Symbols of Desire and Entrapment:
Decoding Hardy’s Architectural Metaphor in *Jude the Obscure*

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In partial fulfillment of the degree
Bachelor of Arts with Honors in English
Wittenberg University

May 11, 2005
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One: Gendered Architecture</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two: Cementing the Walls of His Oppression</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works Cited</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works Consulted</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

Being the author of what many Victorian critics considered a denigrating portrayal of Victorian society, Thomas Hardy tiptoed away from *Tess* in 1891 only to emerge four years later with *Jude the Obscure*—a novel more audacious in many ways but also more reliant on the subtlety of symbolism and metaphor. In *Jude*, Hardy couples the use of architecture with more overt indicators (character dialogue, for example) to voice his message. Such descriptions are so well-articulated that, were they not paired with *Jude*’s plot, it would be difficult to see them as anything other than eloquent fripperies. On the contrary, Hardy’s metaphors of landscape, skylines, and even open spaces comprise such a craftily calculated critique that he proves his mastery as both author and architect. It is important to note that the term architect, or architecture, is one that refers to more than just building design; it is a synonym of spatiality, meaning it is the general treatment and recognition of space—both artificial and natural.

Indeed, from the Christminster colleges to Farmer Trouthham’s field, Hardy relies on varying environments to make a thorough commentary. Over the years, literary critics have deciphered the meanings of such places in many different ways. Joyce Liu, for example, considers the Fourways to be “symbolic of the confused stage in Jude’s life” and sees the Brown House as a “visible threat and curse from the past” (9, 14). Ward Hellstrom interprets the buildings of the Christminster colleges as “Jude’s aspirations,” his “frustration,” and ultimately the novel’s “antagonist” (12-13). This paper will argue that the creators of those buildings, the architects, are the novel’s true antagonists.
Hardy’s decision to use the metaphor of architecture is appropriate because of the already existing intimacy between it and society. The size of our homes is an indicator of status; style, location, and the amount of privacy are other telling factors. Even the buildings in which we work or attend church are indicative of identity, gender, and class. According to current architectural theory, the everyday structures around us are inscribed with gender messages that reflect our values. Melissa Venoy argues, for example, that American architecture in particular resembles our capitalistic, patriarchal society—noting the development of the skyscraper as a symbol for male executives who like the world at their feet (15, 18). A similar argument then can be made for Hardy’s Victorian England—or any era, really. Today, one metaphoric use of architecture is so common that it has become a universal idiom: “breaking down walls,” and all of its variants, is one way of communicating the idea of overcoming barriers. Hardy uses this figure of speech to illustrate Jude’s struggle with class. More complex, however, is his use of architecture to indicate and provide a commentary on Victorian-era gender roles and Jude’s fatal flaw.

To better understand the significance of the spatial metaphor in *Jude the Obscure*, it is necessary to examine the role it played in Hardy’s own life. Born into a legacy of builders, stonemasons, and bricklayers, architecture was more than a career interest for Thomas Hardy; it was a family tradition extending for four generations—something that he was expected to perpetuate, just as a pillar supports a larger superstructure. For the first twenty-one years of his life, Hardy lived in a cottage that his great grandfather, John Hardy, built for the family. Hardy’s grandfather, the first Thomas, “set himself up in business as a mason and bricklayer, the trade he had learned from his father and which he passed on to his three sons” (Millgate 8). Hardy’s father, builder and stonemason, and
Hardy’s mother, Jemima, encouraged the study of architecture for both of their sons. Merryn Williams notes the familial pressure Hardy endured: “Architecture had been chosen for him by his parents rather than taken up freely” (18). Nevertheless, Hardy pursued a career in the field, even though he had entertained and even preferred other options.¹ At the age of sixteen, he began his study of Gothic architecture and church restoration in an apprenticeship under architect John Hicks, who had his office in downtown Dorchester, and at twenty-one, Hardy left for London after landing an impressive apprenticeship under the acclaimed architect Arthur Blomfield.

Hardy primarily restored churches and rectory-houses during this apprenticeship, which better acquainted him with the vanguard of the gothic revivialis movement: A.W. Pugin and John Ruskin, who believed that gothic architecture transcended stone and craftsmanship, becoming “independent of its materials” and a living relic of human existence (Ruskin 43). Ruskin describes his affinity for the gothic, which showcases humanity: that “accidental carelessness of measurement or of execution being mingled undistinguishably with the purposed departures from symmetrical regularity” (150). A young Hardy learned to value such philosophies and apply them not only to his work in London, but also to his literary efforts.

Hardy’s London co-workers were avid readers and writers, a fact that had remarkable and long-lasting impressions on the novice. He began studying fervently, sometimes waking up before dawn just in order to keep up in conversation with his

¹ In his autobiography, Hardy reports that at this time “he had just begun to be interested in French and the Latin classics” and also noted that he “sometimes, too, wished to enter the Church” (31). Studying the resemblances here to Jude’s character would make for an interesting study.
friends, who had received additional education from the universities. Hardy’s theological studies gave his work of restoring ecclesiastical buildings a context; sometimes he would even attempt to translate the scriptures from the original Greek himself.

Hardy’s time in London became a foundation for what could have been a very successful career, had he not turned to writing in 1874. Critic Timothy Hands writes: “There is no reason to suppose that, had he wished to, he could not have pursued an architectural career leading to prosperity and perhaps even distinction” (96). It is most interesting then, that Hardy began drafting his first novel after winning a handful of architectural competitions in 1863, and—no less—continued writing even when the novel was rejected for publication. The manuscript for *The Poor Man and the Lady* was sent to publisher Alexander Macmillan in July of 1868 and destroyed soon after by Hardy. But a particular sentence in Macmillan’s critique may have been the encouragement for Hardy to keep writing: “If this is your first book, I think you ought to go on” (Hardy 60). Hardy had written poetry since his days in Dorchester, but was then experimenting with prose—all in addition to his life as an architect. It was a difficult time: he had invested so much of his young life into studying architecture (roughly sixteen years) and had been nearly guaranteed a career in the country’s capitol city, but his heart was prone to the pen. In Hardy’s autobiography, he discloses this struggle in an 1869 entry: “Which course in life to take—the course he loved, and which was his natural instinct, that of letters, or the

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2 Hardy was always quite disappointed that he never attended university. This resurfaces most obviously in *Jude the Obscure* and the short story, “A Tragedy of Two Ambitions.”
3 *The Life of Thomas Hardy*, though published under his wife’s name, Florence, is regarded as Hardy’s own work and is thus generally considered an autobiography.
course all practical wisdom dictated—that of architecture” (Hardy 61).

During these precarious years, Hardy wrote his sister Mary letters complaining about the life of a London architect, and in 1872, his membership to the Architectural Association was revoked for his refusal to pay dues—tangible evidence indicating steps away from the profession. By 1874, after the publication of four novels, including perhaps one of his most successful, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, the decision was official: Hardy was a writer. He assuaged his anxiety and fear of failure by remembering he always had “his father’s house to fall back upon in addition to architectural jobs—which were offered him readily by Blomfield and other London architects” (Hardy 61).

Architecture never completely disappeared from his life, however; it remained a hobby and clung to the pages of his prose and poetry, thriving as a prominent motif in his writing for the remainder of his life.

Hardy’s earlier works teem with this architectural theme, this “Tragedy of Two Ambitions,” as an autobiographical short story from this period is so aptly titled. Architecture played a heavy role in all of his early texts: *The Poor Man and the Lady*, for example, now considered nearly autobiographical, had an architect as the main character. Additionally, *Desperate Remedies* (1871) and *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873) have protagonists of the same profession, while *A Laodicean* (1881) “is dominated by architectural discussion” (Hands 97). This pattern diminished as Hardy began gaining recognition in his new career, writing what are now considered his best novels. While *The Mayor of Casterbridge, The Return of the Native*, and *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* do
have some architectural discourse, they generally rely on its inclusion less than the earlier novels.

It is most curious, then, that in 1895, Hardy published *Jude the Obscure*—a novel with as much reliance on architectural descriptions as those from the 1870s. Unlike his other novels, *Jude* is divided into six titled books: Marygreen, Christminster, Melchester, Shaston, Aldbrickham and Elsewhere, and Christminster Again. Such names suggest an obvious emphasis placed on geographic location and spatiality, as does the fact that all of these places (in addition to several buildings, roads, and other landmarks) were inspired by actual places. Norman Page notes: “There is in existence a sheet of notepaper on which, in Hardy’s own hand, are written most of the place-names in *Jude*, and then, after the word *approximates* to, the real place-names in a parallel column” (365). Furthermore, in some editions of the novels, detailed maps of Wessex were included. This all makes place an obvious candidate for metaphor, and indeed it is: in *Jude the Obscure*, architecture is a motif representative and critical of gender roles, class, and Jude’s fatal flaw.

We know that Hardy was never one to shy away from controversial subject matter. Reflecting on his oeuvre, in fact, one may infer he was actually drawn to controversy. Gender and class are foregrounded in *Jude*, layered in both action and metaphor. Chapter one of this paper will examine Hardy’s metaphoric critique of gender and how that it is indicated through character surroundings. Chapter two will turn to Jude and examine his own faults—ultimately defining his fatal flaw by examining his environment.
Chapter One: Gendered Architecture

_The naked man for me is architecture. When I no longer make architecture, I see everything as woman._

-Le Corbusier

Hardy defines and ultimately critiques Victorian-era gender roles by embedding meaning into the space surrounding his characters. He mirrors, and in some instances foreshadows, the personalities of his characters through the architecture, or space, surrounding them. As established in the introduction, the relationship between our environment and society is undeniable. More specifically, a strong bond exists between architecture and gender. Tina Hinchcliffe notes the case in eighteenth-century France, when “a growing number of independent Parisian women [who] could afford the services of architects [. . . ] helped bring into being a new type of house which defined these women’s independent positions” (88, 92). These women were aware of the gender message that architecture carries and thus strove to create places that defined them appropriately—that is, as independent women. The result was the construction of homes with distinct eloquence, permanence, and massiveness—traits Venoy and others typically term masculine (29).

Generally, most structures are gendered male, whereas lack of structure—gaps and voids—are feminine. The latter generalization, better explained by Le Corbusier in the epigraph, mirrors the idea of a woman’s womb. Similarly, rounded or enclosed structures carry the symbolism of a woman’s breast, and thus are typically gendered
accordingly (Weisman 15). Rigid, erect and upright structures, on the other hand, are very masculine (Venoy 18). This not only stems from the notion of male superiority, but is imagistically suggestive of male genitalia. Weisman describes the American skyscraper as “the pinnacle of patriarchal symbology and the masculine mystique of the big, the erect, and the forceful” (16). In contrast, the home is the distinct architectural symbol for femininity (Venoy 19). Nature, too, is also considered feminine, as it idly awaits the “civilization” of mankind (Weisman 20). Weisman continues, stating that “Man, by ‘virtue’ of his birthright, is separate from, morally superior to, and sovereign over ‘Mother Nature,’ who, like woman, he may tame and exploit for his own benefit” (22).

This idea of “male supremacy” (22) is also indicated through varying levels of privacy in architecture. Typically masculine constructions are very showy, large, and public. Venoy notes that architects sometimes plant a building on an entire corner and use thick and oversized stone to communicate the masculine qualities of importance, prominence, and permanence (30). A set of front stairs leading to one central entrance is another common technique used to establish superiority. Venoy notes that, for example, many public monuments exist above ground level, using “hierarchical spatial arrangement” to indicate their superiority (16, 28-9). The value attached to such sprawling, imperialistic structures makes evident society’s preference to masculine architecture (Venoy 21).

Female space is rarely noticed, let alone applauded, because it is usually just “the everyday voids” (Venoy 18). Feminine architecture is generally small, privatized, and enclosed—not commanding of attention or admiration like its masculine counterpart.
Enclosed and limited space mirrors the social constrictions for women, who are held to one of only three possible roles in society: the mother, the virgin, or the prostitute.\(^5\) These age-old classifications go back to the Garden of Eden, and yet still plagued Hardy’s England. Hardy himself condemns their prevalence through action and personality in *Jude*, but also through treatment of space. For example, the Eve of the novel, Arabella, is often positioned near open spaces and gaps—suggestive of the female genitalia and her promiscuous character. Arabella’s sexual fertility also partners her with nature—an entity already established as feminine. Just as Arabella is represented through her environs, so, too, are the dominant males in *Jude*. Hardy illustrates these traditional types through both the penetration of space and phallic architecture.

In contrast, Hardy offers a foil for each of these traditional roles. The revolutionary Sue Bridehead is the epitome of sexlessness (as Jude states on multiple occasions), and, by the novel’s end, Jude himself has an androgynous identity. Though biologically male and female, Jude and Sue defy their expected roles and even actively seek to create new ones. They do this architecturally by inhabiting both traditionally feminine and masculine spaces, collapsing the straight binaries that the other characters adhere to. The shock of this gender-bending is contrasted by the lazy obedience of the more traditional characters, Arabella and Phillotson. Though Hardy gives these stock characters traits that are unfavorable and even villainous, they are the survivors in the end; it is his revolutionaries who either assimilate to society’s expectations or die without surrendering. Sue ultimately collapses under the pressure of Victorian society, but Jude remains insistent, ending as a martyr for his cause.

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\(^5\) Several critics reference this idea; see feminist critic Jane Rendall (14) for one example.
It is important to note, however, that death is not complete failure. Jude knows this (having breathed life into the pages of ancient scholars), and so should we: “the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life” is Hardy’s resonating epigraph. The concepts survive, immortal in his prose. Though Arabella and Phillotson (and even Sue) survive, it is clear that they only master the roles expected of them—and to Hardy, that is no extraordinary accomplishment.

Through way of four major gender role categories in *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy critiques and ultimately calls for the reevaluation of narrow-minded gender classifications. The first two roles represented personify the traditional expectations for woman and man, while the other half offer a divergence from Victorian norms. Arabella and Phillotson are the former pair, resembling a sort of Eve and Adam, while Sue and Jude embody the alternative roles of sexlessness and androgyny. All character types are indicated in traditional means (action and words) as well as through their environment. The rest of this chapter is broken into four parts, each further detailing one of Hardy’s four gender roles and focusing on surrounding architecture.

I

‘Well—if a woman feels like it, she ought to do it.’
-Arabella to Jude (294)

Though it is clear by the end of the novel that Arabella represents Eve of the Mary/Eve dichotomy, it is first necessary to remember Arabella as we first meet her.

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6 The epigraph is from 2 Corinthians 3.6.
Though she clearly competes with Jude’s first true love, academia,\(^7\) she is not initially seen as villainous. We, Hardy’s readers, welcome her into Jude’s life, eager to have someone care for him. Though as early as her first scene we are made aware of her ability to deceive (she lies about the pig pizzle), we want Jude to experience love. Elizabeth Hardwick notes Jude’s young idealism concerning Arabella as one of the few happy moments of the entire novel (67). Thus she initially seems a good match for our protagonist—possessive of a charisma that could complement his passivity. By the end of the novel, however, Arabella is clearly the villain—the type of woman Aunt Drusilla vehemently warns Jude about. Not only has she duped Jude, but also succeeded in shocking the optimistic reader.

Arabella’s personality is mirrored in her surroundings. She is bold and straightforward, and thus her geographic plunge into Australia and seeming ubiquitousness in London, Christminster, and Aldbrickham. However, as she truly is a traditional, dependent female, Arabella never truly inhabits her own space; she is always tagging on with her father or looking to marry herself into shelter. After Cartlett’s death, she resorts to begging: “‘I am lonely, destitute, and houseless,’” she tells Jude in the final book. “‘Father has turned me out of doors after borrowing every penny I’d got [. . . ] Please, Jude, for old times’ sake!’” (291). Arabella owns no property of her own; her only true space is her body, and thus she flaunts it—the only way she holds any power. This raw sexuality is symbolic of nature’s lush fertility, and thus she can be paired with the old-fashioned Marygreen. Interestingly, when Jude first tells Sue of his relationship with Arabella, the two are walking among carcasses of “rotten cabbage-leaves” (132) and

\(^7\) Arabella first gets Jude’s attention by knocking him out of a book and into her presence by throwing a pig’s pizzle at him.
Barrett 12

other vegetables—nature’s embryos. They dodge the debris of a closed marketplace and talk of Jude’s wife. Joyce Liu describes: “Arabella, the pig-breeder’s daughter, represents the carnal side of human nature and is the one who executes the ensnaring purpose of Nature” (8).

And indeed, Jude is initially quite ensnared with Arabella. Their relationship acquaints our protagonist with the societal norms regarding gender roles. Jude catches on, as Hardy indicates spatially. When Arabella suggests a spontaneous game of hide-and-seek (47), for example, she assumes a traditional female role and allows Jude to exert traditional masculinity. Even though it is just a game the two play, Arabella puts herself into a small, enclosed space and hides from the male, waiting to be discovered. Jude, the seeker and conqueror, ravages the household until her finds her. Helen Hills notes a dichotomy that exists between the sexes “in which men inhabit a public sphere and women are confined to the private sphere of the household” (7). But, as evidenced in this passage from Jude, male dominance can even extend into the home. Jane Rendall comments that, even with the one place so closely associated with woman, “the patriarch controls” (21). Interestingly, the prize at stake in Jude and Arabella’s little game is one that further sexualizes the situation—“one kiss” (47).8

This is how love is supposed to be, right? Perhaps childhood love. The game itself suggests a sort of naïveté that can be construed as a metaphor for society’s child-like ignorance and outdated opinions on love and marriage. Hardy couples this metaphor

8 A similar scene can be found on the same page, when Jude snatches Arabella’s conchin egg away in a flirtatious manner. The egg carries obvious symbolism of fertility and female sexuality, as Arabella establishes: “I suppose it’s natural for a woman to want to bring live things into the world.” Jude’s move to capture the egg, then, is a metaphor for the masculinity of human sexuality and a foreshadowing of the role he will step into. Arabella and Jude eventually realize this and consequently, “her face flushed; and becoming suddenly conscious he flushed also.”
with a more explicit jab to the characters’ seeming happiness, detailing their misery immediately after: “It was some two months later in the year, and the pair had met constantly during the interval. Arabella seemed dissatisfied [. . . and Jude] seemed sad” (47). The former, nervous about the failing relationship, feigns pregnancy in order to secure marriage. Her readiness to marry speaks volumes of women’s roles in Victorian England; marriage was sometimes an act of love, but always a move toward security. Though Jude’s first reaction to Arabella’s news makes obvious the lack of love in the relationship—“‘This is a complete smashing up of my plans [. . .] Dreams about books, and degrees, and impossible fellowships’” (48)—he agrees to marry. He does so because, as Elizabeth Langland notes, being an honorable albeit lower-class male in Victorian society, Jude is bound to a sort of chivalric code—regardless of love (36). This unwritten law, something still somewhat active in today’s society, carries the message that love is not a pre-requisite for marriage. Further, love does not just magically develop through marriage. Arabella soon realizes this, recognizing her marriage as the source of her unhappiness. Thus they grow in misery; the couple’s “half-furnished hut” (51) now a metaphor for their empty feelings for each other, no longer a playground for them to assert their sexuality.

Arabella is still able to maintain her femininity through acts of vanity, however, which seem a type of masturbation. As she turns further away from her husband, she turns more toward the mirror, becoming infatuated with herself and making evident her sisterhood with Eve. When Jude finds her practicing dimples in the looking-glass, he pleads, “‘I don’t care about dimples. I don’t think they improve a woman—particularly a married woman’” (51). The irony here lies in Arabella’s assumption that Jude is asleep,
leaving the reader to wonder why she is practicing the dimples in the first place.

Additionally, Jude’s placement in the bedroom, and on the bed—a place suggestive of human sexuality—allows us to further question Arabella’s decision to turn her back and “amuse herself” (51). Her negligence foreshadows Jude’s death scene:

[Jude’s] face was now so thin that his old friends would hardly have known him. It was afternoon, and Arabella was at the looking-glass curling her hair [... ] when she had finished this, [she] practiced a dimple, and put on her things [... ] hatted, gloved, and ready. (316-7)

The only difference in this excerpt is that their relationship is more than just metaphorically dead; soon it will be severed forever by Jude’s death. The similarities in these two scenes, one in the beginning of the novel and one at the end, define Arabella as a static character lacking depth and development. This is Hardy’s critique of women’s expected roles of the Victorian era: they are one-dimensional.

Indeed, Arabella’s surface appearance is what proves most important to her. She is enthralled with the external, and is constantly sharpening her primary tool of seduction. Like Eve, the house she inhabits is her body, and she is ever-attending to it. In this way, Arabella becomes a piece of architecture herself, her accessories paralleling the moldings and designs decorating gothic cathedrals. On their wedding night, Arabella’s true self is first acknowledged with “her first unrobing” (49). She detaches a weave, much to Jude’s surprise, and leaves the “tail of hair [... ] hung upon the looking glass” (49). Eventually this deception spills out from the bedroom and becomes very public. The most outrageous example regarding this is when Arabella makes herself into a walking spectacle of domestic violence. After a fight with Jude, she runs from the house and into the highway, where “she began to saunter up and down, perversely pulling her hair into a
worse disorder than he had caused, and unfastening several buttons of her gown” (57).
Arabella intensifies her misery with Jude here by controlling her appearance—her preferred tool of expression. Though she is essentially trying to display Jude’s physical violence and masculinity, Arabella is the one who truly emerges as masculine. She earns this by making what was a small, private argument into a public exhibition along a main strip of road.

Such connivery complicates Arabella’s role as a Victorian woman. In fact, because she is scheming, ambitious, and usually somewhat successful in her pursuits, one could argue that she is more masculine than feminine. However, despite the control she seemingly exhibits, Arabella is actually very dependent. She lives with her father in the beginning of the novel and returns to him in the end, and in between takes turns living with Jude and Cartlett. She becomes property for these men to take care of, essentially denying her ability to live independently and instead complying with society’s discriminatory expectations. In the height of her ostensible independence, Arabella is actually crumbling at the core. Her intrusions into Jude and Sue’s private space could be read as masculine if she weren’t really just seeking help out of desperation. One could argue that Arabella is merely just claiming her legal rights as wife of Jude, but she severed the marriage years before by traveling to and marrying in Australia. “‘I don’t know that I want your company’” she tells him after returning from Australia (145). She is only Jude’s wife when it is beneficial for her.

Arabella is dependent on men not only financially, but also sexually. She inhabits a role that Langland describes as the “practiced seducer,” while her victims are oftentimes the “defenseless innocent” (36). Though her only detailed encounters in the
novel are those with Jude, her words suggest she acts similarly with others, as she mutters about Jude’s meager advances—“Rather mild!” (40). Arabella is constantly designing possible rendezvous with Jude, always inviting his masculinity. Even early in their relationship, she coordinates a time with her family when she can have the house to herself. She wishes to recreate the space as her own, and then invite Jude into it—a subtle metaphor for sex. “He’s shy,” she tells her family (46), hinting at her need to coach and encourage him. By inviting him into her family’s home, Arabella invites Jude to occupy her private, bodily space. Such desires were voiced more explicitly in a conversation with her friend Anny, to whom Arabella earlier confesses: “I shall go mad if I can’t give myself to him altogether!” (42). The use of her father’s home as a tool to gain what she wants is again repeated at the end of the novel, when Arabella tricks Jude into staying with her and remarrying. She plots with her father—“We must keep him jolly and cheerful here for a day or two, and not let him go back to his lodging” (297)—before journeying to Jude’s apartment, collecting all of his belongings, and redistributing them in the Donn’s own home. She keeps Jude drunken and dozing in an upstairs room—her quarters of femininity (298).

Arabella first takes advantage of Jude’s depression and intoxication when the two bump into each other in a tavern near the city (145-7). After her shift at the tavern ends, they travel to “a third rate inn”—she lucid and intent, he, staggering in depression. Another example occurs in Aldbrickham, when Arabella calls on Jude while he is living with Sue. After Sue begs Jude—eventually agreeing to marry him—Jude concludes not to see his Marygreen wife. The next morning, however, the guilt-laden bride-to-be visits Arabella at the inn where she is staying. Arabella thinks the visitor—“a friend from
Spring Street” (210)—to be Jude, and thus receives “him” immediately. This misunderstanding is further evidenced by Arabella’s seductive positioning on the bed. Her earnest exhibition explains her instructions to “come in and shut the door” (210) and is telling of her sexual scheme. When she discovers her visitor is Sue, Arabella “[flung] her head back upon the pillows with a disappointed toss, and ceased to retain the dimple she had just taken the trouble to produce” (211).

The architecture of this scene is also distinctively female—or, better—distinctively Eve. Her positioning upstairs, in a private and feminine space, behind a closed door, and lounging in bed, is a telling detail. Arabella beckons Jude to ascend the stairs to her private sphere, inviting him to witness her femininity. Hardy also notes the positioning of Arabella “facing the window” in this scene, the folds of her skin and curves of her figure displayed and illuminated by the light streaming in (211). The architecture here, her position in front of the void of the window, is fundamentally feminine. Additionally, Arabella objectifies her body, inviting what film theorist Laura Mulvey calls the male gaze: a “scopophilia (pleasure in looking) [. . . that takes] other people as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze” (424). Arabella’s goal is physical adoration, and she secures this by prostituting herself, by arranging herself in such a way that the light falls in from the window, a spotlight on her body.

In a later section of this paper, I will prove that Jude gazes and frames things idealized (Sue, for example) behind windows, and in effect distances himself from them. Assuming this is true, Arabella is then Sue’s stark opposite. By appearing in front of a window, Arabella’s accessibility is communicated. Quite literally, she has no barrier before her; she is on the same side of the glass as Jude. Arabella has stepped out of the
architectural frame and made herself available to him in a very physical sense. This placement with windows is common to Arabella’s environs, and one indicative of her role as Eve. It occurs again when Arabella pays her respects to the couple after the loss of the children. Hardy’s narrator notes: “[Arabella] sat down in the window bench, where they could distinctly see her outline against the light” (273)—a sharp contrast to Sue, who has sunken into “a dark corner,” and even eventually “invisibly [leaves] the room” (273).

Despite her treachery, both Jude and Sue see Arabella as an allegory for Victorian morality. Before Jude and Arabella go off to the tavern in Book Three, for example, Jude contemplates his wife as “an intended intervention to punish him for his unauthorized love [for Sue]” (145) and is thus able to rationalize his indulgence. Sue, too, has a similar experience, considering Little Father Time—an extension of Arabella—to be God’s messenger. She finds Arabella’s son as the deliverer of her deserved punishment: “‘My babies have been taken from me to show me this! Arabella’s child killing mine was a judgment—the right slaying the wrong’” (275). She then urges Jude to return to Arabella, and she to Phillotson (283). Arabella’s hypocrisy does make her an interesting representative for Victorian society. In addition to her promiscuity, we also witness Arabella’s capricious spirituality. Her switch to Christianity after Cartlett’s death (similar to Alec d’Urberville’s transformation in Tess), and switch back (248) exemplifies her two-facedness and superficiality. Arabella’s fickleness is perhaps best captured in the novel’s final scene, when she leaves Jude’s death room to rejoin a public celebration in the streets of our protagonist’s beloved city.
Though she is perhaps more outspoken and conniving than most of the Victorian women (and even men) portrayed in the novel, Arabella’s flagrant use of her body to get what she wants is nothing new or revolutionary. By assuming the role of a narcissistic and indulgent Eve, Arabella ultimately reinforces an old-fashioned gender role for women.

II

‘... the natural man’s desire to possess the woman.’
-Sue to Jude (277)

Because males are the privileged of the two sexes, their gender expectations are more lenient. Not restricted to one of only three possible roles, men possess a liberty that many women never know. With liberty, however, comes the tempting opportunity to tyrannize, as Hardy depicts in Jude the Obscure. At one point or another, both of the novel’s major characters exhibit domination over the subservient being—the female. Only one of these two, however, go on to live a less masculine life after this experience—ultimately catering to both sexes and assuming an androgynous identity. Jude’s lack of success tells us, however, that indeed, there are gender roles prescribed for Victorian men, and they hinge on domination.

In a previous section I have already stated the responsibility regarding relations with women, especially in marriage. This is what Langland calls the “chivalric code of helpless women and protective and honorable men” (36), and something that is at work within Jude the Obscure. Jude himself enters his first marriage out of a sense of duty rather than love—sacrificing his happiness and dreams of academia—and continues to
attend to Arabella even after they have separated. This marriage code is also the reason why Phillotson’s decision to let Sue live with Jude so shocked Hardy’s readers. By allowing her departure, the schoolmaster violates the expectations of men at the time, tainting the sanctity of marriage.

Before this, however, (and just after it), Phillotson upholds society’s traditional values and expectations regarding masculinity. Indeed, he harbors the traits of providing for others, being responsible, and exercising domination. This last trait Phillotson best illustrates through Mulvey’s concept of the male gaze—a theory that denotes two methods of male observation: fetishism and voyeurism (423-430). The former is practiced more innocently by Jude, the framer and idolater of Sue and Christminster.  

More disturbing is Phillotson’s chronic voyeurism. Mulvey describes society’s treatment of observation as a seemingly passive form of predation and thus not immediately threatening (423). Consequently, voyeurism often goes unquestioned and is thus a most reprehensible transgression. In *Jude*, Phillotson’s secrecy—his masked lust—is so alarming because of Sue’s defenselessness. As a voyeur, he examines her without her knowing:

It was a little over half-past eight o’clock in the morning, and he was waiting to see her cross the road to school, when he would follow. At twenty minutes to nine she did cross, a light hat tossed on her head; and he watched her as a curiosity. A new emanation, which had nothing to do with her skill as a teacher, seemed to surround her this morning. He went to the school also, and Sue remained governing her class at the other end of the room, all day under his eye. (85)

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9 This idea is discussed in greater detail in chapter two of this paper.
Phillotson’s attention to detail in this passage is evidence enough of his possessiveness. He keeps Sue where he can see her, controlling with his gaze. He maintains a passive ownership of her, using their workplace as a venue to assert masculine dominance. In fact, Phillotson is able to get Sue to agree to marriage, with the pretense that it would benefit their careers. Sue confesses this to Jude:

‘I have promised—I have promised—that I will marry him when I come out of the Training-School two years hence, and have got my Certificate; his plan being that he shall then take a large double school in a great town—he the boys’ and I the girls’—as married school-teachers often do, and make a good income between us.’ (107)

Interestingly, Jude is also fooled by the schoolmaster’s logic: “‘O, Sue . . . But of course it is right—you couldn’t have done better!’” (107). Phillotson’s true motivation, of course, is not the occupation of two schoolhouses, but the occupation of one bed.

In addition to lust, Phillotson’s male gaze is also fueled by suspicion of Sue and womankind in general. In conversation with his friend Gillingham, Phillotson discloses that he even “hid [him]self in the school one evening when [Sue and Jude] were together there” to listen to their conversation (183). This lack of trust for Sue indicates Phillotson’s hold on traditional gender roles—expecting his wife to follow Eve’s deception, or the “rule of women’s whims” (188). Sue is finally made aware of her husband’s distrust when, after thanking him for “never giving credit” (176) to the rumors surrounding she and her cousin, Phillotson confesses that, in fact, he had. He tries to explain, “‘I didn’t doubt you [ . . . ] I took his [Jude’s] word”—proving the value of a man’s word over a woman’s. Sue cries in retaliation: “He wouldn’t have inquired!”—further highlighting the differences between Jude and the schoolmaster (176).
The schoolhouse’s description as “modern” (85) suggests a kinship with the new (artifice, masculine) as opposed to the old (nature, feminine). Thus Sue’s place of work is metaphorically established as a patriarchal institution and a place where she has very little power, even as teacher. Phillotson maintains the power by keeping her “all day under his eye” (85) through way of the glass partition dividing their rooms; quite easily he “could see the back of her head [. . . ] whenever he turned his eyes that way” (177). He even examines the markings she has made on her blackboard one afternoon after she had gone (88). Sue’s own room is neither a feminine nor gender neutral space (as she would have it); rather, it is occupied and controlled by the male gaze. Phillotson’s title, the schoolmaster, defines him as the head of the schoolhouse—the “master” of Sue’s classroom, her so-called space. On one particular occasion, the day the schoolmaster finally realizes he is losing Sue to Jude, he gazes “all day” with a “dazed regard upon her” (188). Aside from Phillotson, the school-inspector, too—essentially a stranger—is able to infiltrate her room and rupture her control. The inspector, a male, “came and stood behind her and watched her teaching some half-minute before she became aware of his presence” (88). Upon discovering him, Sue nearly faints, and is whisked into Phillotson’s room where he calms her with brandy. Notably, “[Sue] found [Phillotson] holding her hand” (88). The two men, seemingly playing off of each other’s infringing masculinity, use the situation and their role as administrators to collapse Sue into inferiority and even dependency.

Though Sue leaves Phillotson for Jude, the schoolmaster’s gaze lingers. He is able to convince himself outwardly of her abandonment, though internally, he remains the passive voyeur. From the window he watches her leave his house forever (186). A
sympathetic reader could argue that Phillotson’s farewell is sensitive and indicative of more than just sexual love. Phillotson’s emotionlessness, however, makes it difficult to see him as anything other than a sexual predator. Phillotson’s sole epithet, “the schoolmaster,” indicates his identity well—dry, old-fashioned, and emotionally distant; “‘I am a bachelor by nature,’” he affirms (185). His emotionlessness is most evident when he abandons Sue to the company of Jude during her enrollment at the Training School. For weeks while Sue is away, Phillotson immerses himself in his career, moving from “the mixed village school as Lumsdon near Christminster to undertake a larger boys’ school in his native town of Shaston” (127). The schoolmaster shuts “himself up” in his house “instead of calling round upon his new neighbors” (128) with the excuse of scholasticism—though, to his credit, “what he was regarding was not history” (128). Rather, the schoolmaster studies Sue’s image. Even in his private study, she pervades. It is important to note, however, that here Phillotson is merely admiring her physical presence—never her personality or intellect. His worship of her exterior reaches a climax when he pondered “kissing the dead pasteboard with all the passionateness, and more than all the devotion, of a young man of eighteen” (129). Phillotson’s desire to have Sue attend the Training-School (104) in the first place is a fact incriminating enough of his old-fashioned masculinity. The school, which Sue hates immediately, finding it “friendless” and “strict” (104), is clearly not an institution for progressive career women. When Phillotson sends her there, he is essentially sending Sue to become a subservient wife.

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10 See appendix for an image of Phillotson’s school in Shaston.
11 When Phillotson does mention Sue’s intelligence to Gillingham, it’s clear he perceives it almost as a threat: “‘I can’t answer her arguments—she has read ten times as much as I. Her intellect sparkles like diamonds, while mine smoulders like brown paper . . . . She’s one too many for me!’” (182).
A more tangible representation of Phillotson’s masculinity is evident within the first sentence of the novel: “The schoolmaster was leaving the village, and everybody seemed sorry” (9). His readiness to leave his home—the place he earned recognition and respect—to discover an unknown place shows masculinity. It is in this way that the schoolmaster packs up all of his possessions\textsuperscript{12} and heads “thither” (61). When Phillotson reenters the novel, his masculinity is still evident. Though he has promised to never forget Jude, he has, and even after a reintroduction, he cares little for him. His energies turn to Sue, who Jude conveniently but unknowingly drops into the schoolmaster’s gaze. Phillotson holds his prey with the aforementioned guise of a co-worker, but soon his intent is known: “he place[d] his arm round the girl’s waist; whereupon she gently removed it; but he replaced it” (89).

Only in Sue’s absence—after everything associated with her is stored away in a box (186), an echo of her identity not even existent in the inanimate—does Phillotson gain femininity. By letting Sue go, he surrenders his profession and respect from the community, ultimately emasculated when forced to return to Marygreen for employment. He rationalizes his thoughts to Gillingham with the voice of a twenty-first century progressive: “‘I don’t see why woman and her children should not be the unit without the man’” (184). Phillotson’s change may seem unnatural considering his former character; and indeed it is. He becomes Hardy’s tool—an allegory for new England (almost like Arabella had, to Sue and Jude), while Gilingam represents the old traditions. The conversations between the two, then, can be read as Hardy himself negotiating with a

\textsuperscript{12} Except for his piano, which Phillotson leaves with Jude. This is an early indicator of how the schoolmaster regards his pupil, and is a small foreshadowing of events to come.
conservative audience. Gillingham\textsuperscript{13} exemplifies Victorian gender roles, fearing “matriarchy” and even advocating violence as a means to control: “I think [Sue] ought to be smacked, and brought to her senses—that’s what I think!” (184).

Gillingham’s masculinity is doubly noted through Hardy’s description of space. On two different occasions, he enters Phillotson’s private sphere—his home—without the schoolmaster there to answer the door. In one example, Phillotson returns to find the visitor in his living room: “Gillingham was sitting in [Phillotson’s] house awaiting him” (195).\textsuperscript{14} Knowing no boundaries or limitations as a white male in Victorian England, Gillingham’s entrances are not so unusual. His repeated invasions, the act of entering a place not his own, are symbolic of male penetration and indicators of his superior gender.

Still, Phillotson withstands his friend’s overt masculinity, refusing to extend his “rightful” control over Sue. Eventually, however, he does assimilate to his gender expectations, but only when Arabella tells him of Sue and Jude’s separation. The temptation of a possible reunion with Sue—not the loss of his job, home, or security—encourages the schoolmaster to write Sue after years of silence. Even with Gillingham, the arch-masculine, advising otherwise (281), Phillotson invites Sue back to him. Knowing she had reverted to a more traditional identity after the tragedy, Phillotson once again takes advantage of his beloved’s tremulous state. Though her personality and outlook on life have completely altered, the schoolmaster remains entranced by her beauty. His ability to live happily with the new Sue suggests his love for her external only, and disregard for her internal.

\textsuperscript{13} Presumably Hardy borrowed the name Gillingham from the Dorset town of the same name, which—interestingly—traces its origins to “a tribe or group dependent on their leader” (Dorset Page).
\textsuperscript{14} A similar scene occurs on page 186.
Phillotson’s ultimate act of masculinity, however, is veiled by Sue’s own audacity: her timid invitation for sex. The schoolmaster seems innocent in his submission to Sue’s self-prescribed penance, as he initially questions her many times. But his questioning is questionable. Knowing Sue is “creed-drunk” (307), Phillotson’s somber request to have her swear on the Bible is preposterous. Ultimately, he is able to consummate his fantasies, welcoming her into his bedroom without much guilt. In doing so, Phillotson disregards the initial hesitance of Gillingham, the advice from Edlin, the heartbreak of his former student, and the obvious reluctance of Sue herself, who shrinks back from his touch twice in this scene and even clenches her teeth while he kisses her (313). “‘That’s a complaisant spirit—and perhaps you are right. With a lover hanging about, a half-marriage should be completed,’” he agrees, convincing even himself (313). Through Sue, Phillotson is able to achieve what he never did in Christminster: he is finally able to exercise his masculine superiority, consummating the male gaze in an act that Richard Dellamora calls “marital rape” (456). His selfishness ultimately makes him Eve’s equal.

III

‘This pretty body of mine has been the ruin of me already!’
-Sue to Widow Edlin (310)

Sue constantly seeks to neutralize space, to ungender it. Often finding this task impossible, she chooses to remove herself completely from restricting situations, an act of rebellion against society’s narrow-mindedness. Her desire to escape gender roles is most obvious in her window-jumping. Perhaps most memorably, Sue “mount[s] upon the sill and leap[s] out” (179) when Phillotson accidentally intrudes on her sleeping in a
Her fear of sex—of acknowledging her own sexuality—becomes something to outrun, to physically elude.

Sue also jumps from a window when she escapes from the Training-School. One could argue that in this instance Sue is merely escaping unfair punishment (having been quarantined from her schoolmates after returning from an unintended night out with Jude) as opposed to gender roles. However, examining Hardy’s prose only a few paragraphs prior suggests a connected motive: “Half-an-hour later [the students] all lay in their cubicles, their tender feminine faces upturned [. . . and ] every face bearing the legend “The Weaker” upon it” (112). It is clear that the Training-School doesn’t roundly educate women as one might infer; the school breeds mindless bodies that adhere to and even promote traditional female gender roles. This point can also be supported architecturally when examining the living arrangements for the students. Students of Christminster (males, who populate the buildings of the phallic skyline) are free to live independently or with a flatmate. Sue’s schoolmates, however, live in one large room, their private space limited only to “cubicles” and “cots” (112)—giving the school less of an academic atmosphere and one more redolent of a convent. The training school’s location, moreover, aids in defining it as a distinctly traditional female space.

Surrounded on all sides by greenery, the school is enveloped in nature. In fact, in order to escape, Sue must wade through a river, which she does—slowly but surely treading over her expected role.

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15 Phillotson in turn runs down the stairs to retrieve her—a crumpled “white heap” (175). Interestingly, this is the first of exactly two times when Sue’s body is described as a “heap.” The second occasion occurs when she escapes to the church in Aldbrickham, fleeing from Jude and Arabella and the death of the children. In the latter instance, she appears as a “heap of black clothes” (274). An interesting study would be a close analysis of these two scenes with attention to the color symbolism. See appendix for an image of the window Hardy was thinking of when he wrote this scene.
The school, however, is so wed to the idea of traditional gender roles that the officials do not think Sue capable of such an act. When the porter admits to having heard splashing noises, it is first assumed that Sue drowned. It isn’t until after they return from checking the grounds that her escape is considered. The mentioning of drowning harks back to Jude’s young suicide attempt—yet another indication of “the obscure pair[‘s]” (243) differences. This scene may also remind readers of moments from Hardy’s earlier novels. For example, Eustacia Vye in *Return from the Native* surrenders her life by drowning, and Retty Priddle attempts it in *Tess* (174). Tess herself even contemplates the act while looking down at a dark pool. Sue’s actions, her solitary insistence on getting across the river and out of that gendered zone, set her apart as one of Hardy’s most determined and revolutionary characters (at least initially). While she insists on living outside of gender roles, Sue’s “pathetic” (112) schoolmates inhabit them, gazing out only in the secrecy of night, “from the mullioned windows at the vast west front of the Cathedral opposite, and the spire rising behind it” (113). This secret admiration of the phallic spire highlights the divide between the sexes, further defining women as the weaker vessel. Sue, however, has a very different reaction. When she is not denying the power of phallocentrism, she is actually quite fearful of it—recognizing it as a symbol of male dominance. Even the architectural symbols of patriarchy make Sue tremble: “the gables of the old building in which [Sue] was again to be immured rose before Sue’s eyes, she looked a little scared” (111).

I’ve just contrasted Sue with some of Hardy’s other heroines, but perhaps her most distinctive trait is her seeming inability to love. This inability is not innate; rather, it is stems from her confusion of love for the carnal. Consequently, Sue refuses to love all
together. In this way she resembles Mary, though Sue is more Mary than anyone wants her to be. She shudders when Phillotson touches her (311), and—more symbolically—notes the phallic wedding chapel: “the [church] tower loomed large and solemn in the fog” (290). This tower is a foreboding image that genders the institution of marriage masculine while also alluding to the expected sexual behavior that goes with it. This is proven further when on Sue’s wedding day, she is the only woman present, surrounded by four men (290).

Some might argue that Sue’s determination to escape her expected gender role is in fact the embodiment of masculinity. While many of the aforementioned instances can be gendered masculine, there are a handful of others that raise the counterargument. For example, Sue assumes a more feminine role when she stores herself in a laundry closet under the stairs in order to avoid sleeping in the same room as Phillotson (174). As Venoy states, such enclosed, private chambers are traditionally gendered feminine, as they display passivity and inferiority (19-22). When Phillotson finds her, breaking the homemade lock Sue literally strung together, she yells at him for invading her space, her identity: “You ought not to have pulled open the door!” (174). In doing so, Phillotson sees her windowless nest of rugs; essentially penetrating the space she worked to ungender. Though Venoy and others would define this space as feminine, for Sue it is a safe zone—free of gender and thus free of expectation.

Comparably, after she escapes from the Training-School, Sue seeks refuge at her cousin’s. Jude welcomes her into his private lodging, where he readily gives his dinner and dry clothes to the fugitive. It is in this scene that the strongest case for Sue as masculine can be made, for she has not only intruded into Jude’s private space, but also
appears before him in his clothes, “masquerading as himself on a Sunday” (115). In both action and appearance she can easily be described as masculine. Jude’s motherly doting heightens her seeming masculinity, though in actuality, her invasion of his one-room bedchamber is innocent. Even slouching in his armchair, her underthings drying by the open fire—Sue has only achieved gender neutrality; she has found a safe zone. She drifts off to sleep peacefully, in no way knowing the implications of her late-night visit. In fact, Jude’s presence is so stimulating to her that Sue nods off in mid-conversation (116).

It isn’t until later, after “they won’t have [her] back at the Training-School” (125), that Sue understands her actions. She didn’t realize that by sneaking out of a window she merely snuck into another (quite literally, too; she asks Jude if she should crawl through the window to avoid being noticed by the landlady). Somebody has to tell Sue her actions are questionable; she doesn’t understand otherwise because her intentions were innocent. What she considers “sexless cloth and linen” (116) her society defines quite differently. Thus her sever with Jude. Shortly after being dismissed from the Training-School, Sue limits her response to his letters and avoids visiting with him—an attempt to sever her association with Eve and Adam and all gender roles. This act (though not as obvious as window-jumping), is, too, an escape. By silencing herself, Sue escapes Jude. This feminine passivity is also symbolized architecturally, as during this time Sue hides at a friend’s house near Shaston “in a little bed in a room a dozen feet square” (125). She inhabits this small, feminine space intentionally, assuming a more traditional role in an attempt to counteract her previous actions—ultimately wishing to gain gender neutrality. Sue will do anything to escape negative gender roles, even adhere symbolically to
crippling Victorian tradition. Her goal is to become neither masculine nor feminine; rather, she seeks to escape both genders.

But Sue confuses gender for sex. She thinks that abstaining from sex liberates her from gender, which is a fantasy only Jude attempts to derail. He values her independence but condemns her lack of physicality, describing it as unnatural and calling Sue a “phantasmal, bodiless creature” with “so little animal passion” (204). Even when she leaves Phillotson for Jude, Sue does not indulge; she maintains her purity by sleeping in a different room than Jude. Sharon Dutta notes the intended metaphor of this spatial arrangement by citing a letter Hardy wrote to his friend Edmund Gosse: “Though [Sue] has children, her intimacies with Jude have never been more than occasional, even while they were living together (I mention that they occupy separate rooms, except towards the end)” (114).

When Jude and Sue finally do have sex, it is noted rather peculiarly, in a very off-handed, by-the-bye sort of manner. In fact, we are only made aware of it when Sue is described as pregnant, and even that is a fact dropped rather subtly. This hole in the prose suggests the idea of a virgin birth, making it so that, even in her sexual encounters, Sue remains sexless. Further, D.H. Lawrence claims that it was neither love nor lust that finally collapsed Sue; rather, “[i]t was only [. . .] the knowledge that Jude wanted Arabella, which made Sue give [Jude] access to her own body” (418). Fueled by jealousy, it is possible that Sue never felt any sexual desire for Jude.

Regardless, she becomes a mother—an act that compromises her identity as one free of gender by fitting into one of three possible roles for women. Before bearing her

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16 Sue later tells Jude: “Your wickedness was only the natural man’s desire to possess the woman. Mine was not the reciprocal wish till envy stimulated me to oust Arabella” (277), admitting the reason why she opened herself sexually to him.
own children, however, it is important to note that she was a mother to another: Little Father Time, Arabella’s son. Sue welcomes Little Father Time graciously and even allows him to “call [her] mother” (219). It is most interesting how Arabella makes a mother of Sue before Jude does. It is she, our accessible Eve, who keeps the relationship between Jude and Sue fertile—almost making Sue a whole woman. As we know, however, Jude and Sue do sexually consummate their relationship. Little by little, “his little bird” steps into a role more traditionally feminine, “caught at last!” (210). This descent into femininity—fueled by jealousy or not—is noted doubly in Sue’s environment. For example, during the auction before the move from Aldbrickham, Sue “ensconced herself in an upper room” behind a door that says “Private” (240), while visitors roamed her home. The visitors, presumably male, have infiltrated her space with the sole intention of scrutinizing and appraising the objects of her private life. Sue’s passivity in an upstairs chamber almost make her, too, an object to be appraised.

It isn’t until the children’s death that Sue questions the traditional identity she stepped into, however. She makes statements that degrade her motherhood and even wishes to “follow the two little ones to the grave” (267)—an ambiguous statement that could imply suicide. She escapes to the graveyard and stands in their grave, almost inviting the gravedigger to bury her alive. Jude pries Sue from the “half-filled hole” (267) and returns with her to their “now hated house” (268). Not long after, Sue returns to Phillotson, a slave to gender roles. She has recognized her sinfulness and now seeks repentance, thus becoming obedient to society’s norms. She abandons her old Voltaireian self and becomes instead a more traditional Victorian woman, or what Coventry

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17 Additional examples of feminine architecture encasing Sue during this time can be found on pages 205 and 219.
Patmore calls “The Angel in the House” (Patmore).¹⁸ The Angel in the House emerges especially with guilt, as when Jude anonymously beckons Sue to meet one last time. Resultingly, Sue performs penance in her new home with Phillotson: “[She] was muddling helplessly in the kitchen, for she was not a good housewife, though she tried to be” (310). Sue tells the Widow Edlin, “‘I have scrubbed the stairs since eight o’clock. I must practice myself in my household duties’” (310).¹⁹

The most harrowing penance completed, however, is the sexuality Sue pulls into her relationship with Phillotson. This is the ultimate rejection of her former independence and sexlessness and is instead exemplar of inferiority and subservience. It is the death of her true self. Comparable to Jude’s death room, Sue enters Phillotson’s bedchamber to finally consummate her wifedom. Though she survives the night with the schoolmaster, Sue’s spirit is “as dead as fern-leaf in a lump of coal” (69). In turn, Hardy ultimately rejects her strategy for gender role reform. Sue’s attempt to escape traditional femininity by denying human sexuality is logic that makes little sense, and thus her defeat.

IV

The truth is, a great mind must be androgynous.

- Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Like Sue, Jude similarly undergoes evolution in gender. He begins feminine, evolves to masculinity, and ultimately ends androgynous. Hardy notes this gender evolution throughout the novel in action, words, and—perhaps most interestingly—

¹⁸ Jude, too, considers Sue an angel, though not in any way similar to Patmore’s angel. He constantly notes her seeming “divinity” (116) with admiration on many occasions.
¹⁹ A similar scene can be found on page 291.
environment. A point to be skimmed here and developed later in the paper is Jude’s fascination with place. Hardy establishes this relationship early in the first book: “All around [Jude] there seemed to be something glaring, garish, rattling, and the noises and glares hit upon the little cell called [his] life, and shook it, and warped it” (17). From early on, Jude is a careful observer and even philosopher—taking and leaving meaning in his surroundings.

Though only one of many, Jude’s major location shift is from Marygreen to Christminster. Similarly, his romantic interests shift from Arabella to Sue. This juxtaposition makes it easy to see the two women as metaphors for the two places: Arabella as the open, accessible land of Marygreen, and Sue as the cold sterility of Christminster. With both places and women, however, Jude struggles. Regarding gender, Marygreen (Arabella) is too open—inviting masculinity hungrily. Christminster (Sue) on the other hand, is seemingly vapid. After being exposed to both of these extremes for most of his life, Jude himself balances out somewhere in the middle. By the novel’s end, he lives in the city (Sue) but with Arabella (Marygreen)—ultimately collapsing the binaries and attaining a more holistic and even androgynous identity. The novel’s ending, though tragic, can be read symbolically as the bridging of two different character types and two different landscapes.

From childhood, Jude is very feminine—evidenced most obviously by his thoughtful concern for smaller creatures and sentimental attachment to certain landmarks in Marygreen. Within the first chapters of the novel, we see Jude feeding the crows in Farmer Troutham’s field and dodging the earthworms dotting his path (14-16). Hardy explains, “a magic thread of fellow-feeling united his own life with theirs. Puny and
sorry as those lives were, they much resembled his own” (14)—noting feelings of inferiority that resemble a feminine identity more closely than a masculine one. Comparable to his treatment of animals, Jude also looks upon the inanimate with thoughtful concern. The landscape of Marygreen is noted in detail by our protagonist (and later, in contrast, we will witness his keen observation of the Christminster skyline). This intimacy with Marygreen, a loamy country town riddled with corn fields and thatched roofs, suggests Jude’s alliance with nature, or the feminine. Even Jude’s workground, for example, is teeming with sentiment; “every inch of [Troutham’s field] had been the site, first or last, of energy, gaiety, horseplay, bickerings, weariness” (13-14). Jude grows up as a friend only to nature, a sojourner amid the Wessex landscape.

As a young boy, Jude prizes what Virginia Woolf calls “a room of one’s own.” While he does try to make a “private study” (28) at the helm of Drusilla’s bakery cart, Jude eventually retreats to a more feminine “room”: the great outdoors. In one particular instance, he journeys to a riverside spot near the Brown House to study the classics. There, enveloped in nature, he finds a private place of his own: “he stopped the horse, alighted, and glancing around to see that nobody was in sight, knelt down on the roadside bank with open book” (29). This private immersion in nature is characteristically feminine, a fact noted by Weisman and developed in an earlier section of this paper (20). Similarly, Hardy’s description of Jude’s cognition a few lines prior—“[Jude’s] mind had become so impregnated with the poem” [my emphasis] (29)—is a clever metaphor that bridges the fertility of nature with both womankind and Jude.

It is on one of Jude’s Socratic walks near the Brown House that he first encounters Arabella, poised with her pig pizzle. It should be no surprise that his
femininity is heightened in his relationship with her. Concerning women, Sprechman states that Jude is “passive and almost masochistic [. . .] assum[ing] the passive, patient role traditionally assigned to women in literature”—ultimately becoming the sidekick, or “traditional heroine” (103-104). Conversely, Arabella gains masculinity by plotting behind his back and feigning pregnancy.

The height of Jude’s femininity is achieved with an event often overlooked in the text: Jude’s suicide attempt as a young man.\(^{20}\) Overwhelmed with his marriage, he interrupts his walk home with a trip to a frozen pond, where

> he ploughed his way inward to the centre, the ice making sharp noises as he went.
>
> When just about the middle he looked around him and gave a jump. The cracking repeated itself; but he did not go down. He jumped again, but the cracking had ceased. (58-9)

This suicide attempt, though flippant and half-hearted, is significant for several reasons. Not only could this have been the death of our protagonist, but it is also very telling of Jude’s early feminine nature. The act of suicide itself can be gendered feminine, as it is generally considered a passive escape. Additionally, the role nature, specifically water, plays in the attempt further defines him as feminine (Weisman 12). Finally, and what I find most interesting, here Jude mirrors his mother’s suicide, who killed herself by drowning when he was very young. This (perhaps subconscious) shadowing on Jude’s behalf suggests an identification he has with his mother\(^{21}\) and the female sex in general.

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\(^{20}\) Comparing Jude’s suicide attempt to Little Father Time’s suicide would make for an interesting study. Killed by hanging himself in the lodging, Jude’s son becomes one with the building—a piece of ornamentation on a Gothic structure. In death the child surrenders to society, physically becoming an extension of it—feeding the machine. The suicide mirrors Little Father Time’s somber character and further notes the differences between he and his father, who attempts suicide in a more feminine manner.

\(^{21}\) Jude only just learns of his mother’s suicide hours before he walks out onto the lake (58-9).
(Interestingly, Aunt Drusilla reports that Jude’s father escaped to South Wessex—an action that best corresponds with Arabella’s flight to Australia.)

The atrocity of Arabella’s actions seem to taunt Jude, to prod him toward a more masculine persona. This tension is mirrored metaphorically in Jude’s environs, as his childhood landscape becomes tainted by the masculine drive of the Industrial Revolution. Having witnessed this transformation himself, Hardy pens aspects of the Revolution into his prose. Jude, too, witnesses society’s mechanization, which even dribbles down into the untouched countryside of Wessex. In the first few paragraphs, Jude notes a new granary and workground that once bore nothing more but nature’s intended seeds. Now, the fresh harrow-lines seemed to stretch like the channellings in a piece of new corduroy, lending a meanly utilitarian air to the expanse, taking away its gradations, and depriving it of all history beyond that of the few recent months. (13-14)

This imperialistic trace of masculinity that emerges in rural Marygreen is the manifestation of the Revolution, the architecture of mechanization. Literally, the land is reaped according to society’s demands; metaphorically, the masculine is raping the feminine. This message, Hardy’s metaphor, is almost an indication—a paternal omen—to Jude warning him of masculinity. Similar subtleties dot the first few chapters: the old Roman roads, for example, have been forgotten, with “not a soul visible on the hedgeless highway” (17). Such roads are replaced by new routes and railway lines—more direct and efficient. Hardy ends the first chapter with the metaphor of the well-shaft, which was “the only relic of the local history that remained absolutely unchanged” (11). A few paragraphs prior and the idea of a depleted history is more explicitly stated:
Many of the thatched and dormered dwelling-houses had been pulled down by late years, and many trees felled on the green. Above all, the original church, hump-backed, wood-turreted, and quaintly hipped, had been taken down, and either cracked up into heaps of road-metal in the lane, or utilized as pig-sty walls, garden seats, guard-stones to fences, and rockeries in the flowerbeds of the neighborhood. In place of it a tall new building of modern Gothic design, unfamiliar to English eyes, had been erected on a new piece of ground by a certain obliterator of historic records who had run down from London and back in a day. The site whereupon so long had stood the ancient temple to the Christian divinities was not even recorded on the green and level grass-plot that had immemorially been the church-yard, the obliterated graves being commemorated by eighteen-penny cast-iron cases warranted to last five years.

(11-12)

In this passage it is most obvious that the old is rejected and replaced with the new—new architecture, new roads, a new way of life. Later Jude will realize even some of his classical studies are outdated.

The descriptions of the neglected and/or modernized Marygreen carry a sense of impending doom, suggesting that the assimilation to society’s norms—with masculine as dominant and female as subservient—is inevitable. Weisman traces this notion back to the Bible and terms it “dominant theology” (20). She continues, paraphrasing the popular belief from Genesis 1:26-28: “Man is separate from and above nature; and it is his right and responsibility to control, subjugate, and bend the environment according to his own greater human purposes and needs” (20). Thus Jude’s gender role is subliminally prescribed in the evolution of his environs, and his relationship with the traditionally feminine Arabella is the first suture in his step toward masculinity.
Arabella’s Eve-ness spurs Jude’s masculinity (though perhaps unintentionally, as the crumbling of their marriage can be traced to the time when Jude finally assumes a more aggressive role in the relationship). Jude’s turn to masculinity is first evident when Arabella throws his books down; in response, Jude, “incensed beyond bearing, caught her by the arms to make her leave off” (57). Just as the landscape of Marygreen modeled, Jude matches Arabella’s physicality to gain power within the relationship. Soon after this scene, Jude abandons his home and journeys blindly into Christminster—a center of progression, industry, and education. Langland notes the masculinity in this decision: “By entering Christminster, Jude [embraces] an established patriarchal tradition” (35).

Jude’s initial relationship with the city’s buildings, particularly the colleges, further associate him with the overstepping masculinity we witnessed in Marygreen. As a boy he admired the phallic Christminster skyline, and as a young adult, Jude consummates his boyhood fascination. This happens most disturbingly when Jude gropes the moldings of the college buildings. The mysterious structures become his, and in the middle of the night he sneaks off to discover them: “He entered [the quadrangle], walked around, and penetrated to dark corners where no lamplight reached” [my emphasis] (63). Such descriptions not only classify Jude as masculine, but also as very carnal—almost Arabella’s counterpart. One might say she taught him well, although oddly, the buildings are now Jude’s object of sexual desire.

These feelings, Jude’s desire to dominate, are also evident later on with Sue. Ever since first laying eyes on Aunt Drusilla’s photograph, Jude becomes enchanted by his cousin. Seeing purity again, he is drawn to it—perhaps with the desire to corrupt it. Jude  

22 This is the first of exactly two times in the novel when Jude shows the ability to be physically abusive to another. Both times Arabella is on the receiving end of his violence. On 304, Jude threatens her life: “‘Say another word of that sort,’ he whispered, ‘and I’ll kill you.’”
describes Sue’s mantelpiece photograph with a sense of immaculacy: “a pretty girlish face, in a broad hat with radiating folds under the brim like the rays of a halo” (63).23 This description mirrors that of the Christminster colleges: not only are they described as encased in a halo (20), but the buildings constantly loom over him, surrounding him ominously, just as Sue smiles “down and preside[s] over his tea” (59). Marjorie Garson states that “Jude attributes to [Sue] many of the values which he has attributed to the city, imagining them both as bodiless, visionary presences, as shining forms encircled by haloes of light” (455-458). The associations bridging Sue and Christminster make evident the relationship between them—Sue emerging almost as a metonym for the city.24 She is an extension of the place just as Arabella, the country bumpkin who Jude first describes as “a complete and substantial female animal” (33), is representative of old Marygreen. Sprechman notes that, “the novel presents a strong contrast” between Arabella and Sue, representing “two opposing sides of nature,” and also Jude’s opposing interests (104-5). Sue’s contrasting modernity is noted on several occasions. For example, when Jude asks her if she would like to go and sit in the cathedral to visit, Sue responds: “‘Cathedral? Yes. Though I’d rather sit in the railway station” (107). As seen here, Sue’s intolerance for the old is often coupled with a preference for the new. The railway itself, perhaps the single most important technological advancement of the nineteenth century, is synecdochic for the Industrial Revolution; or, more generally,

23 Jude immediately falls in love with Sue and pleads with his aunt until she gives the photograph to him, though she warns Jude about her. Ironically, Aunt Drusilla considers her niece’s line of work (ecclesiastical craft-making) “a perfect seed-bed of idolatry” (71). After Jude receives the photograph, however, it is evident that he is the one who will develop the idolatry problem (a point to be addressed later in this paper)—as he “put the photograph on the mantelpiece, kissed it [ . . . ] and felt more at home” (69).

24 As Dale Kramer notes (169), Phillotson was a character that did not exist in the novel’s first draft. Sue played his part—living in Marygreen and drawing Jude into the city after her departure. But Hardy created Phillotson for several reasons, one of them to save Sue’s introduction for the city—a fact that further ties her to Christminster.
progress toward a manmade society. Jude, still harboring some attachment to nature and the old, retorts, “How modern you are!” (107).

This is one moment in which Jude realizes his idealistic descriptions of Sue may be too generous. Similarly, once Jude is finally inside the city, he learns that the buildings are “pompous,” and “barbaric” (68); no longer a “a perfect ideal” but “more or less the defective real” (97). They do not embrace him as he once thought they would (31-2) and provide neither happiness nor shelter—perhaps an omen from Hardy regarding marital relations with Sue. Some critics enlarge the scope of this metaphor to make the buildings representative of male/female relationships in general, commenting on the covenant of Victorian marriage. Jordan Anderson notes: “the image of an archaic structure is [ . . . ] the social trappings of marriage” (28). Like marriage, the Christminster buildings are beautiful from a distance—ostensibly providing security, shelter, and even beauty. But with a closer look, the buildings are dilapidated and sunken; they are ultimately confining, old-fashioned, and in need of major restoration.

Jude’s own restoration, if you will, from the feminine into the masculine, is itself not a very smooth transition. In fact, at times he exhibits disgust at his transformation, and spends considerable energy and time attempting to reverse it. The “animal passion” (75) he has for Sue is noted shamefully, as Jude knows he is to only think of her “in quite a family way, [. . .] in a practical way as one to be proud of; to talk and nod to; later on, to be invited to tea by” (73-4). He even tries supressing his emotions—which only angers Sue, who accuses him of being dishonest (126). While Jude’s feelings are “unmistakably of a sexual kind,” the stonemason, notably, did not “[rush incontinently to her,” as
Victorian masculinity would have it (79). Jude acts with such caution that, to Jude’s surprise, Sue actually first approaches him.

After finally meeting Sue, Jude’s lust is matched by a more holistic and less guilt-laden love. A similar phenomenon also happens with the Christminster buildings—those structures Jude once fondled in the middle of the night—when he finds employment as a stonemason. A platonic intimacy develops concerning both Sue and the city, far surpassing the skin, the external. Indeed, more than Jude’s masculinity is materialized in his handiwork as mason—his honest passion, too, becomes evident: “he examined the moldings, stroked them as one who knew their beginning” (68). As opposed to the sexual relationship alluded to above, Jude is now a part of one more balanced.

Jude himself has little luck executing his mission as the artistic yet respectful restorative mason. The nature of the Revolution counters his desires, and he is forced to copy, patch, and imitate, because “medievalism was as dead as a fern-leaf in a lump of coal” (69). He notes with some disappointment “the broken lines of the original idea” replaced with “precision, mathematical straightness, smoothness, exactitude” (69). Continuing the sexual analogy, this is a sort of rape that Jude is expected to execute. Like with the landscape in Marygreen, society dictates his role, his expectations, and Jude must comply. Because he cannot afford to be picky, “[Jude] accept[s] any employment offered” (69).

This distaste for restoration work [evident as early as chapter one with a description of the restorer of the Marygreen church: “a certain obliterator of historic records who had run down from London and back in a day” (12)] mirrors Hardy’s own opinion of restoration. Former Hardy Society chairman Furse Swann writes that Hardy is
“drawn to the craftsmanship of the original builders” and almost always worked to maintain the architect’s original idea (2). While writing *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy himself was working on the restoration of St. Peter’s West Knighton church. There he insisted on remaining true to the original structure, “doing the best he can to renovate and restore the ancient fabric of the building in as sensitive an unobtrusive a way as possible” (Swann 3).25

Jude’s compromising obedience, on the other hand, is a sort of emasculation. He merely follows orders, mindlessly feeding the hierarchy that has so forsaken him. Further, and perhaps worse, Jude loses more of his masculinity when the buildings turn their backs on him, rejecting his hopes of attending school. After he finally acknowledges his failure, Jude faces the buildings almost shamefully:

[Jude] went up to an octagonal chamber in the lantern of a singularly built theatre that was set amidst this quaint and singular city. It had windows all round, from which an outlook over the whole town and its edifices could be gained. Jude’s eyes swept all the views in succession, meditatively, mournfully, yet sturdily. Those buildings and their associations and privileges were not for him. From the looming roof of the great library, into which he hardly ever had time to enter, his gaze travelled on to the varied spires, halls, gables, streets, chapels, gardens, quadrangles, which composed the ensemble of this unrivalled panorama. He saw that his destiny lay not with these, but among the manual toilers in the shabby purlieu which he himself occupied. (94)

25 For example, Hardy was careful to leave the Table of Kindred and Affinity intact at West Knighton—a plaque that lists thirty marriage laws. The table—positioned high and centered on the front wall, overlooking the congregation—must have fueled a bit of Hardy’s creativity. An etching of the ten commandments, too, remain in West Knighton—suggestive of the scene in *Jude* when Jude and a pregnant Sue paint the commandments in the church outside of Aldbrickham. See appendix for images.
As an “unrecognized part of the city” (94), Jude loses all sense of identity—not only his masculinity. Hardy’s narrator describes him as “deprived of the objects of both intellect and emotion” (97). It is no surprise, then, that he sinks into a depression and indulges in his vices, what Jude calls his “Arch Enemies” (278). By going to the Fourways, the public halls, and the taverns, Jude publicizes his failure—a childishly masculine reaction. He makes himself quite a spectacle, catching attention from others as he pouts: “‘I don’t care a damn [ . . .] for any Provost, Warden, Principal, Fellow, or cursed Master of Arts in the University! What I know is that I’d lick ’em on their own ground if they’d give me a chance, and show ’em a few things they are not up to yet!”’ (98). A handful of undergraduates then challenge Jude, egging him to recite the Creed in Latin, and ultimately force him from his barstool and onto Sue’s (100). The stumble to Sue’s is perhaps what castrates our protagonist most. By exposing his worst side to the woman he loves and collapsing in her aid, Jude becomes helplessly feminine. It should be no surprise that he takes off in the middle of the night and never mentions this late night visit again. Notably, Jude retreats to his old room in Aunt Drusilla’s house in Marygreen, reduced to a child.

Sue’s friendship during this time is the primary savior of Jude’s esteem; she even rebuilds his masculinity by becoming the new object of his sexual desire. Her marriage to Phillotson, however, results in a spout of jealousy that leads Jude back to Arabella in a series of sexual yet emotionally vapid encounters—further evidence of Jude’s weakness for mindless self-indulgence and ability to exert masculinity. Langland notes the affect of Arabella’s sexuality on Jude’s identity, stating that it puts him “back to the authority [ . . . as] men in a patriarchal society” (42).
As Jude gets to know Sue, however, he is able to match his “animal passion” (204) with an emotional love. Even and perhaps especially after she leaves Phillotson, for example, when Jude might more reasonably assert some of his masculinity, he loves her wholly. Hardy’s narrator describes: “[Jude] was really proud of [Sue’s] companionship, not more for her external attractiveness than for her sympathetic words and ways” (229). He finds himself loving her whole person and even honoring her strange customs (sleeping in separate rooms, refusing marriage, etc.). Still, Jude’s lust is not stamped out. Several times does he show his dissatisfaction with Sue’s meager physical affection. He tells her: “You have never loved me as I love you—never—never!”’, and even goes as far to say, “You are, upon the whole, a sort of fay, or sprite—not a woman!”’ (277). On one occasion, Jude uses a situation to force Sue’s sexuality out of her, and even “bolt” her into marriage (209). The scene I am referencing is when Arabella drops by the couple’s lodging late at night and seeks Jude’s help (205). By accommodating Arabella, Sue grows jealous and even fearful that the temptress will sway Jude’s masculinity. This fear becomes a concession to marry:

‘Very well then—if I must, I must. Since you will have it so, I agree! I will be. Only I didn’t mean to! And I didn’t want to marry again, either! . . . But, yes—I agree, I agree. I do love you. I ought to have known that you would conquer in the long run, living like this.’ (209)

The word “conquer” here is a fitting double entendre, as so much of marriage for Sue is sex. Though I am hesitant to describe Jude as scheming, he does use this situation to his advantage, as he is finally able to squeeze commitment from Sue. Architecturally, this is noted with a metaphor of the locked front door. After Sue promises marriage, Jude “kissed her on one side, and on the other, and in the middle, and rebolted the front door”
He has locked her into a covenant, and quite literally, into the domesticity of a home. Though the marriage never happens, Sue does make herself sexually available to Jude—committing just enough to keep Arabella away. Langland supports Sue’s motives: “[She] precipitously agrees to sleep with Jude to erase Arabella’s claims on him” (41).

The idea of the home (a traditionally feminine construct) is important for Jude—ironic because he himself grew up in one so broken. On one of their many walks together, Jude and Sue pass the house Jude once inhabited with Arabella. He stops, and “could not help saying to Sue: ‘That’s the house my wife and I occupied the whole of the time we lived together. I brought her home to that house’” (151). Even at this early time in their relationship, it’s evident that Jude wishes to create a place with Sue that can be their space together. This finally happens when Sue leaves Phillotson. When she meets Jude for the first time after her separation from the schoolmaster, Sue is surprised to see Jude jump onto the train car with a suitcase instead of welcoming her off. She inquires, “‘But don’t I get out? Aren’t we going to stay here?’” Jude replies in the negative, desirous of creating a new home together, a new identity (188). Sue does not understand this idea—“‘I thought we should have stayed here,’ she repeated”—and questions how Jude could abandon his job, security, and home. He replies, “‘I would have deserted any day at your command, dear Sue’” (188). Jude’s desire to discard the old and move on to something new and uncharted with Sue is symbolic of more than just his love for her. It is another stage in his evolving identity, which is now approaching androgyny. Jude wants to move into a new role, together with Sue—to physically and mentally inhabit a new place.
This androgyny, that balance of masculinity and femininity, is evidenced in several other places in the novel as well. When Jude walks in parallel lines with Sue for example, he equalizes the space between them (86). Similarly, he welcomes Sue’s assistance for his various stonemason endeavors (236).\(^{26}\) Both physically and emotionally, Jude has attained a gender balance, embodying both sexes. He and Sue exist as “two parts of a single whole” (229); not as two extremes who join only physically in the act of sex.

This unity thus explains his difficulty in returning to “just Jude” when Sue abandons him. Still, however, Jude maintains his androgyny. Liu notes: “Once Jude has chosen his path, he is compelled to follow it to the end of his life, which he does” (315). Though he does remarry Arabella, Jude never really returns to Arabella—neither sexually nor emotionally. He lives with her but lives alone, refuting to lapse back into the pattern of his old masculinity. By the end of the novel, Jude has come to understand and value holistic love. In Marygreen, Arabella taught him carnality, and Sue was his platonic companion in Christminster. Loving and living these two extremes, by the end of the novel he has achieved a balance—an androgyny—and maintains this appreciation for both genders until death. Venoy says that the recognition of both masculinity and femininity is paramount, as one could not exist without the other. Architecturally, this is also true: “masculine and feminine symbolism in architecture have an equal value in that the two symbolisms could not stand alone [. . .] Masculine symbolism in architecture is only read as such because feminine symbolism in architecture reflects its masculinity” (Venoy 28). So it is in Jude—and life, as Coleridge implies.

\(^{26}\) Unlike Phillotson, who only welcomes Sue into the work world as an employee beneath himself.
Though Jude is the only character of the discussed four to die in the end, Hardy’s preference for his treatment of gender is clear. The traditional gender role types, represented by Arabella and Phillotson, survive only because they choose to live in accordance with society’s norms; they fight nothing so of course they face no threat. From cover to cover, Arabella is a selfish pleasure-seeker, as is Phillotson—though the latter strives to mask it with an air of courtliness that really only makes him more vile than his female counterpart. Sue does go through a metaphoric death by marrying and sleeping with Phillotson, but her role-playing in the final book is cowardice. Jude’s androgyny, on the other hand, offers a boldness that should earn him our uncontested admiration. He rejects sexual indulgence in the last book and maintains an identity true to the self he found with Sue, his true love. He remains until death—unlike Sue, who collapses into a new role in fear of being judged by society and God. Because of her over-concern for only her own salvation, Sue joins the ranks of Arabella and Phillotson. Jude pleads with her, begging her not to leave him to the temptation of his vices: “‘Don’t abandon me to them, Sue, to save your own soul only!’” (278). But Jude is abandoned, as we know, and not only by Sue. Regardless, he persists, emerging as the only character in the end who does not compromise his identity to satisfy the demands of a corrupt society.
Chapter Two: Cementing the Walls of His Oppression

*And then he continued to dream . . . (JO 32)*

Virginia Woolf once said about Thomas Hardy: “If we are to place Hardy among his fellows, we must call him the greatest tragic writer among English novelists” (Woolf 3). Many still share this opinion, and understandably so; though the Victorian writer had an appreciated comic side, his novels and poems are remembered predominantly for their tragedy. Jude Fawley, Hardy’s final protagonist, is his most glaring victim; as an ambitious—too ambitious—member of the working class, Jude is the epitome of repression. After being born into parentless poverty, Jude is taunted by Christminster’s colleges, abused by women, and ultimately left to die alone. Incidentally Jude is considered innocent to the point of martyrdom, making the novel Hardy’s most tragic. As martyr, *Jude* represents a plea for marriage rights, a plea for reform in both the church and the education system, and a plea for social equality and compassion among all walks of life, including animals. Jude is also the personification of persistence. Despite his misfortunes, he trudges onward, never giving in; rarely do we see Jude cry. But his ambition, initially admirable, morphs into an unhealthy obsession. His fascination with the City of Light, or Christminster, is unwarranted, and his passion for Sue is wrongfully unwavering. Jude becomes a most pitiable and abject victim, but that is not something completely beyond his control. In fact, Jude perpetuates his ill treatment: by idealizing Sue and the city, he makes it impossible to succeed with either, let alone both. His

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27 An interesting study might be found in Hardy’s frequent comparisons of Christ and Jude.
misconception of these entities as unblemished is paralyzing, a fault of his own character. Thus his status as victim is questionable. The concept of a tragic hero is perhaps more fitting, implying that Jude carries some responsibility for his fate.

Though rigid social norms (gender roles included) hinder Jude from achieving his goals, the walls that he creates himself prove far more interminable. Hardy indicates this subtly in the text through the use of symbolic architecture, using both literal and metaphoric walls for Jude’s repression. Additionally, Hardy symbolizes Jude’s fatal flaw, his idolatry, through the use of windows and other architectural frames. In several scenes, Jude is positioned behind glass, staring at things coveted—most obviously, Sue and Christminster. This not only frames the subjects for Jude, making them into an idealized art and less of a reality, but also keeps him immobile—trapped and powerless behind a wall of glass. Jude worships the buildings from his apartment window as a young man (71), and is similarly held captive by them when he returns to the city years later. This idolatry becomes a wall for Jude, an internal creation that eventually materializes, as indicated by Hardy through Jude’s labor: restorative stonemasonry—work that literally strengthens the very walls that keep him repressed. This above all else indicates Jude’s control over his fate. Andrew Cooper concurs: “Jude’s manual labor is self-alienating: it maintains the barrier that keeps him out as a working-class man” (398).

Hardy, a trained architect, uses architecture to illustrate both Jude’s social repression and the way he oppresses himself. Windows and walls especially are used to illustrate Jude, our tragic hero’s, fatal flaw.
I

... and to make the face of a wall look infinite, and its edge against the sky like an horizon... -John Ruskin

From his youth, Jude had coveted that which he did not have, a quality born presumably because of his bleak childhood life. Left to his surly Aunt Drusilla after the death of both of his parents, Jude often bore the brunt of his guardian’s irritation: “‘It would ha’been a blessing if Goddy-mighty had took thee too, wi’ they mother and father, poor useless boy!’” she blasphemes (12). Incidentally, Jude finds some refuge at school, even if only as “one who had attended the night school,” not as a daytime “disciple” (10). Regardless, the role that the schoolmaster, Richard Phillotson, plays in Jude’s life is nearly paternal. Thus Phillotson’s departure, the opening scene of the novel, is an important event, and is so noted by Jude with great care. Phillotson explains to his pupil, in perhaps his most effective lesson:

‘Well—don’t speak of this everywhere. You know what a university is, and a university degree? It is the necessary hallmark of a man who wants to do anything in teaching. My scheme, or dream, is to be a university graduate, and then to be ordained. By going to live at Christminster, or near it, I shall be at headquarters, so to speak, and if my scheme is practicable at all, I consider that being on the spot will afford me a better chance of carrying it out than I should have elsewhere.’ (10)

These words haunt our protagonist. Not surprisingly, almost immediately after Phillotson’s departure, Jude develops a desire of his own to go to Christminster. Though nothing in the text before this exchange insinuates Jude’s desire to follow his friend “thither” (61), his adoption of the schoolmaster’s aspirations should not be seen as
unusual or uncommon considering Jude’s impressionable age (11) and Phillotson’s fatherly role. Though we later learn Phillotson doesn’t deserve such admiration (he forgets Jude, even after vowing he wouldn’t), it is clear he was the only person who had not robbed the boy of his esteem. Aunt Drusilla, on the other hand, encourages Jude to leave Marygreen, implying he’d be happier elsewhere: “Jude, Jude, why didn’t go off with that schoolmaster of thine to Christminster or somewhere?” (16). Consequently, Christminster quickly becomes a place of hope and happiness for young Jude—the answer to all of his problems. This childish dreaming is excusable; we don’t mind when he steals across Farmer Troutham’s field at dusk in order to view the city from the Brown House barn roof, or when he imagines ‘the voice of the city, faint and musical, calling to him, ‘We are happy here!’” (21). We, Hardy’s readers, allow such incidents, almost blithely, because we want Jude to be rescued from Marygreen, even if only through his imagination. But what begins as an innocent boyhood fantasy grows into an unhealthy and lifelong obsession, all fomented by Phillotson’s influential words.

Before Jude even sets eyes on Christminster, he has already defined it, calling it a “beautiful” (16) and “attractive city” (18). Before experiencing it, Jude has created it in his head: to him, Christminster is the place free of oppression, where he, essentially an orphan, could feel the inter-connectedness yet free-wheeling independence of a large city. It is the place where he could succeed and prove himself with hard work, where he could challenge his assigned social role. Before actually experiencing life there, Jude makes many assumptions, defining the city essentially as an escape from his deprivation. Cooper notes Jude’s delusion: “[he] invests all his belief in an idealized Christminster, substituting this for the real one” (396). And when Jude finally does see Christminster, it
is an odd moment that only furthers the notion of it being a magical city. Wrapped in a thick fog, the city is cloaked and indiscernible until Jude prays for clear skies. After a few moments,

The thinning mist dissolved altogether from the northern horizon, as it had hardly done elsewhere [. . .] Some way within the limits of the stretch of landscape, points of light like the topaz gleamed. [. . .] It was Christminster unquestionably; either directly seen or miraged in the peculiar atmosphere. (19)

This seemingly supernatural unveiling of the city only bewitches Jude further.

Christminster’s luminescence is so powerful, in fact, that it is overwhelming: Jude “anxiously descended the ladder, and started homewards at a run” (19)—only to be lured back out a few days later, of course, like a moth to the flame. On Jude’s second visit, Hardy describes the city with warm and Biblical images: “only a halo or glow-fog overarching the place” (20); and, more: “a city of light” (23).

Though Jude cherishes what he presumes to be the city’s values, that invisible internal, he latches on to the external, the tangible—the Christminster skyline. The city’s buildings are physical evidence of its majestic existence, similar to Oz’s emerald green towers. Echoing Pugin’s and Ruskin’s philosophies on gothic architecture, Jude sees the buildings as much more than just buildings; they breathe life and they represent hope. Cooper notes their symbolism: “The stones are represented as living beings, engaged in a struggle for life” (401). In several instances, the buildings are personified, given human qualities. The lamps about town, for example, “winked their yellow eyes” (63) at Jude, and while he walks among the streets at night, the detail in the gothic buildings “seemed to breathe his atmosphere,” introducing him to “the emotions of the living city” (69).

Additionally, in a later passage, Jude compares the front of Cardinal College to a face,
“with its long front, and its windows with lifted eyebrows” (309). Physically seeing the
city becomes the fuel for Jude’s imagination, for his chimeric Christminster; soon it
“acquired a tangibility, a permanence, and hold on his life” (20). And yet Jude’s thirst
for Christminster is never quenched—his aspirations of becoming a university academic
obstructed by several walls.

Hardy uses the analogy of a wall to symbolize Jude’s repression, both literally and
metaphorically. As a stonemason in a city of gothic architecture, Jude’s literal walls are
abound. Such walls—be it the walls of the colleges or the walls of his death room—are
physical barriers that inhibit his physical mobility. Even Jude, the one in a “shifting,
almost nomadic, life” (243), that vagabond who “crisscrosses the Wessex landscape like
penciled lines drawn by someone intent on covering the paper” (Freeman 162) has his
mobility checked because of closed doors and towering walls. When Jude journeys to
see the colleges, for example, he is halted when he discovers “the gates were shut, and he
could no longer get into the quadrangles” (64). The great college buildings have become
fortresses, impeneetrable edifices that shun him. The walls do not only limit Jude’s ability
to physically change his location, however; they also pose an impeding hurdle to his
intellectual development. Quite literally,

Only a wall divided him from those happy young contemporaries of his with
whom he shared a common mental life; men who had nothing to do from
morning til night but to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest. Only a wall—but
what a wall! (70)

The walls are physical barriers that keep Jude away, with no amount of work or passion
able to clobber through them. They are unyielding and ominous; indeed, Jude “could not
go in” (65).
Hardy also uses metaphorical walls to illustrate Jude’s repression. Social institutions in general seem to be Jude’s largest “wall”—among them, marriage probably the worst. Jude’s premature marriage to Arabella, for example, is the conflict that steers the course of the rest of the novel. Even after an excursion to Australia and a marriage to Cartlett, Arabella’s bond with Jude is resolute. He is haunted by the union, as is Sue, who denies Jude marriage partially because of this affair. Their cousinship also makes the union taboo, especially considering Aunt Drusilla’s warnings of the Fawley marriage curse and Mrs. Edlin’s perspective: “Weddings be funerals ’a b’lieve nowadays” (314). Additionally, Sue’s marriage to Phillotson poses another wall. Although feelings of love are dwindling if not completely non-existent in their respective relationships, Jude and Sue are still contracted under Victorian-era societal norms. Divorce was not yet a regulated option for unhappy couples; death or proven adultery were the acceptable grounds for litigation. Since Jude and Sue have neither, their desires are checked with a wall. The pressure to be a socially acceptable couple weighs in on the “obscure pair” (243) several times; they must lie about their relationship even to their son, Little Father Time—who ironically is not comforted by the bond and would rather have the two unwed.

As a single mother, Sue is especially susceptible to judgment. When confronted by Arabella at theKennetbridge fair, Sue is pressured to lie:

‘Then you are living with him still?’

‘Yes.’

‘Married?’

‘Of course.’

28 It can even be inferred that Sue gets married because of Jude’s marriage to Arabella. Though never explicitly stated in the novel, it can be assumed that Sue agreed to marry Phillotson in a fit of jealousy.
Sue’s discomfort in telling this lie is obvious, as the conversation continues:

‘Any children?’

‘Two.’

‘And another coming soon, I see.’

Sue writhed under the hard and direct questioning and her tender mouth began to quiver. (245)

Similarly, Sue is also forced to lie when seeking lodgings with the family upon their return to Christminster. With her stomach bulging and three children already in tow, Sue is considered a harlot, not a wife: “‘Are you really a married woman?’ [Sue] hesitated; and then impulsively told the woman [. . .] in her own sense of the words she was a married woman, in the landlady’s sense she was not” (259-260). Incidentally, the lodge owners, notably after a quarrel, 29 ask Sue and her children to leave. All of this is most interesting because Sue dodged marriage to avoid such pitfalls, weary of endangering her “liberty” (203). This is forgivable, almost; Sue’s experience with Phillotson was a negative one. To her, marriage is an entrapping and loveless engagement, an economic contract. She tells Jude: “‘We are a weak and tremulous pair, Jude, and what others may feel confident in I feel doubts of—my being proof against the sordid conditions of a business contract again” (225). But by not marrying Jude, Sue encounters additional walls. Lewis Horne reiterates:

For the two of them, neither marriage nor no-marriage can function. They search but they do not find. What they do come upon is the truth that appearances and expectations deceive. Freedom becomes imprisonment, sanctuary a trap. (208-9)

29 It is most interesting to observe the levels of happiness here between the married and unmarried couples. Hardy seems to be saying that, although security and commitment may come with marriage, happiness does not. Sue and Jude appear much more civil and unified than the lodger and his wife. The same comparison can be drawn between Cartlett and Arabella, who seem rather miserable and gloomy together at the fair, despite their legal union.
Marriage, even to the one you love, is an entrapping institution; it is a wall Sue does not want to invite again into her life. Jude doesn’t share this view. A hopeless romantic and uxorious would-be husband, he sees marriage as the one thing that could strengthen their relationship and perhaps even salvage their existence. It is a security he longs for. But Sue’s bullheadishness—that obstinance that earns her distinction as the Victorian New Woman—pressures Jude into obsequiousness.

Another wall Jude faces is his socio-economic status. His lower, working-class lifestyle is a large inhibitor to his dreams of academia. Because Jude must work all day in order to survive, he has little time to study. Sherlyn Abdoo writes: “Jude’s ineligibility for a university education, when he is finally rejected, is due not to his lack of scholarly ability, but to his low social status” (309). Sue echoes this injustice when she tells Jude: “‘You were elbowed off the pavement by the millionaires’ sons’” (120). Jude’s economic situation also affects his social life. For example, the organist from Kennetbridge to whom Jude wishes to pay his gratitude judges Jude by his class, “estimating his life with an appraiser’s eye,”—just as Arabella does later on Jude’s deathbed (304, 317): “They talked a little longer, but constrainedly, for when the musician found that Jude was a poor man his manner changed from what it had been” (156). When Jude expresses his emotional attachment to the song, the musician responds, “‘Yes, there’s some money in it’” (156). Here the musician is no better than Physician Vilbert, who is a most glaring example of someone obsessed with measurable success.

Though society’s walls are cumbersome impediments, Jude maintains faith in the future. He does not become jaded or cynical or even depressed; Jude plods onward, maintaining what Abdoo calls “Jude’s idealizations” (309). In fact, Jude’s idealizations
seemingly intensify as his path toward success becomes more and more obstructed.
Since he first laid eyes on the city, it was as if Jude was staring at something other than a place—something that was not quite real. Seated on the barn’s roof as a young boy, he gazed at Christminster’s skyline as if it were a piece of art. He prized it so much that it became something unattainable; his complete and utter worship of the place only distanced himself from it. This act of freezing things, taking their life, their morality (something Ruskin so values in Gothic architecture), the ability to be human, is literally represented in Jude’s décor, his room being “furnished with framed photographs” of the “rectories and deaneries [. . . and ] the ecclesiastical carvings and monuments” (108). Quite literally, Jude has made the Christminster buildings into framed pieces of art. In the process they lose their tangibility, instead becoming static and feckless. They are images, abstractions and contrived ideas—not actual places. Though picture frames and windows do enable Jude to observe, he is ultimately immobile on the other side of the glass—his wall.

Jude’s apartment window in Christminster invites the skyline into his modest home, where he “lives in the narrowest way” (71) but works most vigorously in order to achieve Phillotson’s recycled dream of becoming a university academic. The buildings loom over Jude as he studies, a constant reminder of his goals and thus presumably towers of inspiration:

From [Jude’s] window he could perceive the spire of the Cathedral, and the ogee dome under which resounded the great bell of the city. The tall tower, tall belfry windows, and tall pinnacles of the college by the bridge he could also get a glimpse of by going to the staircase. These objects he used as stimulants when his faith in the future was dim. (71)
One can imagine that in times of hopelessness, fatigue, and hunger, Jude would peer from this window and stare out at the buildings—his “stimulants”—and feel some hope for the future. Even years later, with his family “bedraggled” behind him (257), it is evident that Jude’s obsession never dies; his return to the city (deliberately planned for Remembrance Weekend, the pinnacle event of the Christminster school year), throws him back under the buildings’ hypnosis. Jude even suggests to Father Time the route of academia, a sort of attempt to live vicariously through his son: “‘And Sue, darling; I have an idea! We’ll educate and train him with a view to the University. What I couldn’t accomplish in my own person perhaps I can carry out through him!’” (219). Fortunately this is an idea that Little Father Time rejects—his mind not as impressionable as his father’s. Still, the family’s search for a lodging is thwarted several times when Jude, who “in all the terrible, sickness of hopeless, handicapped love” (89) chases robed scholars and stumbles under open windows in order to catch a word or two of the goings-on inside the colleges: “‘I wish I could get in!’ he said to [Sue] fervidly. ‘Listen—I may catch a few words of the Latin speech by staying here; the windows are open,’” he says (258). Additionally, Jude cannot mask his excitement when he finds that, of their chosen lodging, “the window commanded the back of another of the colleges” (259). Jude is completely taken with the buildings—an obsession that began as an innocent and youthful dream almost 20 years previous. Jude continues to gaze, and he will do so until his death, exactly one year later to the day.

Indeed, idolatry is Jude’s fatal flaw. He frames things behind glass, literally and metaphorically, and in effect distances himself from them. Hardy’s decision to have Jude operate through windows is symbolic of our protagonist’s passivity. Essentially, a
window is a wall that teases; we can see things from windows, but generally we can not act from them. Jude does not make this distinction, and when he does attempt to move forward, it is in a passive aggressive manner that is easily thwarted by characters with stronger ambitions—be it Phillotson’s self-centeredness, Sue’s audacity, the organist’s ingratitude, or rejection letters from certain university presidents. He is too passive to tame Sue, let alone rupture the entire social hierarchy of nineteenth-century England. No, Jude is no action hero. From windows he gazes, at windows he listens. He is immobile, gentle, and mild; “he was a boy who himself could not bear to hurt anything” (16).

Hardy does not reserve the framing motif for detailing Jude’s obsession with the colleges only, however; it is a characterization of Jude evident among all of his passions. When Jude first lays eyes on Sue Bridehead, for example, it is in the form of a photograph on Aunt Drusilla’s mantle piece. Interestingly, the description given to Sue’s image echoes the earlier description of Christminster: “the photograph of a pretty girlish face, in a broad hat with radiating folds under the brim like the rays of a halo” (63). Recycling the image of the halo to describe Sue parallels her with the enchanting and heaven-sent Christminster, raising an interesting point: the objects of Jude’s most intense idolatry are given similar qualities of saintliness and immaculacy.

When Jude sees Sue in person, she is just as lifeless—preserved behind literal and metaphoric frames. He first watches her through the window of her workplace, remaining silent and anonymous on the other side of the glass. Once inside, Jude doesn’t say a word; he remains the quiet observer because Sue’s power (like Christminster’s) has the ability to paralyze. Jude’s curiosity remains piqued and his imagination active, however—“What was she doing? He stole a glance round” (72)—but he does not
address her directly. Though Jude has entered this free space with the intention of introducing himself, he is immobile behind a wall of glass. Hardy’s omniscient narrator notes such passivity: “He felt very shy of looking at the girl in the dress; she was so pretty that he could not believe it possible that she should belong to him” (72). Just as Jude turns the Christminster buildings into pieces of art (108, 232), he so idealizes Sue, framing and crystallizing his (false) impression of her. Jude leaves the store satisfied, thinking his cousin to be a good person simply because of her employment weaving Alleluia banners: “‘A sweet, saintly, Christian business, hers!’ thought he” (72). In reality, Sue is a closet pagan, or as Jude later defines her, “a perfect Voltaire” (133). As he had done with Christminster, Jude has decided her identity within moments of being in her presence. Such presumptions are noted by the following list of clauses, taken from this passage: “He could perceive”; “He affected to think of her”; “He perceived that”; “He supposed”; “Her presence here was now fairly enough explained”; and, “She seemed” (72-3). Jude is never fully sure of anything concerning Sue during this encounter, nor during their second encounter, nor their third. Though he admits that “it would have been easy to speak to her there and then” (72), Jude remains her unassuming observer, merely “[keeping] watch over her” (72).

Jude’s observations of Sue eventually attain a level of Mulvey’s voyeurism, and his desire to have her becomes tainted with lust. From the Cardinal church congregation he silently watches her, fueled by “animal passion” (75). Still he remains her anonymous admirer, led on now by the tactile desire to touch. Abdoo notes the imbalance of this relationship: “[Sue’s] lack of sexual desire and her inability to love Jude completely creates a barrier between them” (309). Jude, on the other hand, knows his lust and
guiltily admits to it—“the situation was growing immoral” (80)—but yet he gives in to the temptation: “his conscience was likely to be the loser in this battle” (80). Jude is also tempted by the university buildings, which he looks on with a similar seductive eye. One particularly strange episode is when Jude escapes in the middle of the night in order to visit such edifices, “for what mattered a night’s rest for once?” (67). There he disturbingly consummated his desire, “serpentin[ing] among the shadows [. . . ] feeling with his fingers the contours of [the buildings’] mouldings and carving” (64). This physical intimacy is illustrated later again in the novel, when Jude and his family return to Christminster. He leaves Sue and the children in the rain and runs off to “gratify [his] infatuation” (258). Such episodes give a new meaning to Hardy’s poetic description of Christminster: “that ecclesiastical romance in stone” (29) and mark the change of Jude’s innocent admiration to corrupted obsession. It is most interesting how Jude’s two very different passions “stimulate” (71) him sexually—a parallel that foreshadows the dueling roles these two passions will play in Jude’s life. This conflict is hinted at a few times: “‘I hate gothic!’” Sue tells Jude (109); and later, she echoes: “‘Gothic is a barbaric art after all. Pugin was wrong, and Wren was right!’” (241). Thus, though Jude tries to bridge the two diverging entities (seen here through the human power of touch), his desire is ultimately impractical.
Meek young men grow up in libraries, believing it their duty to accept the views which Cicero, which Locke, which Bacon have given; forgetful that Cicero, Locke, and Bacon were only young men in libraries when they wrote those books.

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

Overwhelmingly, Jude’s impediments, or walls, are constructed by something external to himself—things he cannot control. The walls are the norms of his culture, and they yield to the interests of those at the top of the social pyramid. Jude’s poverty, for example, is something he cannot control nor overcome, nor the issue of marriage rights, nor the procedure for admitting students into the Christminster colleges. Additionally Jude has inherited bad luck: the death of both parents, for example, and the Fawley marriage curse. All of these things offer Jude up as a victim, and Hardy suggests that he is only one of several: Tinker Taylor and Uncle Joe are other examples, and it is suggested that Little Father Time (or more appropriately, Little Jude), would have carried on the stonemason’s struggles, had he lived. This Dickensian corruption of innocence—commented on by Little Father Time in a hopeless plea: “‘But we don’t ask to be born!’” (261)—is a large reason why the novel was so lambasted. Jude the Obscure is the tragedy of man—of undeserving man.

The novel’s title implies victimization and is an immediate indication 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” (15-16). His curious epithet stirs remembrance of St. Jude, “martyr and patron saint of hopeless causes” and makes sense of his “his goal [to live in] Christminster,” a place Hardy’s narrator calls ‘the home of lost causes’” (Abdoo 312).
But “Jude the Obscure” is a name reserved solely for the novel’s title. In fact, “obscure” is rarely used to describe Jude within the text (the connection is there only once); rather, Jude is given other titles—quite generously, actually—that suggest a role less of a victim and more of a perpetrator. Hardy’s characters do not define Jude as a victim, but rather as a self-inflicting tragic hero. “You are Joseph the dreamer of dreams, dear Jude. And a tragic Don Quixote,” Sue tells Jude (162). Here she addresses his tendency to idolize people, places, and even things—his fatal flaw. Sue recognizes his idolatry and verbally condemns it, as do Arabella, Phillotson, and Hardy’s narrator on other occasions.

Arabella tells Sue:

‘Still harping on Christminster—even in his cakes!’ laughed Arabella. ‘Just like Jude. A ruling passion. What a queer fellow he is, and always will be! [. . .] Christminster is a sort of fixed vision with him, which I suppose he’ll never be cured of believing in. He still thinks it is a great centre of high and fearless thought, instead of what it is, a nest of commonplace schoolmasters whose characteristic is timid obsequiousness to tradition!’ (246)

Yet such conversations have little effect on the blinded Jude; his idolatry is so unwavering and absolute that he could never “distinctly hear the freezing negative that [the] scholared walls had echoed” (261). Even Little Father Time, a child, is able to detect the city’s repelling nature: “‘I don’t like Christminster!’” he cries (259). Hardy’s narrator also warns Jude in an attempt to deter his idolatry, redefining the “city of light” as a city of darkness on many occasions: Christminster was “[a] place of vanished dreams” and “too sad a place to bear” (153). Jude, however, remains oblivious to the city’s “estranged look,” foregoing such warnings, and instead thinking that “he had never seen the place look more beautiful” (142). Hardy’s countering narration presents reality
to the reader. One of the less overt examples of this is represented by Phillotson’s piano.

In Book I, the piano was an extension of the schoolmaster’s thoughtfulness to obtain a thorough education—something Jude had grown to covet. But when Jude sees the piano again, stored in a vacant schoolroom, it is clear that Phillotson was never a musician (159); the piano was an ideal that never existed. Jude doesn’t see this, however, even when he sits down to play the piano himself. Not only then does he misunderstand the abilities of others, but Jude is never conscious of his own abilities. In Book III, the piano takes on a new representation: it is Jude’s quickness to judge and interpret; it is his misunderstanding—not only of Phillotson, but of all things.

Similarly, Jude mismeasures the intelligence and character of the university students. His first encounter with a university graduate is that of his meeting with Physician Vilbert, who gives Jude his “first lesson” (24). Jude learns the hard way that, after “honestly perform[ing] his promise to the man of many cures” (25), the doctor is only concerned with the advancement of his offbeat remedies and homespun love potions. Unfortunately, however, Jude does not let this experience taint his impression of the saintly Christminster—notably where Physician Vilbert studied. Instead Jude plods onward to the city; “thither he resolved as firmly as ever to go” (30). Once there, he has similar experiences with other undergraduates. One particular example, taking place in an obscure tavern, proves that Jude’s understanding of the students’ intelligence and character is flawed. Egged on by friends to recite the Creed in Latin, Jude delights a rowdy audience with his knowledge of theology and the classical languages. But he is so consumed with the task that he doesn’t even realize the students’ ignorance: “‘Good! Excellent Latin!’ cried one of the undergraduates, who, however, had not the slightest
conception of a single word” (98). Still Jude raged on, even against his better judgement: “He could not get on. He put his hand to his forehead, and his face assumed an expression of pain” (99). Unknowingly, Jude’s drunken yet fervent determination becomes the source of amusement for the jocose undergrads; his blinding idolatry hinders his ability to see reality. Jude is oblivious that his own abilities, limited even by drunkenness, had far surpassed the undergraduates’. Thus, even in times of intellectual superiority, Jude is among the “inferior species” (98). Cooper writes: “Jude’s intellectual work [. . .] causes him to become complicit in the process that maintains a division and hierarchy of labor, with the result that he cannot see that in stonemasonry he has acquired a skill that is beyond the capacity of those who occupy the colleges” (398).

Though Jude’s disadvantages, his walls, originate from a larger, social order, his actions (or lack thereof, rather) reinforce the walls, and thus Jude shares responsibility for his obscure fate. We know that Jude can outsmart the graduates; we know his labor as a stonemason is honest and thorough; we know that his heart is bigger and his morals truer than any other character in the novel . . . Just because Jude’s society never properly recognizes him in these areas of life doesn’t mean he failed in them completely. His failure exists in idolatry—when his fantasy world finally crumbles, and the truth finally emerges, on his deathbed, when Sue does not return to him and the Remembrance Day processions continue on without him. The plaque outside of Jude’s Aldbrickham house that announces his profession of constructing headstones, those “simple memorials for the dead,” (205) may as well have been Jude’s own gravestone: his idealizations are that entrapping; he has essentially constructed his own coffin.
Hardy depicts this through Jude’s occupation: building restoration. All day Jude labors to restore the crumbling walls of colleges, churches, and other buildings—a literal act that metaphorically symbolizes his responsibility. If the walls represent Jude’s struggle, then his work restoring them represents his role in strengthening his struggles. Jude’s night work (studying, his attempt to break through the walls) is not enough to reverse his work during the day, and thus his failure. Hardy’s narrator comments on this, something John Farrell calls “the crossroads where irony and tragedy intersect” (69): “[Jude] daily mounted to the parapets and copings of colleges he could never enter, and renewed the crumbling freestones of mullioned windows he would never look from” (270). Even worse, Jude’s labor requires no creativity or intelligence; stonemasonry, “marked by precision, mathematical straightness, smoothness, [and] exactitude,” calls for little else but “copying, patching, and imitating” (69). Though Jude is the embodiment of progressive and social change, he is an obedient and mindless worker. His job has him trapped behind glass, and stone; he is made passive. Interestingly, this contradicts Ruskin’s definition of the gothic stonemason, instead illustrating the loathed image of slavish and servile workers. Ruskin comments:

For it is not the material, but the absence of human labor, which makes the thing worthless; and a piece of terra cotta, or of plaster of Paris, which has been wrought by human hand, is worth all the stone in Carrara, cut by machinery. It is indeed, possible, and even usual, for men to sink into machines themselves so that even hand-work has all the characteristics of mechanism. (57-8)

Indeed, this is what Jude has become: a machine, mindlessly fueling the institutions that repress him.

Interestingly, Jude’s studies also mechanize him. Studying only the classics, he is
trapped in the memorization and regurgitation of facts and opinions already stated. Just as Jude does not construct anything of his own as a stonemason, he merely reproduces the philosophies of others (Cooper 398). Cooper continues, “[Similar to] Jude’s labor of reproduction, so also we can say that his intellectual labor produces nothing new, but reproduces the words of others as an historically timeless form of speech” (404). This worship of the past—one of the facts, the thoughts, the people—is haunting (310); it poisons Jude. He becomes so consumed in the past, the Classics, the dead scholars, that he, too, becomes “almost his own ghost” (64). Jude’s idle nature almost makes him obsolete; or at the very least, passive. Even after his epiphany at the Fourways (96-7), he remains tied to the dead and the idle. On one particularly lamentable excursion into the Wessex countryside, Jude recounts having read Hesiod, Thucydides, Euclid, Livy, Tacitus, Herodotus, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Aristophanes, Euripides, Plato, Aristotle, Lucretius, Epictetus, Seneca, Antoninus, the Iliad, and the Greek testament, and so reveals his expectations: “One of those colleges shall open its doors to me!” (31-2). But the doors do not open to Jude, for he preaches the past while trying to shape the future; essentially, his aspirations are oxymoronic. Jude’s frequent recitation does not show intelligence, just capacity of memory. Additionally, Cooper insists that Jude’s “mode of reproduction [. . . makes him] unable to [. . .] speak his own thoughts” (405). We will never know how the story would have been different if Jude had followed his own pursuits, instead of assimilating to the structure of traditional education. Hardy speaks to Jude through the meager character of Tinker Taylor, who nobly says to Jude: “‘I always thought there was more to be learnt outside a book than in’” (98). Alas, such wisdom is heard but never understood by our protagonist.
While Jude’s idolatry is to blame for his obscure fate, it is important to note that he is not a villain or nefarious character. He is a good person—too good, actually. His character is nearly egalitarian, even by today’s standards. Jude failed because his expectations for society were impractical for his time—a fact recognized in the text several times. Jude consoles Sue: “‘We are a little beforehand, that’s all’” (225). These words are typical of Jude—optimistic, tinged with impracticality. But yet we have seen many of Jude’s walls erode away: the deterioration of strict marriages and the update of college admission practices. Our tragic hero is not lost in this success; he is immortal in Hardy’s prose. Perhaps more importantly, Jude lives on through the Christminster buildings, what Ruskin calls

the only witnesses […] All else for which the builders sacrificed, has passed away—all their living interests, and aims, and achievements. We know not for what they labored, and we see no evidence of their reward. Victory, wealth, authority, happiness—all have departed, though bought by many a bitter sacrifice.

But of them, and their life, and their toil upon the earth, one reward, one evidence, is left to us in those gray heaps of deep-wrought stone. They have taken with them to the grave their powers, their honors, and their errors; but they have left us their adoration. (34)

But Jude’s workmanship is not what will be remembered; rather, such “monotonous uniformity” (270) is overwritten by another art preserved in the stone. In death, Jude himself becomes one with the Christminster buildings. Hardy’s final description of his protagonist indicates this: “the marble features of Jude” next to his books, “roughened with stone dust” (321). Such words are deliberate in their intention: Jude has become the architecture; he has consummated his dream. This idea is alluded to earlier in the novel,
when Jude tells Arabella: “‘I am neither a dweller among men nor ghosts [. . . ] when I am dead, you’ll see my spirit flitting up and down among these [buildings]’” (310).

Indeed, Jude’s “flitting” is memorialized in the gothic architecture of Christminster. He has finally joined those he so admired, those relics of the past. Though tragic, Jude’s death gives us some resolution, and even hope. He is finally at rest—no longer an architect. Hardy, emerging now as the novel’s true architect, suggests this through Jude’s dying countenance: “there seemed to be a smile of some sort upon [Jude’s face]” (321)—notably the only smile Hardy ever explicitly notes for his protagonist. Through death, Jude surrenders his role as architect over to Hardy, the engineer of one of the most controversial novels of the Victorian era.
Conclusion

As we have seen, both Victorian society and Jude can be blamed for Jude’s failure. Traditionalists of Victorian England laid the first brick but the stonemason himself literally cemented the walls of his oppression with his idealism. Both parties are guilty of constructing Jude’s coffin and have been described throughout this paper as architects of the grave. A loose interpretation of this metaphor allows us to see the responsibility each had in Jude’s suffering and eventual death, even though such things were never intended—or, included in the blueprints, if you will. Indeed, death was an unintended byproduct of society’s eroded beliefs and Jude’s extreme optimism.

Taking a less literal interpretation from the metaphor of Jude as architect allows another reading to surface. Though our protagonist was certainly not the first victim of poverty, Christian dogma, stringent gender roles, and/or a discriminatory education system, he emerges as a strong prototype. His ideals, though admittedly before his time (225) and a large cause of his death, are timeless qualities that should be remembered even today in the twenty-first century. Marjorie Garson notes that,

Though we know from the beginning that Jude is going to be mistaken about Christminster and about Sue, we are to think more of him for his idealism, and less of those beings which fail to live up to his image of them. Christminster ought to be the City of Light, and if it is not, it is the city which is to blame; Sue ought to be worthy of Jude’s devotion. (458)

Never surrendering, not even in death, Jude is a martyr for his time. It is no coincidence that only four years after Jude was published, Ruskin College, a university for working
class men, was founded and appropriately nicknamed St. Jude’s (Hardy, Preface 7).

Indeed, sainthood is almost appropriate (the novel’s title sounds almost a canonizing epithet), as Jude does not live solely for himself; rather, he lives for those that will come after him. Fittingly, he stumbles past “th’ Martyrs’ burning place” (296) in his last days and quotes the following Corinthians passage: “Though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing” (13-3). This scene foreshadows Jude’s sacrificial death, which comes to symbolize a stand for holistic love, gender equality, and the dissolution of society’s discriminatory norms. The concern and magnanimity Jude exhibits for the future, even after his own children have died, reminds me of the assassinated archbishop, Oscar Romero, who continues the architectural thread in the following quotation: “We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the accomplished builder and the worker. We are workers, not accomplished builders; ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own” (Just Peace).
Works Cited


Works Consulted


Appendix

Images, clockwise:

**Figure 1:** St. Peter’s West Knighton Church, the church Hardy restored while writing *Jude*.

**Figure 2:** The Table of Kindred and Affinity (center) and plaques listing the Ten Commandments inside West Knighton.

**Figure 3:** A closer look at the Table of Kindred and Affinity. Thirty laws make clear who one is not allowed to marry.

**Figure 4:** A window at West Knighton. The clear glass was intentionally chosen by Hardy, a purist in restoration, to allow for natural light to shine into the church.
Figure 5: A remodeled version of the schoolhouse Hardy had in mind while penning Phillotson’s schoolhouse in Shaston.

Figure 6: Phillotson and Sue’s “home.” One of the two windows facing the camera is rumored to be the window Sue notoriously jumped from.

Figure 7: A look at the back of Stinsford Church—Hardy’s favorite. He taught Sunday School there as a young man and did some restoration work when he was older. His heart is buried in Stinsford’s small graveyard, along with the bodies of his two wives, C.S. Lewis, and the actress who played Tess in the original stage production.