within such a context there are Iserian textual gaps in narrative detail where the text is silent and hence invites filling-in by the curious reader.¹² This is especially apparent in the *rendezvous* event. One day Jude and Sue go on an outing and they miss the train back to

Melchester (145; bk. 3, ch. 2). This is momentous for Sue as it causes trouble for her as a result of her absence from the Training School. In the absence of a fuller context, the reason for missing the train is kept oblique. This “unnarration”¹³ is interesting for the reader to speculate on – be it a deliberate decision or otherwise. Suspension of narrative, in the form of a notable hiatus, is most realized in Fowles’s *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* (written by a Hardy disciple). Sarah Woodruff is supposed to have had an affair with the French officer. This is mere conjecture, as she is still a maiden. However, she does not care to lay bare the fact and controvert the rumour. The narrative does not disclose the reason why this understanding is not advanced. In this connection, identifying the cause of the exceptionality of Little Father Time, whose portrayal may be said to be “magical realist” and “unnatural,”¹⁴ appears as a conspicuous absence. He conflates childhood and maturity, deconstructing the notion of time – a time traveller and, at the same time, ironically atemporal, transcending time. Hardy here, it seems, is projecting time into a game. Father Time’s ontologically indeterminate state (“his quaint and weird face,” he looks “so aged,” “a preternaturally old boy” [289; bk. 5, ch. 4]), his uncannily precocious thoughts (far from being childlike) and his act of cannily hanging his half-siblings and then himself (implicitly to escape the fate of their elders) activate the imagination of the reader to fill the void and unlock the epistemological mysteries. The principle of narrative absences and the reluctance to specify is inherent in postmodernist writing. There is much room for speculation about narrative omissions. Pynchon’s *The Crying of Lot 49*, for instance, revolves around riddles and perplexities that Oedipa and the reader are locked in, and which need to unfold.

Within this frame of Postmodernism one may say that, contrary to the opinion of many critics such as Christopher P. Baker, *Jude* does not in my view end,¹⁵ as he put it, on “a note of complete negation and despair” (439). It opens to two readings playing off against each other: a closed ending and a deferred ending, a finale and a finale *manqué*. Even if it concludes “with a final signified” (“Death” 147) to use Barthes’s term, it is without finality or closure. The feasibility of ensuing recuperation offers the possibility of a variant ending. Hardy is so uncompromising that he refuses to bring a text teeming with contradictory discourses to a univocal, definitive ending. He creates a space for renewal, a final cosmetic gloss. In a moment of near-epiphanic revelation, Jude, while he muses on the illusoriness of the object of his quest in his final moments, says what suggests regenerative hope, opening up the prospect for his successors in his after-history. Beyond the novel’s zero point, the exclusionary educational norms that structure the culture will recede. If Jude dies without the fulfilment of his unappeasable desire, giving up to despair, there will be a redemptive space of belonging for future Judes among whom he will enjoy posthumous existence: “They are making it easier for poor students now” (288; bk. 5, ch. 3), and he refers us to what is becoming:

I hear that soon there is going to be a better chance for such helpless students as I was. There are schemes afoot for making the University less exclusive, and extending its influence. I don’t know much about it. And it is too late, too late for me! Ah – and for how many worthier ones before me! (413; bk. 6, ch. 10)

This reorienting anticipation-statement in the penultimate chapter, which may be seen as a kind of rejuvenating epilogue to the novel, enters into dialogue with the dark-toned denouement of physical death and destabilizes it. Hope for winning out in the end creates

meaning against death's finality; Jude's failure is a harbinger for this emerging space – a success. The promising future will heal the present. Pertinent in this regard is Sue's remark to Jude, "Your worldly failure, if you have failed, is to your credit rather than to your blame . . . Every successful man is a selfish man. The devoted fail" (374; bk. 6, ch. 4), and also the narrator's observation early on that Jude "was the sort of man who was born to ache a good deal before the fall of the curtain upon his unnecessary life should signify that all was well with him again" (21; bk. 1, ch. 2). The latter statement demonstrates that finally there is a consequent rise after a despairing fall.

The potential for mobility and change is underpinned by the novel's six spatially demarcated narrative phases, whose epigraphs taken from great works show – in passing – its intertextual affiliation with mainstream world literature.¹⁶ Geographical space is destabilized, and nomadic wanderings negate settlement, fixedness. The circular pattern of the narrative ("At Christminster Again") in itself suggests the undoing of finality. But for death, Jude would have redefined himself in relation to the openness of the future. This sense is extended in the novel's final lines where we see the last of Jude smiling in death – a life-enhancing and felicity sign: "there seemed to be a smile of some sort upon the marble features of [the dying] Jude" (422; bk. 6, ch. 11). In this context, Jude's suggestive avowal to Arabella shortly before his death, "when I am dead, you'll see my spirit flitting up and down here among these!" (407; bk. 6, ch. 9), carries weight. This could well be taken to imply life-in-death, continued existence – non-being of the flesh, but the spirit outlasts the grave. Moreover, the narrative stopping in the middle of a dialogue between Arabella and Mrs. Edlin, leaving it unfinished, confirms that the ending is inconclusive. It is fitting that the closing sentence uttered by Arabella – "She's never found peace since she left his arms, and never will again till she's as he is now!" (423; bk. 6, ch. 11) – points the reader to the future and the expectation of an event. This ending pre-empts a new beginning.

In this sense, the novel does not achieve a totality and the bifurcated conclusion tallies with the pattern of contradictions that pervades it. In a similar vein, we may read Little Father Time's murderous act, committed under pain of being, as leading to renewal. Attributing the predicament of the family to the youngsters, he ends the three lives to give Malthusian room for the elders to live on. This is mediated through his summary statements: "*Done because we are too menny*" (347; bk. 6, ch. 2; emphasis original) and "If we children was gone there'd be no trouble at all!" (345; bk. 6, ch. 2). It is a death-for-life. Against the apocalypse of escapist and despairing death, the novel plays off the counter movement of renovation. There is a strong justification for this reading of the openness of the ending by virtue of the dialogic fabric of the text that bolsters it up. Bakhtin highlights "unfinalizability" that produces dialogic discourse in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (7, 235). What attaches importance to this interpretation is that it endows the novel with further relevance to postmodern fiction, which resists closure and favours deferred endings.

A marker of self-reflexivity in the novel emerges as the extradiegetic narrator (a persona of Hardy) shows his metafictional self-awareness, drawing attention to his own presence at the end of the novel by involving the reader in the reality of the text through direct address: "The last pages to which the chronicler of these lines [Jude's chronicle] would ask the reader's attention are concerned with the scene in and out of Jude's bedroom" (416; bk. 6, ch. 11). The narrator here inscribes himself in the story, giving the impression to the reader that the story he is reading fits a topic for a chronicle, a history, thus enhancing the believability of the narrative. And yet, simultaneously, he makes us aware of the ongoing process of narrating

and fictionality, pointing to the creative process, as the illusion of reality is broken – thus belying the historiographical claim. An earlier instance of narratorial appearance, which gives resonance to this self-reflexive stance, reads, “The purpose of the chronicler of moods and deeds . . .” (298; bk. 5, ch. 5).

To come back to Weatherby's position, Henry James, possibly the master craftsman in his view, is very much on his mind at Hardy's expense and diminishment. The James well-made novel is spun from the consciousness of one and only one character – a narrative centre that provides a focus of control and homogeneity. It holds firmly to this central locus of significance as the unifying agent, but what one may term an authoritative, monological voice. In Lyotard's opinion, to “wage a war on totality” (82) is a postmodern characteristic. Lyotard's view coincides with that of Bakhtin. In his praise of Dostoevsky, Bakhtin notes that his polyphonic novel is “constructed not as the whole of a single consciousness, absorbing other consciousnesses as objects into itself, but as a whole formed by the interaction of several consciousnesses” (*Problems* 18). According to Hutcheon, postmodern fiction opposes “narrative singularity and unity in the name of multiplicity and disparity” (*Poetics* 90). And, Richard Pearce explains in a discussion of Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973) that “indeterminacy is inherent in Pynchon's world for it lacks a central or unified observer even in the role of narrator” (7). Further along, Walter Benjamin argues that storytelling is markedly distinguished from informational discourse, as the latter is defined by limitation and control, whereas good storytelling is marked by opening out and indeterminacy: “the narrative achieves an amplitude that information lacks” (89).

In *Jude*, the third-person narrating voice, besides impersonal reportage, makes the narrative angled through the point of view of each of the central characters. One may cite the following as an example:

He [Jude] had heard that breezes travelled at the rate of ten miles an hour, and the fact now came to his mind. He parted his lips as he faced the north-east, and drew in the wind as if it were a sweet liquor. (28; bk. 1, ch. 3)

After carrying them [the statuettes] along a little way openly an idea came to her [Sue], and, pulling some huge burdock leaves, parsley, and other rank growths from the hedge, she wrapped up her burden as well as she could in these, so that what she carried appeared to be an enormous armful of green stuff gathered by a zealous lover of nature. (101; bk. 2, ch. 3)

Here, the narrational report, while referring to acts performed, is privy to Jude's and Sue's consciousnesses, a transcription of their unspoken thoughts and feelings. The lexical register, dreaming in Jude's case and exhibiting an inner fragmentation in Sue's, is characteristic of each character. We get an indication of Jude's and Sue's working of the mind through narrated thought in the words “his mind” and “an idea came to her.” My concern here is not with the free indirect discourse but with the moving from point of view to point of view. Hardy's practice does not limit him to a fixed uni-directional perception involving one centripetal consciousness, but allows a mosaic of narrative voices and minds, which discourages reader involvement with any one character. This shifting, unstable focalization is appropriate to a centrifugal world. As noted in Weatherby's work (“Hardy” 481), Henry James would have restricted the centre of consciousness to what I term a monological Jude had he written the novel.¹⁷ Coherence brought about by this centredness is achieved at the cost of a play of

differences, multiplicity, fragmentation (which the author deplors [469, 473]), heterogeneity, and dialogic openness. Bakhtin's comment on Dostoevsky's novels is perhaps pertinent in this context: "What unfolds in his works is not a multitude of characters and fates in a single objective world, illuminated by a single authorial consciousness, rather a *plurality of consciousnesses*" (*Problems* 6; emphasis original).

One need only note in closing that if the "experiments and . . . accomplishments" of "James, Conrad, and later Joyce" "made," in Weatherby's words, "the modern novel possible" ("Hardy" 483, 482),¹⁸ I think it is likely that Hardy's own seem to press in the direction of Postmodernism as they embody glimmerings of its concerns.

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NOTES

1. It is worth noting that Brooks and Warren, major figures in the history of New Criticism, ascribe failures in fiction to inadequate coherence: "successful fiction always involves a coherent relating of action, character, and meaning. . . . most of the failures in fiction could be stated as failures in coherence" (*Understanding Fiction* 27).
2. Among notable Hardy scholars who may be mentioned in this regard as they raise this matter of inconsistency and irregularity (admittedly non-questionable) as imperfection are the following: Baker who writes, "What mars the characterization of Jude, however, is not so much the sheer weight of Hardy's philosophizing, the vast moral and ethical implications with which Jude's every act is heavy, but rather the basic inconsistency inherent in Hardy's philosophy" (432), and he pursues the point, "Hardy's ambiguous ideology thus generates an aesthetic problem as well as a philosophical one by stripping Jude of a coherent system of values and thereby undermining the moral component of his characterization" (433); Langland is of opinion that "We have trouble crediting Sue with a cohesive, *healthy* personality" (18; emphasis added), that "Hardy, the narrator, and Jude have not finally decided on the cause of Sue's failures" (20), and that "Point of view is problematic" (25); also Sonstroem (6, 9, 13, 14), and Holloway (245) level this kind of charge at Hardy (the first partly, as is apparent in the title "Order and Disorder in *Jude the Obscure*," and the argument, "framing chaotic randomness within an intricate order" [13]). Holloway is of opinion that in *Jude* "All rectifying stabilities have dropped out of sight; and nothing is left but a frustrated aggregate of querulous and disoriented individuals" (289). It should be added that the vigour of these studies is much in evidence. One may assume that New Criticism criteria, that were past the in-flower stage then, are still implicit in them. The studies are fully justified by their approach, bearing in mind the historical context.
3. Weatherby is an established scholar held in high repute, and to do him justice his reading is a consequence of its date and may have gained cogency then. The approach to Hardy that tags him "the old-fashioned man from Wessex" is, in my view, an old-fashioned approach in these postmodern times. However, Weatherby does not deny Hardy certain success as in his estimation, the "earlier" novels are "more successful" ("Hardy" 469) to which he adds a surprisingly laudatory remark that James, Conrad, and later Joyce "did not produce anything quite comparable in intensity and inevitability of action to what Hardy accomplished in the earlier Wessex fiction" (483). Further, in his insightful later essay on Hardy's poem "The Voice," he has also taken a favourable stance, as he writes, "that Hardy did have learning, and respectable learning, is certain. . . . and in one field ["his knowledge of the Greek

- New Testament”] he was enough better educated than most of his critics as to call their qualifications into question” (“Of Water” 302).
4. It is worth noting that the negative assessment of *Jude* calls to mind the shortcomings that Mark Schorer finds in D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* as expressed in “Technique as Discovery” (1948). The backbone of his argument is standard New Criticism material. Unquestionably, he is a major figure in the history of literary criticism, but his argument is of its time. He makes a case against contradictions, inconsistencies, and tensions in the novel, which sounds unfamiliar to postmodern readers. In his view, *Sons and Lovers* is an “example of meanings confused by an impatience with technical resources” (76). This point is extended in the following statements: “neither the contradiction in style nor the confusion in point of view is made to right itself” (77); “The result is that, at the time the book condemns the mother, it justifies her; at the same time it shows Paul's failure, it offers rationalizations which place the failure elsewhere” (77); “The contradictions appear sometimes within single paragraphs” (77); “this technical failure” (78); and, “The insidious rationalizations of the second theme [‘the ‘split’ between kinds of love, physical and spiritual” (76)] have crept in to destroy the artistic coherence of the work” (78).
 5. In this regard, it is pertinent perhaps to say that Robert Venturi's ground-breaking text on postmodernist architecture that critiques the modernist movement for its orderliness carries the significant title that conveys its argument: *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1977).
 6. The point is extended here. In a gnomic sub-section running for less than three pages and titled “Structuralism and Deconstruction” in *Thomas Hardy*, Harvey limits his attention exclusively to a cursory approach to J. Hillis Miller's *Thomas Hardy: Distance and Desire* (1970) and *Fiction and Repetition: Seven English Novels* (1982). Referring to the latter, he rightly points out that Miller raised questions about “intelligibility,” “coherence and unity” in the texts under investigation. As he writes, “The basic concepts of deconstruction; difference, repetition and marginality, inform Miller's sceptical reading of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*” (166). Also, in another path-breaking study, Widdowson puts *Tess* on the map of Postmodernism in *On Thomas Hardy: Late Essays and Earlier*. In a chapter devoted to Arabella in the same book, he observes that she is “the novel's internal and self-deconstructing satiric voice” (183).

Jude has been viewed from a Bakhtinian-bound perspective – a form of postmodern discourse – in, *inter alia*, two book chapters. In “Crossroads to Community, *Jude the Obscure* and the Chronotope of Wessex” (the reference to Bakhtin here is direct), Farrell notes that the crossroads as a trope is accorded centrality in *Jude* and that “it reflects the crisscrossed, heteroglossic nature of the text” (69). Further, the spatio-temporal coordinates in *Jude* are attended to in Rode's chapter “Nomadism and the Road Not Taken in *Jude the Obscure*.” Much is made, too, of the importance of the subject in Freeman's “Highways and Cornfields: Space and Time in the Narration of *Jude the Obscure*.”

In the course of this paper I will attempt to show briefly that dialogism figures in *Jude*. This contrasts with the monologism that Lock in “Hardy and the Critics” (2004) attaches to the Hardy narrative. The evidence for this, in his view, lies above all, it seems, in the virtual absence of free indirect discourse. Within this scope, Neilson remarks, in passing yet with much point, in “Hardy, Barbarism and the Transformations of Modernity” about *Jude*'s “heteroglossic indeterminacy of meaning” (78). The statement sets *Jude* in a Bakhtinian setting and puts forward a telling observation regarding instability of meaning.

A few other pieces tend to find a focus on aspects of the postmodern as a critical mode in Hardy, such as Hollington's reading of *Jude* through the lens of Walter Benjamin in “Story, History, Allegory: Some Ironies of *Jude the Obscure* from a Benjamin Perspective.” So too is Miller's “Thomas Hardy, Jacques Derrida, and the ‘Dislocation of Souls’”; it links Hardy in one way or another with Derrida. Focussing on Hardy's poem “The Torn Letter,” he notes that “‘The Torn Letter’ contains several characteristic Hardyan ironic turns away from the straightforward notion that a letter may have a performative power to determine the self of its recipient. Derrida has the general idea of the letter-poem from Thomas Hardy right” (139). Before these lines in the essay, he gives the example of Bathsheba's letter to Boldwood in *Far from the Madding Crowd*.

7. The novel harbours other examples of simulation replacing the real, among which one may mention the following: Jude speaks to the wind and it seems to answer the call (28; bk. 1, ch. 3), he burns his own photograph to erase the memory of his marriage to Arabella (80; bk. 1, ch. 11), and Phillotson kisses Sue's photograph "the dead pasteboard with all the passionateness, and more than all the devotion, of a young man of eighteen" (169; bk. 3, ch. 6).
8. This relativization makes it possible to avoid falling into the trap of fitting Hardy into categories – confining him to the customary view of pessimist seeing no prospect of change within the thoroughgoing turbulence of life (which has earned the status of a trademark) or ameliorist envisioning the possibility of human betterment and a beneficent end, but rather for integrating them. His characters have free will and a sense of self, while simultaneously they enact a determined course of unhappiness. Much in the fiction is open to uncertain and conflicting interpretation. In this way, my present interpretation of the ending of *Jude the Obscure* as inconclusive conclusion is a case in point. Additionally, it is relevant here to point out that "both/and," not "neither/nor" is, in Derrida's view, a marker for the interchange of binary oppositions (*Positions* 41) – the opposites are unsettled. Hutcheon also maintains that "the postmodern partakes of a logic of 'both/and,' not one of 'either/or'" (*Poetics* 49).
9. Haueis convincingly identifies a relationship between the Apollonian and *scientia sexualis*, and the Dionysian and *ars erotica* (260). In Foucault's discussion in the *History of Sexuality*, *ars erotica* and *scientia sexualis* are associated with the "series of binary oppositions: body/soul, flesh/spirit, instinct/reason, drives/consciousness" (78).
10. One may note here that dialogic conflation of viewpoints and discourses is the hallmark of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987).
11. This statement is quoted in Rachman's article "Character and Theme in Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*." He favours the interpretation that "colleges of Christminster . . . ought not to shut out men desirous of knowledge" (52).
12. Iser speaks of "gaps in the text" that need the active reader's involvement. He explains that "the gaps function as a kind of pivot on which the whole text-reader relationship revolves. Hence, the structured blanks of the text stimulate the process of ideation to be performed by the reader on terms set by the text" (111–12).
13. Warhol points out that the unnarrated points to "those passages that explicitly do not tell what is supposed to have happened, foregrounding the narrator's refusal to narrate" (221). And as Prince explains, the unnarrated is that case when "one of the events goes unmentioned. In *this* case, something is not told (at least for a while) not so much because of a narratorial incapacity, a tellability imperative, a 'legal' imposition, but because of some narrative call for rhythm, characterization, suspense, surprise, and so on" (2; emphasis original).
14. The "Unnatural" as a working term in Narratology has been variously defined. One of these definitions states, "Various kinds of narrative strangeness and in particular in texts that deviate from the mimetic norms of most narratological models" (Alber, *Unnatural* 2). Another definition reads, "unnatural (i.e., physically or logically impossible) scenarios that take us to the limits of human cognition" (Alber, "Impossible" 79), and Brian Richardson uses "the term as a synonym for 'antimimetic'" (Herman 21).
15. It is worth noting here that Hardy in a letter to Edmund Gosse attaches importance to the ending of the novel: "in writing Jude [*Jude*] my mind was fixed on the ending" (*Life* 273).
16. The many graphic signs, allegorical representations, quotations (mostly from the various texts that Jude has so eagerly read), and allusions interspersed throughout the novel serve as intertexts along the intertextual perspective (a characteristically postmodern device).
17. This brings to mind Lodge's back-and-forth reading of Hardy in interacting with Vernon Lee's (Violet Paget's) charges accusing Hardy in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* of "a general slackening of attention . . . and confusion of thought" (167). Weatherby follows in the line of Lee. Lee is obsessed with James's criteria as she frames Hardy in an almost Jamesian register, and her discussion of *Tess* is also time-specific (1923). Against this reductive reading Lodge writes:

Underlying all Vernon Lee's criticism we can detect a prejudice against omniscient narration and in favour of Jamesian 'presentation'; against 'telling' and in favour of 'showing'. Just how dangerously narrowing and exclusive such prescriptive interpretation of Jamesian precept and practice can be, has been fully and persuasively argued by Wayne Booth in *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. (168)

However, it should be pointed out that Lodge has, for the most part, a Formalist bent as a critic. This is perhaps evident in his concluding remark: "Alternately dazzled by his [Hardy's] sublimity and exasperated by his bathos, false notes, confusions, and contradictions, we are, while reading him, tantalized by a sense of greatness not quite achieved" (188).

18. To say this is not to deny that the works of Henry James, James Joyce, and Joseph Conrad embrace vivid and cardinal moments of Postmodernism, as critical discussions have pointed out. See, for example, Green, Meisel, Murfin, Nadal, Richardson (2000 and 2011), Torsney, Weinstein, and Yang.

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