



A Probe Into the Narrative Structure of *Jude the Obscure*

LI Lingling^{[a],*}

^[a]Foreign Languages Department, Binzhou University, China.

*Corresponding author.

Received 18 June 2013; Received 12 August 2013

Abstract

This paper attempts to explore the narrative structure Hardy employed in *Jude the Obscure*. Based on close reading and textual analysis of *Jude the Obscure*, the essay argues that the text takes on the form of circular structure and contrastive symmetry. With such pluralistic forms, a perfect harmony is thus achieved between the content, especially in the tragic themes, and form so as to enhance the tragic effect and irony of the text. It is concluded that both in time span and narrative structure Hardy transcends the 19th century Victorian norms, thus Hardy may be also acknowledged as a modernist writer.

Key words: *Jude the Obscure*; Narrative structure; Circular structure; Symmetry; Contrast

LI Lingling (2013). A Probe Into the Narrative Structure of *Jude the Obscure*. *Studies in Literature and Language*, 7(1), 52-59. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/sll/article/view/j.sll.1923156320130701.2620> DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/j.sll.1923156320130701.2620>

This essay spotlights the narrative structure of *Jude the Obscure*. First, the text takes on the form of circular structure in terms of space transition and plot development model. Second, symmetry is employed by Hardy to expose marital relations between the major characters as well as the process of transformation in the religious beliefs of the protagonists. Finally, contrast or conflict is embodied in the same person, between the characters or reflected in the themes of the novel. It is concluded that both in time span and narrative structure Hardy transcends the 19th century Victorian norms. In this sense Hardy may be also acknowledged as a modernist writer for his proficiency in the manipulation of circular structure, symmetry and

contrast. With such pluralistic forms, a perfect harmony is thus achieved between the content, especially in the tragic themes, and form so as to enhance the tragic effect and irony of the text.

Jude the Obscure (JO) is the last novel of Thomas Hardy. Since its publication, it has provoked most heated repercussions and criticism from literary critics across the entire world. It is considered by many as the best novel Hardy ever wrote, being called his “swan song”. However, over the century critics still tend to focus on the content and themes of the story. Few have touched the artistic form of the novel. This tendency, which emphasizes the content while neglecting the form of Hardy’s novels, is more likely to mislead the readers and researchers as well – while reading a novel they are vigorously tempted by its fascinating plot, characters or themes, etc as exposed in the content of the novel. Hence, this essay is designed to concentrate on the narrative structure of the novel by applying recent theories in narratology.

Narrative structure is probably an essential element concerning the form of JO. In a large sense, Hardy’s training in architecture and music exerts an immensely significant influence on his literary form. As Merry Williams points out, “It was his architectural training that enabled him to say that Casterbridge met the countryside in a *mathematical* line and that *Jude the Obscure* was ‘almost geometrically constructed’ (Williams, 2005, p.21)”. He always values his architectural background and draws upon it when composing his own novels. In the novel Hardy mixes together such geometrical structure or elements as circular or ring structure, symmetry and contrast with an attempt to achieve perfect integrity between architecture and literature. For Hardy, the true architect was like an artist, a ‘creator of forms’. Art must remain close to the rhythms of life, and he went on feeling this after he had given up architecture for literature:

That the author loved the art of concealing art was undiscerned.

For instance, as to rhythm, years earlier he had decided that

too regular a beat was bad art. He had fortified himself in his opinion by thinking of the analogy of architecture, between which art and that of poetry he had discovered, to use his own words, that there existed a close and curious parallel, both arts, unlike some others, knew that in architecture cunning irregularity is of enormous worth, and it is obvious that he carried on into his verse, perhaps in part unconsciously,... (Hardy, 1962, p.300)

1. CIRCULAR STRUCTURE

As a post-Victorian writer, Hardy revolts against the then invariable and prevailing Victorian narrative norm, i.e. linear narration and pursues a non-linear narrative mode. This attempt of Hardy is primarily reflected on his adept application of circular structure or ring in geometry into his literary work *Jude*. The arrangement of circular structure roughly lies in space transition and plot development model.

1.1 Circular Structure in Space Transition

First and Foremost, *JO* is divided into six parts, each identified by the name of the places in Wessex, centering about the fictitiously-named university town of Christminster. Two of the six parts, in fact, are set in Christminster: Part Second, and Part Sixth. Jude's transient life moves on along with five particular place names which follow the route: Marygeenà Christminsterà Melchesterà Shastonà Aldbrickham and elsewhereà Christminster. After a thorough reading of the text, we may observe that this arrangement is not merely a simple circulation of places but that of Jude and Sue's life experience.

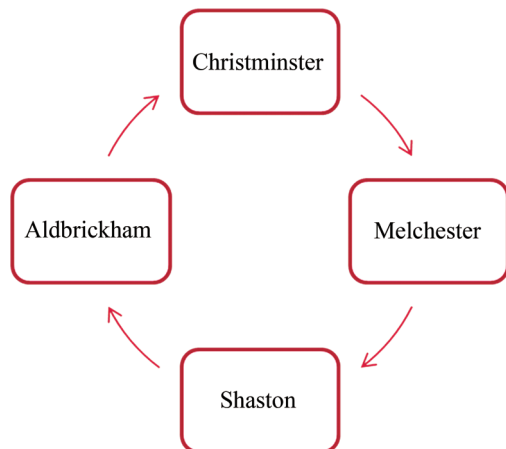


Figure 1
Circular Structure in Space Transition

As depicted in the flow chart, Marygeen seems to be the first stop or commencement of Jude's life. This is absolutely not the case. He was brought up at Marygeen, but practically Marygeen does, in no sense, pertain to him. He is merely abandoned there in a night just as his son at Aldbrickham. (Zhang, 1987, p.70) To this extent, Jude begins his pursuit in life in *Christminster*, which

is "paradise of the learned" and "a castle, manned by scholarship and religion" from Jude's perspective. It is in that very scholarly city, that Jude initiates his persevering struggle for a scholarly life in Christminster, and that having met his cousin Sue Bridehead, Jude develops a growing affection or love for her. The latter, however, turns out to thwart or melt away his scholarly ambitions apart from lack of "trained teachers or coaches". "All that was clear to him amounted to this, which the whole scheme had burst up, like an iridescent soap-bubble, under the touch of a reasoned inquiry." (Thomas Hardy, 1991, p.118)

After the collapse of his University hopes at Christminster, Jude continues his life at Melchester, where he sustains his second dream - "the ecclesiastical and altruistic life as distinct from the intellectual and emulative life." But this pursuit is also discouraged by his infatuation for Sue until Sue gets married to Phillotson, who used to be his schoolmaster.

Shaston is the next stop in Jude's life, which serves as the turning point in the destiny of Jude and Sue and also the attributing factor procuring their union of love, unmarried. Jude moves on to Shaston to date with Sue, and there they kiss. "The kiss is a turning-point in Jude's career since it was glaringly inconsistent for him to pursue the idea of becoming the soldier and servant of a religion in which sexual love was regarded as at its best a frailty, and at its worst damnation (227)." Just as his first aspiration - towards academic proficiency - is checked by a woman - Arabella, his second aspiration - towards apostleship - is also checked by a woman - this time, Sue.

Afterwards, the unmarried couple left Shaston for Aldbrickham and elsewhere in order to sustain a living while finding refuge from the inquisitive and unwelcome eyes of the world. There they are always on the move from one place to another, leaving to the readers with agitation and depression.

The final stop of Jude's life is still Christminster, the starting and end point of his life and dream, which also functions as the peak of Jude's tragedy. The alarming and catastrophic child-murder committed by the precocious Little Father Time is the final deathblow to Sue's belief in love and religion. She resigns herself physically back to Phillotson and that proves to be the deathblow to Jude's life. He closes his journey of life at Christminster.

To summarize, the life course of Jude and Sue practically starts from Christminster and ends at that right place taking the form of a circular structure. In a sense, Jude experiences his circle of life with the transition of places: Christminsterà Melchesterà Shastonà Aldbrickham and elsewhereà Christminster. Christminster is an enchanting city imbued Jude with all his aspirations in life; Christminster is also a city with disillusionment and lethality to Jude. During the process each step on for Jude and Sue is an intensified tragedy. Thus an irony of fate

and tragic effect is accomplished.

1.2 Circular Structure in Plot Development Model

In addition, circular structure also appears in the plot development model of the novel. As shown in the previous section, Jude's travelling route between the five places can also be described as his life-long persistent but hopeless pursuit for learning and love. The plot extends gradually to the readers according to Jude's personal experience. The plot development model of the text can be illustrated as follows in sequence:

1 Jude parted from her wife Arabella and went to Christminster pursuing his aspirations for learning (and love)à 2 Handicapped in learning, Jude followed Cousin Sue to Melchester, only to find that she had been wedded to another personà 3 Thwarted in love, he followed Sue to Shaston and they fell in love unmarriedà 4 The couple reached Aldbrickham and elsewhere living happilyà 5 They returned to Christminster experiencing the child-murder; they returned to their former spouse separately; Jude died lonely there with unfulfilled or lost love and career. And this sequence can be simplified as the following chart:

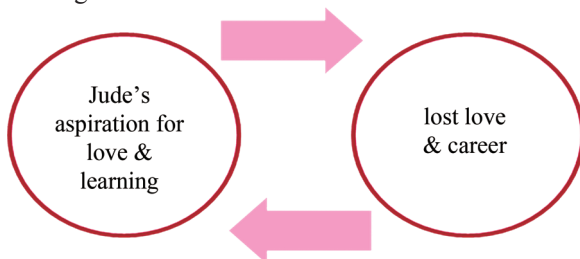


Figure 2
Circular Structure in Plot Development Model 1: Jude's Pursuit of Love and Career

These narrative lines or sequence constitutes the framework of the text in terms of plot development. Along with the development of time sequence, Jude went through his whole life course with space transition and eventually reverted to his starting point finishing his circle of life. Hence it is obvious that in plot development model, the text takes on the form of a closed circle. The novel starts with Jude's attempt to pursue his love and career and ends up with the loss of his love and career. The protagonist starts with nothing and culminates in nothing. The two things combined mould a unique circular structure. First, the geographical reversion (Christminster — Melchester — Shaston — Aldbrickham and elsewhere — Christminster) shown in Jude and Sue's life circle is one clear marker of circular structure in space transition of the fiction. Second, another circle of their doomed destiny or fate shapes with the sequence "misfortune — struggle — happiness — misfortune", as depicted in the following chart.

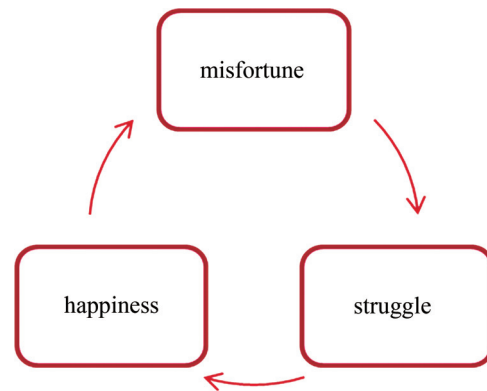


Figure 3
Circular Structure in Plot Development Model 2: The Protagonists' Destiny

Therefore, like a circle, this circular narrative structure, encloses every taste of life. In this life course, Jude does not undergo much change from beginning to end, whether geographically or in his social status and living conditions. Ambitious as he is, he can never practice other careers except as a stone-mason; his final wife is also her first one; Christminster - the enchanting city of light where his life starts is also where his life ends; He ultimately dies in a renting house in misery, just as is the case he once lived humbly in her aunt's shabby home. Likewise, his cousin Suzanne Bridehead - his dearest love also undergoes a circular life. Revolting against the Victorian conventions, Sue divorced his husband Phillotson, eloping with her true love - Jude, in cohabitation; whereas her willfully rebellious spirit fell thoroughly into collapse in face of the child massacre. In salvation she returned to her husband selling torpidly her flesh and soul. In this circular narrative structure, the plot develops upwards from some particular crises or coincidences. To a great extent, every time Jude steps on to a new place, there is invariably a coincidence or chance which acts as a turning point in his life, leading the protagonist, step by step, to a tragic ending. This preconceived storyline breaks the Victorian narrative conventions of linear narration and strengthens the personal tragedy of the characters.

2. SYMMETRY

Apart from circular structure, *Jude* is also marked by perfect contrastive symmetry. Influenced by his experience in architecture, Hardy ingeniously arranged symmetrical structure in the text in dealing with marital relations between the main characters and the changing course of their religious beliefs. They are Jude and Sue, Arabella as well as Phillotson.

2.1 Symmetry in Marital Relations Between the Characters

Above all, there exists symmetrical structure in marital relations between the four characters.

When it comes to Jude, Arabella Donn is his first marriage partner. In Part First, young Jude was concentrating on his promising future career concerning Christminster: "Christminster shall be my Alma Mater; and I'll be her beloved son, in whom she shall be well pleased," (35) when something smacked him sharply in the ear, and he was aware that a soft cold substance had been flung at him and had fallen at his feet. It was - a piece of flesh, the characteristic part of a barrow-pig. Overwhelmed at her sensual beauty, he grovelled before her red skirt. "The unvoiced call of woman to man, which was uttered very distinctly by Arabella's personality, held Jude to the spot against his intention -- almost against his will..." (37) This new experience diverted his attention from his scholarly aspirations for Christminster, and he felt himself to be another man from the Jude of yesterday. His books and his intentions hitherto adhered to so strictly was of no use and even a sheer waste of time to him. He was just living for the first time: not wasting life. As for him, it was better to "love a woman than to be a graduate, or a parson, or a pope"! With such new outlook, he was seduced into an unwise marriage with Arabella.

However, this matrimonial union that based a permanent contract on a temporary feeling had no necessary connection with affinities that alone render a lifelong comradeship tolerable. "She soon found him such a slow old coach that there was no prospect of his ever bettering himself or her." Abandoned by his first wife, his former hopes reburned in his heart. For this he left Marygreen for Christminster. But the fact of his being married was the first barrier to his craving for true love, i.e. his later marital relations with his cousin Sue.

Strictly speaking, Jude's moving on for Christminster was more on the basis of passion for Sue than a scholarly one: "So would she be to him a kindly star, an elevating power, a companion in Anglican worship, a tender friend." (91) So there do exist essential affinities that alone render a lifelong comradeship with Sue. Despite the three crushing reasons for his affection for her, he yielded to her temptation after all. That is why he accompanied her wherever she went, regardless of potential consequences even in the case of Sue's marriage with his respected schoolmaster - Phillotson - out of mere impulse and gratitude for the assistance and protection the other offered, just like his first marriage, worked as another forcible obstacle for their permanent comradeship.

On the other hand, there is so much in common between them. Sue was intellectually unorthodox, anticlerical, contemptuous of conventions and brilliant in a way that dazzled Jude. Both of them were of high ideals, strongly attracted to each other, possessing abundance of sympathy, common interests and pursuits. Sue would never find an internal peace if she left Jude, nor would he. They are mutually loved so that Sue felt it unbearable to be wife of Phillotson. As she said: "Though I like

Phillotson as a friend, I don't like him - it is a torture to me to -- live with him as a husband!" (223) What tortures Sue most is "the necessity of being responsive to that man whenever he wishes, good as he is morally!" Consequently the dreadful contract between Sue and Phillotson came to a close under the table. With Phillotson's permission, this right match began their practically married happy life.

Had it not the catastrophe of child-murder committed by Little Father Time, they might have lived in harmony regardless of criticism from the outer world. However, for all their rebellion, this harsh reality broke through their ultimate psychological line especially from Sue's side. "We must conform!... All the ancient wrath of the Power above us has been vented upon us, His poor creatures and we must submit. There is no choice. We must. It is no use fighting against God!" (361) "We ought to be continually sacrificing ourselves on the altar of duty!" With this steep shift in Sue, this "Nature's own marriage" gave way to "Heaven's." Both of them reverted to their original marriage.

Such being the case, the two pairs of protagonists witness a symmetrical process of development in their marital relations: "union - partition - reunion" and "marriage between Jude and Arabella and that between Sue and Phillotson - two divorces - remarriage between the original pairs." Transparently, Sue's return to Phillotson accounts for Jude's mortality of the body and Sue's mortality of the soul (Wang, 2003, pp.59-62).

2.2 Symmetry in Religious Beliefs of the Characters

Finally, the characters' attitudes towards religion demonstrate a structure of contrastive symmetry in their shifting process, Jude and Sue in particular.

As a boy of eleven, Jude had developed a keen aspiration for Christianity and worshiped Christminster as "the Heavenly Jerusalem". For this he made strenuous efforts in his self study of Latin and Greek to fulfill his dream of being ordained at Christminster. Even after the collapse of his University hopes, his fervent passion for the priesthood rekindled in his heart. So pious and devoted a Christian was he that he went to church frequently and made daily prayers. Whereas having realized the purity of his love with Sue unacceptable to the world, he began to feel the absurdity and paradox of religion. Therefore when Christianity and conventions killed their true love, he burned all his books on theology and ethnics and halted his services in the church. He ended his life as a man of sin from Christian perspective. In short Jude's shifting orientations to religion are marked by the paradigm: Jude the Saint to Jude the Sinner.

On the contrary, Sue experienced a thoroughly opposing shift in religion. Sue appeared first as a religious skeptic, buying pagan figures like the Venus and the Apollo which symbolize liberty. As an independent and rebellious figure, "her intellect played like lambent

lightning over conventions and formalities.” Unlike Jude, however, facing their love despised by the world, Sue gradually gave in to Christian dogmas spiritually, sacrificing herself on the altar of duty as a wife. She turned out to be a “Saint” destroying all her emotions and feelings. Hence, Sue’s paradigm in religion flows like this: Sue the Sinner to Sue ‘the Saint’.

Based on the analysis above, this symmetrical structure in the changing of marital intercourse and worship between the characters constitutes Hardy’s bitter criticism and satire of Victorian reality which is Hardy’s philosophy in tragedy.

3. CONTRAST

JO is a novel rich in contrast. Contrast or contradiction dominates and contributes a great deal to the themes and relationship between characters of the novel, or it is embodied in the same character. The following aims at dwelling on and exploring the various contrasts reflected or implied in the novel with an attempt to further investigate Hardy’s skillful application of contrast into his literary works.

3.1 Contrast as Embodied in the Same Character

First, contrast or conflict may lie in one character like that in *Jude*. Hardy ascertained that the tragic end of man lay in “the contrast between the ideal life man wished to lead and the squalid life he was fated to lead”. (Hardy, 1962, p.289) So as for Hardy, contrast goes hand in hand with tragedy. “Tragedy may be created by an environment of... human institutions.” The idea revealed Hardy’s great progress in understanding tragedy. By relating Jude’s fate to Victorian society, Hardy endeavored to seek the cause of tragedy from social institutions, referring tragedy to the contrast, or conflict between man and society. In the blighted unjust society, it was inevitable that the laboring people with aspirations for a better life were made to meet tragedy. “The best tragedy - highest tragedy in short - is that of the WORTHY encompassed by the INEVITABLE”. (Pinion, 1968, p.145) In this case, the two most significant protagonists Jude and Sue are the best instances.

In Jude, we see two contrasting sides of his character: the sensual Jude versus the spiritual or intellectual Jude, or we might say Jude the scholar and Jude the lover, Jude the Christian and Jude the Pagan, Jude as a knight in his dauntless struggle for his dream and true love versus Jude as a villain. Walking leisurely with the hungrily sensuous Arabella, he found ‘it was better to love a woman than to be a graduate, or a parson; ay, or a pope,’ totally oblivious of his life-long sacred aspirations. He is apt to be lost to all conditions of things in the advent of a fresh and wild pleasure just as is the case of his encountering Arabella. In the (implied) author’s words, “He was a man of too many passions to make a good clergyman; the utmost he could

hope for was that in a life of constant internal warfare between flesh and spirit the former might not always be victorious.” (201) As a matter of fact it is the dual nature in his character that sparks off his ultimate failure in love and career.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the narrator presents Jude from the inside, as it were, whereas readers and critics must grasp Sue almost entirely from external evidence - what she says and does, and what people report about her. The usual assertion that the narrative is never presented as from Sue’s perspective is mistaken, but internal glimpses certainly are infrequent. Readers, like Jude, have to trust to empathy. Consequently, Jude is understandable even if one doesn’t admire what one sees; with Sue, the reader must intuit the narrator’s (and Hardy’s) intentions. The result is that even though the novel is most clearly readable as the impassioned speculation on the career of its male protagonist, who deserves sympathy for the frustration and pain caused him by personal and intellectual dilemmas, for most readers the core of their reactions to the novel lies within the conflicting values and feelings of Sue. (Kramer, 1991, p.172)

3.2 Contrast Between the Characters

There also exists a sharp contrast between characters, such as the gap between sexless Sue Bridehead and sensual Arabella Donn as well as the one between Jude and Phillotson.

To begin with, Sue and Arabella constitute the most transparent contrastive pair in *Jude*. Sue and Arabella, in Hardy’s *JO*, are like a Pre-Raphaelite painting of Sacred and Profane Love. There they stand—assuming the absent man, the abashed, overwhelmed Jude. Sue is thin, pretty, with a light, abstracted, questioning gaze; Arabella is round, sly-eyed and sleepy, with the dreaming torpor of a destitute girl pondering an exchange of sexual coin. In contrast with sensual and pragmatic Arabella, Sue is “intellectual and intensely seeking”. (Kramer, 1991, p.164) It is scarcely worth noting that they are thoroughly different, forming almost two opposites. The sources of feeling could not be more reflective than they are in Sue, or more immediate and formless than they are in Arabella. Experience, with them, is not merely the sum of events gone through; it is the response of their differing consciousness to love, want, greed, or renunciation.

Then Sue is sexless with repressed feelings for love. She insists on virginity or remaining a ‘bachelor girl’, fiercely resisting men’s possession of her body as a symbol of independence from male enslavement. However, her ideal for a bachelorette goes to extremity in Victorian Age. She craves for passionate love, but fears physical relations with men. Therefore, Sue may be described as a vivacious woman, a perplexed Victorian maiden, a ruined weaker, in dreaming of being a typical free “bachelor” girl, inevitably renounces her love and

falls in with the wishes of Patriarchal moral codes and struggles for salvation. Sue fails and is denied in the ache of modernism. (Zhang, 2006, pp.51-53)

On the other hand, Arabella is sensual, "she was a complete and substantial female animal - no more, no less." 36) Compared with Sue, she is a seducer to men, who, by any means, attains her goal by regaining Jude from Sue. Sue's return to Phillotson derives from her self-punishment, but Arabella's regaining of Jude is based on her belief that Jude is the very man she likes. The latter one does not conceal her own desire while Sue is always evasive in her feelings to Jude. Arabella explains to Phillotson her idea on how a man can control a woman and make her yield.

However, she shares her perspective and insight with the author as an acute observer of Sue, who hesitates between her sexual desire and hysterical abstinence, while Arabella, through the whole story, decides her own destiny. So Arabella prevails or wins in Victorian society. The down-to-earth Arabella is a heartless seductress, but that does not mean she is not a survivor. Arabella encompasses the archetype of the Mother Earth who lives off of her fertility and sexuality. Arabella is just that, a sexual creature that understands the cycle of life and death, and what must be done in order to accomplish that cycle. She does everything in her power to survive as a Victorian woman while also fulfilling the duties of the Mother Earth, which consequently depicts her as being a vile, selfish, and promiscuous person. She has a power Jude cannot possess nor understand -

the power of life and death. In this sense, Arabella is the Earth Mother, the survivor, and the hero of *JO*. The reasons are listed as follows:

First, Arabella's actions are animalistic and overt, but only because the Mother Earth must conform to the standards of the Victorian woman in order to accomplish her goals. Arabella marries in order to survive in the Victorian society, and she goes about it in a direct manner:

On a sudden something smacked him sharply in the ear, and he became aware that a soft cold substance had been flung at him and had fallen at his feet. A glance told him what it was—a piece of flesh, the characteristic part of a barrow-pig, which the country-men used for greasing their boots, as it was useless for any other purpose. (*JO*, 35)

Then here Arabella uses the pig penis as her missile to portray to Jude what she wants from him. She does not want a sentimental relationship, but a sexual relationship. The goddess of fertility simply wants to have sex, not engage in an emotional affair, but Jude sees the penis and says, "... used for greasing their boots, as it was useless for any other purpose." Jude does not understand the gesture, which results in mixed communication. He does not see that he is dispensable, just as the pig's penis. All Arabella needs is a man to help her reproduce, she can easily throw him away like the pig. Her action of throwing

the penis was a sign for Jude. That is all he is to her, that is all she wants from him, and it is easy for her to throw away. Jude assumes that all love is the same; he is unable to open his mind to different concepts of the feeling. His love is a courtly one, where secrecy and passion motivates the pursuit. Arabella's idea of love is a more practical sense of the feeling. What she wants from Jude is his body – his social status, prestige, future, and goals do not matter at all to her. Even with these conflicting ideas of love, Arabella and Jude marry. Arabella is the only character in *JO* that is able to survive by the end of the novel.

In this sense, Arabella and Sue belong to two contradicting types of new woman.

3.3 Contrast as Reflected in the Themes

As can be inferred from *JO*, Hardy handles the classic theme of love and marriage along with that of flesh and spirit, each pair of which constitutes a distinct contrast or contradiction.

First and foremost, in contemporary views, marriage should be based on love and love perpetuates marriage. Whereas in *JO*, love and marriage is always at war with each other and seems to be an irreconcilable one. In the novel Jude's marriage with Arabella illustrates Hardy's view that such a union based entirely on the passing surge of sexual passion tends to be immensely fragile and is doomed to failure and misfortune. Arabella tricks Jude into marriage partly by coercion and tapping his sensuality. Drastically different in personality, educational background and disposition, the couple has no shared interests or common pursuits. Arabella's concept about marriage is nothing but to gain a husband "with a lot of earning power for buying her frocks and hats... and throw aside those stupid books for practical undertaking," (Culler, 1975, p.72) While Jude's spiritual pursuits and his imaginative disposition is far from gratifying her practical needs and material comforts. Their marriage is doomed to end up in failure.

Jude's marriage with Arabella is plainly absurd. She forces Jude into marriage by manipulating his presence in her house as to make him compromised. He marries her because he is still sensitive to such abandoned concepts as 'honor' and 'integrity'. In fact, his remarriage with Arabella is a black parody of Sue's with Phillotson, the one made possible only by will, the other through stolidity. After the remarriage, Jude's hope after Sue's desertion of him melts away and his vitality is steadily fading. Arabella's selfishness and mercilessness intensifies his despair and further accelerates his destruction.

Jude and Arabella's first and second marriages, though well protected by the law and the social norms, in no way provide the couple with real love and sweet happiness. On the contrary, it serves as the accomplice of the wicked, the schemer of marriage - Arabella - to procure what she hunts for. Under the disguise of law, it justifies lies and deceits, produces conflicts and pain, tortures the tender-

hearted and deprives the individuals of their right to seek for true affection. Marriage claims to bond the couple happily together; in the novel, however, it is by no means the guarantee and protector of love. Marriage and love, once a harmonious whole, is split apart. Arabella and Jude's marriage is nothing less than a ridicule of the prevailing marital institution in Victorian Age.

Furthermore, another theme of *Jude* is the conflict between flesh and spirit. Thomas Hardy himself once described the book as "a deadly war waged between flesh and spirit". The contradiction between flesh and spirit dominates the whole novel. Jude's entanglement with Arabella clearly reveals the fierce struggle of flesh and spirit in Jude.

Jude encounters Arabella for the first time when Jude is reciting the list of Classical authors whom he has mastered and is making plans for further study. However, his quiet dream of scholarship is abruptly disturbed by Arabella Donne, a country wench, who deliberately tosses a pig's pizzle at him to draw his attention. The pizzle is a symbol of sex which signifies that there is to be nothing else in their relationship but sex. Jude singles Arabella out from other girls and his first sight at her arouses in him overwhelming passion of its kind which is usually lighted when the first woman, whatever her kind, comes into contact with him. This is the first time that Jude has been with a girl for a while and their first acquaintance brings to Jude a kind of feeling that is new and fresh overflowing with excitement and passion. Arabella begs Jude to keep visiting her on Sundays and on the first Sunday that comes after this casual meeting he weighs for an instant whether to spend the afternoon in reading classics or phone her. Although he soon realizes that this girl is somewhat incompatible with his academic pursuits and alerts him of not being distracted from his study, yet blind to all her coarseness, he is driven to the girl. At length, flesh subdues spirit while Jude's sense overcomes sensibility.

In essence, it is a hidden sexual drive that takes hold of or seizes Jude. He cannot help yielding to the temptation although he knows clearly that Arabella is not the type of girl that he really appreciates, whether in appearance or in temperament, nor even to say a spiritual companion to accompany him through his journey of academic pursuits. Jude is totally seduced by Arabella's physical charms and yields to the desires of the flesh. His "great expectations" give way to sensuality. Jude marries Arabella because she lies in saying that she is pregnant. To be responsible for Arabella's "pregnancy", Jude, out of sympathy and the pressure of social conventions rather than affection, agrees to marry her immediately. It is Jude's misfortune that his first woman is not of a finer kind, not of a kind that could promise sweet conjugal comradeship through life's rough journey or encouragement in his difficult course towards a goal far distant and far higher than his present position: "...she was a complete and substantial female animal -- no more, no less". Later, Jude encounters Arabella in a

pub in Christminster spending a night living together, though legally in a sense that they are still a couple, yet not morally in that Jude, at that time, has already been deeply attached to Sue. His contemptible action distresses the more refined nature of Sue. The animal part of him is always too strong for the spiritual.

Hence Arabella reflects Jude's character flaws in nature -- his unquenchable sexual desire always overwhelms. The very fact that Jude allows himself to be deceived by her, in succession -- even spending a night with her in a casual husband-and-wife relationship after her having once abandoned him and while he falls in love with Sue, indicates the strength of the sensual portion of his nature.

Jude has his share of patience and steadfastness, but he is more a physical creature. In the eyes of Arabella, he is more of a desirable sexual object. Eventually, the conflict between Jude "the scholar" and Jude "the lover" intertwines, and the pursuit for love involves abandoning his once burning ideals and aspirations. When sex is drawing a young man in one direction and his ideals in another, he is destined to undergo tremendous emotional anguish. The conflict between flesh and spirit is the essence with Jude throughout his life. As a basically good man with a potentiality for some kind of greatness within his own sphere, Jude is pulled this way and that by desires and his character flaws, until he finally dies in misery.

To sum up, contradictions or contrasts are prevalent in the novel. In addition to what is discussed above, there are other pairs of contrastive elements, such as love and career; humanity and Christianity. All serves well to delineate the inner conflicting emotions of the characters which bring about their predicaments and despair and to project the irreconcilable conflicts between character and environment. The sharp contrasts between the two are so intense that the whole novel is overwhelmed with grim pathos and poignancy. (Zhang, 2008, pp.9-10)

CONCLUSION

Based on the above analysis, it may be seen that Hardy takes the lead in his manipulation of circular structure as well as contrast and symmetry. All this strengthens and highlights the tragedy of the protagonists, especially Jude and Sue. Bitter irony is also achieved with such structural arrangement. As a transitional writer, Hardy challenges the overwhelming Victorian conventions of linear structure and breaking new ground of modern fictional structure -- circular structure with symmetry and contrast which constitutes Hardy's unique aesthetic vision on architecture and literature.

Nowadays, modern readers or scholars are coming to realize its glorious aesthetic value in art form. They are increasingly aware of the perfect harmony achieved between the content and form of the text. Just as Dale Kramer points out, Hardy was "read" by *Jude* as much as *Jude* is a reading by Hardy of his times (1991, p.168).

REFERENCES

- Culler, Jonathan (1975). *Structuralist poetics* (p.72). Cornell University Press.
- Hardy, F. E. (1962). *The life of Thomas Hardy* (pp.289, 300). London: Macmillan.
- Hardy, Thomas (1991). *Jude the Obscure* (pp.35-361). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Giordano, Frank Jr. (1984). *"I'd Have My Life Unbe"-Thomas Hardy's self-destructive characters*. Alabama: The University of Alabama Press.
- Kramer, Dale (1991). *Critical approaches of the fiction of Thomas Hardy* (164-168). London: Macmillan Press.
- Pinion, F. B. (1968). *A hardy companion* (p.145). London: Macmillan.
- Wang, Y. M. (2003). Form is content: An interpretation of *Jude the Obscure*. *Journal of Foreign Languages and Literature*, 20(3), 59-62.
- Williams, Merryn (2005). *A preface to Hardy* (p.21). Beijing: Peking University Press.
- Zhang, W. N. (2008). On binary oppositions in *Jude the Obscure*. *Journal of Language and Literature Studies*, 53(12), 8-10.
- Zhang, Y. T. (2006). *The bewilderment and destruction of female characters in Thomas Hardy's major novels* (57-60). Xi'an: Foreign Institute of Northwest University.
- Zhang, Z. Z. (1987). *Thomas Hardy's thinking and writing*, (p.70). Beijing: Foreign Languages Teaching & Research Press.