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# HARDY'S VISION OF LOVE IN *JUDE THE OBSCURE*: MARRIAGE AS A SORDID SOCIAL AND LEGAL CONTRACT VS. FREE LOVE AS COMRADESHIP[1]

## Abstract

Starting from the observation that Thomas Hardy's vision of marriage, as reflected in *Jude the Obscure* (1895), should not be oversimplified into a straightforward denouncement of this institution, this paper offers evidence that his views are much more refined. By delineating marriages and the free union of its main characters, the novel intends to address several important issues. Sue Bridehead, who has the function of the author's ventriloquist on this issue, offers scathing criticism of the Victorian marriage, which she views as an economic institution with nothing in common with love. As suggested by the examples of the conjugal lives in the novel, this institution represents a sordid contract that forces the spouses into an unequal relationship and is fundamentally unfit to shape the changing nature of emotional relationships. The novel suggests that legal provisions are unnecessary complications to already complex relationships between the sexes. *Jude* may be interpreted as Hardy's appeal for the reformation of marriage laws that thwart the simple dissolution of marriages and contribute to the victimization of the more vulnerable spouse, objectification and denial of basic human rights to women. Hardy's narrator gives priority to the free union of Sue and Jude, which is based upon equality and friendship, over conventional marriage. Sue attempts to raise their relationship to a higher level that transcends not only a socially and legally regulated institution but also physical love. Even though the couple endeavours to create a transcendent relationship free from external influences, their love is doomed to failure. The crucial question that the novel attempts to answer is — is a free and independent emotional relationship possible in Victorian society? The novel's tragic end suggests that the unconventional cohabitation of Sue and Jude is too advanced for the time and place in which it occurs.

Key words: Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, marriage, free love, friendship, Sue Bridehead, Arabella Donn

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## *1. Introduction*

The very end of the XIX century was marked by a crisis of values and upheavals that threatened the foundations on which Victorian society rested. In circumstances that were changing at a rapid rate, anxiety grew, which resulted in a longing for some symbol of stability and security. Galvan and Michie describe the Victorian period as dynamic and revolutionary in all aspects but one – "if anything seems to bear out the cliché that the nineteenth century was a morally and socially conservative time, it is the notion that its fiction possessed an internal drive towards blithe marital endings" (2018: 1). In a similar vein, Joseph Allen Bonne aptly remarks, "in both Victorian life and conventional literature, loving marriage and harmonious family life were increasingly idealized as the one inviolable certitude, the one unchanging center of happy existence" (1984: 69). It is this pillar of Victorian ideology that is the subject of scathing criticism of Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* (1895), which intends to indicate the discrepancy between the ideal and the real concerning it.

Hardy is certainly not the only writer who dealt with the issue of failed and less-than-ideal marriages in the second half of the nineteenth century – on the contrary, this theme was frequent among his contemporaries. However, he is significant in that, unlike the majority, he does not only blame individuals for the failure of marriages in the novel. As Kiely notices, a hallmark of novels dealing with marriage is that a bad matrimonial bond is "never to be blamed on the institution itself" (1980: 86). On the other hand, in Hardy's fictional world, although a bad marriage is sometimes brought about by the temperamental differences of the spouses, the scales are heavily tilted towards the very nature of Victorian marriage. In Hardy's view, the bourgeois variant of conjugal life is fundamentally unfit to mould the changing form of emotional relationships because of its commerce-like nature and tendency to standardize and regulate something that should be unique.

By emphasising that the only acceptable form of the emotional relationship between a man and a woman is marriage, "the Victorian ethos sought to transform the otherwise potentially disruptive energy of passion into a stabilizing convention of bourgeois society" (Bonne 1984: 65). In addition, a typical portrayal of Victorian married life implies the delineation of the home as a haven in a heartless world and reflects "the patriarchal distribution of power in the larger social structure" (1984: 68). On the other hand, as suggested by the examples of miserable conjugal lives in *Jude*, marriages based on convention are marked by domestic warfare and the victimization of the more vulnerable spouse, regardless of gender. Ironically, only in the free union of Sue and Jude does the couple really make an effort to turn their home into their private haven. The hypocrisy of Victorian ideology is mirrored in banishing this couple to the margins of society due to their refusal to make their relationship official, while bad marriages that lack mutual affection are tolerated only because of their legality.

This paper aims to address several important issues regarding marriage as reflected in *Jude*. First, the novel offers a harsh view of the contemporary institution of marriage regulated by society and law. Second, through the description of the hardships caused by the indissolubility of unhappy marriages, the novel suggests that marriage laws should be reformed. Third, the novel prioritizes free love over

conventional marriage. However, even though Sue and Jude aim to create a union of equals that is free from external interference, is constantly changing and is subject to renegotiating, their endeavour fails. The tragic end of their unconventional love is the consequence of social pressures that intensify when the couple turns into a family with the arrival of children. To the detriment of Sue and Jude, the presence of children allows society to interfere in a relationship that should concern only the two of them.

*2. Marriage as a social and legal contract*

Hardy is generally recognized as a harsh critic of marriage. However, his attitude towards marriage, influenced by Victorian scholars such as John Stuart Mill and Mona Caird, is unique and should not be oversimplified to a straightforward denouncement of this institution. In a similar vein to Mill and Caird, Hardy was an advocate of the transformation of marriage from an institution regulated by law and convention into a version of joint life based on equality and voluntariness. Whereas Mill is famous for his agitation for women's suffrage and against women's discrimination, Caird, a late Victorian writer and journalist, is not so well known to the general public today. However, this feminist caused quite a stir among her contemporaries with her progressive views expressed in an essay entitled "Marriage" (1888). The Victorian institutionalised form of marriage that was based upon the subordination of one (female) party to the other was depicted by Caird as a "vexatious failure" (1888: par. 32). Some of the biggest obstacles to establishing a harmonious marriage were the inequality of the sexes and the concept of separate spheres. Boys and girls went to separate schools and had no opportunity to socialise, which is why they grew up completely ignorant of the real nature of the opposite sex. Moreover, young single women, when interacting with young single men, were taught to view them only as potential future husbands. Under such restrictive circumstances, as Mona Caird notices, it was almost impossible to develop friendships between the sexes (1888: par. 28). According to Caird and Hardy, basing conjugal life on friendship rather than on passion and social conventions is invaluable for the true reform of the institution of marriage.

Hardy and Caird's vision of love stands in stark contrast to Victorian marriage. Whereas Hardy advocated the attitude that marriage should be the confirmation of natural laws, a typical Victorian marriage "did not spring out of a natural attraction allowed to grow and flourish through a couple's sharing of both their pleasures and their labors" (Stave 1995: 155). As indicated by Claudia Nelson, Victorian middle-class marriage is very much "like an arrangement that exchanged one valuable commodity, a woman's sexual inexperience, for another, a man's agreement to confine his sexual urges to a single woman to whom he was legally bound" (2007: 20). In other words, the contemporary institutionalised form of marriage is an economic institution that has nothing in common with the original vision of marriage as a sacred union. Quite the contrary, marriage is often associated with contract and business in *Jude*. Such a concept of conjugal life is best exemplified in the case of Arabella Donn, who views marriage as an "economic exchange that will allow her to acquire new frocks and hats" (Stave 1995: 132). It is such a commerce-like nature of

marriage that Hardy and Mona Caird are against. Caird suggests that such a concept of marriage was the legacy of Martin Luther and the Reformation, who disputed the importance of passion in marriage and shifted its focus to respectability (1888: par. 25). Indeed, the bourgeois concept of marriage turned this sacred union into an artificial institution where the emphasis was on duties and obligations, sanctioned and shaped by law and society.

As attested by the parade of couples in *Jude*, a typical Victorian marriage is often entered into on completely wrong grounds, such as economic security, respectability, climbing the social ladder, or temporary feelings. Everywhere around her, Sue sees evidence that contemporary marriage is "brought about by social pressures, rather than a pursuit fuelled by love" (Bury 2020: par. 2). Wrong grounds for marriage are perhaps best testified by the respective impromptu marriages of Jude Fawley and Sue Bridehead. Their decisions to get married are not brought about by their convictions that they have found life companions but by the need to satisfy society's expectations. More precisely, both marriages are contracted to avoid gossip and social stigma. Entered into for the wrong reasons, the marriages turn out to be complete failures that set off a series of tragic events that culminate in Jude's death and Sue's emotional breakdown. Hardy's pessimistic portrayal of these marriages suggests that the contemporary institutionalised form of wedlock is "socially favourable in principle but morally hypocritical in practice" (Bury 2020: par. 3).

As the novel implies, passion and temporary feelings are not a solid basis for marriage. Jude Fawley, the protagonist of Hardy's last novel, realizes this shortly after falling into a marriage trap set for him by the cunning and calculating Arabella: "their lives were ruined, he thought; ruined by the fundamental error of their matrimonial union: that of having based a permanent contract on a temporary feeling which had no necessary connection with affinities that alone render a life-long comradeship tolerable" (Hardy 2002: 64).

The marriage of Arabella and Jude fails because it is based solely on sexual attraction. However, they decide to marry, although in their hearts, they feel that they have completely different attitudes and goals. Of course, their impromptu marriage is greatly accelerated by Arabella's story of an alleged pregnancy, which forces the honourable and gullible Jude to take responsibility for his past recklessness.

Nonetheless, awakening occurs very quickly, since the fact that the baby is not on the way is revealed and both partners become disappointed by the character of their spouse. When the passion that initially brought them together subsides, Arabella's traits which she once successfully hid are brought to light. Jude is appalled at her artificiality which is revealed in her wearing false hair and deliberately making dimples in her cheeks. Arabella's exploitative and ruthless nature stands in direct and stark contrast to Jude's sympathetic and oversensitive nature. In addition, their marriage fails because Arabella will make no effort to deepen and develop their relationship. For example, she does not show the slightest interest in finding out who Jude really is and what he wants out of life. To Jude's chagrin, she sees marriage as a means to satisfy her greed, not as a sacred union of two life companions "who are always in the pursuit of mutual and deeper understanding of each other" (Yuhua 2017: 40).

Having adopted the social convention according to which marriage is a contract by which the husband should provide for her materially in exchange for the satisfaction of his sexual urges, she is disappointed to see that she will not find the material well-being she had hoped for with Jude. For Arabella, marriage is the means for climbing the social ladder. Failing to achieve her goal on the first attempt, she unscrupulously steps forward in search of a new victim. Therefore, despite Jude's utter disappointment in Arabella's character, she is the one who decides to leave him. However, even though she deserts him, she does not divorce him, which is no coincidence. The naive and gullible Jude is her last resort in case her adventurous foray to the New World in search of a better life fails. By leaving him, but by not making it official, Arabella continues to influence his life, since he, as a married man, cannot attempt to prevent Sue from marrying Phillotson.

Arabella, being a shrewd and calculating woman, is acutely aware that for Victorian women of low birth and no education, marriage is still the best career. According to the law that was valid in Victorian Great Britain, the husband was obliged to financially support his wife, which offered better prospects for working-class women than low wages in factories. In Arabella's view, the marriage law is not the enemy of women but is there to protect them, which is why later in the novel she advises Sue to legalize her extramarital relationship with Jude: "'Life with a man is more business-like after it, and money matters work better. And then, you see, if you have rows, and he turns you out of doors, you can get the law to protect you, which you can't otherwise, unless he half runs through you with a knife, or cracks your noddle with a poker'" (Hardy 2002: 259).

Here, Arabella refers to the law that came into force in 1878, when certain amendments were made to improve the 1857 law on matrimonial causes. The goal of these legal regulations was to provide protection from abuse to the most vulnerable categories of women and to make divorce less expensive and therefore more accessible. These amendments allowed women victims of domestic violence to "obtain a separation order" (Lambert 2018: 6). Arabella's view of marriage is diametrically opposed to Sue's, but it is largely a consequence of their different starting positions, and thus possibilities. Therefore, her perception of marriage as an exchange and survival tactic for women of low origin is a consequence of a social ideology that did not give status to unmarried women of modest means. Arabella, therefore, is an unapologetic survivalist who refuses to pretend that marriage is any different than it is, but who instead attempts to turn strict social conventions to her advantage. In other words, she not only complies with conventions but also exploits them. Arabella's manipulation of marriage law supports the claim that Hardy endeavoured to prove that society should consider whether such a complex emotional state such as love "should be brought under the law" (Burdett 2012: 369). Moreover, her exploitation of Jude testifies to the marriage victimization and entrapment of both sexes.

Much of the hardships of Jude and Sue, two central characters of Hardy's last novel, are the consequence of their inability to end unhappy marriages in a simple manner. For example, Hardy asserts in the preface to *Jude* that "a marriage should be dissolvable as soon as it becomes a cruelty to either of the party" (2002: xiv). Although with the coming into force of the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 divorce

through the law courts was allowed (Lambert 2018: 5),[2] this law reflected the double standards characteristic of the Victorian era. While the man had the right to divorce in case of the wife's infidelity, the woman had the same right only if the husband's infidelity was accompanied by incest, sodomy or some other kind of cruelty. Hence, although the divorce procedure was simplified, the law did not live up to expectations since the grounds for divorce and the sexual double standards remained unchanged. To Sue's chagrin, sexual incompatibility was not a legal basis for divorce. This significantly complicates Sue's position, and even though she is separated from her husband, she has a problem making it official, since in the eyes of the law Phillotson did not sin against her. Thus, the law becomes an obstacle for people to resolve the resulting problems by agreement and part ways without legal complications. Indeed, as suggested by Sue and Jude's experiences with their conjugal partners, legal provisions further entangle the already complex emotional relationships.

Hardy's sharp criticism of legislation is not only due to its tendency to mould the changing form of emotional relationships and to thwart the dissolution of unhappy marriages. Under the law in the Victorian era, some basic human rights were denied to women after marriage. Until the adoption of the Married Women's Property Acts of 1870 and 1882, the direct consequence of marriage was the complete legal invisibility of women. Upon marriage, women became femme-coverts, which actually meant that they could not own any property and that they became possessions of their husbands.[3] It is this incorporation of the woman's individuality and identity into that of the husband that is the main cause of Sue's opposition to the institution of marriage. The wedding ceremony itself, during which someone hands over the bride to her future husband, testifies to the objectification of women. As Sue aptly remarks: "According to the ceremony, as there were printed, my bridegroom chooses me of his own will and pleasure; but I don't choose him. Somebody gives me to him, like a she-ass or she-goat, or any domestic animal" (Hardy 2002: 163).

The objectification of women, as testified in the example of Sue's marriage with Phillotson, was not only a feature of the wedding ceremony but one of the hallmarks of Victorian conjugal life. According to the dominant social ideology, after marriage, a woman was not the owner of her body. In other words, her consent to sexual relations with her husband was taken for granted. Such a state of affairs is the main cause of discord between Sue and Phillotson. As girls and young women in the Victorian era had no sex education before marriage, they did not really understand what marriage really was. Therefore, Sue believes that the relationship between her and Philotson will maintain a friendly character even after they become a husband and wife. His sexual advances are unpleasant to her because it turns out that, although she likes him as a man, he is repulsive to her as a sexual partner. On the other hand, Phillotson accuses Sue that in not liking him, she is committing a sin (Hardy 2002: 214). The

2 Until the adoption of the Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act (1857), the only way for a woman to get out of marriage was "legal separation ordered by a court" (Mill 2017: 18).

3 According to Claudia Nelson, the adoption of laws that decreed that married women must also have legal rights simultaneously improved their position and reflected deep cultural anxieties in Victorian society (2007: 9). Such findings called into question the idealistic concept of home and family, fuelling the suspicion that the ideal rarely reflected the real.

fact that Phillotson sees Sue as his sexual possession and that by the very act of marriage, he acquired the absolute right to have intercourse with her whenever he wished is considered normal by him and the majority of Victorian society, but, alas, not by Sue. In Victorian society, hence, *Jude* caused such a loud reaction not only because it dealt with the taboo question of sexuality, but also because Sue may be the first female character who so openly and boldly spoke about a woman's right to her body and soul. As indicated by Sue, while emotional relationships should be based on voluntariness, marriage is conceived in such a way that it reduces the woman to an object of lust without free will and the right to say no.

As suggested by the examples of marriage in *Jude*, the social and legal stipulations of Victorian marriage aim to mould and standardize the life of married couples, or, to put it differently, bourgeois marriage represents a threat to the freedom of couples to organize their lives according to their mutual choices. In *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy goes beyond simply rejecting the "happily-ever-after" formula of a novel dealing with marriage. As suggested by the respective conjugal lives of Sue and Jude, rather than being the coveted ultimate goal of individual existence, the Victorian marriage is a hypocritical social convention that ensnares the inexperienced and the most sensitive ones into a trap. Hardy's pessimistic portrayal of literally all married couples in *Jude* singles out Hardy's last novel as the bleakest in his literary oeuvre. However, pointing out the causes of bad marriages and the necessary reforms of marriage laws indicates that the institution of marriage can and should be improved. Yet, through the description of Sue and Jude's cohabitation, the novel implies that love is regulated by law only in case of necessity. Their relationship, based on equality and true love, rather than convention and law, suggests that couples can arrange their relationships much more successfully than law and society. By giving this kind of union, which is not static and is based on friendship, priority over traditional marriage, Hardy expresses the progressive view that "the key to companionship is most emphatically to be sought in behaviour rather than in law" (Hammerton 1990: 270).

### *3. Free love*

Sue and Arabella, each in her way, fight for autonomy and take advantage of the wider range of opportunities for women that marked the fin de siècle epoch. This period is important because women achieved property rights, the right to higher education, as well as the right to engage in various professions. One of the main features of the end of the nineteenth century was the phenomenon of the New Woman, who, in addition to the aforementioned rights, also demanded the right "to explore alternatives to marriage and motherhood" (Merrick 2019: 36). As this right undermines one of the pillars of stability of Victorian society, it should come as no surprise that the New Woman provoked harsh condemnation from a section of the public who characterized her as a woman who wanted to become a man (Ingham 2002: 139). Still, as Merrick aptly remarks, the quality she possesses, which was considered the inviolable privilege of a man, is "a Victorian society-deemed masculine desire to take control of her own life" (2019: 29). In terms of her attitudes towards individual freedom and marriage, Sue Bridehead is the New Woman par

quintessence. Precisely this "male" desire to become the inviolable creator of her destiny is the principal goal of Sue's existence. Having had the opportunity to experience first-hand the constraints of Victorian conjugal life, she openly and boldly advocates the point of view that marriage is not only not her ultimate goal – it is not her goal at all.

After an unhappy marital experience, Sue turns into a fierce opponent of the institution of marriage. Her decision to remain outside of the reach of this economically, socially, and legally regulated institution is the consequence of her realisation that it is wedlock that forces spouses of equal backgrounds into an unequal relationship (Merrick 2019: 35). This is best exemplified by the relationship of Sue and Phillotson. Although they are equal both in terms of education and class, it is the Victorian concept of marriage that encourages Phillotson to view Sue, after they become a husband and a wife, as his legal possession that is always at his disposal.

The main problem with marriage, according to Sue, is that the union, although essentially private, is actually a public institution subject to interference and pressures from society. Throughout the novel, Sue functions as Hardy and Mona Caird's ventriloquist on the issue of marriage. In her controversial essay on marriage, Caird states that conjugal life should be a private matter concerning only the parties directly involved in the relationship. An ideal marriage, according to Caird, should be based upon equality and free will of both sides. In addition, the ideal emotional relationship should be free in the sense of being free from external influences, because any interference by law or society into this sacred union, as Caird claims, is impertinence (1888: par. 32). Or, in words of John Stuart Mill that Sue quotes when convincing Phillotson to let her go: "She, or he, who lets the world, or his own portion of it, choose his plan of life for him, has no need of any other faculty than the ape-like one of imitation" (Hardy 2002: 215). To put it differently, partners should be free to arrange the union according to their discretion and vision of what that union should be like. Sue and Jude attempt to create a closed and isolated relationship, "to cut themselves off from public life" (Jarvis 2016: 103) in order to free their relationship from external influences. This seclusion includes the physical isolation of the couple, and Sue and Jude rent "an isolated home in Aldbrickham so as not to draw attention to their unmarried status" (Griffith 2020: 129). In doing so, they attempt to remove the sacred union from the economic and public and move it to the domestic and private domain. By delineating the relationship of Sue and Jude, Hardy attempts to answer the key question – is free and independent love possible in Victorian society? At first glance, the union of Jude and Sue has a much better chance of success than the failed marriage of Jude and Arabella because they are bound together by mutual affinity. Their mutual resemblance and attachment are so evident that Philotson concludes that: "'They seem to be one person split in two'" (Hardy 2002: 221). However, establishing a harmonious relationship between these two lovers complicates the problematic issue of sex. Although Sue proposes a free union to Jude, it is not the kind of union typically associated with the term, the union in which "only passion justifies the act" (Ingham 2002: 149). Therefore, the novel's appeal for love free from external influences should not be reduced to an appeal for permissive

sex. To preserve her freedom and autonomy, Sue decides to create a sort of sexless relationship with all the men she gets involved with. Too preoccupied with the loss of personal freedom, Sue forces Jude into a relationship in which she always has the right to do as she likes, viewing his desire to be one with her and to consummate the relationship as coercion. Even though Jude is diametrically opposed to the conventional notion of a husband, she constantly acts as if there is a reason why she is on constant guard not to give in and surrender to him. The amount of freedom and autonomy she aspires to is something unprecedented in English literature, particularly in Victorian literature, which often reinforced the ideology according to which the woman's ultimate purpose was to please her husband. Sue Bridehead, with her wishes and aspirations, completely baffles her partners, who in the end decide to give her all the freedom she wants.

Specifically, the problem does not arise due to Sue's "curious aversion to sex" (Dave 1985: 130). Sue has often been misinterpreted by critics as a frigid, sexless woman.[4] As Jarvis convincingly argues, Sue's outspoken revulsion at Phillotson's sexual advances stands in stark contrast to the sexual relationship Sue develops with Jude (2016: 90). Sue, as Deresiewicz aptly remarks, is a passionate woman with a healthy, if weak, sex drive (2007: 60). She is often misconstrued as a flirtatious woman (even occasionally by Jude) due to her apparent vacillation throughout the novel. However, her inconsistency is not a result of wanting to keep a man, but a result of her inner conflict. Deresiewicz succinctly summarizes the essence of her turmoil: "her physical desires pull her in one direction, her intellectual and social desires in the other" (2007: 60). Therefore, the war between the flesh and the spirit mentioned in the novel's preface refers not only to Jude but also to Sue.

In other words, she attempts to subdue her "animal" desire not only to preserve her freedom. Sue attempts to subdue her instinct to take her relationship with Jude to the next level. She wants the two of them to transcend not only the socially and legally regulated institution of marriage but also to overcome "the natural impulses [...] that [often]encourage men and women to treat each other like animals" (Deresiewicz 2007: 61). Their emotional relationship, which is clear to even the most disinterested observer, truly transcends all existing frameworks: "Their supreme desire is to be together, to share each other's emotions and fancies and dreams" (Hardy 2002: 223). Therefore, this paper's argument goes in line with Dave's claim that in Hardy's vision, passion, while a natural and normal thing, needs to be restrained: "this animal ingredient in man must be duly disciplined and, if possible, quite sublimated in order that man might take to higher occupations unobstructed" (1985: 87). Sue sees the possibility of disciplining desire into a special, sublime kind of love, a love that is also friendship, a true companionship – the ideal to which Hardy's characters aspire.

To Sue's detriment, Jude, despite his wish to become Sue's comrade, cannot subdue his sexual urge. He is acutely aware of her wish to sublimate passion in order to ennoble their relationship: "All that's best and noblest in me loves you, and your freedom from everything that's gross has elevated me, and enobled me to do what I should never have dreamt myself capable of" (Hardy 2002: 256). Whereas Sue is

4 For Sue as a frigid, sexless woman, see Blake (1978) and Millett (1970: pp. 130–131).

capable of subduing her sexual urge, Jude, who is arguably (at least at the beginning of the novel) a more conventional character, is powerless to overcome the strong sexual attraction he feels for her. As their life together without the gratification of desire is real torture for Jude, he uses the first convenient opportunity to blackmail Sue into changing her attitude. Finally, Sue surrenders and the consummation of the relationship occurs. There is no indication that the satisfaction of the desire leads to a change in the relationship between them. As a matter of fact, at the fair where Sue and Jude meet Arabella and her husband, the couple seems happier than ever:

> Jude, in his light-grey holiday-suit, was really proud of her companionship, not more for her external attractiveness than for her sympathetic ways and words. Their complete mutual understanding, in which every glance and movement was so effectual as speech for conveying intelligence between them made them almost the two parts of a single whole. (Hardy 2002: 281)

However, even though it appears that the transformation of their relationship into a sexual one does not negatively affect the quality of their relationship, it does result in long-term negative consequences in terms of public exposure of the nature of their relationship due to the birth of children. Even though Sue and Jude represent a couple whose relationship all other examples of emotional relationships in the novel in terms of intensity of affection and equality of surpasses partners, it is doomed to a tragic end. This tragic end is brought about by social and economic pressures on them which intensify when the couple turns into a family. While Sue and Jude are only a couple, "the cousins are able to obscure class readings of their sexual relationship in part through their consanguinity" (Jarvis 2016: 103). However, the children's presence is irrefutable evidence of the sexual nature of their relationship. Due to the exposure of the illegality of their cohabitation, Jude cannot keep a job, and the family is forced to move from place to place. Bearing in mind the oversensitive nature of these two lovers, exclusion from society necessarily fosters guilt in them. The final blow in the form of a tragic murder and suicide only precipitates their inevitable psychological collapse. After Jude's death and Sue's self-sacrifice in the form of returning to her first husband, the question remains whether they wanted lotto much, or whether it was simply too soon for such a bold endeavour. Whichever answer is correct (and Hardy suggests both throughout the course of the novel), the fact remains that their attempt to transcend the boundaries of class, gender, time, and place has remained unfulfilled.

### *4. Conclusion*

Starting from the observation that Hardy's visions of love and marriage have often been misunderstood, this paper offers evidence that his view, as indicated by *Jude the Obscure*, is much more complex and refined. Hardy is generally recognized as a harsh critic of the marital institution. However, *Jude* implies that Hardy's attitude should not be oversimplified into a straightforward denouncement of marriage. Sue Bridehead, who has the function of the author's ventriloquist on this issue, offers scathing criticism of the contemporary Victorian institution of marriage as a sordid

social and legal contract that is essentially an economic institution and has nothing in common with love. As evidenced by a parade of unhappily married couples in the novel, Victorian marriage is often contracted for the wrong reasons. Moreover, as the novel implies, legal provisions are unnecessary complications to the already complex relationships between the sexes. In addition, Victorian marriage contributes to the objectification and denial of women's basic human rights. From the analysis of the failed marriages of Sue and Jude, it follows that, although temperamental differences are sometimes the cause of marital troubles, it is the institution of marriage itself that, with its legal and social stipulations, is fundamentally unfit to shape the changing form of emotional relationship. On the one hand, *Jude* may be interpreted as Hardy's appeal for the reform of marriage laws. On the other hand, the novel is also a plea to couples to arrange their relationships, be they official or unofficial, in a much better manner than any law can. As indicated by *Jude*, each couple should be given the freedom to arrange their unions according to their desires and preferences. However, the novel's tragic end testifies to the claim that love free from external influences (pressures) in the Victorian era is a dream, an illusion that is dispelled by turning the couple into a family, which inevitably increases the social and economic pressures on the unconventional union of Sue and Jude.

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## HARDYJEVA VIZIJA LJUBAVI U *NESLAVNOM JUDEU*: BRAK KAO JEDAN DRUŠTVENI I PRAVNI UGOVOR NASPRAM SLOBODNOJ DRUGARSKOJ LJUBAVI

### Sažetak

Polazeći od zapažanja da vizija braka Thomasa Hardyja, kako se odražava u Neslavnom Judeu (1895), ne bi trebala biti pretjerano pojednostavljena u izravnu osudu ove institucije, ovaj rad nudi dokaz da su njegova gledišta mnogo profinjenija. Opisujući brakove i slobodnu zajednicu svojih glavnih likova, roman se nastoji pozabaviti nekoliko važnih pitanja. Prvo, Sue Bridehead, koja ima ulogu autorova trbuhozborca po ovom pitanju, oštro kritizira viktorijanski brak koji smatra ekonomskom institucijom koja nema ništa zajedničko s ljubavlju. Kako sugeriraju primjeri nesretnih brakova Sue i Philotson te Jude i Arabelle, ova institucija predstavlja prljav društveni i pravni ugovor koji supružnike prisiljava na neravnopravan odnos i fundamentalno je neprikladna za oblikovanje promjenjive prirode emocionalnih odnosa. Drugo, roman sugerira da su zakonske odredbe nepotrebne komplikacije već složenim odnosima među spolovima. Jude se može tumačiti kao Hardyjev apel za reformu bračnih zakona koji onemogućavaju jednostavan razvod braka i pridonose viktimizaciji ranjivijeg supružnika, kao i objektivizaciji i uskraćivanju osnovnih ljudskih prava ženama. Hardyjev pripovjedač daje prednost slobodnoj zajednici Sue i Jude, koja se temelji na jednakosti i prijateljstvu, u odnosu na konvencionalni brak. Sue pokušava podići njihov odnos na višu razinu koja nadilazi ne samo društveno i zakonski reguliranu instituciju već i fizičku ljubav. Iako par nastoji stvoriti transcendentnu vezu bez vanjskih utjecaja, njihova je ljubav osuđena na propast. Ključno pitanje na koje roman pokušava odgovoriti jest — je li u viktorijanskom društvu moguća slobodna i neovisna emocionalna veza? Tragični kraj romana sugerira da je nekonvencionalni suživot Sue i Jude previše napredovao za vrijeme i mjesto u kojem se dogodio.

Ključne riječi: Thomas Hardy, *Neslavni Jude*, brak, slobodna ljubav, prijateljstvo, Sue Bridehead, Arabella Donn