THOMAS HARDY’S *JUDE THE OBSCURE* AND D.H. LAWRENCE’S *SONS AND LOVERS*: A PSYCHOLOGICAL TRANSITION FROM VICTORIANISM TO MODERNISM

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I have examined the final copy of this Thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts with a major in English.

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ABSTRACT

Authors Thomas Hardy and D.H. Lawrence were both influenced by the old traditions of the 19th century and the new ideals of the early 20th century. By comparing Hardy’s final novel, *Jude the Obscure*, originally published in 1895, to Lawrence’s early novel *Sons and Lovers*, released in 1913, one recognizes thematic similarities signifying the influence of Hardy on Lawrence’s work. This novel-to-novel approach allows for a tightly focused comparison between the two authors that reflects similarities found in their other bodies of work (including novels, poems, plays, and criticism), while the relative chronological closeness of the two novels—a mere eighteen years apart—emphasizes the authors’ function of providing a literary link between Victorian and Modernist ways of thought. By also examining the influence of psychoanalysis, and specifically Sigmund Freud, on Lawrence’s novel, one better understands the way in which this budding field of psychology enhanced the descriptive quality of writing and helped to distinguish Lawrence from Hardy. Hardy touched upon topics of sexuality and internal conflict that Lawrence later expanded upon in his own novels. Though both authors emphasized similar themes and character traits, Hardy proved unable to address them as thoroughly and lucidly as Lawrence because he lacked the critical psychological vocabulary to which Lawrence, as a Modernist, had access. At the same time, both writers addressed subject matters at odds with his society’s moral standards and gained notoriety due to the content of their novels. Therefore, comparing Hardy and Lawrence allows one to trace the progression from Victorianism and Modernism, not only in terms of literary style but also in terms of social ideas and terminology. Instead of merely focusing on an author within the narrow confines of the literary period in which they
wrote, this comparison allows the reader to break free from his historical restraints and be viewed as parts in the history of British literature. By forming connections between authors, time periods, and social developments, one better understands cultural progress and gains insight into the Big Picture as it relates to literature and society as a whole.
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Research on the similarities between the works of Thomas Hardy and D.H. Lawrence has been far from limited. Richard D. Beards’ “D.H. Lawrence and the Study of Thomas Hardy, His Victorian Predecessor,” John Paterson’s “Lawrence’s Vital Source: Nature and Character in Thomas Hardy,” and Emily Powers Wright’s “Religious Relations: Nature, Sex, and Tragedy in the Novels of Thomas Hardy and the Early Writings of D.H. Lawrence” comprise only a few of the many critical essays that explore the connection between Hardy and Lawrence. Perhaps the connection between these two authors has remained a viable source of discussion because the texts of Hardy and Lawrence provide an intriguing literary bridge between two distinct periods of time: the end of the Victorian era and the beginning of Modernism. Hardy lived at the crossroads of the old traditions of the 19th century and the new ideals of the early 20th century, and, thus, the period into which his texts have been categorized varies according to critic. Though firmly recognized as a Modernist, Lawrence began writing early enough in the 1900s to display significant influence from the Victorian writers before him. By comparing Hardy’s final novel, Jude the Obscure, originally published in 1895, to Lawrence’s early novel Sons and Lovers, released in 1913, one recognizes thematic similarities signifying the influence of Hardy on Lawrence’s work. This novel-to-novel approach allows for a tightly focused comparison between the two authors that reflects similarities found in their other bodies of work (including novels, poems, plays, and criticism), while the relative chronological closeness of the two novels—a mere eighteen years apart—emphasizes the authors’ function of providing a literary link between Victorian and Modernist ways of thought.
Hardy touched upon topics of sexuality and internal conflict that Lawrence later expanded upon in his own novels, and, in this regard, Hardy paved the way for Lawrence. Though both authors emphasized similar themes and character traits, Hardy proved unable to address them as thoroughly and lucidly as Lawrence because he lacked the critical psychological vocabulary to which Lawrence, as a Modernist, had access. Hardy expressed themes according to the best of his ability, utilizing the limited psychological vocabulary of his time, which was heavily influenced by the philosopher Schopenhauer who asserted that “the empirical world exists, for the subject, only as representation” (Kenny 212). However, the emergence of Freud and the development of psychoanalysis provided Lawrence with a wealth of terms and ideas from which to draw that had not been formulated when Hardy wrote his novels. Though Lawrence may not have directly utilized Freud, the psychologically cognizant environment in which he lived influenced his writing. Therefore, the transition from Hardy’s Jude the Obscure to Lawrence’s Sons and Lovers demonstrates the way in which the advancement of psychology enhanced the descriptive quality of literature.

In addition to examining the human psyche, Hardy and Lawrence both gained notoriety due to the content of their novels. Though each wrote within the limited scope of his own literary time period, both authors addressed subject matters at odds with his society’s moral standards. That both Jude the Obscure and Sons and Lovers received harsh reception from critics and the general public alike speaks to the groundbreaking and controversial subject matter which both authors explored in their novels: a New York World critic declared that Jude the Obscure contained a “coarseness which is beyond belief” (Hardy, Life 279), while a review of Sons and Lovers in the New York Times.
concluded that “Mr. Lawrence has small regard for conventional morality” (Fanning 308). Comparing Hardy and Lawrence allows one to trace the progression from Victorianism to Modernism, not only in terms of literary style but also in terms of social ideas and terminology. Instead of merely focusing on an author within the narrow confines of the literary period in which they wrote, this comparison allows the reader to break free from his historical restraints and be viewed as parts in the history of British literature. By forming connections among authors, time periods and social developments, one better understands cultural progress and gains insight into the Big Picture as it relates to literature and society as a whole.

In order to truly understand the relationship between Hardy and Lawrence, one must first gain knowledge about the social context within which each author wrote and the characteristics which distinguish Hardy’s literary period from Lawrence’s. In The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence, the Cambridge Marxist critic Raymond Williams observes the following concerning the transition from Victorianism to Modernism:

[W]hat happened between the 1890s and 1914 is of great critical importance for the novel. It is a period of crisis and of a parting of the ways. The different roads then taken and the disputes that accompanied each creative choice connect in important ways to our own world. […] Indeed, the central problem—the relation between what separated out as 'individual' or 'psychological' fiction on the one hand and 'social' or 'sociological' fiction on the other—is still, though perhaps in new ways, at the heart of our creative difficulties and concerns. (120)

Interestingly, the time frame to which Williams refers neatly encompasses Hardy’s final novel, Jude the Obscure (published in 1895), and Lawrence’s first major novel, Sons and Lovers (published in 1913). As such, Hardy and Lawrence, and more specifically their novels Jude the Obscure and Sons and Lovers, act as useful artifacts to help one explore
the progression of Modernism as it stemmed from Victorianism. As mentioned, the focus on the social versus the individual provides one of the distinguishing factors between Victorian and Modernist literature. In the introduction to “The Victorian Age” in The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Carol T. Christ and George H. Ford write that “Most Victorian novels focus on a protagonist whose effort to define his or her place in society is the main concern of the plot. The novel thus constructs a tension between surrounding social condition and the aspiration of the hero or heroine, whether it be for love, social position, or a life adequate to his or her imagination” (1059). Though society with its restrictive social and sexual standards and its limitations on what could be said in fiction certainly affects Hardy’s protagonists and often plays at least an indirect role his novels’ plots, Hardy (even in his earlier texts) appears more focused on documenting the individual than analyzing the larger social condition of the Victorian age. That Hardy titles several of his novels according to the central character of the given story—The Mayor of Casterbridge, Tess of the D’uerbervilles, Jude the Obscure—further denotes Hardy’s intrigue with examining individual struggles. Furthermore, unlike Victorian writers such as Dickens, Hardy chooses to explore his characters outside the chaotic, bleak backdrop of London with its poverty, crime, and other social ills and instead places them within the picturesque setting of the Wessex countryside, which, in essence, isolates the characters from many social problems commonly addressed in Victorian novels (though Hardy undoubtedly touches upon a number of social issues from an individual perspective, including education, the role of women, and the institution of marriage). Having the aforementioned distinctions from the typical novelist of the Victorian period, Hardy demonstrates being on the cusp of Modernist ideas and thus proves to be a more
viable link to Modernism than other contemporaneous writers. Conversely, as an early 20th century author, D.H. Lawrence provides a worthy link between the passing Victorian period and the emerging Modernist period.*

In Literature, Politics, and Culture in Postwar Britain, Alan Sinfield presents the “Four defining characteristic of Modernism, as generally understood […]: cosmopolitanism and internationalism; self-conscious and experimentation with language and forms; the idea of the art work as autonomous; and the concept of the artist as alienated by the special intensity of his (usually his) vision of the ‘modern condition’” (Sinfield 182). Yet, despite how accurately these characteristics describe Modernist literature, one recognizes the noticeable absence of these Modernist traits in Lawrence’s early works and in particular his Sons and Lovers. In fact, the novel’s emphasis on the individual and human sexuality provides the only notable element of Sons and Lovers that links it to Modernism. Though Lawrence’s later novels such as Lady Chatterley’s Lover adapt a distinctly Modernist style, at the time Lawrence wrote and published Sons and Lovers, he stood in between Victorian and Modernist literature. Thus, while certain characteristics of Sons and Lovers indicate that Lawrence was on the road to Modernism, the other aspects of the novel just as strongly show Victorian literature’s (and in particular Thomas Hardy’s) influence on Lawrence. Therefore, just as one distinguishes Hardy as a late Victorian writer, one should also more specifically define Lawrence as an early Modern author.

Lawrence’s knowledge of Hardy’s work also provides an interesting correlation

[*The Modernist period is commonly accepted to have spanned from 1905 to 1941.]
between the two authors. Lawrence’s own writings indicate that he indeed read a
significant amount of Hardy’s work. In fact, early in his career (a year after the
publication of *Sons and Lovers*), Lawrence wrote a “Study of Thomas Hardy,” a lengthy
essay which “includes some very detailed and direct response to the older novelist”
(Williams, *English* 170), and, in Lawrence’s own words, “is supposed to be a book about
the people in Thomas Hardy’s novels” (“Study” 20). In the context of literary history,
this essay provides an important link in establishing the influence of Hardy on Lawrence.
Of the essay, Williams stresses that “it's significant that Lawrence, in effect deciding the
future direction of his life, should try to get his thoughts and feelings clear in relation and
in response to the writer who is obviously (if we can look without prejudice) his direct
and most important English predecessor" (*English* 170). Consequently, because of this
essay documenting Lawrence’s knowledge of Hardy, one more clearly observes the
similarities between the two authors both inter-textually in terms of character
development, setting, and themes; and externally in terms of how society received their
works and perceived their moral integrity. Williams concisely summarizes the
relationship between the authors: “That Hardy and Lawrence are eventually very
different is clear enough, but that they started, at different times, from very closely
related situations, feelings, and ideals—from landscape, a country, a society, a people, a
working community; from connected desires and the frustration of desires—is in my
view just as clear” (*English* 170-71).

Another major influence on Lawrence, which helps differentiate his works from
that of Hardy, is the emergence of modern psychology and the psychoanalytical theories
of Sigmund Freud and their increasing influence on mainstream society. Around the
same time as these psychological advancements, the literary world was shifting from Victorianism to Modernism. In *Freudianism and the Literary Mind*, Frederick Hoffman notes that "Freud [...] stood, in 1886, at the threshold of psychoanalysis; as yet, both the hints of a new theory of mental life and the technique needed to get at the facts were obscure" (4). As Freud’s theories about the human psyche developed and advanced, they gradually gained popularity, especially among the avant-garde. Lawrence describes his own perceptions about the effects of psychology on everyday life:

"Psychoanalysis had become a public danger. The mob was on alert. The Oedipus complex was a household word, the incest motive a commonplace of tea-table chat. Amateur analyses became vogue. “Wait till you’ve been analysed,” said one man to another. A sinister look came to the eyes of the initiates—the famous, or infamous, Freud look. You could recognize it everywhere, wherever you went. (“Psychoanalysis” 3)

Though Lawrence provides a less-than-flattering description of psychoanalysis, he nonetheless astutely emphasizes the dramatic influence Freud and his theories had on the general public and, consequently, modern literature. Psychoanalysis acted as a tool which helped writers evolve from Victorianism to Modernism: "writers were eager for an approach to characterization that avoided the gentility of Jane Austen, the sentimental heaviness of Dickens, and the socially diverting realism of Howells. They felt that sex was their problem; that they had but recently discovered it under layers of social restriction; and that psychoanalysis furnished a ready set of descriptive terms for their purpose" (74). Whether directly or indirectly, Freudianism changed the way in which many modern writers perceived and created characters and relationships. Hoffman explains Freud’s role in shaping the way in which Modern authors portrayed individual struggles:
Such terms as the Oedipus complex and the Electra complex become
catch words for writers whose province had always been the field of
domestic relationships. It is not that these problems would not have
continued as legitimate subjects for treatment in fiction had Freud never
made his “three contributions.” But, for better or for worse, Freud's
contributions made writers more conscious of these problems and gave
them at least the illusion that they were legitimately transferring scientific
terms and descriptions to the field of art. (Hoffman 43)

Hoffman’s observations not only effectively describe Freud’s relationship with Modernist
authors but, more importantly, identify the key difference between Hardy and Lawrence:
though both authors used domestic relationships “as legitimate subjects for treatment in
fiction” (Hoffman 43), Lawrence had the distinct advantage of living in a social
environment immersed by the ideas and “descriptive terms” (Hoffman 74) of
psychoanalysis. David Lodge further emphasizes the strong bond between Modern
authors and psychoanalysis through his assertion that “Modernist fiction is concerned
with consciousness, and also with the subconscious and unconscious working of the
human mind” (45). Nevertheless, though a late Victorian writer, Hardy’s novels, like his
early Modernist counterpart’s, also explore the inner workings of the human psyche.
What, then, is the distinguishing factor that separates Hardy from Lawrence, Victorian
from Modernist? Hardy lacked a psychological vocabulary of terms such as
“subconscious” and “the Oedipus complex” to aid him in elaborating a character’s
motivations.

The extent to which Freud and psychoanalysis affected Lawrence’s writings
remains unknown. Victoria Blake, who provided an introduction to Lawrence’s Sons and
Lovers, notes that “Hundreds of pages, perhaps thousands, have been written about
Lawrence's Oedipus complex as demonstrated in the novel [Sons and Lovers]” (XV),
though she also stresses that the actual influence of psychoanalytical concepts on the
book remains unclear. Hoffman’s analysis echoes that of Blakes’s and skeptically—
though without making any concrete assertions—addresses the likelihood of Lawrence
intentionally utilizing Freud in *Sons and Lovers*: “Lawrence was pointed out as a novelist
with exceptional insight into such psychoanalytic problems as incest-horror and the
Oedipus complex. Yet that novel was written before Lawrence had any real acquaintance
with Freud, and before he mentions Freud in any of his letters” (Hoffman 151). Freud’s
theories may not have directly influenced the content of Lawrence’s novel, but sources
indicate that his future wife Frieda exposed Lawrence to Freud prior to the publication of
*Sons and Lovers*:

Freud’s theory of the Oedipus complex had been in print in German since 1899 in *Die Traumdeutung* (translated into English as *The Interpretation of Dreams* in 1913); but few people outside the circle of professional
psychologist would have known about it. But Gross [Frieda’s husband] knew it: Frieda must have heard it from him and passed it on to Lawrence. (Worthen* 443)

Additionally, in his essays “Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious” (1921) and “Fantasia
of the Unconscious” (1922), Lawrence provides Modern society with documented
critiques of Freud, which, among other things, criticize Freud for his overly clinical
theories and tendency to relate all human problems to sex: “Sex has at least some
definite reference, though when Freud makes sex accountable for everything he as good
as makes it accountable for nothing” (“Psychoanalysis” 61). That Lawrence felt versed
enough in psychoanalytical thought and terminology to publish two separate essays in
which he acts as a critical authority on Freud further indicates that the author was

[*John Worthen is the author of *D.H. Lawrence: The Early Years 1885-1912*. Published
by the Cambridge University Press, this biography of Lawrence’s early years is
considered authoritative.*]
relatively knowledgeable, if not of Freud’s actual writings and lectures, at least of the
general concepts of Freud’s major theories. Furthermore, though Lawrence criticized
Freud, he also recognized his importance in certain areas: "Lawrence did agree with
Freud in at least one particular—that the normal sex life of man had been disastrously
repressed and neglected" (Hoffman 157). Thus, though Lawrence may have never
knowingly incorporated aspects of psychoanalysis into his texts, the psychologically rich
social atmosphere and Frieda’s discussions most likely at least unconsciously (to use a
Freudian term) influenced his perspective and consequently his novels.

Establishing solid connections between Hardy and Lawrence and Lawrence and
Freud allows for a critical examination of how Freudianism affected literature. Exploring
the similarities between Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure* and Lawrence’s *Sons and Lovers* as
they relate to specific psychoanalytical constructs enables one to see the progression from
Victorianism to Modernism as influenced by the development of modern psychology. By
examining the two novels particularly in conjunction with the psychological theories
discussed in Freud’s *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), *Three Contributions to the Theory
of Sex* (1905), and *Totem and Taboo* (1912)—all published after *Jude the Obscure* (1895)
but prior to Lawrence’s *Sons and Lovers* (1913)—one more clearly distinguishes how the
introduction of psychoanalytical vocabulary influenced not only the topics explored in
literature but the way in which the topics were addressed and described. Interestingly, as
a progression exists between Hardy and Lawrence, so too does a notable progression
exist between Freud’s early and later writings: “the all-important 'Oedipus complex' [was]
first formulated in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, explained in *Three Contributions to a
Theory of Sex*, and finally in *Totem and Taboo* used as a means of clarifying many of the
peculiarities of human behavior” (Hoffman 17-18). This development of both literature and psychology demonstrates society’s continuous intellectual advancement. Furthermore, by also examining Freud’s *Civilization and its Discontent*, published after both novels, one observes that Hardy and Lawrence’s novels provide keen insights into certain aspects of culture about which Freud would soon concisely theorize.

*Jude the Obscure* and *Sons and Lovers* each focus on a young male protagonist searching for love and a purpose in life. In fact, just as Hardy named his novel after his main protagonist, so similarly did Lawrence originally intend to name his novel *Paul Morel* after the central character in the story (Lawrence, *Letters Vol. 1* 184). Perhaps Lawrence eventually changed the title of his novel to *Sons and Lovers* to personally distance himself from (and, consequently, divert attention away from) its strikingly autobiographical content. Each book chronicles its main protagonist from early childhood through adulthood, and along their journeys to manhood, both characters experience similar trials and tribulations associated with growing up and finding oneself. Furthermore, both Jude and Paul seem to possess similar temperaments that Hoffman links to the influence of Freudianism:

> [W]riters modeled their studies of character on the therapeutic situation. The hero of this type of fiction was [...] frequently pale, shy, sensitive, given to much introspective brooding over the world, which struck him as being harsh and importunate. His experiences with the other sex were less affairs than adventures in understanding. No single motive explained every act; rather, any one act presupposed a variety of motives, intricately bound with the 'hidden life' of the character. (73-74)

Lawrence describes young men of Paul’s generation as being “too diffident and shy” and “so sensitive to their women that they would go without them for ever rather than do them a hurt, an injustice” (*Sons* 306). Specifically, Lawrence portrays Paul with fair,
reddish hair, “a pale, quiet child, with eyes that seemed to listen, and with a full, dropping underlip” (Sons 65). Though lacking a fair complexion, Jude is similarly “described as a young man with a forcible, meditative, and earnest rather than handsome cast of countenance” (Hardy, Jude 79). The introspective and guarded nature of both Jude and Paul secludes the characters from the larger whole of society: “Knowing not a human being here, Jude began to be impressed with the 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” (Hardy, Jude 82). Additionally, the careers and extracurricular passions of the protagonists reveal much about the psychology of the characters. Both characters attend to jobs firmly rooted in the needs of the real world: Paul renders drawing of limbs that will be made by the prosthetic company where he works, while, as a mason, Jude creates and refurbishes architecture. While both professions allow for personal talent and limited creativity, they nonetheless require a mind grounded in real-life practicalities. However, the imaginative aspects of the characters’ pastimes—Paul paints scenery for recreation; Jude delves into the world of classic literature—denote their abilities to shift from reality to fantasy through the aid of art, possibly alluding to neurotic tendencies:

The artist is originally a man who turns from reality because he cannot come to terms with the demand for the renunciation of instinctual satisfaction as it is first made, and who then in phantasy-life allows full play to his erotic and ambitious wishes. But he finds a way of return from this world of phantasy back to reality; with his special gifts he molds his phantasies into a new kind of reality, and men concede them a justification as valuable reflections of actual life. (Freud, “Formations” 19)

The ability to indulge in artistic fantasy, be it through creating a painting or immersing oneself in an ancient text, suggests that Jude and Paul may also distort their perceptions of fantasy and reality in their own personal lives. Thus, Jude’s young mind idealizes the
scholarly town in which he one day hopes to reside: “He was getting so romantically attached to Christminster that, like a young lover alluding to his mistress, he felt bashful at mentioning its name again” (Hardy 20). As Jude ages and grows to maturity, he shifts from fantasizing about a place to fantasizing about a woman: "he kept watch over her [Sue], and liked to feel she was there. The conscious of her living presence stimulated him. But she remained more or less an ideal character about whose form he began to weave curious and fantastic day-dreams" (Hardy, Jude 93). Likewise, in young adulthood, Paul’s unrealistic “ambition, as far as this world’s gear went, was quietly to earn his thirty or thirty-five shillings a week somewhere near home, and then, when his father died, have a cottage with his mother, paint and go out as he liked, and live happily ever after” (Lawrence, Sons 99). The characters’ fixation with idyllic perceptions of individuals and situations will ultimately contribute to their unfortunate ends.

However, despite very similar sensitive characterizations and internal struggles, the detail with which Lawrence describes Paul’s character and inner conflicts marks a notable progression from Hardy’s descriptions of Jude. Hardy illustrates Jude’s sensitive nature and internal conflicts through the use of third person narration that states Jude’s condition in very general, and occasionally vague, terms. For instance, when observing Jude’s growing attachment to Sue, the narration simply states that “retrospective visions of Sue only made Jude the more miserable that he was unable to woo her, and he left the cottage of his aunt with a heavy heart” (Hardy, Jude 119). In contrast, though Lawrence also utilizes third person narration; he describes Paul’s conflicted state of mind so vividly and expressively that the reader associates these descriptions more explicitly with Paul’s own internal thought process. In particular, Paul’s conflicted feelings for Miriam
exemplify Lawrence’s use of detailed imagery to effectively depict internal struggles: “when he saw her eager, silent, as it were, blind face, he wanted to throw a pencil in it; and still, when he saw her hand trembling and her mouth parted with suffering, his heart was scalded with pain for her. And because of the intensity to which she roused him, he sought her” (Lawrence, *Sons* 175). This difference between the manner in which Hardy and Lawrence describe the internal working of their characters in no manner implies that Hardy’s use of description was inferior to Lawrence’s; rather, it merely emphasizes the influence of Freud on Modernist writers. Freud’s theories on the unconscious, combined with his emphasis on detailed descriptions, provided Modernist authors with a model of internal characterization to utilize. Hoffman notes that "The inert, dead mass of clinical material did not interest Lawrence in the slightest; but he always credited psychoanalysis with value as a descriptive science" (Hoffman 156). Thus, Lawrence’s descriptive psychological insight into his protagonist may in part be credited to Freud.

Aside from their reserved and sensitive dispositions, Jude and Paul also find themselves torn between the love of two women who represent the two polarities of man’s desires: sexual and spiritual/intellectual. In his essay “The Most Prevalent Form of Degradation in Erotic Life,” Freud maintains that “To ensure a fully normal attitude in love, two currents of feeling have to unite—we may describe them as the tender, affectionate feelings and the sensual feelings” (174). That both Jude and Paul associate feelings of tenderness and affection to one woman and feelings of sensual/sexual energy to another suggests that they exemplify what Freud terms “severe psychical impotence” (“Most” 176). In *Jude the Obscure*, Jude first becomes intrigued by Arabella, who with her “curiously low, hungry tone of latent sensuousness” (Hardy 49) represents the sexual
component of the woman. The narrator’s description of their initial encounter emphasizes Jude’s attraction to Arabella’s physical attributes: “It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that till this moment Jude had never looked at a woman to consider her as such, but had vaguely regarded the sex as beings outside his life and purposes. He gazed from her eyes to her mouth, thence to her bosom, and to her full round naked arms, wet, mottled with the chill of the water, and firm as marble” (Hardy, *Jude* 39). In his essay “The Study of Thomas Hardy,” Lawrence posits that “in her [Arabella] Jude went very little further in Knowledge, or in Self-Knowledge. He took only the first step: of knowing himself sexually, as a sexual male. This is only the first, the first, necessary, but rudimentary step” (112). (That Lawrence can look back to Hardy’s Victorian text and analyze it according to his Modernist and psychologically influenced perspective of human nature suggests that certain aspects of *Sons and Lovers* may present a re-envisioning of Hardy’s text for the Modern audience.) Though Jude and Arabella wed because Arabella tricks Jude into believing she is pregnant, they soon discover that they are incompatible intellectually, or in Freudian terms, “affection is lacking.” Arabella’s treatment of Jude’s books exemplifies her total disinterest in the academic world which Jude values: “Arabella’s hands had become smeared with the hot grease, and her fingers consequently left very perceptible imprints on the book covers. She continued deliberately to toss the books severally upon the floor” (Hardy, *Jude* 70). Conversely, not long after Jude’s separation from Arabella, he becomes infatuated with his cousin Sue Bridehead.
Though also attracted to Sue sexually, Jude notes “it is not altogether an erotolepsy* that is the matter with me, as at that first time. I can see that she is exceptionally bright; and it is partly a wish for intellectual sympathy, and a craving for loving-kindness in my solitude” (Hardy, Jude 103). Thus, through Sue, Jude seeks out the intellectual and spiritual component of the woman, and, in contrast to Arabella’s animalistic gesture of throwing pig’s offal at Jude to gain his attention, Sue sophisticatedly writes Jude a note inviting him into her world. Yet to gain the spiritual and intellectual component, Jude must sacrifice his sexual urges. Lawrence surmises, “When he [Jude] came to Sue, he found her physically impotent, but spiritually potent. That was what he wanted. Of Knowledge in the blood he had a rich enough store: more than he knew what to do with. He wished for the further step, of reduction, of essentialising into Knowledge. Which Sue gave to him” (“Study” 112). However, though Lawrence interprets that Jude sought a life focused exclusively on knowledge, the lack of sexual closeness between Jude and Sue eventually wears on him. In the latter half of the novel, Jude laments, “‘[Y]ou, Sue, are such a phantasmal, bodiless creature, one who—if you’ll allow me to say it—has so little animal passion in you, that you can act upon reason in the matter, when we poor unfortunate wretches of grosser substance can’t’” (Hardy, Jude 284). To further emphasize the extreme nature of his female characters, in particular Sue, Hardy himself clarifies that “there is nothing perverted or depraved in Sue’s nature. The abnormalism consists in disproportion, not in inversion, her sexual instinct being healthy as far as it goes, but unusually weak and fastidious” (Hardy, Life 272).

[*”Erotology” (“the science of love”), a variation of the word “ertolepsy,” first appeared in the Oxford English Dictionary in 1886 (374). Hardy’s use of this unique scientific word shows him to be knowledgeable of the current psychological terms of his time.*]
Freud’s writing on erotic life provides additional insight into Sue’s repressed sexual nature:

The long abstinence from sexuality to which they [women] are forced and the lingering of their sensuality in phantasy have in them, however, another important consequence. It is often not possible for them later on to undo the connection thus formed in their minds between sensual activities and something forbidden, and they turn out to be psychically impotent, i.e. frigid (“Most” 183-184).

Thus, though Hardy effectively describes Sue’s weak sexual disposition, Freud’s theories on women and sexuality offer a psychological explanation for Sue’s sexual drive that Hardy left unspoken.

Similar to Jude, in Lawrence’s *Sons and Lovers*, Paul finds himself in a love triangle which pits his sexual desires against his intellectual/spiritual needs. However, Lawrence’s depiction of Paul’s struggles with women provides more than simple dramatic conflict; it presents a vivid, fictionalized account of Lawrence’s early life as a young man, with Lawrence’s fiancée Jesse Chambers as the model for Miriam and married friend Alice Dax as the inspiration for Clara. Jude and Paul engage in remarkably similar struggles while trying to decide which component of a woman is more necessary. Interestingly, while Jude begins in a sexually-charged relationship and regresses (or evolves, depending on one’s point of view) to an intellectual/spiritual relationship, Paul inversely begins with a spiritual kinship and moves on to a sexual liaison. Thus, while a young teenager, Paul develops attachment to the introspective Miriam:

He would not have it that they were lovers. The intimacy between them had been kept so abstract, such a matter of the soul, all thought and weary struggle into consciousness, that he saw it only as a platonic friendship. He stoutly denied that there was anything else between them. Miriam was silent, or else she very quietly agreed. He was a fool who did not know
what was happening to himself. By tacit agreement they ignored the remarks and insinuations of their acquaintances. (191)

Though Miriam remains in tune with Paul spiritually, as the years pass, Paul begins to yearn for something more, for sexual satisfaction which Miriam seems incapable of giving him. While continuing to wait for Miriam, Paul takes notice of Miriam’s friend Clara who peaks his sexual interest: “She was kneeling, bending forward still to smell the flowers. Her neck gave him a sharp pang, such a beautiful thing, yet not proud of itself just now. Her breasts swung slightly in her blouse. The arching curve of her back was beautiful and strong; she wore no stays*” (Lawrence, Sons 262). Paul sways back and forth in his affection for Miriam and Clara, yet neither appears to satisfy his needs. Though he eventually convinces Miriam to yield up her virginity to him, he sadly “realized that she had not been with him all the time, that her soul had stood apart, in a sort of horror. He was physically at rest, but no more” (314). Furthermore, though Clara comfortably engages in sexual activities with Paul, he comes to the conclusion that “Clara could not stand for him to hold on to. She wanted him, but not to understand him. He felt she wanted the man on top, not the real him that was in trouble. That would be too much trouble for her; he dared not give it her” (Lawrence, Sons 442). At the book’s conclusion, Paul remains alone with only the memory of his deceased mother to keep him company.

In both novels, the protagonists seem to lean towards the intellectual/spiritual over the sexual. When the two contrasting components of the woman are compared in Jude the Obscure, the spiritual is elevated while the sexual component instills in Jude a sense of

[*Clara’s lack of “stays” indicates that she is a modern woman.]
distain: “Looking at his loved one as she [Sue] appeared to him now, […] so ethereal a creature that the spirit could be seen trembling through her limbs, he felt heartily ashamed of his earthliness in spending the hours he had spent in Arabella’s company” (Hardy 203). Though *Sons and Lovers* does not present the sexual component in a negative light—an increased openness that may directly relate to Freud’s influence on Modern society—, Paul acknowledges that despite his sexual attraction toward Clara, “he belonged to Miriam. Of that she was so fixedly sure that he allowed her right” (Lawrence, *Sons* 277). Still, despite their leanings, the males “were too truthful ever to marry” the spiritual embodiment of their desires (Lawrence, “Study” 117). In the end, neither Jude nor Paul succeed in their relationships, primarily because none of the women who they wooed are complete—they represent mere parts of the whole.

Paul Morel is further complicated by his incestuous attraction to his mother. Freud aptly surmises that “the erotic life of such people remains dissociated, divided between two channels, the same two that are personified in art as heavenly and earthly (or animal) love. Where such men love they have no desire and where they desire they cannot love” (Freud, “Most” 177). Lawrence further observes of Hardy’s novel that “If Jude could have known that he did not want Sue, physically, and then made his choice, they might not have wasted their lives. *But he could not know*” (Lawrence, “Study” 117). Jude could not “know” because this knowledge was not available to his conscious mind.

After experiencing the strong intellectual force of Sue, Jude finds himself unable to effectively resume his relationship with Arbella and, thus, he dies due to his forced separation with Sue. By rejecting Miriam’s suggestion of marriage, Lawrence depicts Paul as able to recognize that he cannot satisfactorily live with only the spiritual
components of desire, which marks him as a symbol of his Modern age. However, despite his insight, Paul appears just as tortured and miserable as Jude. Instead of choosing a woman, Paul rejects them both, preventing a tragic end like Jude’s but, nevertheless, leaving Paul alone and hurting. Had Jude and Paul chosen a female partner with integrated components of sexuality and spirituality, they might have fared better in life.

*Jude the Obscure* and *Sons and Lovers* feature undercurrents of incestuous desires and the growth of forbidden relationships which Freud and other psychoanalysts classify as “taboo subjects.” In *Totem and Taboo* Freud explains that “‘taboo’ has about it a sense of something unapproachable, and it is principally expressed in prohibitions and restrictions” (18). In their novels, both Hardy and Lawrence explore taboo subjects in relation to individuals tempted to disregard long-established restrictions. What distinguishes Hardy’s novel from Lawrence’s is the familial closeness of the individuals experiencing incestuous feelings and the guilt felt by those characters who engage in these feelings. Through Jude’s attraction to his cousin Sue, Hardy questions the social institution of marriage and also addresses the social taboo of incest:

He [Jude] affected to think of her [Sue] quite in a family way, since there were crushing reasons why he should not and could not think of her in any other. The first reason was that he was married, and it would be wrong. The second was that they were cousins. It was not well for cousins to fall in love even when circumstances seemed to favour the passion. (Hardy, *Jude* 94)

In the Victorian period, which held strict social/sexual standards, establishing a romantic relationship between first cousins was, perhaps, the most scandalous form of incest that would be allowed to be published. In order to ensure that the feelings that develop between Sue and Jude are not culpable, although technically incestuous, Hardy informs
the reader that both of Jude’s parents died early in his childhood, before the beginning of the novel. Thus, Jude lacks the two essential objects needed to explore the usual Oedipal relationship: a mother and a father. Jude’s competition with his childhood schoolmaster Mr. Phillotson—Jude’s sole male role model in childhood and a surrogate father—for Sue’s affection provides the novel with Jude’s closest sexual rival: “Having inadvertently witnessed Phillotson’s tentative courtship of Sue in the lane there had grown up in the younger man’s mind a curious dislike to think of the elder to meet him, to communicate any way with him” (176). Phillotson’s marriage to Sue causes an irreparable rift between Jude and the man he once admired as a father figure. To lend further credence to the supposition that *Jude the Obscure* possesses incestuous and Oedipal undertones, some see Sue “as the projection of Hardy’s mother, who must be kept virginal, or nearly so (except, just as in his mother’s case, for an occasional lapse for procreation)” (Brown, xvii). Thus, Hardy invokes the undercurrent of an Oedipal relationship while staying within the moral boundaries of Victorian society.

Because Lawrence writes some fifteen years later, and because society has become familiar with the Oedipus complex through Freud, *Sons and Lovers* is able to explore incestuous and, more specifically, Oedipal desires more openly and explicitly. Lawrence based much of his novel on personal experiences and his relationship with his own mother. On the subject of his mother Lawrence wrote, “This has been a kind of bond between me and my mother. We have loved each other almost with a husband and wife love, as well as filial and maternal” (*Letters Vol 1.* 190). In *D.H. Lawrence: The Early Years 1885-1912*, John Worthen emphasizes Frieda’s role in linking Lawrence’s *Sons and Lovers* to Freud’s psychoanalytical theories:
Frieda’s excitement about what she now thought of as the real heart of the novel was because, in Freud’s theory, the child was not rendered abnormal but was naturally dominated by incestuous feelings for its mother and by a desire to murder its father. Freud described a pattern which—although Lawrence had known all its details before—he can never have heard articulated so clearly as a theory; it was doubtless some comfort and reassurance to find that he had been thinking along the same lines as a revolutionary European intellectual. (443)

With regard to the credibility of Freud’s Oedipus complex, Lawrence asserts, “Beware of it—this mother-incest idea can become an obsession. But it seems to me there is this much truth in it: that at certain periods the man has a desire and a tendency to return unto the woman, make her his goal and end, finds his justification in her” (Letters Vol. 3 301-302). This acknowledgment that the Oedipus complex conveys a certain amount of truth about human nature along with Frieda’s known discussions about Freud with Lawrence suggests that the author, at the very least, recognized the similarities between Freud’s theory of incest and his own portrayal of the mother-son relationship in *Sons and Lovers* and was most likely in some manner influenced by Freudian psychoanalysis.

Unlike Jude, Paul spends his youth in a family having both a mother and a father—the usual environment for the growth of Oedipal feelings. In *Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud contends that “It is the fate of all of us, perhaps, to direct our first sexual impulse towards our mother and our first hatred and our first murderous wish against our father” (921). Accordingly, the male children of the family, especially Paul and his older brother William, develop a deep attachment to their mother and an intense dislike of their abusive father: "All children, but particularly Paul, were peculiarly against their father" (Lawrence, *Sons* 66). As Freud labels Oedipal feelings as a common developmental stage in young boys, the eldest son, William, is logically the first child to openly, and physically, express his abhorrence for his father in a scene that involves potential
violence: “Morel danced a little nearer, crouching, drawing back his fist to strike.

William put his fists ready. A light came into his blue eyes, almost like a laugh. Another word, and the men would have begun to fight” (Lawrence, *Sons* 67). Because of William’s separation from the family and early death, Paul’s mother eventually transfers all of her love and affection to him, and, as Paul matures into adulthood, their mother-child bond develops into a barely sublimated incestuous relationship: “The mother and son walked down Station Street, feeling the excitement of lovers having an adventure together” (103). Freud explains that “Many persons are detained at each of the stations in the course of development through which the individual must pass; and accordingly there are persons who never overcome the parental authority and never, or very imperfectly draw their affection from their parents” (Freud, *Three* 83-84). While Paul’s conflict with his father and attachment to his mother may initially present a natural stage of development, Paul has difficulty developing out of this stage, and thus this Oedipal stage becomes a complex: “the analytic picture of the Oedipus complex is an enlarged and accentuated edition of the infantile sketch; the hatred of the father and the death-wishes against him are no longer vague hints, the affection for the mother declares itself with the aim of possessing her as a woman” (Freud, *General* 294). Paul’s unnatural connection with his mother consequently hinders his relationships with other women:

He had come back to his mother. Hers was the strongest tie in his life. […] There was one place in the world he stood solid and did not melt into unreality: the place where his mother was. Everybody else could grow shadowy, almost non-existent to him, but she could not. It was as if the pivot and pole of his life, from which he could not escape, was his mother. (Lawrence, *Sons* 245)

Furthermore, Mrs. Morel’s tight psychological grip on Paul prevents him from successfully establishing a meaningful relationship with any other woman, even after her
death. Intriguingly, Paul escapes from the grasp of the women in his life only after he “kills” his mother. Thus, the influence of Freud on society not only enabled Lawrence to write a mother-son relationship with sexual undercurrents, but it also permitted the mother character to be in direct competition to her son’s more socially acceptable choices for a romantic partner.

Additionally, the way in which characters of Hardy’s novel and Lawrence’s novel handle their socially deviant behavior—premarital sex, incestuous feelings, seeking sexual and intellectual relationships outside one’s marriage, etc.—demonstrates another, and perhaps the most important, shift between Victorianism and Modernism. *Jude the Obscure* very much focuses on the guilt felt by the characters for considering and later engaging in socially illicit acts. Jude acknowledges while still only contemplating a romantic relationship with Sue that “There was not the least doubt that from his own orthodox point of view the situation was growing immoral. For Sue to be the loved one of a man who was licensed by the laws of his country to love Arabella and none other unto his life’s end, was a pretty bad second beginning when the man was bent on such a course as Jude purposed” (103). Jude quite clearly desires to live according to the established regulations and therefore exemplifies the psychological assumption that “to those who are dominated by [taboo prohibitions] they are taken as a matter of course” (Freud, *Totem* 18). Thus, Jude’s hesitations stem not from personal misgivings but solely from his desire to comply with social regulations. Freud explains this dichotomy between base instincts and social restrictions in *Civilization and Its Discontents*:

It is impossible to ignore the extent to which civilization is built up on renunciation of instinctual gratifications, the degree to which the existence of civilization presupposes the non-gratification (suppression, repression or something else?) of powerful instinctual urgencies. This “cultural
privation” dominates the whole field of social relations between human beings. (63)

Sue similarly describes this conflict between love and culture, “I said it was Nature’s intention, Nature’s law and raison d’etre that we should be joyful in what instincts she afforded us—instincts which civilization had taken upon itself to thwart. […] And now Fate has given us this stab in the back for being such fools as to take Nature at her word!” (Hardy, Jude 373). Sue and Jude’s guilt and consequent sufferings exemplify Civilization and Its Discontents’ “intention to represent the sense of guilt as the most important problem in the evolution of culture, and to convey that the price of progress in civilization is paid in forfeiting happiness through the heightening of the sense of guilt” (Freud 123). Therefore, when Jude’s son murders Jude and Sue’s children and then commits suicide, Sue associates the tragedy as a punishment for producing children out of wedlock and not living according to society’s rules: “I see marriage differently now. My babies have been taken from me to show this! Arabella’s child killing mine was a judgment—the right slaying the wrong. What, what shall I do! I am such a vile creature—too worthless to mix with ordinary human beings!” (Hardy, Jude 386). After the loss of her children, Sue acts according to Freud’s assertion that "if it [a taboo] should be violated, such an act must be expiated through 'renunciation' (Hoffman 18) and ends her relationship with Jude in order to re-establish a socially valid, yet loveless, marital relationship with her first husband Phillotson, whom she finds physically repulsive.

Echoing Freud’s thoughts on civilization and love, Lawrence summarizes that Jude and Sue “were not at war with God, only with Society. Yet they were all cowed by the mere judgement of man upon them, and all the while by their own souls they were right. And the judgement of man killed them, not the judgement of their own souls, or
the judgement of eternal God” (“Study” 30). Interestingly, Lawrence’s own novel *Sons and Lovers* remains essentially void of the external conflict of society and centers exclusively on the inner conflicts of the characters. Thus, nowhere does Paul fret about his Oedipal feeling for his mother or lament about engaging in a sexual relationship with a separated but still-married woman. When propositioned for sex by Paul, even the saintly character of Miriam “was not afraid of people, what they might say; but she dreaded the issue with him” (Lawrence, *Sons* 311). Thus, Lawrence shifts guilt away from social institutions and places them solely on the internal feelings of the characters.

Though both *Jude the Obscure* and *Sons and Lovers* depict the struggles of a single character, the intense guilt Jude experiences because of violating social norms compared to Paul’s lack of socially inflicted guilt suggests that though a Modernist thinker in many respects, Hardy still heavily influenced his work with the Victorian emphasis on society. Likewise, Lawrence’s lack of social commentary denotes a Modernists’ increasingly narrowing interest on the individual struggle of man.

Though the Modernist period allowed Lawrence to write with fewer restrictions than his Victorian predecessors, neither the works of Hardy nor Lawrence (nor Freud, for that matter) were immune to the social outrage created by their works’ controversial subject matter. Even before publication, Hardy recognized that the content of *Jude the Obscure* would stir up controversy:

[A]s composition progressed he [Hardy] had serious misgiving and 7 April 1894 wrote to Harper’s asking to be allowed to cancel the agreement altogether, confessing that ‘the development of the story was carrying him into unexpected fields and he was afraid to predict its future trend.’ The agreement was not cancelled, but with the first installments in hand H.M. Alden the editor protested, and Hardy consented to revise and bowdlerize. (Purdy 90)
Nevertheless, Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure* “sent shock waves of indignation rolling across Victorian England. It was denounced as pornographic and subjected the author to an avalanche of abuse. Hardy’s disgust at the public’s reaction led him to announce in 1896 that he would never again write fiction” (Grossman, vii). Of *Jude the Obscure*, the *New York World* critic remarked in her review, “I do not believe that there is a newspaper in England or America that would print this story of Thomas Hardy’s as it stands in the book. Aside from its immorality there is a coarseness which is beyond belief” (Hardy, *Life* 279). In response to a letter written by this *New York World* critic, Hardy wrote, “I am aware that the outcry against it in America was only an echo of its misrepresentation here by one or two scurrilous papers which got the start of a more sober press, and that dumb public opinion was never with these writers” (Hardy, *Life* 279). Williams further stresses the severity with which society rejected Hardy’s novel and links his hardships to those which Lawrence would inevitably face:

*Jude the Obscure* had been hysterically attacked as immoral [...]. These attacks on *Jude* as earlier on *Tess*, remind us of something we now easily forget: that of all the nineteenth-century novelists Hardy was the most bitterly received, in his important work by the English establishment. He is in this sense a true predecessor—though it is a lineage none of them wanted—of Joyce and Lawrence.” (Williams, *English* 119)

As suggested, Lawrence experienced similar problems with the publication of *Sons and Lovers*, which was “Rejected at first by Heinemann Publishers […]. Criticized for his graphic depiction of sexual relations, Lawrence defends himself by saying that ‘whatever the blood feels, and believes, and says, is always true’” (Blake IX). Lawrence further voiced his frustrations about social restrictions in a letter to Ernest Clings on July 22, 1913, in which he complains, “The damned prigs in the libraries and bookshops daren’t handle my [*Sons and Lovers*] because they pretend they are delicate-skinned and I
am hot” (Lawrence, *Letters Vol. 2* 47). However, despite Lawrence’s irritations, on the whole, critics treated *Sons and Lovers* far more kindly than Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure*.

Though the critics handled Lawrence’s novel with caution, many observed the psychologically realistic elements of *Sons and Lovers* that made for an “intriguing read.” The *Nation* critic remarked that “The story will leave a gloomy impression on most readers. It is too strongly grasped and wrought out to be negligible, and will force many, in spite of themselves, to accept it as a true picture. The mother’s relation to her children, especially the two sons, is described with the firm knowledge that brings conviction” (Fanning 308). Similarly, the *New York Times* review stated that “Mr. Lawrence has small regard for conventional morality; nevertheless, though plain spoken to a degree, his book is not in the least offensive. It is, in fact, fearless; never coarse. And one must go far to find a better study of an intense woman” (Fanning 308).

Though eventually quite popular, Hoffman points out that even "Psychoanalysis was not immediately welcomed or accepted, whether by the medical fraternity, the schools of psychology, or the general public. It was at least ten years before the new psychology was cautiously accepted, and twenty before it enjoyed, or suffered, the attention of the general public" (87). Furthermore, in his introduction to Lawrence’s “Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious,” Philip Reiff observes the following link between Lawrence and Freud: “Because both Freud and Lawrence did, each in his own way, get down to fundamentals, each has stood accused of being at once irrelevantly eccentric and directly dangerous to the community” (Rieff viii). This observation could also be made of Hardy.
Though society may have felt otherwise, critical thinkers such as Hardy, Freud, and Lawrence did not produce obscene writings; they merely sought to explore a key element of human existence largely overlooked in previous literature: sexuality. That much of society was not adequately prepared to have the topics of sex and personal desire addressed in such a detailed and introspective manner emphasizes the revolutionary nature of the authors’ text in terms of expanding type of subject matter allowed in popular literature. The shift from Victorianism to Modernism marks an important transition in time in which both Lawrence and Hardy played key roles. This progression from Hardy (late Victorian) to Lawrence (early Modernist), along with the integration of Freud’s theories, shows how authors, psychologists, and other great minds work off of one another to slowly but steadily increase the general public’s knowledge of psychology and tolerance of sexual exploration in literature. Furthermore, the efforts of Hardy, Freud, and Lawrence paved the way for later authors to examine issues of sexual desire in relationships in a realistic and honest way without fear of social hindrance.
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