

Does a novel have to be, as it is conventionally defined, an "extended piece of prose" (Cuddon 430) or can it embrace more diverse forms of written expression? This is the question that a comparison of Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* with Alfred Tennyson's *Maud* brings to mind. These two pieces are very different ways of telling a story, but they share some common techniques in their narrative and certainly in their images suggesting in some way that *Maud* qualifies as a novel, at least as interpreted by a reader.

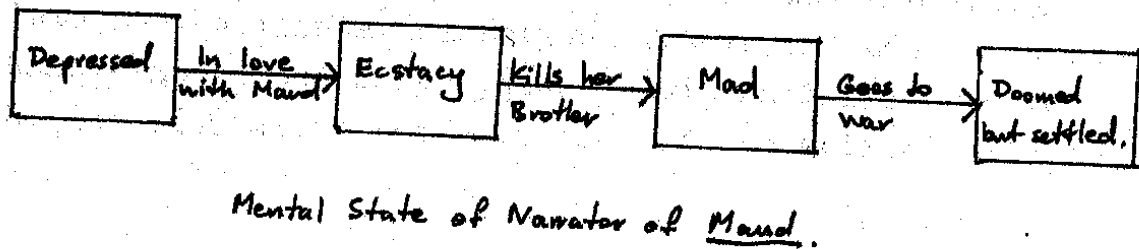
To enable a detailed comparison from a narratological perspective of *Maud* and *Jude*, two works of vastly different presentation, I will be using some of the tools provided by structuralism. This approach, by stripping the narrative back to more basic units, allows a common ground for side by side analysis of Hardy's novel, and Tennyson's series of verses. *Maud*'s credentials as a verse novel will be addressed by analogy to Hardy's poetry and *Jude* itself. The features of these works will be further illustrated by analysis of an important passage from both the novel and the poem.

The poem *Maud*'s striking feature is that the story is told entirely in first person verses. Benveniste's comment, "in narrative, no one speaks" (Barthes 283) is here completely inapplicable. In contrast to the traditional novel's entirely personal code of narration, the poem's hero does nothing but talk, with the narrative slowly advanced within the framework of his rambling verses. *Maud*'s narrator gives such an extreme example of a personal narrative that a plot is hardly allowed to escape. The closest Tennyson comes to a traditional narrative is after the death of Maud's brother when it appears the speaker is too stunned to be obtuse. Otherwise information important to the narrative is well scattered in the lyrics.

Jude by contrast is traditional in the sense that its omniscient narration is for the most part apersonal. The even handed narrator is really out of sympathy with none of the characters and the focalisation doesn't shift to favour any character. The narrator knows too much about what is going on in their thoughts to be considered to be using a personal code from any of the actant's perspectives. Because of this, the narrative is much more direct than *Maud*, with all the details available to the reader.

Each narrative has a definite subject, in both cases the young man of the story. The main framework of *Jude* is chronicling Jude Fawley's progress through his short life. The other main characters have been described as derived from Jude, Sue being his character with most of the earthiness removed, and Phillotson an older version of Jude with the same wife and same intellectual aspirations (Alvarez 417). A similar argument would explain Arabella as Jude minus Sue. If Jude has some competition as subject of the narrative, *Maud*'s hero has none. The other actants only exist in his rambling verse, which depending on the state of mind when delivered, are necessarily distorted. The effect of seeing the other characters mentioned only through his words enhancing the phantom like quality, especially of Maud.

The structure of *Maud* determines that the narrative must come in the flashes of the mental state of the narrator. The major effect of this on the narrative is to have the plot extractable only from far flung parts of the lyrics. Tennyson employs a degree of dystaxia so great it would be better described as near ataxia, with the minimal element of narrative progressing in fits and starts. Once dissected clear of the verses a simple linear plot is evident with phases of changing equilibrium.



The structure must be based around his state of mind as that is the raw material given, but as far as plot goes the activities of falling in love, killing Maud's brother, and deciding to go to war covers the action.

The narrative of *Jude* also occurs in flashes, this time of important events, but Hardy's work displays more expansion as primary technique than distortion. The novel's structure is in six parts each of which contains a significant loss to Jude.

Part One: Marygreen Jude loses freedom then Arabella.

Part Two: Christminster - Jude loses his dream of entering university.

Part Three: Melchester - Jude loses Sue.

Part Four: Shaston - Jude loses the Church as a vocation.

Part Five: Albrickham - Jude loses community acceptance and his health.

Part Six: Christminster Again Jude loses his children, Sue, and his life.

Hardy continually expands the story with unforeseen disasters, each more miserable than the last, culminating in the horrible deaths of the Frawley children. There is also an element of distortion about this, as there is an odd sort of suspense as to when luck will change for the better; such is our narrative competence of novels in which a young man struggles against the odds to succeed. Jude never does, and there is a relentless pessimism in Hardy piling misfortune upon misfortune in this narrative.

The basic linear narratives extracted here are subject to integration of metaphoric layers and to a lesser extent subplots. In *Maud* the subplots such as they are left completely undeveloped. Maud's future after the duel is not explored, nor are the details of her lover's families' financial details gone into. The reader's desire to know what happens next does

not find any joy with Tennyson's work as these would not fit the concept of first person verses. Possibilities like that require a less restrictive format like that of *Jude*'s omniscient narrator for full exposition.

Metaphoric factors such as geography are integrated into the horizontal narrative of both the novel and poem. Hardy emphasises geography with his naming of sections of the book after the main town of the action. Place plays a more subtle role in what his characters do, in that proximity to places with a significant history for that individual affect the behaviour they exhibit. Arabella for example is overwhelmed by her desire to get Jude back at the site of their marital home (250). Christminster has a magnetic effect on Jude, outliving his failure to become an undergraduate and prompting his return there initially with Sue and then with Arabella, to die.

Maud's narrative has its meaning also enhanced by the integration of vertical components relating to place, involving the opposing ideas of the wood and the garden. There is a sense of Maud's garden having a brightness, which for a brief moment defies and overcomes the dark images of the wood when the narrator falls in love, only to recede and be conquered by the "world of plunder and prey" (line 125) of the wood after the duel, (Priestly 112) Similar integrations occur in both *Jude* and *Maud* of elements of biblical references, and recurring allusions to death, with Hardy and Tennyson using the same narrative tools in their superficially different works,

While *Maud* can be compared in a narratological sense with a traditional novel like *Jude* in a meaningful way, there is a sense that this is more due to the reader than the poet. The series of lyrics provide a narrative that can be enjoyed in a separate way from the appreciation of the verses as poetry. I suspect this is due to a response in the reader that there is a novel in there somewhere which would be interestingly complemented by the poems. This process can be illustrated by analogy using *Jude*. It is possible, if artificial; to construct the bones of a series of verses called "Sue" by Thomas Hardy which could complement *Jude the Obscure*. A putative series of poems would be:

Childhood Among the Ferns (corresponding to Part One)

The Young Glass Stainer (Part Three)

The Recalcitrants (Part Four)

Midnight on the Great Western (Part Five)

Neutral Tones (Part Six)

He Never Expected Much (minus the last four lines) (Part Six)

These mostly first person poems provide personal glimpses which could be related to the actual narrative Hardy has written in an apersonal mode. These flashes correspond to *Jude the Obscure* in the same way that Maud's fragments of the speaker's state of mind correspond to the more traditional mode in which the reader would like to appreciate the narrative. The big difference between the works then in this sense is not that one is verse and one prose, but that one is personal and one apersonal, and the extremely personal mode of Maud prevents exploration of smaller details. The effect in heightening mystery and the sense of desperation and madness in his protagonist does however reward Tennyson's approach in Maud.

Hardy's skill in narrative is well illustrated by the fifth chapter of Part Fourth (188-196) in which he manages to advance the narrative rapidly at many levels without showing his hand too obviously. This passage contains the crucial macrokernel of Sue leaving Phillotson for Jude, and this opportunity is used to the fullest for exchange of information directly and indirectly between Jude and Sue and so to the reader.

The section of the novel is one in which Jude's primacy as the subject of the narrative is replaced by a situation with two major actants. While the novel is structured around Jude's disappointments, Sue's progress and the subplot of her relationship with Phillotson, which intersects here with the main narrative, becomes progressively more interesting and important to the novel and this is emphasised by the equal status she has here. The omniscient narrator's focalisation does not favour either of the actants.

Hardy takes the opportunity of the intersecting of Sue's story with the main narrative to impart much information as dialogue between the actants. This enables the important kernels of Jude giving up his clerical ambitions and Arabella's request for divorce to be exposed within their dialogue, relieving the narrator, of the need to use direct informants.

Apart from containing indications within the dialogue, Hardy uses repetition, distortions and expansions of narrative to good effect in this passage. He expands the narrative through the circumstances of Jude's night with Arabella being discovered by Sue, having set up this eventuality, with the overtones of betrayal of Sue, by having him let Sue down earlier by not meeting that particular night. This hiccup to Jude's relationship With Sue is further weight for him to bear, following the revelation that the relationship will not be a sexual one.

Hardy distorts the narrative here from a more conventional outcome of a couple running off together, with telling comment on the character he has created in Sue. As Jude says, "this is a queer elopment!" (192) and it is the strangeness of the arrangement which leads to Jude's description of Sue as "you spirit, you disembodied creature, you dear, sweet tantalising phantom." (195)

It also provides an opportunity to recall Sue's unusual past with her undergraduate friend, the first of Sue's male friends to be destroyed by her denial of the physical, and a portent

for ill in the future for Jude. The repetition by Jude and Sue of Richard's good points while virtually eloping underscores the lack of full commitment, especially of Sue, to this arrangement.

This passage gives an example of the way place motifs are integrated into the narrative. The fourth part of the novel is based at Shaston and this passage is a transition in that it moves toward Albrickham. Sue however expected them to go to Melchester. This is unacceptable not so much because Jude says he is known there but because Melchester is a move backwards to the place where Sue was sponsored by Richard at college, and where Jude had clerical ambitions and was working on the cathedral. Albrickham is the town where Jude and Sue finally do become lovers, and their journey there corresponds to Jude's expectation that they will be lovers now. Hardy's use of place as a recurring aspect for vertical integration emphasises the difference between Jude's expectations and Sue's.

The first lyric in the second part of Maud (Part Two, lines 1-35) contains more narrative than any other poem in the series and therefore, while not typical of the process of narrative in this work, does demonstrate the technique Tennyson uses. While lines 2-11 are typical of the varying styles of verses revealing the state of mind at any one time, from lines 12-31 he speaks a straightforward narrative telling the story of the duel.

The kernel of the duel is the abrupt turning point of the work, changing the state of mind from ecstatic tones to madness. The relatively unadorned narrative bridges the expectant happy aspect of the previous poem and the dissociated mind revealed in the madness following. The other macrokernels of the narrator falling in love and later deciding to join the Crimean War are more gradual events and are fittingly spread out; in the case of love developing for Maud spread out over the great bulk of the first part of the poem.

The opening line being separated from the rest of the lyric and not explained till later illustrates the technique of dystaxia Tennyson uses throughout the poem. By not revealing that it was Maud's brother who uttered the words until thirty lines later, the poet creates the impression that Maud's lover is at fault, as all such utterances to date in the first person refer to himself or to personified flowers. The repetition "the fault was mine, the fault was mine" (line 1) echoes the chants of the flowers in the previous section and in retrospect suggests that Maud's brother was a part of her garden world, and his admission of fault and suggestion that the persona save himself and run away indicates that the one sided view of Maud's brother is incomplete. Throughout the poem significant events have to be linked up like this to expand on the thin narrative line revealed in the changing state of mind in the poems.

The catalyser "dawn of Eden" (line 8) integrates the biblical and place strands with the main narrative. The brightness of Maud's Garden had covered the world earlier (Part One, lines 571-598) but now is destroyed and leaves a "darkening land" (line 6). He has repeated the sin of Cain (Part One, line 23), murdering a brother and destroying the Eden that had

temporarily encompassed his mind. This complex interplay of the Garden related to Maud, innocence and Eden, contrasted with hellfire, the wood and society previously explored at length, comes together with a rush here allowing Tennyson to explain more simply what had happened in the duel while retaining an undertone of horror culminating in Maud's scream.

Comparing these works from a narratological viewpoint it can be said that as Victorian examples of narratives in which young men are ruined by external events and unsuitable women, they exhibit similarities in the way metaphoric elements are integrated into the narrative to enhance meaning. This is in spite of wide differences between them in presentation of the work as a series of personal verses as opposed to a traditional novel. Whether it is of use to add the "verse novel" to the "Gladstone bag of literature" (Cuddon 431) as a further sort of novel is debatable, but Maud can certainly be in one way appreciated as a novel that never was.

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