

## **“Get out of Town”: The “Itinerant Concerns” of Thomas Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure***

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Thomas Hardy’s last novel, *Jude the Obscure*, opens with a momentous description of departure: “The schoolmaster was leaving the village, and everybody seemed sorry” (3). Hardy’s choice to introduce the reader to Phillotson as “the schoolmaster” embeds in this first sentence a subtle attention to the process of differentiation that recognizes individuality amidst abstraction (Hensley 607). Juxtaposing “the schoolmaster” to “everybody,” the abstracted conglomeration of villagers who make the social body, underscores the tension between interchangeability and singularity for liberal political systems that cultivate an ethos of equality through mass democratization. “The rector” of Hardy’s fictional Marygreen is particularly aware of the stakes this leave-taking has for the town, going “away for the day, being a man who disliked the sight of changes,” deciding to return only “when the new school teacher would have arrived and settled in, and everything would be smooth again” (3). The rector’s ability to foresee at once both Phillotson’s singularity as the unpleasant instrument of change and his interchangeability, represented in the eventual return of normalcy, creates a pervading friction in the novel that follows Jude and Sue’s struggle for various forms of inclusion. In this first sentence Hardy has also established two important thematics for understanding the ways his characters will define themselves within and against society: the traveling individual and the occupational identity.

The “problem of particularity” was a contentious political issue in the decades that led up to the writing of *Jude the Obscure*. Nathan Hensley argues in “*Armada* and the Logic of Liberalism” that the singularity of the liberal subject was “twisted at the foundations of the democratic sovereignty being debated during the 1860s, when any particular voter began to be understood as potentially equivalent, in philosophical terms, to the next” (608). The “ethical self-fashioning” enabled by this equivalency had the potential to “transform a social body once composed of particular, qualitatively different individuals into a state comprising exchangeable units” threatening to move attention away from “social relations toward number.” Victorian novels therefore, much like the political reform surrounded their publications, was explicitly concerned with the process that “makes individuals individual” (607). This thematic is explicitly confronted in “Father Time,” a character whose very name suggests an effacement of particularity, and whose suicide note, “Done because we are too meny,” with its ringing indictment of Malthusian political economy, draws a resounding critique of political systems whose concern with equality had devolved to the mere consideration of number (325). But Hardy also explores the issue of the one and the many in more subtle ways that expose both the affordances of interchangeability within liberal equivalency and the censor achieved through recognition that adheres to the singular subject. This kind of censor is achieved through what Glen Coulthard calls a “governmentality that works through the limited freedoms afforded by

state recognition and accommodation" (16). "State recognition," in this analysis does not mean brute force, but rather the production of different modes of behavior and thought within the subjects of a place that enforce "the types of practices and subject positions that are required for their continued domination."<sup>1</sup> In *Jude the Obscure* it is through episodes in which a character voluntarily leaves their community that they achieve the anonymity necessary to become "interchangeable," which allows them to pass unnoticed by the moral code of the town, while establishing oneself in a new location makes the subject singular and unable to escape recognition and repression.<sup>2</sup>

The travel that abounds in Hardy's novel, and provides the plot much of its narrative force, is made possible by two historical configurations: the development of the railway and the increasing importance of occupation as a marker of identity. The growth of England's expansive railway system influenced movement and citizens' orientation toward place to such an extent that it moved Sydney Smith, a Victorian commentator, to exclaim, in 1842, "Distance is abolished!" (Simmons 310, c.f. Bleicher 84). By the time Hardy began making notes for the novel in 1887, England had already gone through a midcentury "Railway Mania" and passed Gladstone's Regulation Act, which "mandated low-cost universal access to rail travel" (Bleicher 85). The railway not only compressed space, it also opened up the affordances of extended mobility to nearly every class, effecting not only the exchange of goods and the political configuration of England's booming economy, but also a range of social and psychological influences that changed social relationality.<sup>3</sup> The sudden availability of distance meant the "death of geographical security and identity guarantees, and the rise of opportunities for exploiting and being exploited by others [because] of all the prerequisites for launching a narrative identity experiment, none is greater than the need for fresh territory" (84). Although imposture had been an important concern for the social order before the railway, the increase of speed and accessibility exploded the possibilities for this kind of self-fashioning by creating an exponential increase in "fresh territory" for those in need of self-erasure.

This development was mirrored in literature by an increase in plots, such as Wilkie Collins' *Armadale* and other sensation novels, but also more canonical texts such as Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend*, that evolved around the assumption of someone else's identity or the self-fashioning of a new one for some generative potential. Even in the many "bigamy plots" of this period, novels that, while they did not always involve straight forward imposture, needed to use distance to grant the anonymity that allowed the second marriage to take place, travel became intrinsically linked to self-identity and the possibility of transgressing the law (McAleavey). In *Jude the Obscure* travel is the condition of any character's attempt to tell a new story about themselves in order to circumvent the law because "to tell a new story, one must travel to a place where no one knows the old one" (84). But if novels like *Armadale* teach "the (liberal) lesson that the sins of the fathers are not visited upon the sons [so that] every subject can break free from his family

history through the magic agency of individual virtue,” Hardy’s later novel is a more complex engagement with the autonomous liberal subject where, without the possibility of continued movement, recognition by the state secures individuality within the “social moulds” of society (Hardy 197). In this way *Jude* is also evocative of cases of imposture, like the 16<sup>th</sup> century trial of Martin Guerre, that pre-date a conception of the free liberal subject and make social relationality an inherent part of identity formation. Martin’s abrupt departure from his community, and Arnaud du Tilh’s later arrival as the new Martin, draw parallels that underscore the many ways identity is contained within the bounds of state recognition in *Jude* and emphasize the anonymity of travel as a means to escape censure.

Unfortunately for the itinerant minded individual, 19<sup>th</sup> century liberal political systems were not as open to the pervasive wandering of its subjects as might be assumed by the expansion of the railway. From its beginning, the railway was not a matter of individual freedom, but of economic production. Therefore, the second historical circumstance, begun much earlier than the first, that is important to the possibility of anonymity through travel is the Lockean recognition of identity and self-worth within an occupation or job position. Recognizing identity in this way makes unemployment, or movement that occurs outside of production, an example of criminality. In a lecture given at the College de France on January 17<sup>th</sup> 1973, Foucault argues that it is not the case that “one wanders around and this vagabondage gradually leads to theft, and then to crime, but that vagabondage is the element on the basis of which other crimes are to be specified” (*Punitive* 46). The element of crime is not therefore the literal movement of the individual, but rather that movement which takes the subject outside of production. Criminality is defined as a state “of traveling around, of not being settled on an estate, of not being *defined by a job*. Crime begins when one has no civil status that is to say geographical location within a definite community” (my emphasis, *Punitive* 46). Criminality occurs because when “one moves one causes a shortage of labor in the poorest regions, the effect of which is to raise wages” (46). It is important to note that travel, in Foucault’s sense, is explicitly defined as the absence of geographical location *and* job-title because the crime of vagabondage is, at its most elemental, the theft of production. To move one’s geographical location, but retain one’s job-title, a feat that was not easily achieved until the advantages of the railway, was not criminal. In the hundred years that separate Le Trasne’s text and Hardy’s novel the popularization of the train, the improvement of roads and the availability of carts and carriages popularized movement to such an extent that the connection between geographical place and the individual’s need to define himself through work was destabilized. Hardy’s itinerant characters are therefore able to avoid criminality if they are confirmed within the system of production.<sup>4</sup> Although the vacated town has experienced a shortage of labor, as can be seen in Hardy’s characterization of “the rector[’s]” anxiety, another laborer will appear within the forces of production to fill the vacant place.

## Itinerant Production

The anonymity that travel affords Jude and Sue is embodied by the “itinerant quack doctor” Vilbert, who also exemplifies the traveler’s relationship to the forces of production. Vilbert’s itinerancy is not the result of exile or a way to escape work. Quite the opposite, his proclivity to wander the towns and villages of Wessex is a savvy economic decision that allows him to make a living practicing medicine without the privileges more traditional doctors possess. The success of his practice is explicitly linked to “the distances he traversed on foot,” which are “enormous, and extend[] nearly the whole length and breadth of Wessex” (Hardy 21). But Vilbert also depends on the insular nature of the places he visits. In fact, the very reason Vilbert is able to use travel as a means of evading and refashioning his identity is, as Jude’s aunts says, because Marygreen “never had anything to do with folk in Christminster, nor folk in Christminster to do with we” (12). Isolation and locality helps Vilbert become “well known to the rustic population, and absolutely unknown to anybody else, as he indeed, took care to be, to avoid inconvenient investigations” (21). If his particular style of medicine will be unprofitable, or even criminal, within more genteel circles, a developed itinerancy allows Vilbert to pass into the spheres where he can sell his goods, becoming well known to those he must do business with, while escaping the censor of those who threaten his business. Although his income is “humbler” than “those of the quacks with capital and an organized system of advertising,” Vilbert continuously appears successful and is never reprimanded by the law (21).

Even more fully than Jude, Vilbert’s identity in the novel is linked to his trade. When Arabella seeks him out, years after Jude originally approached him for help procuring books, she describes him as “the itinerant Vilbert” (51). The repetition of this descriptive adjective suggests that it is synonymous with his character or at least the degree to which others recognize him. Hardy also suggests that his itinerancy not only helps him survive, but is an important part of the configuration of Wessex, providing something others consent to through their purchasing power. When Arabella is in need of an abortive, she goes to Vilbert because she, “like all the other cottagers thereabout, knew the quack well, and she began telling him of her experiences” (51). Vilbert’s itinerancy allows him a certain level of recognition, his own “system of advertising,” by which he can cultivate his trade. The need for commodities that are not strictly professional opens a position within the production cycle of the town which, because the cottagers want these needs to be secret, Vilbert can provide through the anonymity of his wandering. He therefore avoids criminal status by both selling goods and traveling Wessex. He is neither outside of production, nor squarely within the letter of the law. His status renders him uniquely recognized and anonymous because, while he is not recognized by genteel society, and not known well enough to ever be investigated by the cottagers, he also possesses an aura of identity that is sought out by Jude and Arabella when they are in need of something “not strictly professional” (21). Vilbert represents the anonymity which Jude and Sue will make use of when they first arrive

in a new town, but his continual motion allows him to stay outside of the law, whereas Sue and Jude, who seek to establish themselves in various places in the novel are recognized by it.

Without Vilbert's perpetual itinerancy, Jude can use travel to leave Marygreen, but he must ultimately establish himself in a trade that is fully recognized by Christminster. This job-title makes him interchangeable, like the "new schoolmaster," and therefore a part of the town's production. Jude is conscious of this dynamic from the very moment he resolves to go to Christminster to pursue his intellectual endeavors, asking himself "but how live in that city<sup>5</sup>?" (29). Aware of the criminal status of the vagabond who comes "under the penal system at the level of the action of asking someone else for one's subsistence without working," Jude must find work (Foucault, *Punitive* 45). Reflecting that he "had no trade or calling of any dignity or stability whatever on which he could subsist while carrying out an intellectual endeavor," Jude imagines entering the town by making himself interchangeable through the realization of a trade (29). He is not only conscious of the vagabond, but has also already learned that "a man's relation to his work forms a central category in classical and Victorian liberal understandings of property, the characterological virtue of self-possession, and the posture of self-interest" (Hadley, *Liberalism* 237). But self-fashioning, or self-interest, especially as it is realized through labor, is coiled around social relationality in the novel, a dynamic that is even more obvious on Jude's second trip to Christminster. But even in this first trip, in order to establish himself in the new town, Jude asks himself "what was most required by citizens?" (29). Pursuing this line of thought, Jude realizes that preparing food will leave him too poor, that clothing manufacturing is distasteful to his sensibilities, but "they built in a city; therefore he would learn to build." Although Jude exercises his own interest by rejecting the second option, and at least partly in embracing the third, the stress Hardy lays on the community's role in Jude's formation of possibilities and interest in a trade that is already established, reinforces the dynamic interchange between the subject and the social body. Jude's choice is inscribed within the system of production that the citizens of the town participate in, and since his choice to pursue intellectual endeavor by traveling to this town is from the start neatly integrated to the question of production, Jude's "posture of self-interest" is defined within the economic structures of Wessex.

Yet, this interplay does not simply limit the possibilities Jude can pursue. By identifying for himself a trade with stability, and some level of dignity as well, Jude is able to leave Marygreen and enter Christminster. Marygreen is unable to furnish Jude with the kind of intellectual possibilities that comprise his self-possession. Entering into production in this way allows him the affordance to travel to Christminster where he believes he will be exposed to the intellectual opportunities he craves. The description of Jude's eventual departure from Marygreen fulfills the affordances of departure within the scope of production: "He had last found himself clear of Marygreen and Alfredston: he was out of his apprenticeship, and with his tools at his back seemed to be in the way of making a new start" (71). Although the university does not accept

him, the town does incorporate him into society as a builder. Later in the novel, when Jude and Sue travel to Aldbrickham and Christminster their singularity before the marriage law stresses the degree to which the religious law denies them the anonymity of interchangeability. Identified by the members of the city in this way, their identities are inscribed by social relationality which limits their ability to be interchangeable, in the way Jude was on his first trip to Christminster, and represent the fully autonomous citizens of Victorian liberalism.

### **Itinerant Relationships**

In order to understand how the marriage law identifies a singular subject who is not equivalent to other subjects in the eyes of the law it is helpful to look a few centuries past La Trasne, to the trial of Martin Guerre. Historian Natalie Zernon Davis's account of this infamous case of imposture achieved through the anonymity of travel highlights some of the ways that Hardy's novel uses recognition to offer "a theory of identity formation that cuts against the classical liberal view of the subject insofar as it situates social relations at the fore" of identity (Coulthard 28). While Coulthard is concerned with unpacking the ways the state produces "specific modes of colonial thought" that ensure the continuous domination of indigenous communities, *Jude the Obscure* and *The Return of Martin Guerre* show the ways that the production of a particular discourse or ideology of normativity extend beyond a context marked explicitly by colonialism (16). The story of Martin Guerre begins in the sixteenth century, when, in a small town in southern France, a "rich peasant leaves his wife, child and property and is not heard from for years" (Davis vii). Then suddenly, eight years later, a traveler, later found out to be Arnaud du Tilh, arrives in Artigat claiming to be Martin. The new Martin is accepted by the community and assumes the real Martin's life for nearly four years, living with his wife and participating in the family business, before being brought to trial for his crime. This story unpacks the limits of travel, through an attention to those social molds that Sue will so vehemently denounce.

In her book *The Return of Martin Guerre*, Davis writes that the new Martin's "initial acceptance by family and neighbors" can be explained "[because]...first of all, he was wanted in Artigat...whatever doubts people had, they silenced or even buried them for a while and allowed the new Martin to grow into his role" (43). Martin Guerre's departure left a vacancy in the village. He was a husband and a father, but also, as a land owning merchant in line for his father's inheritance, an important part of the social configuration whose return restored the status quo. But as Arnaud's imposture continues a series of discoveries make it more and more likely that his crime will be exposed. The shoemaker reports that the new Martin's feet are significantly smaller than the old Martin's. The town receives news that Martin was seen in Spain and had a wooden leg.<sup>6</sup> Added to these are Davis' insistence that his wife, Bertrande, if not immediately, then in time, discovers du Tilh is an imposture because "by the time she had received him in her bed, she must have realized the difference; as any wife of Artigat would have agreed, there is no mistaking

“the touch of the man on the woman.””<sup>7</sup> Davis takes this moment of recognition to mean that “either by explicit or tacit agreement, she helped him become her husband” (43). In this account, Bertrande accepts the new Martin because his presence provides her a return to dignity and status, indicative of the way the social body is appeased because “the heir and householder Martin Guerre was back in place” (43). What is important about the way Arnaud was able to “change his name and fashion a new identity” is that he hasn’t actually created a new one (40). Because the religious law recognizes Bertrande’s husband’s singularity it is not possible for a “new” Martin to arrive through exchange. Arnaud had to become Martin.

Confronted with a similar instance of recognized individuality before the law, Sue’s decision to leave Phillotson, and her life in Shaston,<sup>8</sup> to meet Jude in Aldbrickham demonstrates the tension in this novel between an interchangeable identity established through production and a singular identity recognized by the marriage law. If travel helps Vilbert participate in production, and Jude is able to travel because he continues producing, Sue’s departure is a radical breach of this structure because it establishes a vacancy that cannot be “smoothed over.” Sue argues for her interchangeability saying it is not wrong to call marriage a failure if marriage is “a sordid contract, based on material convenience in householding, rating and taxing, and the inheritance of land and money by children making it necessary that the male parent should be known” (201). Sue thinks of marriage here as a generalized occupation, implying that the absence of her singularity should not affect someone else’s ability to perform these roles. If she is defined through “material convenience” than her departure would be “smoothed over” by the appearance of a new traveler accommodating the need offered by a labor shortage. She conceives of her position in this contract as interchangeable, as though she were like the “new schoolmaster” and therefore thinks, or perhaps fantasizes, that she is an interchangeable subject who can depart. But she also acknowledges a different contract. Her differentiation between the “sordid contract” and “the religious contract,” which should not be called a failure, hinges on the singularity of the person before the moral law of the Church. In this second contract the subject is “formed” through “dialogue with others, in agreement or struggle with their recognition” of identity (Taylor 32-33, c.f. Coulthard 17).

It is important to note that the formation of singularity before the marriage law does not rest on the subject’s desire or choice, but instead contains the subject within normative values. William Goetz writes that marriage ends in failure in *Jude the Obscure* because “the marriage law necessarily generalizes something that is in essence particular, and makes contractual a feeling that should be voluntary” (196). Although a traveler might become a builder or schoolmaster through the initial anonymity of their arrival, eventually the social body will seek to include them, to “interpellate” the subject in Althusser’s later vocabulary, as an embodiment of normative values (264). In this way Sue’s “ineffable presence” is not the foundation of her liberal identity, but rather intertwined, and even dominated, by her social relationality which “generalizes”

identity. Hensley summarizes Marx's critique of this kind of exchange writing that "it subordinates particularity, subsuming alterity under the category of abstraction" (615). Sue herself notices that although she is not interchangeable as Mrs. Richard Phillotson, "the social moulds civilization fits us into have no more relation to our actual shapes than the conventional shapes of the constellations have to the real star-patterns" (197). She is conscious of the way "the town" itself is concerned with the "fine materiality of human existence and coexistence" (Foucault, *Security* 339). This confounds traditional understandings of the liberal subject and the "magic agency of individual virtue" that John Stuart Mill and novels like *Armadale* uphold. But travel allows Sue to escape the social mold of Shaston, and radically embrace a fugitive state, even if that escape leads back to conscription.

In *The Return of Martin Guerre* Arnaud du Tilh is only able to become Martin with the collaboration of the town because of the initial anonymity procured by travel. Similarly, in Hardy's novel, for Jude and Sue travel is necessary as a means to escape the couple's identifying marks. When Jude steps into the train car, meeting Sue after she has left Phillotson, he explains that they "couldn't possibly" stay in Melchester because they "are known here."<sup>9</sup> Sue seems to possess an almost sublime understanding of this criminal recognition even before Jude arrives at the station. As "the singular passenger that evening" it seemed "seemed strange [to Sue] that such a powerful organization as a railway-train should be brought to a standstill on purpose for her—a fugitive from her lawful home" (228). Embedded in this quote is both the law of Shaston and the affordance of travel which allows a "fugitive" to escape. The weeks that go by before Shaston even knows Sue has permanently left, appropriately solidify the anonymity which is at the heart of the self-fashioning Sue and Jude will attempt.

Even though travel is a means of temporary self-actualization, it is still bounded and confirmed by an understanding of social relationality. When Jude "book[s] for Aldbrickham" he imagines the relaxation of the relationality that would have identified them in Melchester because "Aldbrickham is a much bigger town—sixty or seventy thousand inhabitants—and nobody knows anything about us there" (229). Aldbrickham's size evokes Thomas Carlyle's concern, set forth in "Shooting Niagara, and After?," that numbers and statistics were reducing individuals to figures (c.f. Hensley 608). Instead of providing progress, Carlyle thought that the equality of liberal political thought was shifting emphasis away from social relationality. At a time when the Census was "widening its scope," *Jude* also highlights a singular affordance within those numbers: anonymity (608). The disappearance of the individual in the conglomerate is indicative of the way people were more and more seeing themselves as a society and referring to that society as a "representative abstraction" (Hacking 269, c.f. Hadley, "Somebody" 70). This abstraction changed the way people were conceiving of their free will as autonomous existence began to be absorbed by Victorian statistics that "emphasize[d] its democratizing premise" by, theoretically, making no "distinctions" amongst its people. However, it is important to note that



this abstraction is meaningless for Jude and Sue's purposes without the affordances of travel. Had Jude and Sue been living in a town of sixty or seventy thousand for a long period of time, they would undoubtedly be known to some of the inhabitants who would identify their station. Hardy does not see within the mass democratization of number the chance for freedom from governmentality; it is instead only through travel that he locates this, temporary, affordance. Jude and Sue arrive in Aldbrickham, able to start their new life. Despite their ultimate conscription to the law, it is important to pause with Jude and Sue at this moment and note in the early period of their life here that, "the twain were happy—between their times of sadness—was indubitable" (278). The textual allusions to the couple's moments of happiness,<sup>10</sup> or "pleasantness," does not mean that travel is a way characters can become autonomous individuals engineering their own happy ending (298). But it is a choice that, if only for a space of time, allows the pair to live together. If travel provides this space, it is the inability to remain traveling, to keep moving like the itinerant Vilbert and "avoid[] inconvenient investigations," that ultimately subjects Jude and Sue to censure and brings about their tragic denouement.

### **Conclusion: Itinerant Stations**

Just as Shaston slowly grew more suspicious, and began to accumulate more theories concerning Phillotson's life after Sue left him, the town of Aldbrickham, once not noticing Sue and Jude, begins to include the couple within their social bonds. Hardy writes: "The unnoticed lives that the pair had hitherto led began, from the day of the suspended wedding onwards, to be observed and discussed by other persons than Arabella" (287). The itinerant entertainers of Shaston and the itinerant Vilbert are allowed access without complete recognition because ultimately, they are moving on. As Jude and Sue become more visible the town notices "the curious facts of a child coming to them unexpectedly who called Jude father and Sue mother, and a hitch in a marriage ceremony intended for quietness to be performed at a registrar's office and rumors of the undefended cases in the law courts" which taken together "bore only one translation to plain minds" (287). When the town of Artigat hears about Martin's wooden leg, or his suddenly smaller feet, they are not provoked because the new Martin is living in accordance with the law. But the longer Sue and Jude abstain from marriage "the superstitious couple [are] more and more impelled to go away" because "the neighborhood generally did not understand, and probably could not have been made to understand" their situation (293). As Jude and Sue's situation becomes "generalized" before the marriage law as a heterodox living arrangement, the young boys of the town no longer tip their caps to Sue, and "the neighboring artizans' wives look[] straight along the pavement when they encounter[] her" (287). Jude and Sue ultimately embody the "interplay between the structural/objective and recognitive/subjective features," which Coulthard argues are essential for ensuring colonialism and in this case ensure the hegemony of legally recognized marriage (32). Transformed into the "subjects" of the towns dominant

ideology the couple understand “what a fools’ paradise of supposed unrecognition they had been living in of late” (297).

The solution to this recognition is another scene of departure, but this time, movement is uniquely evocative of the way an “increased mobility [in the Victorian novel] led to renewed interest in the local and the particular” (7). Jude decides they must “sail under sealed orders, that nobody may trace us,” explaining to Father Time, they “mustn’t go to Aldbrickham, or to Melchester, or to Shaston, or to Christminster.” But Jude also foresees, that “apart from those we may go anywhere” (297). “Anywhere” represents a unique configuration of both place and no place, which is only intelligible by a simultaneous focus on the “local and particular” of these other places. “Anywhere” is also marked by the lack of relationality that it will present to the family which are the only conditions they can live under without establishing themselves and revealing their marital status. The couple live in this way for two years, moving from place to place and leading a life that is “not without its pleasantness” (298). Their reliance on departures supports Freeman’s belief that “whatever stasis Jude Fawley achieves is the stasis of perpetual motion” (164). They are able to live through the “advantage of [Jude’s] adaptive craftsmanship” which allows them “to enter on a shifting nomadic life” (298). The similarity to Vilbert’s position is evoked not only through the transient nature of the occupation, but also its description as “adaptive” which echoes the narrator’s description of Vilbert as being someone who is “a survival.” In this way exile is not a validation of personal freedom, but a choice, determined by social and material circumstances, that engenders possibility. The family differs from Vilbert in that they do not seek profit, although the economic condition is essential, but instead the “preference” to choose “places remote from his old haunts and Sue’s” (297). To ensure that these new “places” do not begin to recognize him as the “old haunts” do, “[Jude] labored at a job, long or briefly, till it was finished, and then moved on.” While their fixed station had prompted the town to define their relationality, the nomadic life, allowed within the productive forces of Wessex, grants the couple their narratives most promising stretches. While Arnaud and Bertrande are fixed<sup>11</sup> within Artigat, and not allowed to leave their station, Jude and Sue make use of this more modern affordance to survive, but survive together in breach of society’s attitude toward their relationality. Although the family’s movement is enabled by the interchangeability of Jude’s occupation, the limits of their movement is uniquely ascribed to social relationality as they stay more than a dozen miles away from any of the towns they had previously lived in. The stretch of pleasantness in this period is afforded by their ability to remain unquestioned and unnoticed, but not appear as criminal vagabonds. Jude’s decision to move the family back to Christminster ends their “perpetual motion” and brings them once again before the eyes of the law.

Jude’s first trip to Christminster is justified through his ability to integrate himself within the productive forces of the town. In arguing for the second trip, Jude returns to this former line

of thinking, believing that if they can just be productive they will be able to exist within the social boundaries. He thinks, "Why shouldn't they care if they were known?" believing "it was over-sensitive of them to mind so much," and although he is in part considering the health of their union, he justifies their inclusion in this space by imagining that "they could go on selling cakes there, for that matter, if he couldn't work" (308). Just as Jude was specifically motivated by "how [to] live in that city" on his first trip to Christminster, his justification for this trip hinges on their ability to establish themselves in the town with the dignity of a station. But where Jude had earlier been the interchangeable representation of his labor, a "builder," he has now achieved a new relationality, through Sue and his children, that identifies him in a singular position that they all must declare. As they inquire about the town for lodgings they are met by a "householder [who] scrutinized Sue's figure a moment" and another who "observing not only Sue, but the boy and the small children...closed the door" (319). Sue is conscious of their visibility before the marriage law telling Jude "I'll put my cloak more round me...How do I look now, dear?" (319). Jude's response "Nobody would notice it now" solidifies the thematic of recognition and social relationality at the heart of self-fashioning. Of course someone does notice "it," challenging Locke and other liberal reformers who "built [liberalism's] fundamental logics on the individual, who only secondarily, if necessarily, enters a social domain after obtaining self-ownership through labor" (Hadley, "Something" 73). Here relationality is not deferred, but established at the very moment of arrival.

To gain access to the town, Jude and Sue must be defined through their labor only, and not their heterodox marital status. The landlady of the third house embodies this attitude asking Sue if she is "really a married women." Although it seems the couple is against admitting Sue because of the size of a family, the husband's anger betrays a subtler, and more repressive logic, as he argues "Now who wants such a woman here?" (320). The couple would perhaps take in a normal family, one that would not stand out in town, but not one recognized as being in breach of the marriage law. The peculiarity of "such a woman" is therefore contrasted to the interchangeability of "a single man" who is not in defiance of the marriage law. The thematic is picked up by the rest of the town as Sue strikes out to try for a new place while Jude procures one for himself. But she is without luck as "Every householder looked askance at such a woman and child inquiring for accommodation in the gloom" (321). Jude's accommodation is evidence of a gendered distinction that unequally makes the woman visible before the laws of marital propriety and subjects her to the consequences of transgression. But Jude's commitment to establishing himself with his family attributes this visibility to him as well, juxtaposing the recognition of the singular transgressive identity of their family with the earlier scene in which he arrived at Christminster and was an interchangeable worker.

Self-fashioning in *Jude the Obscure* is indicative of the way "our sense of self is thus dependent on and shaped through our complex relations with others" (Coulthard 28). Even

Jude's occupation is compromised by this visibility, subordinating the self-possession of a job-position even more forcefully to social relationality than in Jude's first trip to Christminster. Although Jude and Sue's labor brought them into the community of Christminster, it does not make them free liberal subjects, but instead relies on relationality. Sue realizes that though Jude is "in work now...it may only be because our history and relations are not absolutely known...Possibly, if they knew our marriage had not been formalized they would turn you out of your job as they did at Aldbrickham!" (331). If Sue will not agree to a formal marriage, than the couple must depart and resume their nomadic life, making Hardy's novel a critique of the self-actualizing liberal subject. The town asks the couple, just as Artigat asked Arnaud, to establish itself in one of its molds. As the embodiment of "the letter of the law" the villagers in the towns Jude and Sue travel to show that the subject is "determined by and in the interests of the hegemonic partner in the relationship" (Coulthard 17). Sue learns, and accepts this lesson, remarrying Phillotson while the town, knowing she will be "Mrs. Richard Phillotson," again allows her to "now enter Marygreen without exciting much observation" (351). Finally recognized<sup>12</sup> in a normative position, Sue's is established in Shaston through what could be called the "proper choice" of courtship novels. But by allowing Jude and Sue to pursue alternative "paths" within the network of his plot Hardy reveals the liminal potential of "marriage as an ending" (McAleavey 145).

Departures and arrivals in *Jude the Obscure* open up alternative routes and possibilities. But ultimately, as Jude's aunt foresees from the start, travel cannot subvert the singularity of the individual before the marriage law or allow the singular individual to change the normalizing and abstracting power of the law. The power and pervasive spread of this law across Wessex, and its institutionalization via the villagers and landowners of the towns, offers a unique challenge to the individual-centric ideology of Reform-era liberal political systems. The tragedy for the novel's main characters is that while the law demands marriage from couples living together they are also unable to imagine or pursue resolutions outside of the couple. Sue, who radically opposes formalizing her relationship to Jude, doesn't appear to desire or be permitted a solitary existence. Even Vilbert is finally entangled in a marriage plot of his own as the novel ends. The couple is in some ways the ultimate form of law in this novel, a form which, defined by social relationality, complicates autonomous "postures of self-interest" (Hadley, "Somebody" 237). The transience of passion ultimately exposes the incompleteness of the marriage law, but the drive for partnership remains. Confronted with the opposition between their shifting desires for forms of relationality, and the law's rigid conception of propriety, Hardy's characters' transgress through travel, but once they stop moving they find that they are somewhere. Somewhere that will ultimately want to hear their story.

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<sup>1</sup> For Coulthard, state recognition of difference is not only an abstract category that implies the limits of behavior, but also localized at the level of sovereignty and indigeneity. Although *Jude the Obscure* is not a novel explicitly about colonialism, its critique of the autonomous individual of Victorian liberalism underneath an expanding British empire makes Coulthard's analysis of state recognition directly relevant to Hardy's project.

<sup>2</sup> Travel in this sense is different from wandering and exile because it is voluntary and results in a perceived, localized advantage obtained from the new setting. It also differs from touristic travel because it erases the former tie to place that the tourist comes home to from abroad and, as will be shown, from vagabondage because it retains the subject within the cycle of production.

<sup>3</sup> The effect of this legislation can be seen in *Jude* when the family travels to Christminster. Even though Jude has been unable to work steadily due to illness, and Sue has been forced to sell "Christminster cakes" to support them, the family travels, together, by train to their new location (307).

<sup>4</sup> This economic system also asks individuals to participate in a system of self-production, as they must improve at their trade, strengthening the individual-centric logic of liberalism.

<sup>5</sup> The chapter titles further solidify the foundation character within the city, locating each section in not only a geographical location but the social body represented in the boundaries of the name. As Janet H. Freeman notes, Hardy "partitions *Jude the Obscure* according to locations... as if he were pinning something down" (163).

<sup>6</sup> Incredibly, the two most obvious causes for suspicion that Davis has found concern feet.

<sup>7</sup> Davis cites multiple historical records from this region for this regional aphorism: Charles Higounet, *Le Comté de Comminges de ses origines à son annexion à la couronne*; Phillipe Wolff, *Commerces et marchands de Toulouse*; Georges Couarraze *Au Pays du Savés: Lombez évêché rural*.

<sup>8</sup> The vehemence with which the traveling entertainers defend Phillotson in Shaston seems to be one of the most overlooked sections of the novel. The confrontation not only explicitly pits traditional values against modern ones, it also divides the town between owners and mobile individuals. In his conception of Shaston, whose "modern...peculiarity" is to be the home of itinerant minded individuals, Hardy is engaging with what Josephine McDonagh calls "the condition of modernity...mobility" (192; 50). The titles of Hardy's chapters, which establish such a strong sense of place helps to underscore, through juxtaposition, how mobility is "both the concealed provocation and secret subject of realism" creating, for fiction, that "obsessive fascination with local places that dominated the British novel from the nineteenth century onward" (50). Through Shaston, and the departures Sue and Jude make throughout the novel, Hardy is not so much promoting exile as a modern value as he is inscribing choice within the relations of power that constrict possibility. Hardy is therefore at odds with both the Victorian liberalism and the coming modernity.

<sup>9</sup> Hardy's earlier novel, *The Woodlanders* would offer a unique comparison to Sue's narrative as Grace flees her husband and lives with the man she loves, Giles Winterbourne, outside of society until she can travel again safely.

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<sup>10</sup> The extreme brevity which Hardy describes these periods should be acknowledged, perhaps it enforces the determinism of social institutions, but that does not mean they should be skipped over and not read as moments that legitimize the affordances of travel.

<sup>11</sup> The real Martin, of course, did flee, but his departure is such a radical breach of society's laws that it must be done in secret and only leads to a return because Martin hears about the momentous trial. It is also important to that he left his wife behind, while Jude and Sue, when they travel, must always justify their relationality.

<sup>12</sup> When Sue travels to rejoining Phillotson: "the familiar Christminster fog still hung over all things. Sue's slim shape was only just discernible going towards the station" eschewing her visibility (351). Sue is also described as "a figure mov[ing] through the white fog which enveloped the Beersheba suburb of Christminster" (348). The repetition of shape and figure evokes an evasion of recognition that envelopes Sue's relationality to Jude and Christminster in secrecy before she gets to Shaston where, confirmed in marriage, she can go about openly without "much observation" (351).