

## **Trope of Disillusionment in Thomas Hardy's *Jude The Obscure***

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### **Abstract**

Disillusionment is one of the major thematic thrusts of literary enterprise from the time immemorial. This foregrounds the fact that man's disillusionment is ontological. The study investigates the trope of disillusionment in Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*. The paper reveals different struggles that Jude, the eponymous character, passes through. Through Hardy's explicit portrayal of life in Victorian society, Hardy condemns human institutions which endlessly perpetuate people in suffering, castration of hopes and limit them socio-politically. In spite of his legitimate and lofty dreams, Jude dies like a dog. Moreover, social factor responsible for the abortion of Jude's ambitions and ruination of his destiny are emphasised in the study. The literary relevance of Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* is not limited to the Victorian period which was the time when he wrote. This assertion is based on the fact that Hardy has fictionalised the struggle of the common man in the face of helplessness. Thus, the narrative has universal and timeless significance. Disillusioned protagonist is a recurrent figure in much of the twentieth century English fiction. The trope of disillusionment is an attempt to depict the hopelessness, confusion, frustration, alienation, disintegration and estrangement of modern man.

**Keywords:** Disillusionment, Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*

### **Introduction**

Literature is committed to depicting and addressing challenges of humanity. Human society has been enmeshed in various socio-political crises which have become topicalities in literature. Although such challenges have negative effects on human race, they have thematically enriched literary scholarship as writers are geared towards putting their creative weaponry into action. The literary production of the contemporary period is realistic as writers create fictional heroes and heroines who reflect the roles of the individual in

the society as they strive for love, social position or success and better life. Literature is a humanistic field of scholarship that focuses attention on the human experiences and condition. It is considered life because it deals with men in every conceivable relation with others, his joys and woes, tragedies and comedies, fears and hopes. A writer is, therefore, a humanist, whose intention is to embellish and improve the world of reality. Literature cannot be separated from society. In fact, the relationship between these two social phenomena can be likened to a set of twins whose umbilical cords are joined. In the words of Wellek and Warren:

Literature is a social institution, using as its medium language, a social...creation...Literature 'represents' 'life' and 'life' is, in large measure, a social reality, even though the natural world and the inner or subjective world of the individual have also been objects of literary 'imitation'. The poet himself is a member of society, possessed of a specific social status... (1941:46).

Thomas Hardy is regarded as the last Victorian or the proto-modernist, the rural idyllist or the social-problem novelist, bearer of the last vestiges of the folktale or pioneer of the feminist heroine and the working-class hero. He is known for historical and bildungsroman narratives, and social satire. At the beginning of his career in the early 1870s, when his first novels were published anonymously in accordance with a common convention of the time, reviewers were apt to compare him, whether in admiration or by way of reproof for a perceived excess of indebtedness, to George Eliot. Despite the often unsympathetic reviews that dogged his career, Hardy's reputation, both with the general reading public and with his successors, seems to have been less subject to vicissitudes than some. His work remains continuously in print in multiple editions, and novelists with as little in common as Marcel Proust and D. H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf and John Fowles, have found much in him to praise and from which to learn (Penny Boumelha, 2009).

As a Victorian-cum-modernist novelist, Hardy is preoccupied with depicting the reality of the time for which he wrote. One major motif that runs through the modern narrative is disillusionment. Ayo Kehinde (2005) rightly posits that the modern novel is characterised by the tone of disillusionment and awash with alienation, despair, cruelty, absurdity, urban terrorism, crime, pain, dissonance, espionage, poverty, dislocation, disintegration, famine, frustration, anarchy, misogyny, betrayal, nihilism, isolation,

dehumanisation and all forms of anomie. Thus, the tone of the modern novel, like Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*, is pessimistic and jeremiad as a result of multiple challenges that human race struggles with. As Alan Swingewood (1971:214) succinctly submits, novel of disillusionment prioritises portraying "isolated man pitted against other men, against society, sometimes engaged in a hopeless quest for his identity or in self-conscious exploration of the art of writing itself."

The foregoing reveals that disillusionment arises due to various unfavourable conditions that man is subjected to. Pain is, thus, the order of the day. Kehinde (2005:338) maintains that "from the biblical account of the Man's fall to the present period of disillusionment, pain has been felt to be an experience that cannot be separated from the human conditions". This means that disillusionment is an ontological challenge humanity will continue to wrestle against.

*Jude the Obscure* provokes a still more savage outcry. It is apparently neo-paganism, or the attempt to go beyond Christianity, that is put on trial in the narrative. The representative of neo-paganism is Sue Bridehead, the intellectual who persuades Jude to drop his deep-rooted Christian piety and to give up his intention of training for the ministry. An older, more instinctive rural paganism is personified by Jude's wife, Arabella, who cheerfully commits bigamy but then, after her second husband's death, becomes a temporary devout evangelical. Arabella, who originally seduces Jude and later reseduces him, is like a comic version of Alec d'Urberville in Hardy's *Tess of d'Urbervilles*. No sooner has she seen Jude again than she abandons her devout widowhood, announcing her apostasy by throwing her bundle of religious tracts into a hedge. In a novel even more full of spiritual vacillations than *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, her apostasy is the cue for Sue Bridehead to return to a hysterical, self-denying form of religious faith (Parrinder, 2006).

*Jude the Obscure* is a portrayal of the fractured world. It presents the narrator's world set in within the madding crowd. In this novel, "we find carried to the furthest extreme conflicts which have been gaining in definition and momentum as Hardy's novels have continued: the self-estrangement of the individual, the clash with social institutions and, emerging out of this clash, an increasingly sharp sense of the needs of the present time" (Ian Gregor, 1973:37-38). It is in line with the foregoing that this study investigates the trope of disillusionment in Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*.

#### **Disillusionment in Hardy's *Jude the Obscure***

The narrative begins with the exodus of the schoolmaster, Mr. Phillotson, from the village of Marygreen in Wessex. He packs his belongings into a small cart and heads for Christminster, which is twenty miles away. Eleven-year-old Jude Fawley, who has been the schoolmaster's earnest student, assists him with the packing. Mr. Phillotson admires him so much that he gives Jude a book as a parting gift and informs him that he is going to Christminster to enter the university and eventually to be ordained: "My scheme, or dream, is to be a university graduate, and then to be ordained" (11). Mr. Phillotson sees Christminster as a place where his educational and spiritual dreams can be materialised. However, Jude becomes very pensive. Meanwhile, Jude stays with his great aunt Drusilla, who brings him up being an orphan. The thought of schoolmaster leaving him occupies his mind when Drusilla orders him to fetch two buckets of water from the well. As Jude fetches water from the same well where Mr. Phillotson has fetched water, he sobs unconsciously. The narrator symbolically describes the temporal setting of the day thus: "The morning was a little foggy" (12). This is a foreshadow of what is to befall Jude. The fog here denotes Jude's inability to see the future clearly and his unfulfillable dreams. Jude's little interaction with the schoolmaster helps him aspire for greater things in life. He is made to desire to leave Marygreen and find means of getting to Christminster which stands for land of fulfillment.

Set in the Victorian age, *Jude the Obscure* narrates the blurred vision and unfulfillable ambition of Jude Fawley who finds himself in an environment that is unfriendly to his lofty ambition. Jude is preoccupied with dream which is quite taller and bigger than he is, in terms of age, social status and background. Many factors are responsible for his disillusionment. He is a despondent orphan. He comes across some people who are not ready to help him realise his life ambition. For example, aunt Drusilla does not believe in him; she sees him as a nuisance. On the other hand, Farmer Troutham hurts him when he beats and sacks him. Jude is a representative of *bona fide* members of the society who are victims of injustice, suffering, oppression, alienation and class snobbery; whereas, the likes of Farmer Troutham are the heartless oppressors that do not care about the plight of those working under them.

In the same vein, the failure and disillusionment of Jude is as a result of his not having someone that will assist him translate his ambition into reality. He, therefore, ends up being an outsider since he cannot enter the place of his desire. This implies that without an actualiser, both the dream and the dreamer may rot. Arabella Donn is an inimical thorn in Jude's flesh. She seduces him and distracts him from continuing his journey to the city of Christminster. The erstwhile focused and strong-willed Jude succumbs to mundane things

following his distracting relationship with Arabella. According to the narrator, “The intentions as to reading, working, and learning which he had so precisely formulated only a few minutes earlier, were suffering a curious collapse into a corner, he knew not how.” (44).

The hero undergoes a tragic, if unexceptional, peripeteia. Jude sets himself idealistically and single-mindedly on the path to intellectual advancement; he is filled with “a warm self-content” (38) at his prospects of moving onward to university study, where his “present knowledge will appear ...but as childish ignorance” (39). Progress toward Christminster, however, is halted abruptly when the innocent Jude Fawley falls prey to Arabella, that “complete and substantial female animal” (41). Suddenly, his Greek New Testament left open but unheeded, he plunges into a sordid spiral of seduction, entrapment, and imprisonment in a hopeless marriage (Emily A. McDermott, 1999). This represents the genesis of his downfall. He finds it virtually impossible to peruse his Greek book which he obtains from a London publisher. Arabella’s presence signifies doom for him. The author technically likens the relationship between Jude and Arabella to that between the biblical Samson and Delilah: “They sat and looked round the room, and at the picture of Samson and Delilah which hung on the wall, and at the circular beer-stains on the table, and at the spittoons underfoot filled with sawdust.” (49)

In the same manner that Delilah masterminds the unfortunate downfall of her lover, Samson, Arabella Donn brings doom upon Jude. This shows that Jude’s mental sense of sight is dull, otherwise, he would have known the dangerous mission of Arabella. She lures him until “they touched each other” (49). Jude later regrets his meeting with Arabella when he wants to continue his journey to Christminster: “‘I am going away,’ he said to her. ‘I think I ought to go. I think it will be better both for you and for me. I wish some things had never begun! I was much to blame, I know. But it is never too late to mend.’

Arabella began to cry. ‘How do you know it is not too late?’

she said. ‘That’s all very well to say! I haven’t told you yet!’

and she looked into his face with streaming eyes.

‘What?’ he asked, turning pale. ‘Not . . . ?’

‘Yes! And what shall I do if you desert me?’

‘O Arabella—how can you say that, my dear! You know I wouldn’t desert you!’

‘Well then——’

‘I have next to no wages as yet, you know; or perhaps I should have thought of this before.... But, of course, if that’s the case, we must marry! What other thing do you think I could dream of doing?’

‘I thought—I thought, deary, perhaps you would go away all the more for that, and leave me to face it alone!’

‘You knew better! Of course I never dreamt six months ago, or even three, of marrying. It is a complete smashing up of my plans—I mean my plans before I knew you, my dear. But what are they, after all! Dreams about books, and degrees, and impossible fellowships, and all that. Certainly we’ll marry: we must!’ (60)

Dishearteningly, Jude’s dreams about university and upward social mobility get crushed and become mere illusion. Meanwhile, he has no desire to marry Arabella as wife because

that Arabella was not worth a great deal as a specimen of womankind. Yet, such being the custom of the rural districts among honourable young men who had drifted so far into intimacy with a woman as he unfortunately had done, he was ready to abide by what she had said, and take the consequences. For his own soothing he kept up a factitious belief in her. His idea of her was the thing of most consequence, not Arabella herself, he sometimes said laconically (61).

The Victorian society frowns at betraying a lady that one has a close intimacy with. Thus, to satisfy the moralistic principle of the society, the duo are married by the parson. Man’s attitude is often conditioned by social operations. The poor, like Jude, are usually looked down upon. They do not have access to certain privileges. Even though they physically belong to the society, they do not have and feel any sense of belonging as they are intrinsically exiled. Meanwhile, one may still be in his own land and experience exile. In most cases, when disillusionment has been entrenched in the socio-political and economic experience of people, citizens live as aliens in their land. In other words, many citizens of the world are alienated from power, economy and resources, they have been reduced to exiles in their own land. To be in exile is considerably more than being in another country; it is to live

with oneself knowing one's estrangement. It is also to know that one does not belong there. Thus, exile is coterminous with sense or feeling of 'non-belongingness'. Exile is not without its advantages; perhaps the most important outcome of "living in the interstice" is the fact that it allows writers to construct fictive worlds whose alterity or betweenness call for new aesthetic grounds (Boldor, 2005).

Hardy's society places premium on proper conduct, morality and respectability. Ironically, the moralistic Victorian society is enmeshed in the mud of hypocrisy. It is a society that is rather concerned with legality instead of happiness. *Jude the Obscure* depicts the tragedy of the common man with a legitimate ambition. Despite the fact that Jude tries assiduously to actualise his dream, he fails and falls because he does not belong to the right class. Through this explicit portrayal of life in Victorian society, Hardy condemns human institutions which endlessly perpetuate people in suffering, castration of hopes and limit them socio-politically. The world of the novel, therefore, "is a place where human beings are doomed to repeated suffering" (DeCoste, 1999:448).

Moreover, the relevance of the thematisation of the plight of the ordinary man in *Jude the Obscure* cannot be restricted to the Victorian age alone. In other words, the narrative is universally and timelessly significant. The whole world is replete with people suffering amalgam of castrated hopes, ruined destinies and disillusioned minds. Meanwhile, their challenges may not be conveniently dissociated from the socio-political structuring of the polity. In the case of Jude, social stratification is a serious entanglement which traps him down. Jude is a good young man in a bad environment. Though he is not deterred by unfavourable conditions around him, his dreams are ceaselessly deferred.

Patrick Parrinder (2006) maintains that through *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy shows that he never loses his passionate hatred of social injustice, yet, compared to his predecessors in nineteenth-century fiction, Hardy the novelist is curiously unpolitical. His literary success began not with a social-problem novel but with a sentimental rural idyll, *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872). This was followed by a metafictional romance, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873)—metafictional in the sense that the heroine, Elfride Swancourt, is herself a romantic novelist—in which class politics are represented by the 'Saxon versus Norman' convention inherited from Disraeli and Scott.

Hardy foregrounds the motif of migration. This is, however, beyond the physical movement from one place to another. Jude aspires for and attempts social, educational, mental and class migration in order to bring improvement upon his lot. He wishes to be

associated with the successful members of elites and break the jinx of limitation and class snobbery. However, the more he struggles to rise, the more he falls. In the same vein, the novel emphasises journey motif. Commenting on the endless journey and depiction of Jude's rootlessness, Gregor (1973:39) posits that "with the power goes new stridency, reflected in the way in which the journeys along the roads of Wessex are now replaced by the constant journeying by rail, with Egdon Heath just glimpsed from a passing carriage window". Hardy equally reinforces rootlessness and rooflessness of the characters through his titling of each section of novel – 'At Marygreen', 'At Christminster', 'At Shaston', 'At Melchester', 'At Aldbrickham and Elsewhere' and 'At Christminster Again'. Without mincing words, the characters are portrayed as being restless.

Through Drusilla, readers get to know that Jude is an orphan and has been with her for a year. Jude's craze for book is hereditary because "It runs in our family rather. His cousin Sue is just the same..." (14). It is revealed that the marriage of Jude's parents ends unhappily. Aunt Drusilla views him as being useless and thinks that the schoolmaster would have gone to Christminster with him so that he may make a scholar out of him. As a result of his parents' marital ill-luck, Drusilla warns Jude never to marry as she believes the Fawleys have bad luck in marriage. This is an issue that brings about disillusionment in the life of Jude.

Jude perceives that he is living in a world where he is not wanted. He works for Farmer Troutham. His duties include scaring the rooks off the corn with a clacker. However, when he sees the birds, he allows them to feed on the corn due to the fact that "his heart grew sympathetic with the birds' thwarted desires. They seemed, like himself, to be living in a world which did not want them" (15). The owner of the farm punishes him and retrenches him eventually for being so silly. Even though Jude is very small, it is very clear that he understands his polity. He knows quite well that he is seen as a nuisance even to her aunt with whom he stays. This makes him associate himself with the suffering and alienated birds of the air which have no one to fend for them. Jude depicts childhood innocence and simplicity after he is hurt by Troutham. On his way home, he walks on his tiptoes so that he will not crush the worms: "Though farmer Troutham had just hurt him, he was a boy who could not himself bear to hurt anything." (17). He "cannot bear to see trees cut down or lopped," (17) believing that it hurts them. Ironically, these human virtues (gentleness and inability to hurt any living thing) later expose him to suffering in life: "he was the sort of man who was born to ache a good deal." (18).

Being a precocious child, Jude asks his aunt, Drusilla about the city of Christminster where his schoolmaster has gone. Responding to his meditatively asked question, Drusilla says “It is a place much too good for you ever to have much to do with, poor boy, I’m a-thinking.” (19). This establishes the motif of class snobbery in Victorian novel. Victorian society is structures in such a way that ordinary people cannot associate with the nobles. Thus, nobody in the family genealogy of Jude has been to Christminster. According to Drusilla, “We’ve never had anything to do with folk in Christminster, nor folk in Christminster with we.” (19). Thus, people like Jude are usually ostracised and treated as alien citizens. Thomas Hardy’s time was an era of several unsettling social developments that forced writers more than ever before to take positions on the immediate issues animating the rest of society. The attention of many writers was directed, sometimes passionately, to such issues as the growth of English democracy, the education of the masses, the progress of industrial enterprise and the consequent rise of a materialistic philosophy, and the plight of the newly industrialised worker. In addition, the unsettling of religious belief by new advances in science, particularly the theory of evolution and the historical study of the Bible, drew other writers away from the immemorial subjects of literature into considerations of problems of faith and truth. Indeed, Hardy’s *Jude the obscure* echoes “the reverberations of existential attitudes like, guilt, nausea, restlessness, despair, lack of intimacy and estrangement and overarching absurdity” (Abdul Saleem, 2014:68).

Obsessed with unquenchable passion for Christminster, Jude climbs the roof of a barn, the Brown House, to see the city. He does this for three times before he is able to Christminster radiant. During his ceaseless struggle to have a glimpse of the city, he meets a carter who carries a wagon of coal whom he asks about Christminster. Though the man himself has never been to the city, he describes Christminster in wonderful terms, as a centre of learning and culture. This nice description of the city of Christminster further increases Jude’s uncontrollable desire to go there. Thus, he dreamily submits that Christminster is the place for him. Jude longs for Christminster: "It is a city of light," where "the tree of knowledge grows" and "a castle manned by scholarship and religion." (27), “The heavenly Jerusalem” (21). University epitomises Jude’s unfulfilled aspirations. Moreover, he sees his migration from Marygreen as an escape from his present unsatisfactory life. Parrinder (2006) observes a kind of transposition in Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure*, where Christminster (Oxford), is Jude Fawley’s ‘centre of civilisation’. Hardy describes Jude with his dream of classical learning as ‘a species of Dick Whittington whose spirit was touched to finer issues than a

mere material gain' (Hardy, 1974:97). Jude's failure as a potential Dick Whittington is most abject, since his proletarian origins bar him even from entering the colleges of Christminster.

Writers do not just tell stories for fun. They try to give readers insight into human perception, experience and existence. Carl E. Bain, Jerome Beaty and J. Paul Hunter (1981:11) opine that writers "strive to tell truths – new, subjective truths, but truths – even though they "lie" about the actuality of the people and events represented". However, writers' literary prowess is often shaped by social occurrences in their milieu. As a social problem novelist, Hardy is interested in textualising the various tragedies which confront humanity. Commenting on Hardy's writing, Boumelha (2009:250) reveals that Hardy's

imagination is possessed by missed opportunities, failed encounters, returns too long postponed, and all the exquisite agonies of bad timing. The most common shape of his plots takes the form of a struggle by one or more of his characters to leave definitively behind them a past that refuses to stay buried: a sexual secret, a broken promise, a rash act with irrevocable consequences.

The motif of disillusionment in Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* is further shown in the interaction between Jude and Physician Vilbert, a quack doctor that Jude meets on his way home. Jude promises that he will help deliver Vilbert's pills and potions if Vilbert agrees to bring him his old Greek and Latin grammar texts. Meanwhile, Jude tries hard to fulfill his own part of the bargain, but Vilbert disappoints him. Instinctively, Jude realises that the man is a fraud and is bitterly disappointed. Similarly, Jude is disillusioned when he finds every Latin or Greek word has to be committed to memory individually, which is contrary to the universal rule for translating one language into another. His realisation of the cumbersomeness of the assignment aggravates his depression and disillusionment.

Boumelha (2009) observes that Hardy's most thorough and most devastating exposure of the gap between the tired and partial wisdom of public proverbs and the unformulated nature of raw experience is to be found in the very evident narrative strategy of discordant contrasts in *Jude the Obscure*. In the text, character after character struggles to align their personal experience with the maxims, models, or principles by which they variously seek to live. Sue Bridehead, once married, cannot associate her sense of herself as an individual with the 'Mrs Richard Phillotson' that now constitutes her social identity; the schoolmaster, Mr. Phillotson, is torn by the sense that his 'instinct' as a man and his 'doctrines' and 'principles'

lead in different directions; and Jude's enforced journey out of the orderly harmony of his early 'neat stock of fixed opinions' into 'a chaos of principles' lies at the core of the novel's critique of the English bildungsroman.

Each of the characters carries with him/her through the novel a habit of quotation that clearly becomes less and less closely related to the experiences (s) he undergoes. Sue, at the height of her conviction that through rationality and the power of her will alone she can transform her society to match her expectations, gives this graphic expression by producing her own literally cut-and-paste version of the New Testament. But as she is confronted more and more brutally by the limits of her capacity to impose her will upon the world, she is forced to abandon this attempt to make her textual authorities suit her own purposes and instead moves progressively toward silence, so that the reader's two last sightings of her are of her blocking her ears so that she cannot hear Jude and clenching her teeth so that she expresses nothing to the first husband she has remarried, Phillotson. If Sue learns that she cannot rewrite the texts of social ideology to support her own experience, Jude, on the other hand, becomes bitterly alienated from the scriptural and literary history that had at first appeared to offer him a means of personal fulfilment and social mobility as well as a way of understanding his experience through the medium of the received wisdom of authorities. His quotations are increasingly sardonically counterpointed with the situations and relationships in which he finds himself, from his drunken recitation of the Nicene Creed in a pub to the culminating scene of his death (Boumelha, 2009).

Jude is depicted as a dreamer who thinks that through his own singular effort he can achieve his life goal: "... he continued to dream, and thought he might become even a bishop by leading a pure, energetic, wise, Christian life" (39). He strongly aspires to have access to the works of classical authors, such as Livy, Tacitus, Herodotus, Aeschylus, Sophocles and Aristophanes, the moment he gets to Christminster. His initial lack of access to books to whet his intellectual appetite cripples the fulfillment of his tall dream. As an astute young man, he personally develops himself as he studies assiduously to master Latin and Greek and he later get familiarised with Caesar, Virgil and Horace. This is a product of Jude's ceaseless perseverance and *committedness* to grow in knowledge. However, Jude does not limit his intellectual pursuit to scholarship alone, he extends the frontier of his knowledge to religion by studying the New Testament as well as the Gospels with the hope that he may end up being a clergyman. Thus, we see in Jude a desire to be fulfilled both secularly and spiritually. It is evident that Jude grows in age and mind. It dawns on him that he will need resources to

earn a living in the course of his studies in Christminster. Therefore, he takes up a job as a stonemason in Alfredston, while he goes back to Marygreen every weekend. Hardy is known for a profoundly pessimistic sense of human subjection to fate and circumstance. He graphically depicts what it means to be disillusioned and frustrated in spite of one's good virtues which society seems not to reckon with.

Jude's marriage of inconvenience and incompatibility with Arabella is a trap for him. After their legal joining as couple, Arabella starts misbehaving. Eventually, she writes Jude that she is relocating to Australia with her parents. This serves as a kind of relief for Jude. Jude regains his vision following his physical separation from Arabella. He visits the old ridge-track where he has earlier on viewed Christminster afar off. It is established, however, that it is this same spot where his parents separate. Symbolically, Jude is connected with his parents at the spot. Thus, Jude leaves Marygreen and Alfredson. Jude is portrayed as a growing character whose life changes through experience. He starts as a naïve and innocent individual. Marygreen setting relays Jude's childhood innocence and lack of experience. Meanwhile, his disastrous marital relationship with selfish and dubious Arabella opens his to human nature. It also reveals his own weakness as a man who cannot control his human emotion. His characterisational growth is described through authorial comment thus:

He was of dark complexion, with dark harmonizing eyes, and he wore a closely trimmed black beard of more advanced growth than is usual at his age; this, with his great mass of black curly hair, was some trouble to him in combing and washing out the stone-dust that settled on it in the pursuit of his trade. (81-82)

In other words, he has been exposed to life challenges than his age could bear. The blackness of his hair emphasises the fact that his initial childhood innocence has been severed. Thus, he experientially moves from innocence to knowledge as the case of bildungsroman narratives.

After three years of castration of his hope for university, Jude is seen on his way to Christminster following his completion of his apprenticeship as a stonemason. At Marygreen, he stumbles on the portrait of his pretty cousin, Sue Bridehead, who, according to his aunt (Drusilla), stays in Christminster. This portrait gives him inner conviction of realising his dream; Sue becomes a source of inspiration for him. He eventually reaches Christminster on foot in the evening and secures accommodation in a cheap suburb, Beersheba. Having read so much about many great scholars who have studied at Christminster, he imagines their ghost

talk to him and dreams of them. Similarly, the thought of his old teacher occupies his mind. Hardy shows the individualistic nature of English society through the representation of Jude's helpless situation:

Knowing not a human being here, Jude began to be impressed with isolation of his own personality, as with a self-spectre, the sensation being that of one who walked but could not make himself seen or heard. He drew his breath pensively, and, seeming thus almost his own ghost, gave his thoughts to the other ghostly presences with which the nooks were haunted (84).

Abdul Saleem (2014) posits that alienation is the basic form of rootlessness, which forms the subject of many psychological, sociological, literary and philosophical studies. Alienation is a major theme of human condition in the contemporary epoch. It is only natural that a pervasive phenomenon like alienation should leave such an indelible impact upon the contemporary literature. Alienation emerges as natural consequence of existential predicament both in intrinsic and extrinsic terms. The theme of alienation has been variously dealt with persistently and unflinchingly in modern literature. The alienated protagonist is a recurrent figure in much of the twentieth century English fiction. Alienation in its various forms, has been dealt with in the existentialistic literature. In Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*, Jude is alienated and seen as a pariah. The only set of people he can associate with initially are the ghosts of those scholars whom he has heard and read about. This foregrounds his own ghostly nature. According to the narrator, Jude is neither seen nor heard. His voicelessness and invisibility remain serious challenges to him and the realisation of his dreams.

In order to fulfill his ambition, Jude searches for a job in Christminster and he is employed as a stone-cutter. He spends the little money he realises on stationery, while he devotes himself to reading all through the night. The nature of jobs that Jude does tells a lot about his personality. Initially, he undergoes apprenticeship as stonemason, now he is employed as a stonecutter. This implies that Jude is a strong-willed individual that cannot accept defeat no matter the challenges he encounters. Even though circumstances in which he finds himself are not friendly to his dreams, he keeps trying to scale through such unfavourable situations.

Jude appeals to his aunt to help him send the portrait of Sue; although she aversely agrees to his demand, she warns him never to contact Sue. Jude passes through where Sue keeps a shop and refuses to talk with her. He notices a kind of dichotomy between the two of them; while Sue is somehow elegant and sophisticated, he looks rustic. Thus, he develops interest in her. She thinks of marrying her. This is another illusionary desire of Jude that is inimical to his life. Drusilla has envisaged the possibility of Jude developing sexual relationship with his own cousin Sue. When the duo eventually meet, Jude finds out that his schoolteacher, who has been his source of inspiration, has not achieved his ambition of university education. He is disappointed when Sue tells him that Mr. Phillotson remains a village teacher at Lumsdon. Jude's main source of inspiration is disillusioned. Mr. Phillotson informs Jude that he has abandoned the idea of going to the university.

Looking at the issue of disillusionment from the spiritual perspective, Eric J. Leed (1978) submits that it is regarded as a positive experience. Although it is painful, it is a necessary awakening from the enchantment of the senses, from the world of mere appearances. Through disillusionment with the physical things, men acquire wisdom. It is clear that all that Jude passes through are not palatable. He, however, Jude remains indomitable. He fixes his mind on his dreams. Again, his encounter with people and situations serve as means of growing his sensibility and consciousness of what life entails. Hardy believes that fate controls everything, while suffering is inevitable.

Jude recommends Sue to Phillotson as an assistant teacher in order to keep closer to her. Soon, the village schoolteacher begins to show interest in Sue. When Jude realises that the two are having affairs, he becomes unhappy. He feels betrayed because he is the one that introduces them to each other. Similarly, his hope of marrying Sue is dashed. Rivalry and jealousy ensue between Jude and Phillotson. Unfortunately for Jude, he cannot publicly make his intention known since he is still bound to Arabella Donn. Ironically, the object the cold war is unaware of what goes on between the two:

She had not the least conception how the hearts of the twain went out to her at this momentary revelation of feeling, and what a complication she was building up thereby in the futures of both (114).

Meanwhile, during Jude's visit to Marygreen to check her aunt Drusilla who is bedridden, his aunt vehemently warns to steer clear of moving closer to Sue. Drusilla's ceaseless is important as she has a premonition of negative effect such familial strange

affection can have upon him. Jude seems not to understand the hurdle before him in entering university. Some villagers ask him to know whether he has been able to enter the university. These villagers are aware of Jude's financial incapability; thus, they are sure that he will not find it easy to enter the citadel of learning as he lacks the financial wherewithal. The social stratification of the Victorian society is depicted here. It is a society that has no programme for the poor. Those who are poor have no access to education. Jude decides to make enquiries at Christminster and write to colleges for guidance. Again, he is disillusioned as he endlessly waits for response. He eventually gets a note from the head of a college who admonishes him not to bother himself with entering the university, rather, he tells him to continue with his own trade. Jude's mind is made up; he will not allow any reasonable but dream-killing advice to deter him from accomplishing his ambition. Following his ceaseless efforts and continual disappointment, he resorts to drinking and clubbing. Disillusionment is further foregrounded when Jude realises that Christminster is classified into two categories. The main Christminster comprises teachers and students of colleges that have snobbishly alienated Jude, while the other class involves ordinary workers and commoners.

Jude's state of depression and disillusionment is shared by nature. The narrator explains that:

A mournful wind blew through the trees, and sounded in the chimney like the pedal notes of an organ. Each ivy leaf overgrowing the wall of the churchless churchyard hard by, now abandoned, pecked its neighbour smartly, and the vane on the new Victorian-Gothic church in the new spot had already begun to creak (132-133).

The foregoing shows that nature feels for Jude. Mr Highridge, the curate, visits Jude. Jude has now come to realise his own naivety and shallow-mindedness. He explains to the curate his ambitions and every step he has taken so far and concludes that:

Now I know I have been a fool, and that folly is with me....  
**And I don't regret the collapse of my university hopes one jot.** I wouldn't begin again if I were sure to succeed. I don't care for social success any more at all. But I do feel I should like to do some good thing; **and I bitterly regret the Church, and the loss of my chance of being her ordained minister** (emphasis added, 133).

The two aspirations of Jude become shattered. He is, however, not displeased with the university which is controlled by social factor; whereas, he is seriously disappointed that English social stratification and class snobbery have stealthily crept into the church which should be governed by spiritual standard. This emphasises Jude's outright rejection and alienation by both the university and the church which are the objects of his dreams. Failure makes Jude to become wise. He now acknowledges the fact that all this while, he has been controlled by his emotion. His dreams are emotionally-driven. He, therefore, settles for a less-important career in the church. He is to enter as a licentiate and possibly rise no higher than a commonplace curate. His dreams are reduced to mere illusion which makes him to be disillusioned.

Furthermore, Jude is motivated to go to Melchester so that he can enter college of theology. This decision is influenced by Sue who writes him that she is miserably lonely in Melchester. Jude is portrayed as a man of action who does not think. He rarely thinks before taking action. Immediately he receives Sue's letter, he does not think twice before he sets out to Melchester. Meanwhile, he is not happy when Sue informs him of her betrothal to Phillotson and their planning to get married. Jude who has never opened up to Sue, even though that inordinate ambition to marry Sue is against the social code of conduct, feels betrayed. He, however, decides to relate with her only as a kinswoman. For several times, Jude tries to summon courage to tell Sue about his relationship with Arabella but he cannot help it. Each time he wishes to tell her, he becomes psycho-emotionally traumatic. Even though his heart is with Sue erotically, he is maritally bound to Arabella. Meanwhile, Sue has also started developing amorous desire in him as she always wants him around her. However, the two of them are constrained by social forces. Sue feels shock and becomes jealous when Jude eventually tells her of his relationship with Arabella. Thus, Jude's dream of marrying Sue is now completely shattered as Sue informs him of her impending wedding with Phillotson. The presence of Sue is one of the factors that push Jude to embark on pilgrimage to Christminster and later to Melchester. Now that Sue will be leaving Melchester to join be joined with Phillotson in marriage, life becomes unbearable for Jude.

Considering the pains of his disillusionment and aloneness, Jude is affected by psychological trauma. He feels betrayed by the society, church and people around him. He, therefore, finds it difficult to survive in Christminster. Jude is surprised to meet Arabella in a pub where she works as a barmaid. She tells him that she left Australia three months ago. However, Jude is on his way to Alfredston to meet Sue whom he has contacted so that they

will go and visit his aunt Drusilla who is terribly sick. This coincidence is symbolic. It reiterates the internal conflict that Jude experiences regarding his emotion for both Arabella and Sue. He has to abandon his appointment with Sue so that he can discuss with Arabella.

Arabella is portrayed as a betrayer and morally bankrupt. She unremorsefully informs Jude that she has remarried a Sydney hotel manager during her stay in Australia. Not only that, she tells him that she and her new husband are planning to relocate to England. This unexpected information only aggravated Jude's anger, psycho-emotional trauma and disillusionment. Arabella is shamelessly unconcerned about her bigamy and illegal marriage.

In this narrative, Hardy foregrounds the issue of fate as it affects man. Both Jude and Sue are victims of fate. Drusilla warns Jude against marriage owing to the fact that the Fawleys usually experience ill-luck in marriage. Hildrun Heinrichs (1983) states that Thomas Hardy in his novel *Jude the Obscure* deludes the reader into a mood of depressive fatalism and helplessness as he puts a gloom over almost everything, making abundant use of bad omen; he reinforces the gloom as he distorts positive facts, adorning them with invisible flaws; he plays skillfully with the reader's emotion, raising hope only to disappoint it. Thus he prepares the reader to accept any stroke of fate and even Sue's decision to go back to Phillotson seems a probable incident in this malevolent world.

Jude is trapped by his lofty dreams and ambitions. His inability to see clearly reiterates the obscurity of his dream. His marriage to Arabella is a form entrapment as well as his unreasonable affectionate desire for Sue. As long as he is tied to the due and his unfulfillable dreams, he will not experience any progressive advancement. Although Jude is not the only character that experiences disillusionment, his own level of disillusionment is deeper. Other characters, such as Sue and Phillotson are also disappointed as their expectations are shattered. Phillotson is betrayed by Sue as she tells him that she wants to stay alone. He feels very bad about it but eventually grants her request. At this point, he regrets marrying her in the first place.

Throughout the narrative, Jude experiences internal conflict. Although he struggles with many social forces, he also has some innate forces to war against. His dreams are guided by emotion, not intellect. To resolve his conflict, therefore, he has to burn all the books he acquires on theology. It is noteworthy to state that Jude is relieved after burning the books. This marks the end of the pursuit of his dream. In the same vein, the burning of Jude's books symbolises the resolution of his intra-personal conflict. The two main women in his life (Arabella and Sue) are responsible for the castration of his two main goals in life. As a

growing character, Jude comes to the realisation that he cannot combine his *earthly* desire for women and his passion to become a clergy, hence, he jettisons his dream for theological study.

Meanwhile, the elopement of Jude and Sue to Aldbrickham where no one will recognise further compounds Jude's disillusionment. Sue is portrayed as an intrusion in the life of both Jude and Phillotson. She only enters their lives to cause havoc and leave them worse than he had met them. Sue refuses sexual move by Jude to which Jude is surprised.

The narrative is fraught with instances of coincidence. For instance, the same hotel and room where Jude and Arabella stay happens to be the same place where Jude and Sue lodge. Similarly, both Jude and Phillotson subscribe to the intention of their wives to seek divorce. Divorce serves as a means of liberation for both men. Unfortunately, Phillotson's career is ruined as he becomes object of mockery by the society.

Following the finalisation of the process of divorce filed by both Arabella and Sue, Jude and Sue celebrate their individual freedom from their legal but unhappy marriage with their former lovers. Ironically, when Jude brings the issue of their marriage, Sue gives him the cold shoulder. She prefers that they live together as friends without any physical relations to marrying each other. After staying together as friends for some time, Sue decides to marry him. Sue's later decision to marry Jude is motivated by her jealousy for Arabella whom she notices still has interest in Jude. Thus, against her inclination, she wishes to settle with Jude so that she will not lose him to a stranger.

Eight months after Jude and Arabella had separated; Arabella sends to Jude that she has a child for him and that the child will soon arrive from Australia so that Jude can take care of the child. Both Jude and Sue feel bad about the whole situation and later succumb to keep him (the child). Sue pities the child, while his presence further spurs her desire to marry Jude in order to provide a home for the innocent child. Hardy likens Jude to the biblical Job to explicate his many unfathomable sufferings. His life, just as Job's, is replete with afflictions, frustration and ruination of hope and ambition. As a matter of fact, Arabella's sending of the little is meant to complexify Jude's already complicated and troubled life. Although Jude and Sue are not legally and publicly joined as husband and wife, they continue to live together as a couple. Life becomes difficult for Jude and Sue which makes them to become vagabonds. They struggle for what to eat. Although the relationship between Jude and Sue seems to be a happy one, they are not socially accepted as husband and wife. Their rejection and snobbery are shown when they, together with children try to secure

accommodation. Even when they eventually get accommodation, the landlady's husband insists that Sue should leave. This societal superciliousness makes the family to be scattered as they now reside in different places. Parrinder (2006:287) categorically states that:

As so often in Hardy, the failure of Sue's and Jude's neo-pagan experiment in free love is partly put down to their ill-omened family heredity. It is also due to the 'labyrinth' of Christminster, which they are unable to forget as they move disconsolately from one Wessex town to another in search of employment. When the couple try to make some money at Kennetbridge fair, they do it by selling 'Christminster cakes'. The colleges offer Jude his most skilled work as a stonemason even though they will not admit him as a student.

Before long, Little Father Time is despair and sad as the family is reduced to wanderers as a result of their inability to get a secure place to lodge. Sue informs Little Father Time that a new child is on the way. This news rather being good news for him makes him to become gloomy. He castigates Sue for being responsible for the family's harsh and hellish conditions. He knows that the arrival of yet another child will only aggravate the plight of the family. Little Father Time, therefore, concludes that it would be better for him and other children to die than to be subjected to a life of frustration, hopelessness, isolation, alienation, rejection and endless wandering. As Sue goes out to look for Jude, Little Father Time hangs other children and himself. This unfortunate scenario has serious effect on both Sue and Jude. Jude is psychologically depressed, while Sue's uncontrollable grief leads to her giving birth to a stillborn child. *Jude the Obscure* reflects and refracts man's gloom which has to do with short, horrible and harsh life. Lending his voice to the gloom and disillusionment of the modern world, Fraser (1964:16) states that "the world is a fallen world, man a fallen creature". Metaphorically speaking, the stillborn child represents Jude's dreams which are not made to see the light of the day. Sue sees the deaths of the children as a judgement of God upon her for *sinfulness*. Hardy depicts Sue as a round character who changes. Having realised her mistakes, she refuses to marry Jude, saying that she remains morally bound to Phillotson. She goes to church and prostrates herself in front of the cross. This reiterates her repentant soberness.

Sue decides to go back to her abandoned husband, Phillotson. Similarly, Arabella makes successful attempt to get Jude back. After their wedding, Jude is down with

tuberculosis. However, Arabella is not happy because she is saddled with the responsibility of looking after her sick husband. Here, the narrative foregrounds Arabella's self-centredness and callousness. Jude dies on Remembrance Day, which marks the anniversary of the founding of Christminster, a place where Jude's presence is never recognised. Jude is neither mourned nor honoured. Thus, he dies just as he lives – unnoticed. He is buried with his old books. All through his life, Jude is treated as an invisible man. His incurable disillusionment is caused by the cruelty of snobbish social order. From all indications, *Jude the Obscure* vividly captures a brutal and brutish world where man endlessly suffers the pangs of isolation, social stratification, class snobbery, alienation, disillusionment and, of course, persistent failure. Hardy, therefore, depicts Jude as “ontologically a loner, a nothingness” (Ibitokun, 1995:3).

### **Conclusion**

It is evidently clear from the analysis that Thomas Hardy does not only thematise the issue of disillusionment but also technically foregrounds it as a narrative motif. The paper reveals different struggles that Jude, the eponymous character, passes through. In spite of his legitimate and lofty dreams, he dies like a dog. Moreover, social factors responsible for the abortion of Jude's ambitions and ruination of his destiny are emphasised in the study. The literary relevance of Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* is not limited to the Victorian period which was the time when he wrote. This assertion is based on the fact that Hardy has fictionalised the struggle of the common man in the face of helplessness. Thus, the narrative has universal and timeless significance. Disillusioned protagonist is a recurrent figure in much of the twentieth century English fiction. The trope of disillusionment is an attempt to depict the hopelessness, confusion, frustration, alienation, disintegration and estrangement of modern man.

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