



Makale Bilgisi

Gönderildiği tarih: 12 Ağustos 2016
Kabul edildiği tarih: 12 Eylül 2016
Yayınlanma tarihi: 12 Aralık 2016

Article Info

Date submitted: 12 August 2016
Date accepted: 12 September 2016
Date published: 12 December 2016

Anahtar sözcükler

Thomas Hardy, Adsız Sansız bir Jude (Jude the Obscure) (1895), Eşiklik, Eşikte varlıklar, Erginleme törenleri, Arnold van Gennep, Victor Turner

Keywords:

Thomas Hardy, Jude the Obscure (1895), Liminality, Liminal being, Rites of passage, Arnold van Gennep, Victor Turner

DOI: 10.1501/Dtcfder_0000001491

JUDE THE LIMINAL: A CATASTROPHIC PURSUIT?

ESİKTEKİ JUDE: FELAKET GETİREN BİR ARAYIŞ MI?

Gülşah GÖÇMEN

Arş. Gör., Hacettepe Üniversitesi, Edebiyat Fakültesi,
İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü, gulshgocmen@gmail.com

Abstract

Thomas Hardy's last novel *Jude the Obscure* (1895) is centred on its working-class protagonist Jude Fawley's efforts first to become a scholar, then his experiences of resisting the orthodoxies of his society and lastly defying Christianity as a restrictive social force on the individuals. This paper aims to discuss Jude's liminal character from the cultural perspectives on liminality respectively developed by the French ethnographer Arnold van Gennep and the British cultural anthropologist Victor Turner. Jude as a liminal character experiences similar transitions or rites of passage as defined and categorized by van Gennep. Yet, Jude's liminality remains permanent in each stage of his life since he cannot thoroughly perform the transition rites to leave one social position behind and undertake a new one. Also, analysed as a liminal character from Turner's understanding of the term, Jude fails to use the potential that his liminality provides him with to challenge the societal dogmas. However, he terribly suffers from the consequences of his liminal identity throughout the story. Jude's tragic end displays how he is punished for his lifelong liminality that prevents him from moving either to the centre or the margins of his Victorian society. This essay argues that Hardy's portrayal of Jude as a liminal figure reminds the definitions of the term, developed by van Gennep and Turner, but produces a literary example that is quite antithetical to their conceptions particularly due to his apparent pessimism. For, Hardy depicts Jude's threshold identity as an obstacle in his efforts to belong to any particular social, cultural, economic, or intellectual group rather than an opportunity to challenge each social position.

Öz

Thomas Hardy'nin son romanı *Adsız Sansız bir Jude (Jude the Obscure)* (1895), işçi sınıfından başkahramanı Jude Fawley'nin öncelikle akademisyen olma çabalarını, daha sonra toplumun tutuculuklarına ve Hıristiyanlığın bireyler üzerindeki kısıtlayıcı etkilerine karşı çıkma deneyimlerini anlatır. Bu çalışma, Jude'un eşikteki karakterini Fransız etnograf Arnold van Gennep ve Britanyalı kültürel antropolog Victor Turner'ın eşiklik kavramı üzerine geliştirdiği kültürel bakış açılarıyla tartışmayı amaçlar. Eşikte bir karakter olarak Jude, van Gennep'in tanımlayıp kategorilerini yaptığı erginleme törenlerine benzer geçişler sergiler. Fakat Jude'un eşikliği hayatının her döneminde kalır, çünkü yeni bir sosyal konuma geçmek ve eskisini bırakmak için erginleme törenlerini tam olarak icra edemez. Ayrıca, eşiklik kavramı Turner'ın tanımına göre incelendiğinde, Jude'un toplumsal dogmalara meydan okuması için eşikliğinin gücünü kullanmadığı görülür. Ama, Jude hikaye boyunca eşikte bir karakter olmanın acı sonuçlarına katlanır. Jude'un trajik sonu, Viktorya toplumunda merkeze ya da uçlara hareket etmesini engelleyen ve hayat boyu süren eşikliği yüzünden nasıl cezalandırıldığını gösterir. Bu makale, Hardy'nin Jude karakterini eşikte bir karakter olarak tasvir edişinin van Gennep ve Turner tarafından geliştirilen eşiklik tanımlarını hatırlattığını fakat bunu yaparken Hardy'nin aşıkâr kötümserliğiyle bu iki kuramcının kavramlarına antitez oluşturan edebi bir örnek sergilediğini iddia eder. Çünkü, Hardy Jude'un eşikteki kimliğini, her bir sosyal konuma meydan okumak için bir fırsat olarak sunmaktansa belirli bir sosyal, kültürel, ekonomik ya da entelektüel bir gruba ait olma çabalarının önünde bir engel olarak sunar.

'For a Book by Thomas Hardy'

With searching feet, through dark circuitous ways,

I plunged and stumbled; round me, far and near,

Quaint hordes of eyeless phantoms did appear,

Twisting and turning in a bootless chase,-

When, like an exile given by God's grace

To feel once more a human atmosphere,

I caught the world's first murmur, large and clear,

Flung from a singing river's endless race.

Then through a magic twilight from below,
 I heard its grand sad song as in a dream:
 Life's wild infinity of mirth and woe
 It sang me; and, with many a changing gleam,
 Across the music of its onward flow
 I saw the collage lights of Wessex beam.

Edwin Arlington Robinson

Liminality as a concept has found its seminal definition in the studies of the French ethnographer and folklorist Arnold van Gennep. Analysing cultures and rituals from the perspective of cultural anthropology, van Gennep relates liminality to such social phenomena as “ceremonies of birth, childhood, social puberty, betrothal, marriage, pregnancy, fatherhood, initiation into religious societies, and funerals” (3) for these events require certain transitions from one social position to another. He refers to these particular categories as “rites of passage,” each of which implies a different stage of liminality. There are for instance “rites of separation, transition rites, and rites of incorporation” (11). While the first group, also called “preliminal rites” include death or funerals, the latest one, “postliminal rites” indicate marriages or ceremonies of birth (11). It is the transition rites such as “pregnancy, betrothal, and initiation; [...] the delivery of a second child, remarriage, or the passage from the second to the third age group” (11) that particularly underlines the liminality of the subject. The transition rites are based on the idea that the subject can neither leave his/her previous social position, nor can s/he wholly belong to the other. These transition rites reflect the sense of “the liminal” as defined by van Gennep.

Incorporating van Gennep’s theory of liminality, the British cultural anthropologist Victor Turner has expanded the scope of studies on the concept of liminality. Examining how the category of the liminal is experienced by individuals, Turner argues that liminality provides the individual with the possibility of “standing aside not only from one’s own position but from all social positions and of formulating a potentially unlimited series of alternative social arrangements” (*Dramas, Fields, and...* 13-14). Liminality, for Turner, offers such freedom of judgement and action to the liminal beings that they have the potential to change positions in society unproblematically as they truly belong to neither of the places

though they occupy them both. Individuals at the liminal stages of their lives are not yet discursively contained within one social position. So, they can use their liminality either to challenge or to reconstruct the normative definitions of upcoming stages. In other words, Turner considers liminality as a stage that offers personal liberation for the subject and provides him or her with the potential to reform the social norms. He further categorises liminality in two different forms of rituals: “rituals of status elevation” and “rituals of status reversal” (*The Ritual Process...* 167). While the first category implies the transition of the person “from a lower to a higher position in an institutionalised system” (*The Ritual Process...* 167), the second one refers to a carnivalesque state in which it is possible for those of the lower status to rule over the authorities. In both ritualistic practices, the liminal agent is granted with a certain amount of freedom and power with their ability to adjust themselves to each position. The liminal subject has the potential to subvert the dominant social structure with her/his ambiguous identity, or in-betweenness since s/he is not yet defined by and therefore subservient to any normative social positions. Turner’s perspective, thus, offers an understanding of liminality as a subversive space as he most explicitly suggests:

The attributes of liminality or of liminal personae (“threshold people”) are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial. As such, their ambiguous and indeterminate attributes are expressed by a rich variety of symbols in the many societies that ritualise social and cultural transitions. (*The Ritual Process...* 95)

Turner emphasises that liminal personae are able to challenge the social, legal, and cultural boundaries with their unpredictable and ambiguous status that does not correspond to any definitive level of the cultural space. Not organised by customs or rituals, their threshold status provides liminal individuals with the opportunity to produce their own personal spaces –though temporarily. Thus, Turner thinks that recognized “both as phase and state” (*The Ritual Process...* 167), liminality creates a highly subversive cultural space, or even such “a sacred condition” (*Dramas, Fields, and...* 273) that liminal entities can fully experience their in-between positions, not marked by rites of passage yet.

This study relies on the definitions of liminality developed by van Gennep and Turner in order to discuss Thomas Hardy's tragic character Jude Fawley in his last major¹ novel *Jude the Obscure* (1895). Hardy's interest in exploring individuals whose lives are tragically shaped either through or in reaction to the social order permeates his oeuvre from the beginning of his career. Among his characters that precede or foreshadow Jude's liminality is the eponymous character Tess, the poor village girl whose partly noble lineage leads her into a conflicting position as a servant at her relatives' house. Raped and left with a child by her young master Alec D'Urberville, Tess leads a tragic life due to her inability to challenge any social positions that she is confined to as a young Victorian woman. Tess cannot find herself a place to belong to that is not framed through strict social or moral codes of her day. Similarly, Bathsheba Everdene of *Far from the Madding Crowd* is an example of another previous threshold character whose dilemma results from her desire to preserve her liberation as a woman and to be with her love for Gabriel the shepherd. Through a detailed depiction of social norms and values that demand certain rites of passages such as puberty, marriage, or burial, Hardy presents such liminal characters that eventually contribute to the development of Jude whom he describes as the Obscure. In this essay, Jude's obscurity is analysed as a marker of his identity, reflected through his liminality that complicates the way Jude perceives the world and acts out in it.

As a young boy of a lower class family, Jude is obsessed with the idea of studying at the University of Christminster, and he works quite hard as a stonemason to save enough money to afford his college education. Deeply attached to this idea, Jude also tries to educate himself mainly through studying the classical languages of Greek and Latin. But, he first loses the track of his academic pursuit as he falls in love with an elder woman Arabella and marries her. Soon after Arabella leaves Jude, he decides to resume his ambition to study in Christminster. However, his efforts fail once more since the schools that he applied for reject Jude, kindly stating him that he has "a much better chance of success in life by remaining in [his] own sphere and sticking to [his] trade than by adopting any other course" (110). Highly disillusioned with his failure, Jude falls in love with his cousin

¹Thomas Hardy categorises his novels into three groups in his 1912 General Preface to the Wessex edition of his works: Novels of Character and Environment, Romances and Fantasies, and Novels of Ingenuity or Experimental Novels. Hardy critics usually consider the first group to include his major novels such as *Under the Greenwood Tree*, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, *The Return of the Native*, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *The Woodlanders*, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, and *Jude the Obscure* (Harvey 57).

Sue Bridehead who helps him out in adopting the city life in Christminster. Jude and Sue have an unorthodox affair since they are both married when they start to live together. Though after both are divorced, they do not get married but have children out of wedlock. Their relationship turns to be fatally tragic in the end when Little Father Time, Jude's son by Arabella, kills Jude and Sue's children and commits suicide, leaving the couple in desolate pain. Throughout the novel, Jude experiences the complexity of belonging to a particular social status, which requires certain rites of passages that he is unable to perform. For instance, his intellectual attributes are always already in conflict with his limited opportunities as a stonemason, which initially makes him a liminal character. This paper mainly argues that Jude's liminality causes his downfall instead of providing him with the opportunities to challenge the social norms or authorities of his Victorian society. Thus, Jude's character reflects such concept of liminality that can be closely associated with both van Gennep's and Turner's definitions; however, his liminality does not grant him the potential to break down the social taboos. Jude's liminality or obscurity, which can be observed from his early childhood in the novel, gradually leads him into a life that is almost completely incompatible with his social, cultural, and material surroundings, eventually leaving him as an individual in an eternal search for a proper social place to belong to. In other words, although Jude "the liminal" strives to occupy both the central and the marginal roles in society at the same time, he fails to conform to the social expectations in both realms, and he is trapped in a state of in-betweenness as a consequence.

L. J. Butler's analyses of *Jude the Obscure* similarly put a special critical focus on the protagonist's threshold identity. For Butler, the novel is like an allegorical sketch of human in-betweenness, as he argues:

Jude is an allegory, a sociological novel and a psychological study, but its importance is that it is an allegory about the fate of the man as he is caught between classes (and stages of social development), and a psychological novel about the traumatic personal lives of two people caught between desire and duty. The common denominator here is the concept of being 'caught between' things, and the example of 'flesh versus spirit' illustrates it perfectly: the trap is ambiguous and therefore doubly inescapable (121).

Butler's reading of *Jude* sees the novel as a universal allegory of mankind² whose internal/eternal conflict between flesh and spirit, passion and reason, or desire and duty has always been one of the most popular literary tropes. Butler's view credits Hardy's literary talent to create such characters as Jude that arouses a universal feeling of pathos in the reader, but it does not equally claim for Jude's particularity as an individual by limiting it to the allegorical level.

Building on Butler's allegorical interpretation of Jude's character as a liminal figure, it is better to identify Jude's individual characteristics that situate him at the threshold. Jude's liminality remains unresolved throughout his life since he cannot easily pass from one social space to another and preserves his in-betweenness although he experiences certain rites of passage such as puberty, marriage, fatherhood, divorce, or funeral. It is no coincidence that Hardy begins the novel by describing Jude as "a little boy of eleven" (3), later a young man, a husband, a divorced man, a father, and finally a desperate man losing all his children to death and his lover to a psychological breakdown. In each phase, Jude is expected to experience a certain kind of conflict, and these conflicts are respectively relevant to his decisions as to whether to study at Christminster or to stay at Marygreen; to marry Arabella or to fulfil his academic ideals; to remain faithful to his wife or to pursue Sue's love; to practise cohabitation with Sue or to let her live with Mr. Phillotson; to follow his academic pursuits or to gain livelihood for his family. He is torn between his academic aspirations and class limitations as well as between his religious ideals and personal desires, which eventually causes him to die alone in the house of his ruthless first wife, devoid of any happiness either in family, education, or love.

Jude's liminality always interferes with the course of his life as he fails to fulfil what requires to occupy one social status (e.g. a married man) and to move on to another one (e.g. a father). His liminality refers to a sense of placelessness in society, since he is moved by the desire to occupy both the central and marginal places. Jude, as a liminal being, cannot survive in a social environment, which enforces class distinctions, traditional gender roles, or legal institutions through the economic system, law, Church, or family. In this respect Jude fails to pass "the

² Similarly, Dale Kramer puts that Hardy portrays Jude especially in the first part of the novel as "a kind of Everyman, whose weaknesses- drink, ambition, sexual energy- are seen either natural in themselves or as inevitable, if temporary, consolations for the frustration of an aspect of his representativeness" (176). Dale Kramer, "Hardy and the Readers: *Jude the Obscure*," *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Hardy*, ed. Dale Kramer. Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1999.164-182.

stage of permanent incorporation into the community” (168), which is identified by van Gennep as the necessary step to end the liminal stage. Jude’s disengagement from the community similarly reflects Hardy’s tragic vision of life as is summarised by J. O. Bailey as “a violation of natural law brings a blow. A violation of man-made laws, social codes, Christian virtues, which often stand in direct contrast with natural law, may likewise bring a blow” (100). Jude, as an example, cannot escape from transcending the boundaries of his nature and society, which is why he remains at the liminal stage all through his life. His liminality, thus, does not pose any serious threats of disruption to the social order; on the contrary, his existence is constantly threatened by such social, religious, and legal restrictions as marriage, class distinctions, and such social taboos as extramarital sex.

The primary example of Jude’s liminality is his increasing passion for studying at a university, more specifically at Christminster, regardless of his social position. His enthusiasm to get a college degree is first depicted through his constant fascination with the sight of the nearby city of Christminster, where his schoolmaster Mr. Phillotson has settled in order to get a degree. Mr. Phillotson can be regarded as Jude’s earliest connection with the intellectual life since he is the one who stimulates Jude’s academic aspirations when Jude was still a young boy. When he leaves the town, Mr. Phillotson explains to Jude:

Well- don’t speak of this everywhere. You know what a university is, and a university degree? It is the necessary hallmark of a man who wants to do anything in teaching. My scheme, or dream, is to be a university graduate, and then to be ordained. By going to live at Christminster, or near it, I shall be at headquarters, so to speak, and if my scheme is practicable at all, I consider that being on the spot will afford me a better chance of carrying it out than I should have elsewhere (4).

Highly influenced by Mr. Phillotson’s idealistic expressions about university life, Jude begins to build up his own image of Christminster sometimes as “a gleaming topaz” (16) or “the New Jerusalem” (16). The folk of Marygreen and the elderly are aware of Jude’s romantic attachment to such fantasy and quite concerned about his increasing disillusionment since they well know the fact that Christminster will eventually ruin his ambitious plans. The old members of Marygreen, then, speak from the centre with the authority, which they have gained only through recognising the settled social boundaries. They are well aware of the requirements for the initiation into such high-class community, which Jude fails to recognise due

to his over attachment to university life. However, Jude does not listen to what others say about Christminster since he considers the place as “a unique centre of thought and religion –the intellectual and spiritual granary of [the] country” (106).

Another scene that shows how the townspeople were quite aware of the futility of Jude’s aspirations is when the carter advises Jude that he overthink how he is going to cope with the elitist environment of Christminster. In order to impress Jude, the carter even recounts a biblical story, drawing a parallelism to his situation as such: “On’y foreign tongues used in the days of the Tower of Babel, when no two families spoke alike. They read that sort of thing as fast as a night-hawk will whirl. ‘Tis all learning there; nothing but learning, except religion” (18). He clearly marginalises Christminster as a place where doctrinal learning is excluded from the canon, and he warns Jude about the possible consequences of attempting to study at university. To address Jude’s liminal situation in van Gennepe’s terms, it is possible to claim that Jude’s desire to pass from one social position to the other brings about such changes that disturb both “the life of society and the individual” (13). This is the reason why the carter and the people in his small town sincerely worry about Jude’s future and talk to him about possible negative outcomes of his “territorial passage” (1), in van Gennepe’s terminology. Jude aims for an intellectual life that is only accessible by upper class people in his society, and he does not listen to others’ disheartening words. On the contrary, their concerns seem to have an encouraging effect on him, and on his way back home, Jude feels even more confident about his decision:

He suddenly grew older. It had been the yearning of his heart *to find something to anchor on, to cling to*; for some place which he could call admirable; should he find that place in this city if he could get there? Would it be a spot in which, without fear of farmers, or hindrance, or ridicule, he could watch and wait and set himself to some mighty undertaking like the men of old of whom he had heard? As the halo had been to his eyes when gazing at it a quarter of an hour earlier, so was the spot mentally to him as he pursued his *dark way*. (19-20).

Jude reflects on Christminster as the place of his heart’s desire that he could admire for all his life. Particularly, he thinks of the city’s environment that would provide him with the opportunity to meditate upon great historical figures or deeds without getting ridiculed or disturbed by others. Even the simple idea of indulging in contemplative moments without any disturbance enchants Jude, and he resembles this opportunity to a halo that enlightens his dark path of life. He also

believes that Marygreen is not the place that he is bound to live, which is associated with darkness, but he belongs to Christminster, the “city of light” where “[t]he tree of knowledge grows” (20). Indeed, he is economically capable of living in the former one while he thinks his intellectual capacities might enable him to live in the latter. However, his dual attachment both to Marygreen and Christminster entraps him in a perpetual nomadic life since he cannot completely perform the rites of passage, and fails in “the preliminal rites,” or, “the rites of separation” (1). This is the first and most important characteristics that Jude has as a liminal being whose in-betweenness shapes all his life.

Besides lacking the basic social status to get into Christminster, Jude is later involved in a passionate love affair with Arabella, who “soon reassert[s] her sway in his soul” (43), which builds his connection to Marygreen stronger rather than to his dream city. He is easily “diverted from his purposes by an unsuitable woman [Arabella]” (68), and finds himself in a stormy relationship with her. Their first meeting is sarcastically depicted in the novel as “Jude, the incipient scholar, prospective D.D., Professor, Bishop, or what not, felt himself honoured and glorified by the condescension of this handsome country wench in agreeing to take a walk with him in her Sunday frock and ribbons” (40). After spending some time with Arabella, he questions his intentions concerning how to direct his life and decides to marry her in a short time. Their ceremony of marriage is not heartily held either by Jude’s aunt or by Arabella’s family, signalling a possible disapprobation of the changes that this marriage would lead to in their lives. The preliminal rite for their marriage, then, is not fulfilled so as to give the couple the opportunity to “pass from one defined position to another which is equally well-defined” (3). Thus, Jude all the time feels himself “out of place” (43) near Arabella.

Jude’s sense of placelessness increases until the climactic point when the couple are left alone to slay a pig that would be their winter stock, and Jude, appalled by the instructions given by Arabella, feels quite incapable of killing the animal that “[he has] fed with [his] own hands” (58). As a pig breeder’s daughter, Arabella, on the other hand, urges him to stick the animal as quickly as possible, and she detests that her husband’s emotional responsiveness to the slayed pig and calls him “a tender-hearted fool” (60). After they slay the animal, Arabella throws away its pizzle towards Jude such carelessness that it hits his ear and falls on his feet. Horrified to see that it was part of the dead animal, Jude once more realises that the two are not meant for each other. According to Norman Page, “[t]he pig’s

puzzle thrown by Arabella –one of Hardy’s most effective symbols, both bold and apt– shatters [Jude’s] contemplative mood as Arabella herself is to shatter the ‘future’ which Jude is envisaging” (85). Arabella not only ends their relationship through this act but also destroys any hope of regeneration for the couple. So, the scene of killing the pig can be well interpreted as a ritualistic practice, ironically fulfilling the potential for ending Jude and Arabella’s relationship since at that moment Jude is convinced that Arabella is “an unsuitable woman” (68) for him. In Turner’s words, “rites [of passage] characteristically begin with ritual metaphors of killing or death marking the separation of the subject from ordinary secular relationships” (*Dramas, Fields, and...*273). However, Turner notes that such rituals are completed only if they “conclude with a symbolic rebirth or reincorporation into society as shaped by the law and moral code” (*Dramas, Fields, and...*273). Jude and Arabella’s ritualistic act of slaying of the pig radically results in the breakup of the couple. Jude and Arabella’s ways are separated after this event, which makes it graphically clear for both that they are quite incompatible. So, though they perform the deed of killing the pig, which can be associated as a ritualistic practice to end their marriage, the couple do not complete the legal step to get the divorce. Not only their connection as husband and wife ends but also do they become attached to each other through their son to be born soon. Therefore, Jude once again challenges any possibility for regeneration of or reintegration into the social norms after this event. Jude partly seems stuck in the phase of his boyhood although it has been long after he passed his puberty, married a woman, and even consummated his marriage with a child. This is why he almost pathetically tries to persuade himself that he is a grown up man and a husband although he is still neither of them. He contemplates his situation:

He could not realise himself. On the old track he seemed to be a boy still, hardly a day older than when he had stood dreaming at the top of the hill, inwardly fired for the first time with ardours for Christminster and scholarship. ‘Yet I am a man,’ he said. ‘I have a wife. More, I have arrived at the still riper stage of having disagreed with her, disliked her, had a scuffle with her and parted from her’ (67).

Through Jude’s meditation, it is evident that he tries to persuade himself into the idea that he has passed from boyhood to manhood, and, that he is a married man. His efforts, however, prove to be useless since he is quite aware of that he cannot easily leave one stage of his life to pursue another. As insinuated through Jude’s

lines, it is clear that his liminality will keep bothering him at each step of his life since he further reflects how disturbed he feels with his failure as a man and a husband (plus a father, of which only the reader is now aware). By recalling the steps of his relationship with Arabella, he assumes having passed all the rites that secure his status as a man in his community, starting with gaining the marital status. Yet, neither puberty nor marriage as a form of rites of passage could enable Jude to change into a man who never belongs to a single world– either to that of reason or passion; working men or scholars– he continues to bear the reminiscences of his earlier phases, such as his childhood tenderness, youthful idealism, or vigorous sexuality. In other words, Jude is anchored to liminality, which is defined by Turner, as “a movement between fixed points, and [which is] essentially ambiguous, unsettled, and unsettling” (*Dramas, Fields, and...* 274). Jude constantly finds himself moving between two different social positions that complicate how he acts all through his life.

Another phase in Jude’s life, during which he keeps his liminality and suffers, as a consequence, is the period when he goes to Christminster to go to the college. While working hard as a stonemason to sustain himself in the city, he sends many application letters to the colleges, inquiring his aptitude, to which he receives only one reply that is unfortunately negative. The answer is more like a notification for Jude, reminding him once again of his position as “a working man” (110) who would “have a much better chance of success in life by remaining [his] own sphere” (110). For Jude it is “a hard slap after ten years of labour” (110), and he gives up his dream by writing on the college’s wall such lines from the Book of Job as: “I have understanding as well as you. I am not inferior to you: yea, who knoweth not such things as these?” (112). In a way, he reacts being denied the chance to study at a college and the idea of continuing his life as a mason. Inscribing some biblical verse on the college’s wall becomes Jude’s symbolic way of ending his efforts to become a college student. Thus, failing to initiate his school life, Jude performs this act as a closure or phase-out of his dreams rather than as a post-liminal ritual which is performed as “a symbolic rebirth or reincorporation into society as shaped by the law and moral code” (Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and...* 273). Certainly, it is not only due to Jude’s liminal identity that he cannot completely abandon one stage of his life to start the other, but also the class structure of the society is a crucial factor that closes the university doors to Jude’s face. However, what Jude achieves through the ambiguity of his character is his constant efforts to change his social status but to fail at every instance.

After giving up his hopes for an intellectual life, Jude decides to pursue “the ecclesiastical and altruistic life” (123) and to become a clergyman, for which he only spends “a stagnant time to advance his new desire, occupying himself with little local jobs” (123). Jude neither dedicates himself to his ideals nor completely lives without thinking about them. When he receives a passionate love letter from Sue, he is easily diverted from his aim because of his keen attachment to his cousin Sue Bridehead who has already been living there and helped him adjust to the city life. Usually regarded as a “counterpoint to Arabella” (Heilman 307), Sue is a free-spirited young woman with intellectual tendencies who fascinates Jude instantly. From the moment on Jude first met Sue, he could not keep away his mind from her merely because “[t]he consciousness 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” (83). Unlike Arabella, whose carnal desires attract Jude in the first place, Sue charms him with her intellectual capacity and sceptical mind. As Michael Steig similarly states, Arabella and Sue are usually considered to represent two antagonistic sides of Jude, constantly troubling his soul (261). It is true that Jude shares some characteristics with both women despite their sharp contrasts regarding their personalities; however, his identity is not marked by a compromise of such conflicting forces but a schism between the two. Jude’s liminality prevents him from acting out his social roles properly either near Arabella who passionately charmed him as a lover and then a wife or with Sue who intellectually attracted him as first a cousin than as a partner. Although he manages to create an alternative space with his liminal nature and continues to occupy this personal place throughout his life, he still fails to challenge the social, moral, legal, or class structure as an individual. In one of his reflective speeches, Jude thinks of his failed careers both as a college student and as a clergyman, and he puts through a confessional tone:

Strange that his first aspiration towards academic proficiency had been checked by a woman, and that his second aspiration –towards apostleship– had also been checked by a woman. ‘Is it,’ he said, ‘that the women are to blame; or is it the artificial system of things, under which the normal sex-impulses are turned into devilish domestic gins and springes to noose and hold back those who want to progress?’ (209).

Jude’s questioning here takes a challenging turn especially when he blames the artificiality of social norms and codes that limit and regulate the instinctual side of

individuals. So, Jude is highly critical towards his Victorian society, and his criticism reminds of an understanding of social practices as social drama where some rituals are practised to keep the social order and recall Turner's ideas on social ritualistic practices. In fact, through Jude's catastrophic pursuit, Hardy reflects his own subversion of Victorian values, as Geoffrey Harvey posits, by "championing the oppressed working class and the Women's Movement of the day, questioning the sanctity of marriage vows, exploring the grounds of religious faith, and challenging the dominant social institutions such as the universities and the Church" (88-89). Although Hardy depicts Jude's recurrent attempts of rites of passage that fail to secure him a social position due to his liminality, he still conveys a critical perspective towards the social structure that either centralises or marginalises individuals with its strict moral, religious rules or class-consciousness.

Another scene that depicts an example of Jude's constant failure to pass any rites of passage in life is when he mentally and spiritually struggles to prove himself as an adult rather than a child upon meeting Sue. Highly mesmerised by Sue's existence and knowing her marriage with Mr. Phillotson, he simultaneously learns about Arabella's return from Sydney. The situation becomes complicated for Jude, and the narrator reflects on his threshold situation as follows:

He had, he verily believed, overcome all tendency to fly to liquor-which, indeed, he had never done from taste, but merely as an escape from intolerable misery of mind. Yet he perceived with despondency that, taken all round, 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. (185)

Jude, as a man of both too many passions and positions, fluctuates between the realms of the ideal and the material, reason and passion, the moral or immoral/amoral. Similarly, Michael Millgate in his study analyses Jude as a character who is excessively "caught up in dramas of sin and guilt, determinism and free will, whose configurations are plotted in terms as much theological as psychological" (317-18). Jude bears the burden of living "in a chaos of principles" (317) which always overcomplicates the definition of his allegiance to the social world. He continually questions himself about his impressionable nature despite his surface idealism in terms of academic ambition, love, and religion. Jude's final conclusion is as follows: "[T]here is something wrong somewhere in our social

formulas, what it is can only be discovered by men or women with greater insight than mine” (317). He is quite aware of his failure to comply with the social or moral codes, but he is unable to identify the reason why such social demands bring chaotic outcomes for people instead of organising their lives.

To conclude, Hardy’s portrayal of Jude as a threshold character, marked by his mental, psychological, and theological struggles to sustain a place of his own in society, recalls similar stages of liminality as identified by Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner. Both theorists consider the stage of liminality as a potential for the individual to redefine the social position to be held as a consequence of the performed rituals or rites of passages. In the novel, Jude, similarly, goes through various rites of passages as puberty, marriage, death, or divorce. However, he remains at the territorial passage or the liminal stage, as respectively identified by van Gennep and Turner, with no ambition to contest each social position that he simultaneously occupies. Thus, Jude’s liminality can only be interpreted as a literary example that is antithetical to van Gennep and Turner’s definitions of the term since it only serves to accelerate his tragic fall rather than enables him to challenge the social order. In this sense, Hardy’s depiction of Jude as a liminal character contributes to his pessimistic idea that the individuals have no free will to shape their lives disregarding the strict morals, religious doctrines, or class distinctions of their society.

WORKS CITED

Bailey, J. O. “Hardy’s Visions of the Self.” *Studies in Philology* 56.1(1959): 74-101.

Butler, L. J. *Thomas Hardy*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1978.

Gennep, Arnold van. *The Rites of Passage*. London: U of Chicago P, 1992.

Hardy, Thomas. *Jude the Obscure*. Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 2002.

Harvey, Geoffrey. *The Complete Critical Guide to Thomas Hardy*. London and New York: Routledge, 2003.

Heilman, Robert B. “Hardy’s Sue Bridehead.” *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 20.4 (1966): 307-323.

Kramer, Dale. “Hardy and the Readers: Jude the Obscure.” *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Hardy*. Ed. Dale Kramer. Cambridge: U of Cambridge P, 1999. 164-182.

- Millgate, Michael. *Thomas Hardy: His Career as a Novelist*. London: Macmillan, 1994.
- Page, Norman. *Thomas Hardy*. London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1997.
- Robinson, Edwin Arlington. "For a Book by Thomas Hardy." *Thomas Hardy: Critical Assessments: Contemporary Response*. Ed. Graham Clarke. Vol. I. Mountfield: Helm Information, 1993. 244.
- Steig, Michael. "Sue Bridehead." *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 1.3 (1968): 260-266.
- Turner, Victor. *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*. Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1996.
- . *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Ithaca and New York: Cornell UP, 1991.