CHAPTER-IV
MODERN APPROACHES TO HARDY'S FICTION

It is nearly sixty years since his death in 1928 and today, Hardy seems more important, but as poet and novelist than ever before. All his novels are now available in paperback as well as hardcover editions. Moreover, there are several editions of his poetry. For all his popularity, however, Hardy continues to provoke critical debate as a novelist and has often been strangely neglected as a poet.

The number of articles, reviews and critical studies that came in the 70's have shown vigorous and original approaches to Hardy. There is no longer any danger that Hardy will 'go out of fashion' but there is certainly a need for his readers to come to terms with his uniqueness and with the exact nature of his position as a major writer. By looking at him in a variety of fresh ways modern critics have provided a range of new ideas and interpretations that help to identify what is important in Hardy for us today. It is hoped that after looking at the accounts of some of these writers, an assessment of their contribution
to Hardy is arrived at.

The critics of the 70's have all attempted an assessment of Hardy's importance largely by indirect means. Each contribution proposes a thesis or a number of ideas that take advantage of hindsight. For example, in a book, *Thomas Hardy After Fifty Years* (1977) edited by Lance St. John Butler we have some of the most modern approaches by writers, to a man who has grown and changed since his death. The obvious advantage of hindsight is seen in this case: serious appreciation of the cinema is a post-war phenomenon and David Lodge looks at Hardy through the modern glasses this medium provides. The study and editing of Hardy texts has progressed steadily in the last half-century and R.C. Schweik summarises the results of this work and points out the areas in which it is not yet complete. We have Robert Rehder's study of 'form'. In another case a most instructive use of hindsight is made by John Foules who offers a most interesting reading of the little known *The Well Beloved*.

Modern criticism since the '70's has been highly resourceful. It is my purpose to show how the
new approaches to Hardy contribute towards a modern tradition in Hardy criticism.


The spirit of Henry James haunts the pages of these first two books on Hardy. James appears on the first page of both books. The issue that immediately faces one in these books is the sense of anxiety in Hardy's critics: both Gregor and Vigar are writing for an audience which, as they see it, is dominated by the influence of James. Immediately on the defensive, Vigar quickly remarks, "Lovers of Henry James frequently consider him (Hardy) boring or inadequate, and point out the obviousness of his symbolism and the simplicity of his characterization."¹ Gregor, more sedately, explains that James' "art has, of course, been a pervasive presence in the general criticism of fiction

in recent decades, even when it is not being consciously advented advented to."\(^2\) It is the ghost of James, then, that Gregor and Vigar must bury once and for all, at least for those of us who want to understand and appreciate Hardy: "Those who attempt to judge and analyse Hardy's works by Henry James' standards are doomed to the failure of misrepresentation."\(^3\) Again, coincidentally, both critics quote the same threatening passage from James Letters: "Form alone takes, and holds, and preserves, substance."\(^4\)

Gregor and Vigar agree that form, as it is understood by James, plays a small role in Hardy, and both insist that "plot" — of which Hardy has so much, and James so little — is the central clue to understanding his novels. With no clear definition of plot in mind, Gregor begins his description of the characteristic form of Hardy's novels. What Gregor brings to the criticism of Hardy is his sense of the novel as "an unfolding process"\(^5\), and it is this which

\(^3\)Penelope Vigar: The Novels of Thomas Hardy: Illusion and Reality, pp. 6-7.
\(^4\)Ian Gregor: The Great Web, p.23. Penelope Vigar: The Novels of Thomas Hardy, p.6.
he in part means by plot. Despite the few allusions to James, Gregor's discussion unfortunately takes place in a vacuum: he fails to take into account the term "plot" as it is traditionally defined, either simply by Forster or more elaborately, by Ronald Crane in his classic essay on the subject. Gregor ignores that it is Forster, for example, who in fact tells us that "Hardy arranges events with emphasis on casualty the ground plan is a plot, and the characters are ordered to acquiesce in its requirements." Gregor might have used this to give us his own definition of plot and its role in Hardy. Forster's book on the novel, Gregor seems to forget, is one of the earliest and most articulate attempts to liberate all aspects of the novel. Right down to Gregor's claims that Hardy's endings are uneasy because he sought plurality rather than unity, continuity rather than finality, we are reminded of Forster's famous claim for "Expansion — — Not completion".  

What Gregor is finally after is not the story, but what James called the study of the story:

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7Ibid., p.8.
"The novel as an unfolding process, which I described earlier in terms of story, can in this way be seen to extend into its metaphysical structuring, so that the implied author exists neither as a mediator between his characters and the readers, nor as a dramatized consciousness taking a place with other characters, but as a distinctive presence existing alongside the characters, undergoing the same experiences as they undergo, reflecting upon them as they do."

Gregor, however has the uncanny ability to take the opening and closing of two chapters of a novel (as he does with The Mayor) and generates a compelling discussion of its entire pattern; or in the case of Jude to reveal a novel's internal shifts and turns, the inner stitchings of its "great web", its rhythm. All the interpretive chapters make lively reading, particularly because Gregor, through a careful and restrained selection of material, is able to go to the heart of the novel and its major issues without travelling the overworked paths of other critics.

Gregor views within Far From the Madding Crowd, a pastoral perspective. Many of the earlier critics judged the novel in terms of historical accuracy. Andrew Long and R.H. Hutton failed to see the book

8Ian Gregor: The Great Web, pp.31.32.
in the context of history. Many of the contemporary novelists tried to solve the problem by taking the novel as simply an idyll, although some did not fail to notice that idyllicicism could not account for the novel in its entirety. Hardy himself described the book as "a pastoral tale." Michael Squires in, The Pastoral Novel: Studies in George Eliot Thomas Hardy and D.H. Lawrence (1974) notes the pastoral Far From the Madding Crowd is fruitfully adjusted to the realistic and dramatic conventions of the Mid-Victorian Novel. While it may be called a novel deeply pastoral in feeling, there is little doubt that "the falsification and artificiality of traditional pastoral have been rigorously excluded from Hardy's account". These critics have agreed with the view that Hardy is a celebrant of the rural way of life and that its detailed perception is the life-giving force of Hardy's great fiction. But they fail to see the operation of the typical pastoral in Hardy. It is no wonder that Ian Gregor came forward with his challenging words:

If Hardy is celebrating pastoral life in his novel, it must surely be in the spirit of Samuel Beckett.  

10Ian Gregor: The Great Web, p.47.
Ian Gregor agrees that the opposition between 'the natural' and the civilised, between nature and nature is crucial to the concept of pastoral. But in this novel he felt that both these concepts were remote from Hardy's purpose. Gregor points out that the dominant impression which the novel makes on the reader is one of "passion". He quotes utterances like, "I shall do one thing in this life — one thing certain — that is love you, and long for you, and keep wanting you till I die."\(^{11}\) In another place, Bathsheba about Troy, 'O, I love him to very distraction and misery and agony. Don't be frightened at me, though perhaps I am enough to frighten any innocent woman.' Says Gregor:

These are the tones which sound throughout this novel and if the total impression made by the novel is not quite of this kind the intensity of feeling which these assertions and pleadings expose is an integral of the experience which Hardy is concerned to communicate: an experience of intense human vulnerability.\(^{12}\)

Gregor further adds:

An overwhelming desire to fill an unsuspected void within, unsought in origin, capricious and obsessive in its demands, unpredictable in its consequences —

\(^{11}\)Quoted by Ian Gregor: The Great Web, p.12.

\(^{12}\)Ibid., p.51.
this is the kind of feeling which Hardy writes about, and it is there at the centre of *Far From the Madding Crowd*. It is not a feeling which offers itself for moral judgement, so that we think of it in terms of excess, reckless self-abandon. For Hardy, it is an inescapable part of what it is to be human, as likely to strike an oak as a Troy, a Bathsheba as a Boldwood.

This intense projection of feeling, is central to the experience of the novel "Work", is the next element which plays a vital role in the action of the novel. Raymond Williams had earlier pointed out:

> Work enters Hardy's novels more decisively than in any English novelist of comparable importance. And it is not merely illustrative; it is seen as it is, as a central kind of learning.

Gregor says that work as learning "is a counterpoise that Hardy offers to the demands of passion."

Finally, the third element Gregor "emphasises in Hardy's vision of the 'pastoral tale' is "the sense of community" which comes home to us. But the effect of community is perhaps best established by their (Coggan, Joseph Poongrass, Cainy Ball) talk in the Malthouse and in Buck's Head. Says Gregor:

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13 Quoted by Ian Gregor: *The Great Web*, p.52.
What we get from the apparently random collection of stories above love and deception and old age and change and superstition — stories which often act like distorting mirrors on the main themes of the novel — is the sense of a continuum of human experience which nothing can alter or shock. Like the element of work which is present in the novel this affects our apprehension of the passion that exists among the main characters, softening it, unobtrusively distancing it.\(^\text{15}\)

Gregor details the working of the three essential elements:

Passion, work and the pastoral tale all these elements are vividly put to work in this sequence, continually modifying and commenting on each other, the work of the farm providing the dramatic correlative for the emotional tensions generated between the characters.\(^\text{16}\)

His introduction to Jude through the boy's oversimplification of the method of learning the classics is brilliant:

The language in which men seek to make clear to themselves their metaphysical questions, their educational needs, their emotional longings, is in constant need of interpretation. To feel as Jude does that here is some "secret cipher, which once known, would enable him, by merely applying it" to master his problem, is a dangerous illusion — whether that illusion finds expression in the prophesyings of Aunt Drusilla,

\(^{15}\text{Ibid.}, p.57.\

\(^{16}\text{Ibid.}, p.59.\)
the cynical pragmatism of Arabella, or the fervent idealism of Sue. The incident of the grammars initiates Jude into a life-long education in which he is to learn that there is no single law of transmutation by which one kind of experience can be simply translated into another. 

Finally, while the characteristic form of Hardy's and Jame's novels is different, we must admit that Jame's emphasis on the art of fiction has not disabled Hardy's novels or the readers of them, but helped us take a significant step forward in understanding what the art of the novel is for Hardy. Gregor's book is an example of critical progress.

Penelope Vigar defines Hardy's plots as a series of pictures: Hardy viewed "the plot as a thread on which to display his pictures of life." Her central thesis, which she exaggerates at times, is that "Hardy's approach to fiction is essentially that of a painter." Her description of her recollection of his novels is one that is in direct disagreement with Gregor's understanding of them: "In Tess of the d'Urbervilles there are perhaps thirty clearly remembered visual anecdotes; in A Loodician or The Well-Beloved only six or seven. Gregor's fluid process of plot is frozen

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17 Ibid., p.62.  
18 Penelope Vigar: The Novels of Thomas Hardy: Illusion and Reality, p.15.  
19 Ibid., p.20.
by Vigar: "He sees not real people so much as a picture of those people, and our most vivid apprehension of his characters is usually taken at second hand, as he 'freezes' them for us in characteristic poses." 

Upto this point Vigor's thesis is clear if occasionally overstated and long-winded. Vigor is close to identifying an important complex of styles and intentions in Hardy, but her argument often lapses into a terminology which is not subtle enough to describe it, and her summary statements often ring untrue to the complicated material she has presented. To say finally that "the imperfect childish point of view contrasts with the external and uncompromising truth of the real world, as shown objectively by the author himself", is to deny what she has convincingly said earlier - namely, that impression played a significant part in Hardy's theory of fiction and that it is objective.

The best section of Vigor's introductory remarks — a brief discussion of The Woodlanders — looks forward to some of the highlights of her interpretations of the other novels. She successfully shows how in this novel: the total structure of the story rests

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21 Ibid., p.53.
on his manipulation of general effects of light and shade brightness and dimness, night and day, and all the shades of mistiness and partial light in between and, too, how these effects relate to the concurrent themes of deception and artificiality.\textsuperscript{22}

Her chapter on \textit{The Mayor}, the best in the book, makes excellent use of her notion of appearances:

\textit{In all respect Lucetta is, as Herchand fondly remarks before she rejects him, 'an artful little woman.'}\textsuperscript{23}

Hardy emphasizes that the image she portrays is a studied piece of contrivance, the adoption of a personality which is as spurious as the name behind which she disguises her real identity. Her chief fear is that she may be 'seen through', her masquerade pierced. Her query, 'How do I appear to people?' is a telling one. This line of analysis flowers brilliantly in a final description of Lucetta's death:

\begin{quote}
Lucetta is killed by the power of her own imagination by the ribald exaggeration of an image of herself which she has kept carefully hidden, but which is more essentially 'she' than the other successful and sophisticated person which she has so painstakingly tried to create.\textsuperscript{24}
\end{quote}

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\textsuperscript{22}Penelope Vigar: \textit{Op.cit.}, p.26.  \\
\textsuperscript{23}\textit{Ibid.}, p.45.  \\
\textsuperscript{24}\textit{Ibid.}, p.163.
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For Vigar the characters become "part of the structural argument, a pair of puppets acting out their roles for the conclusion." She has little sympathy with the novel, and the chapter is hard going in more than one way. In the end, Vigar's book is an uneven production. If many of the chapters are slow and labored, occasionally they are lit up with fine insights; and a chapter like the one on The Mayor is a complete success.

Ian Gregor had an equal capacity for making excellent points about appearance. For example in The Review of the Native he depicts the tensions between 'land' and 'character' at the outset of the novel as something "physically seen and felt". For he says, "It is through the primal contrast of light and darkness that the novel begins to take shape." The contrast is present throughout the opening chapters. The first one begins:

Moreover to light a fire is the instinctive and resistant act of man when, at the winter ingress the curfew is sounded throughout Nature.

26 Ian Gregor: The Great Web, p.82.
27 Ibid., p.82.
28 Ibid., p.82.
Gregor argues that in this description, the tone is epic - "we are recalled to the primal opposition between 'black chaos' and Promethean rebelliousness' - and in the first assertion the epic tone becomes biblical. Gregor that such descriptions leave one in no doubt that Hardy conceived the opening chapters "on the grandest scale." 29

The next critic I propose to take up is R.A. White. He had been a lifelong admirer of Hardy's work, and at the time of his death was writing a book which was to be the fruit of his deep interest in Hardy and in Hardy's use of history. The author in his book: Thomas Hardy and History (1974) describes the special circumstances which went into the making of Hardy's temperament and shows how he was born into a culture which had changed little since Shakespeare's time and which Hardy shared with D.H. Lawrence. He inherited his grandmother's memories of the Napoleonic wars, his father's feeling for the countryside, and his mother's reverence for education. Hardy brings to his writing the craftsmanship of his ancestors in such a way that the poet and seer join the plain-spoken man of country honesty and simple life, and the resulting

complexity is unique. With such a temperament and such an environment his vision has to be a historical one. Hardy says White, looks at history for a purpose, and it is that purpose expressed through his unique temperament which makes him a great writer.

Hardy was putting on record a history which "he had lived on his pulses". This is White's central thesis. White at the very start of his essay indicates clearly that Hardy was not trying to suggest that one kind of life was better than the other or even made an attempt to recall 'the good old days' in his pictures of the changing world. Hardy left it to his critics in the twentieth century to indulge in jargon about the decline of the organic community and its replacement by a situation which D.H. Lawrence was to name 'anti-life'. What Hardy recorded, says White, "was a history more real than anything he could turn out in a 'historical novel' properly so called".  

White does agree that Hardy was certainly well aware that his novel recorded "the graveward descent of a civilization or of an ancient way of life."  

\[30\text{R.J. White: Thomas Hardy and History, Macmillan, 1974, p.5.}\]

\[31\text{Ibid., p.5.}\]
is emphatic that "he rarely spoke, or wrote, didactically of what was happening, and least of all did he sing swan-songs." Hardy had no moral response to history but was extremely sensitive and an accurate observer and incapable "of keeping his eyes closed sufficiently to the heights or the depths of human experience for the fulfilment of the historian's subaltern tasks." White was not prepared to accept that Hardy had any nostalgia of the past.

White highlights the point however that Hardy had imbided to a great extent "the indigenous culture of the England he loved". He says:

Generation after generation the men and women of this ancient soil had met life and death in the presence of the immensities of sky and sea, moon and hill. Myth had decended upon them from pulpit and alter, and they had employed their symbolism as a vestment, rough and after ill-fitting for the deepest feelings engendered in their hearts by their experience of human destiny upon the earth. They made songs and dances, tales and mumming-plays, to shadow forth ancestral wisdom. Living her nature and its unchanging rhythm and its senseless house-play, they came to a grave irony and a monumental patience. Their most cherished virtue was endurance, their most abhorred sin was breach of faith between man and man in face of the everlasting enemy - earth and the elements and

33 Ibid., p.10.
fate. They knew nothing of 'Art' but everything of life, the life which persists beneath and beyond the little luxuries of Christian piety and consolation. Generations who knew not Adam have collected and appraised the work of their hands and named it 'Folk' but the folk themselves called it quite other names - pots and pans, butts and byres, bartons and cottages 'The New Rigged Ship' and 'The Western Tragedy' and 'Haste to the Wedding'.

All this Hardy had imbibed, a culture he loved so well "flowered from morality whose roots lay at Stratford, Ottery St. Mary, Cockermouth and a thousand small country towns and villages like Higher Bock­hampton." This was ancient Wessex absorbing 'culture'.

This 'culture' meant so much to Hardy. It is through him as it were that the dwellers in these solitary places had gathered together the near-spent forces of their ancient life in order to utter a strange half-articulate cry before the tide of a later age should submerge them for ever. This is precisely what Hardy did in his works. What Hardy thought and felt and said was near enough "to how they thought and felt and would have said." His roots lay deep into an ancient society which had never lost touch with

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36 Ibid., p.16.
its intellectual ancestry. His temperament had the immutable quality of the folk of the fiels who were either spectacles or blinkers, yet he grew up to employ the lingo of a pseudo-scientific age.

So living between two worlds, the rural world of his fathers and the up and coming world of the universal bourgeoisie, he uttered the last judgement of his kind upon the dilemma of modern man. For it was the dilemma of Thomas Hardy. He, too, had outgrown the myth of Eden, the proposition that the world must somehow have been intended to be a comfortable place for man. It was a proposition that ancient Wessex had never possessed, but there was a time when the young Hardy for a brief moment succumbed to it. The moment soon passed.\(^{37}\)

Hardy noted when he was twenty-seven: "Had the teachings of experience grown cummulatively with the age of the world, we should have been cry now as great as God."\(^{38}\) But they hadn't and, says White, Hardy had known it all the time in his heart. He went on saying so for the rests of his life.

\(^{38}\text{Ibid., p.19.}\)
There are the main points in White's *Thomas Hardy and History*. Hardy was born and grew up in 'The Age of History'. That is to say "he belonged to a time and place which regarded everything in its historical bearings and thought everything was to be understood in historical terms."\(^{39}\) Further, the annihilation of time with its unflinching vigour was a pre-occupation of his very long life.

On the whole says White, "he had no taste for historical recurrence."\(^{40}\) One of his major themes in his poems is "the end of dreams or visioning."\(^{41}\) White says Hardy disliked 'messages'. Finally, in a fitting conclusion, White says:

> The dominating impression left with us by a reading of his work is that men are indeed nobler than the 'unconscious cosmos which crushes them', and that loving-kindness - his favourite word - will prevail. And at the same time as man is made more tragic he is made more noble by Hardy's vision of him against the black-cloth of history.\(^{42}\)

The next work which was quite different from the usual personal observations made by critics of the past came in the form of an analysis of the texts of Hardy. The papers in the invaluable *Thomas Hardy*...
collection of the Dorset Country Museum have already been studied and quoted by a number of scholars, and now Lennant A. Bjork has made a significant portion of them, "Literary Notes I" and the "1867 Notebook", available in a useful edition. Readers will be disappointed if they expect these notes to contain the kinds of personal observations quoted in Mrs. Hardy's Life and Evelyn Hardy's *Thomas Hardy's Notebooks*, for the format is that of a common place book, a series of quotations and paraphrases, almost without comment, from readings done by the writer. Yet for an understanding of Hardy, who saw to it that most of his papers were destroyed, these prosaic materials are of substantial value. They provide conclusive evidence of what he read, and of what he noted and understood from his readings, from the mid-1870's to 1888, a period in which he wrote three of his greatest novels.

Bjork's transcription testified to the diligent, comprehensive, and useful attention to detail in the footnotes. These notes which appear conveniently in a second volume, Literary Notes II, so that one can have both the text and the notes open side by side for ease of reference, are in themselves an extensive commentary on Hardy's readings and the use he made
of them. Bjork identifies the hand writing of each entry (after it is the first Mrs. Hardy's). He specifies as nearly as he can the source of the quotation — the issue of the magazine, the edition of the book, occasionally even the copy that Hardy read — and wherever possible he refers the reader also to a conveniently available text. Where there is evidence, he infers the approximate date of the transcription. He identifies obscure proper names. He refers to places in Hardy's writings where the quotation on the idea expressed by it appears directly, in paraphrase, or in echo, and where relevant, he notes Hardy's revisions of the novels. Some of the footnotes are brief factual accounts of Hardy's knowledge of and response to individual authors, ranging from Carlyle to Spinoza to Plato. Throughout, Bjork keeps the direct expression of his own critical judgement to a minimum and takes care to distinguish between facts, inference and speculation.

Bjork's work, in my judgement, appeared at a timely moment in the history of Hardy scholarship. There is a great deal to be learned from explication and analysis of literary texts, and each generation will reinterpret for itself a writer as great as Hardy.
on the basis of close readings.

Much progress has been made and writers have seen the need for scholarly editions of those works of Hardy's which he published during his lifetime. I have cited the example of just one model in Lennart Bjork's *The Literary Notes of Thomas Hardy* (1974). Bjork's work, together with the other publications and editions are potentially of great value for what they can reveal about Hardy's thought and art. Hardy's personal notebooks and scrapbooks deserve editing.

In short, although an account of the study of Hardy's texts over the last few years must he largely a history of preliminary work and disappointingly fragmented scholarship, much of it of very limited value. The time is now at hand when that history of neglect is finally being remedied. With the on-going publication of practical editions of good quality, including the extensive 'New Wessex' edition by Macmillan, there are signs that what has been sown during the first fifty years of textual scholarship on Hardy is finally bearing fruit.

Finally, *The Literary Notes* support a more
complex view of Hardy by documenting the scope, variety, and attentiveness of his reading and offer a host of clues, hints, and starting places for a renewed study of his literary and intellectual backgrounds. The complex fabric of his intellectual life, the workings of his imagination on materials that he actually read and noted, the extent to which his so-called modernism has its origins in the advanced social thought of the sixties and seventies - these are among the fruitful subjects that might well be explored on the basis of the Literary Notes. Knowledge of a writer's intellectual life has nevertheless always been one aid towards interpretation, and one must be grateful that in Bjork's edition of the Literary Notes a basis for fuller knowledge of backgrounds is now widely available.

The "New Wessex Edition" first published in 1974 has been since the development of the history of critical editions of Hardy texts, the most important critical edition of Hardy's work ever undertaken. The introductions included in the New Wessex Edition have greatly advanced Hardy criticism. The introductions contain very scholarly critical discussions on the texts. Most of these introductions are written by great modern critics of the 70's. They include: John
John Bayley, Robert Gittings, Terry Eagleton, Ian Gregor, F.B. Pimon, J. Hills Miller and one of the finest accounts has appeared in the introduction to *Tess* by P.N. Furbank. Furbank is the general editor of the *New Wessex Edition* and his introduction to *Tess* has been widely acclaimed as a masterpiece.

P.N. Furbank does not think of Hardy as belonging to the humanistic and moralistic tradition of George Eliot and Dickens. After all, the basic enterprise of these two novelists is "to teach us how to live." They are always passing moral judgement on all aspects of life. Somewhere unstated within their novels lies the assumption that life in society can be lived successfully, and that moral judgement is a guide to this. Hardy did not belong to this didactic tradition for he was not in this sense a teacher. Says Furbank, "he did not believe that life in society 'could' be mlived successfully". Thus, an important factor about Hardy says Furbank is that the attempt to find some consistent moral attitudes in his novels is largely wasted. Therefore, Hardy's impressions

and visions of life cannot be fitted into a moral scheme.

P.N. Furbank next discusses some 'modern' traits in Hardy. He states that Hardy at the outset of his literary career had pictured himself as a 'modern' novelist, one who had seen deeply into modern experience and could interpret it and make moral and intellectual sense of it. But Hardy was a modern with a difference. Says Furbank:

He was not born to be a Dostoevsky or Ibsen or Lawrence, a writer who could handle the issues of the modern consciousness in realistic art.

Another very modern characteristic about Hardy is his great qualities as a "photographic" novelist. Furbank adds:

He is obsessed with physical evidence and with evoking the numberless lives of the past from the rubbings and abradings they leave on objects. One can go further and say that he thought of stories as 'telling themselves' and humans as - through such traces - imparting their own portrait as in early experiments in photography.

For Hardy, Furbank says, "shadows" have

46 Ibid., p.15.
always been appealing and rewarding in terms of his narrative. "Shadows" have the same fascinating appeal with Hardy as with photographers. Hardy "was obsessed with physical evidence and with evoking the numberless lives of the past from the rubbings and abradings they leave on objects." Shadows speak for themselves just as Hardy conceived of stories as "telling themselves" and of humans as - through such traces imprinting their own portrait, as in early experiments in photography.

This brings Furbank to his next point in declaring Hardy as "extraordinarily cinematic". He says:

First he gives you a close-up of a hand holding dice, then, with undussing focus, moves up the arms, to the gamblers head, and to the scene behind his head. And, as in the cinema, one is first presented with an object and then has to decipher its meaning.

Hardy as a cinematic novelist is a master in matters of perspective and lighting. Most of his physical objects speak for themselves in his use of photo-cinematic devices and to this are added the ones taken from painting. Further, Furbank explains

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48 Ibid., p.16.
that the 'how' of a thing is an always overriding interest with Hardy in considerations of perspective and lighting on how an object may be lit from more than one source.

Furbank sees a close connection between Hardy's photographic skill in matters of perspective and lighting closely linked to the novelists' moral and authorial sense. In terms of narration says Furbank, "he likes to abrogate responsibility for the witnessing and interpreting of events and to shuffle it off on to the shoulders of his characters, making them into eavesdroppers and voyeurs". Thus Hardy does not see the necessity of moral judgements and firm intellectual commitments. Here Furbank once again sees Hardy as not being essentially a 'teacher'.

Furbank next describes what he thinks is the heart of the Wessex Style. He says:

His model, for him as a novelist, was the countryman. He read histories and tragedies out of the Wessex scene, and out of the pages of country histories with the same expertness with which Gabriel Oak and Giles Winterborne, from the visible scene read the time of day and the approaching weather. He also had another "persona" as writer, that of the local antiquarian, a man professionally committed to minute descriptive accuracy. These

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disguises and analogies were a support to him, they gave him is convention as a prose-style. And what this convention reminds me of is something more familiar to us in another art, that of the decorative designer. Hardy saw the immense potentialities for literature, potentialities feeling, in the convention by which, on a plot or a bas-relief the limb of a satyr may be both a limb and the completion of a decorative pattern, or his neck be also the 'neck' of a jug. It is the best analogy I can find for those endless devices by which Hardy implicates his characters in landscape, so they become part of it, or - to use his words in TESS - 'an integral part of the scene'.

Furbank describes Tess as "an allegory or intermittently a whole series of allegories". He explains the whole series of successive landscapes of Tess's life as plainly meant as "Bumganesque". He says that they are also, obscurely, "an allegory of Hardy's own sexual development, the comedy of Marian's finding 'queen shaped flints' - petrified sexual emblems - in the fields of Flirtgomb-Ash, and shrieking with laughter at them, has a note of confessional irony and then, at another time, Tess, enslaved to the threshing machine, typifies traditional agriculture in its defeat." These are some of the symbols used to explain several of his ideas.

51 Ibid., p.19.
52 Ibid., p.19.
The allegorical representation and Hardy's masterly use of pen-pictures are the source of the novel's greatness. Secondly, says Furbank it is possible to see in Hardy characteristics of a 'modern' novelist and an embattled social critic. It was in Tess says Furbank that Hardy depicted and was so well equipped for showing the great problems of life that confront modern writers. Explaining the great 'modernity' present in Hardy, Furbank states such major issues as the clash between the old but confirm forms of religion as opposed to 'pharisaic Victorian travesty'; his coming in touch with 'the great passionate pulse of existence' and viewing life from its inner side' is what Hardy depicted in Tess and later in Jude the Obscure. Says Furbank, "Hardy has realised that 'vitalist' strain in philosophy which runs through Nietzsche and Bergson to Lawrence." 53

If there is any novel where Hardy expressed his heart completely, it is Tess. Says Furbank, "He was no doubt Angel himself." 54 In the clash of Angel and Tess he was dramatizing the life-denying and life-affirming elements in his own temperament. As for Tess, Hardy had a strangely possessive attitude towards her; he liked to refer to her as 'my' Tess

54 Ibid., p.21.
and has a way in the novel, of talking of her as if she had been a real person.

In describing Hardy's skill and versatility as a novelist, Furbank is quick to recognize the writer's great originality as revealed particularly in *Tess*. For Furbank states in the conclusion to his essay:

That free inventiveness of Hardy's, his power of moving from mode to mode and turning everything to expressiveness, is even more commanding in *Tess* than in any of his earlier novels and makes me regard it, imperfect as it is, as his master-piece.

Dale Kramer is another critic of this period and his tightly-knit, polished study, *Thomas Hardy: The Forms of Tragedy* was published in 1975. Kramer supplements the extensive commentary on Hardy's tragic vision, not so much by redefining its particulars qualities as by revealing the distinctive "formal principle" by which it is expressed in each of the major novels: in *Far From the Madding Crowd* (not really a tragedy, as Kramer acknowledges), "schematization and dichotomy", in the *Return of the Native*, the use of two characters to dramatize opposing "worlds" of value; in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, the struggle

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of an individual within a historical cycle of change, and the "encapsulation" of the whole action in a single episode, in *The Woodlanders*, the use of many characters in paralleled situations rather than a single hero, in *Tess*, an emphasis on the subjectivity of consciousness, and in *Jude*, the use of "authorial distance" to provide varying perspectives.

One can criticize this highly analytical study on its own terms but that is to find fault with an intelligent and readable book. In terms of the development of Hardy criticism its importance lies in that it merely adds one more to a number of intelligent and readable books, equal or superior in quality, that apply analytical methodology to Hardy's fiction. Kramer circles back once again over established materials and issues - how the ending of *Far From the Madding Crowd* seems unsatisfactory, how Herchand is different from Farfrae, whether or not tragedy can be written about common people. The relation of Hardy's work to nineteenth-century understanding of tragedy (rather than to the definitions of later critics like Joseph Wood Krutch and Richard B. Sewall), the influence upon his literary views
of the quarterlies, and even the conceptions of the tragic underlying those poems that include the word tragedy in the titles. These subjects may be ancillary to Kramer's formalist concerns, but they are nevertheless relevant to the longer issues, and they have yet to be explored systematically and in detail.

Thomas Hardy and the Modern World, J. O. Bailey seems to see a bright future for analytical studies. He writes that Hardy scholarship up to the 1940's "said what could be said about the facts of Hardy's life, work, and ideas," and that the subsequent generation "began to look beneath the surface into what Hardy called the 'heart and inner meaning' of his works". After summarizing a number of critical studies, most of which, like Kramer's try not so much to place Hardy's achievements in contexts as to analyze themes, motifs, images and structures, Bailey concludes, "The microscope may show yet more". Among the other essays in the collection, nevertheless, those that focus the microscope on the contexts of Hardy's works primarily and secondarily on the works themselves seem most freshly interesting: Harold Orel's: Hardy, War, and the Years of Pax Britannica.

56 Quoted by Paul Zietlow: Nineteenth Century Fiction, Vol. 31, Number 1, June 1976, p.98.
57 Ibid., p.98.
James Gibson's brief description of problems in editing the poems, and Robert Gitting's portrait of the Gifford family.

The essays focusing primarily on the texts themselves provide note-worthy evidence of a growing consensus among Hardy critics that his works provide tentative affirmation of compassion, sympathy, charity. Jean Brook's statement that "Hardy's heroes and heroines find moral assertion of the best values humanity has known still possible in a chaos of indifference without fixed standards of value" is of a piece with F.B. Pinion, "in all three: Manty South, Giles Winterbourne, and Tess, shine the virtues Hardy most admired — selflessness, devotion, fortitude." As I noted earlier, no longer do the critics see Hardy as a despairing pessimist. This over-simplified description of the novelist was in part shaped by the "facts" of Hardy's life and ideas that were allegedly established by the 1940's.

The accounts so far cited by different critics only illustrate the lasting impact Hardy had made on his readers. Unlike contemporary criticism, that

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58 Ibid., p.99.
59 Ibid., p.99.
which came in the 1940's and in the early 70's, one thing is certain that the critics belonging to this phase were highly resourceful interpreters of Hardy's meanings.

Geoffrey Thurley's book *The Psychology of Hardy's Novels: The Nervous and the Statuesque* (1975), opens with an introductory chapter that is an inadvertent corrective gloss on the title of the book generally. Since this is a book burdened with a special vocabulary, it is surprising that Thurley does not take greater care with his terms. He has confused the two terms in fiction: "The concept of Typology in Fiction" and a "morphological theory". But we begin to see that typology, for Thurley at least, almost always means morphology. Reading the chapters on the novels, we also realise that is not a psychological study in the usual sense and that by the misleading title of the book Thurley does not mean psychological study as we usually understand it, but rather what he calls the psycho-physiology of Hardy's novels. He is in short a typological critic dealing with characters as "types".

Thurley claims that Hardy criticism has
been led astray in recent years by too much emphasis on his philosophy, and proposes to reinstate its natural course:

Hardy's novels are about relationships, not man in a cosmic void, against a natural background or unsettled by a changing society, but involved with other men and women.

If Thurley had carried out his intended programme, a study of interpersonal relations in Hardy, we might have had something like the psychological study the title announces, but as it turns out, Thurley's typological read "morphological" thrust has these men and women, as he calls them, continually dissolving before our very eyes into mere types. Thurley claims that his study is a return to an earlier mode of understanding Hardy, to D.H. Lawrence's famous characterization of Hardy's "white virgins" and "dark villains". He calls Lawrence's study the most penetrating word yet written about Hardy, and acknowledges that Lawrence's work anticipates much of his own book.

Finally, Thurley's provocative statement about Hardy, and one that suggests a genuinely new area of investigation in Hardy studies, is linguistic

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Before we can evaluate his philosophic ideas, we must at least be able to read his language; in his case, this language is framed principally in terms of psychological concepts, or, as the preceding discussion has already hinted, psycho-physiological.

In short, Thurley's discussions of Hardy's vocabulary are imprecise. For example, while he convincingly shows physical differences between Herchand and Farbrae, down to Herchand's own remark about Farfrae's slim girth and strength, he neglects a curious verbal echo in these descriptions. He argues that Henchard (statuesque) and Farfrae are "differen-tiated all levels", but when he points to Farfrae's first action in the novel - "to smile impulsively" — the difference begins to look like similarity. Impulsiveness certainly makes me think of Henchard, and to boot Thurley lists it as typing Henchard. This either suggests carelessness on Hardy's part, if we are to accept Thurley's typological argument about a consistent vocabulary in Hardy, or an ironic vocabulary, undetected by the critic, that undermines the kind of archetypal differentiations he has fastened onto.

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62 Ibid., p.369.
Virginia Hyman in *Ethical Perspective in the Novels of Thomas Hardy* (1975), sees Hardy's characters as types too, but the vocabulary she uses in identifying these types is completely different from Thurley's. Her chapter entitled "Character as Ethical Type" makes that much clear, and shows a typological consistency that Thurley's vocabulary often lacks. Her introductory chapters are sharp and lucid as she argues against metaphysics (like Thurley's argument against philosophy in Hardy) and for morality as the basic issue in Hardy's novels. She convincingly shows that the theory of ethical evolution as it came to Hardy through Comte, Mill, Darwin, and Leslie Stephen had a profound influence on him. Hyman sums up ethical evolution as the belief in "altruism as the highest ethical value," and "that by a process of social evolution altruism would eventually prevail." With a keen discrimination, she singles out Stephen for Hardy singled him out in the same way, and Hyman quotes Hardy's acknowledgement that Stephen's philosophy influenced him more than that of any other contemporary. Hyman says that Stephen was the one who taught Hardy how "the path of duty does not coincide with the path of happiness." This view of morality

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can, according to Hyman, correct our mistaken view of his metaphysics and our simplistic sense of fatality and pessimism in Hardy's novels:

Failure to recognize the fact that Hardy saw unhappiness and pain not as the final end for modern man but as a necessary condition for his future moral growth has been one of the chief stumbling blocks in critical interpretations of his works.

As good as these opening chapters are in outlining the moral background of Hardy's thinking, the remaining chapters of interpretation become somewhat creaky.

Since all she is concerned with is character types - both Hyman's and Thurley's studies suffer from this singular focus on character, from a particular narrow angle, and a scarcity of technical insights. But Hyman's last chapter, devoted entirely to Sue Bridehead, comes alive with a series of fine insights, and here the information gathered from Hardy's source is, in fact, used to advantage. Comte she tells us:

"Saw marriage as the crucial pivot between the personal and the domestic stage. The relationship between husband and wife, based originally upon selfishness, becomes, ideally, transformed into the only association in which entire identity of interests is possible."

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Marriage and the family become the axes around which hyman's illuminating discussion of Sue's tragic failure, revolves, and some of the detailing of the husband-wife, parent-child relationships in this chapter suggests a fruitful area for fuller work on Hardy.

J.T. Laird's book is a model of this kind. An important contribution to our picture of Hardy as a working novelist. The manuscript of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* was the first subject of an article-length study (Aumula, 1966) by John Laird. In his book *The Shaping of Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1975), Laird makes an important contribution to understanding Hardy. Like John Paterson's *The Making of "The Return of the Native"*, it offers us a meticulously complete picture of the making of *Tess*. Laird is happy to show that Paterson was wrong on one point, namely in his claim that in *Tess* "the artistic transaction was completed with relatively little interference of an editorial nature." Laird's textual analysis of *Tess* carefully describes the evolution of Hardy's novels from the version to its various printed forms - from the serial version published in the *Graphic* in 1891 and "the episodic sketches" published in the *Fortnightly Review* and the *National Observer* of the same year, to the important editions of 1891,

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1892, 1895, 1902, and 1912. With plot and themes, imagery and characterization in mind, and discriminating between bowdlerizations and important artistic changes, Laird charts the course of this, perhaps Hardy's most complicated, manuscript. His documentation of many of the patterns of classical and biblical allusions and four major themes — intention, nature as norm, will and the insignificance of the individual entity — in the Ur-version is admirable, and the discussion becomes positively absorbing with the development of the heroine's character and her emergence as "pure woman" in the later versions.

An important book of the 70's is *Thomas Hardy After Fifty Years* (1977) edited by Lance St. John Butler. The book brings together some excellent readers of Hardy, almost all of them display the kind of rich durable regard which Hardy calls for. From the point of view of the development of Hardy criticism, the different insights display a good range and balance in the topics covered. The approaches and interpretations are diverse, yet there is an implicit and lively interplay of argument.

In an essay entitled "Thomas Hardy: Fifty Years of Textual Scholarship", R.C. Schweik makes an assessment of the scholarly critical editions, descriptive bibliography and textual analysis contributed by individual writers. He speaks of these dissertations
as being, "sometimes brilliant and substantial, often weak and disappointing, and all of it, in a very real sense, only preparatory to the publication of the kind of authoritative critical editions, complete with definitive apparatus, which are the final goal of modern textual scholarship." 68

Schweik distinguishes between three closely related areas of study: descriptive bibliography, textual analysis, and editing. He cites the publication of Richard L. Purdy's *Thomas Hardy: A Bibliographical Study* as being a "really comprehensive and highly reliable descriptive bibliography, a model of patient accuracy and thoroughness which remains today the best available single source of information on Hardy's manuscripts and the evolution of his texts." 69 The whole purpose of descriptive bibliographies is to throw new light on Hardy's texts, textual materials have been uncovered or their significance reassessed. Schweik says:

Analytic studies simply cannot satisfactorily serve as substitutes for direct consideration of the textual evidence itself, any more than a critical study of a novel can satisfactorily serve as a substitute for


the novel itself. What a fully informed Hardy scholarship requires, then, is critical editions which provide authoritative texts and full records of all textual variants so that each scholar and critic may see for himself what editorial choices have been made and interpret for himself the significance of Hardy's revisions.

In talking about editing, Schweik distinguishes between 'practical' and 'critical' editions. The first type involves a faithful following of some well accepted text. In this case he cites 'the text declared by the author to embody his final intention' -- the 1912 Macmillan 'Wessex' edition. The latter is the definitive edition of Hardy's work where practical editions: the Norton critical edition, simply follow more or less faithfully, but uncritically, one on another of the impressions of the 'Wessex' edition.

About the Macmillan: 'New Wessex Edition', Schweik says:

This is nevertheless, certainly the most important practical edition of Hardy's work ever undertaken:...... ... the explanatory notes are exceptionally good.70

The purpose of the 'critical' editions says Schweik will be to represent as fully and accurately

70 Ibid., p.143.
71 Ibid., p.144.
as possible, Hardy's final deliberate authorial intention. What is important to emphasise here says Scheweik "is that such editions are the 'sine qua non' both of well founded critical judgements and fully informed historical interpretations of Hardy's work. Scheweik calls Simon Gattell's critical edition of Under the Greenwood Tree (1973) a work of modern critical editing done to the very highest standards.

Scheweik explains the importance of further editing Hardy's letters and notebooks, his scrapbooks which survive. These are of potentially great value for what they can reveal about Hardy's thought and art, and they deserve editing.

In short, Schweik has stated that although an account of the study of Hardy's texts over the last fifty years has been largely a history of preliminary work and disappointingly fragmented scholarship, the time is now at hand when that history of neglect is finally being remedied. With the ongoing publication of practical editions of good quality, including the extensive 'New Wessex' edition by Macmillan, with well advanced plans by the Clarendon Press for publication of scholarly critical editions of poems
the letters, and at least some of the fiction, there are signs that what had been sown during the first fifty years of textual scholarship on Hardy is finally bearing fruit.

F.B. Pinion in his essay: "The Ranging Vision" states that Hardy's literary longevity "owes much to his thoughtfulness and verbal economy, more to a creative gift which is often poetic, but most to his vision of life." F.B. Pinion does not think of Hardy as 'egotistical' or 'provincial' as was the custom of earlier critics. The latter based this opinion on the fact that many of Hardy's works related to his own emotional experiences, and that most of his stories are set in very circumscribed areas. F.B. Pinion argues that:

As an artist he has the rare faculty of combining imaginative experience relative to the individual (himself included) with an unwavering sense of man's place in universe; his Wessex transcends topographical limits and it is in under dimensions that those elements which contribute most to his greatness are to be found.

Wessex supplied quite enough 'human nature . . . . for one man's literary purpose' and extended

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73 Ibid., p.1.
the range of Hardy's vision. Even though Hardy derived a special satisfaction from preserving its old superstitions beliefs and customs, the artist in him is opposed to "representative fidelity" as a general rule. His subject was 'life' and not its 'garniture'. Pinion states that his principal interest was not in manners, but in the substance of life only. Therefore his characters were 'beings in whose hearts and minds that which is apparently local should be really universal.'

Hardy in his formative years had imbibed the new scientific philosophy. There was a great deal of scientific opinion in the country for the discerning thinker, and in none was it more constructive than in J.S. Mill, whose new 'religion of humanity' was rooted in the Positivism of Auguste Comte. Hardy's ideas came from these and other sources. Further, local history extended the range of Hardy's vision of life. Pinion adds: "Hardy's familiarity with the Bible probably did more to enlarge his historical sense than any other literatures". Biblical echoes are almost legion in Hardy's fiction, and where they refer to well-known events and figures (Cain and Job, for example) they still have a universalising effect.

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75 Ibid., p.5.
Pinion adds that Hardy achieves a considerable degree of universality through his use of literature. His main purpose was to please at a much higher level, and with this in view he drew Wessex parallels to the Old Testament Story of Saul and David, to the Oedipus Rex of Sophocles, to King Lear and even more notably to Les Miserables. Pinion insists that Hardy is no more borrower. He adapts and transmutes, and the critical question relates not to the means but to the result. Say Pinion:

Only a creative writer with imaginative vision can re-create effectively in this way, and only situations which are essentially the same through out the ages can respond to this kind of treatment.  

Hardy was probably one of the finest writers who had a strong traditional awareness. His fine historical sense involved a perception not only of the "pastness of the past" but compelled him to write not "merely with his own generation" but "with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order." Hardy's works are strewn with them from many sources, ancient and

77 Quoted by F.B. Pinion in The Ranging Vision, p.6.
contemporary. This says Pinion accounts for the multiplicity of Hardy's vision.

In short, Hardy's ranging vision involved an alliance between "the local and the contemporary and those relatively timeless issues which remain essentially unchanged because they are true to life." Pinion fully justifies Hardy's methods. The principal key to Hardy's continuing success says Pinion:

Is that he combines to an unusual degree a scientific vision of man's place in the universe with an artistic realization of the greatness in writing which has commanded assent through the ages.

Truly, P.B. Pinion's essay has been one of the finest contributions, to modern Hardy criticism. Perhaps, no other writer has shown in the past the influence that Arnold and Pater had on Hardy. The influence of Arnold and Pater on The Return of the Native and the parallelism of Less Miserables and The Mayor of the Casterbridge are discussed in F.B. Pinion, Thomas Hardy: Art and Thought (1977). Pinion argues that if a particular locality appeals to an author however limited it may be, it can be adapted to imaginative settings and situations far more successfully than less familiar scenes. This opinion

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78 Ibid., p.11.
79 Ibid., p.11.
made short shrift of the old criticism that Hardy's style is not responsible for the steady growth of interest in his work. Arnold defined this as 'the imaginative reason'; Pater, more precisely, as 'the imaginative intellect'.

In an essay, *The Form of Hardy's Novels*, R.M. Rehder makes an assessment of the principles that contributed to the development of a strict and rigorous form in his fiction. From earlier reviews and articles that appeared during his life-time and from the writer's own statements, it is obvious that Hardy had a carefully working definition of form. Says Rehder:

He stresses symmetry and tightness. He deplores the spasmodic, the heterogeneous and the conglomerate.

Rehder reports that 'self-concealment' was one of the earliest factors that made for the awakening of Hardy's sense of form. That he is made no parade of his art neither did he display emotion for it; appeared that Hardy as a young child, was distrustful of spontaneous and strong emotion, pondering it as a problem. Says Rehder: "His response to this trouble is secrecy".  

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81 Ibid., p.15.
Further, Hardy rejected that the idea of the novel should be merely a representation of sensation or the would. Selection and treatment was the criterion for a good novel. Rehder adds, "like Shakespeare, like all the great poets, he had a metaphor-making mind." One of the greatest demands on Hardy's descriptions and one that accounts for his greatness was that being "less discursive" and more specific, Hardy made things happen through use of a series of images.

Rehder says that a significant characteristic of most of Hardy's novels is their markedly unhappy endings. Says Rehder:

He is the first major English author to write a number of novels that end unhappily, although the conclusions of his best novels can only be tragic. He does not simply negate happiness, he insists on sorrow. His achievement, in terms of form is to have combined the tragedy and the novel.

A number of contemporary critics had condemned Hardy for over-burdening his plots with "coincidence" and "surprise". But Rehder speaks of Hardy as being a master of such surprises. They are essential to his way of telling a story and to his understanding

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83 Ibid., p.17.
of the world for "the form of his understanding is the form of his novels". 84

In describing Hardy's attitude to form, Rehder's central theme shows how his self-concealment worked itself out in his fiction and how he thought of form as a way of holding feeling. Hardy's plots, his conception of character and his notions of development all come from this same matrix. Therefore Rehder declares that Hardy needs the tragic control because of the overwhelming power of his feelings. No other English novelist had expressed sorrow so vehemently as Hardy. His idea to tragedy represents a combination of Greek, Shakespearian and Biblical tragedy.

Hardy's great subject matter entitled "the destruction of the old world by the new". 85 It was Hardy's great task and he did this with some difficulty "in aligning the inner and the outer life, and this is related in his novels to the tug between the past and the present. Hardy always felt the inevitability of change, of the destruction of the old, but the old is charged with more feeling than the new and he is always aware of the past in the present - his feeling is divided.

85 Ibid., p.25.
Hardy was an unusually creative man for he was poet and novelist, he drew and painted in water colour. He was an architect. As musician he could play the fiddle and was well being able to sing. Says Rehder because of this remarkable diversity of his artistic accomplishments he is perhaps "the only writer to be both a great novelist and a great poet."  

Finally, there is no doubt that an account like Rehder's has helped in a considerable way to enhance Hardy's reputation as "one of the greatest English novelists, with Jane Austen and George Eliot, Henry James and Joseph Cornad."

One of the most original and modern approaches in this collection of essays is David Lodges: "Thomas Hardy as a Cinematic Novelist". Hardy a 'cinematic novelist', Lodge argues, anticipated films, not that he was influenced by them. Lodge explains that Hardy, like a film-maker, seemed to conceive his fictions, from the beginning, as human actions in a particular setting:

The dense woods of *The Woodlanders*, the wild heathland of *The Return of the Native*, the contrasting valleys and heights of *Tess*, are integral to the imaginative unity of those novels. He called them 'novels of character and environment', and it is his ability to make concrete the relationship between character and environment in a way that is both sensuously particulars and symbolically suggestive that makes him such a powerful and original novelist, in my opinion, rather than his skill in story-telling, his insight into human motivation or his philosophic wisdom.

In 1978, John Bayley published a detailed critical study: *An Essay on Hardy*. This book suggests a new approach to Hardy as poet and novelist. It concentrates not so much on ideas and attitudes as on the texture of the writing, and on the crucial importance in it between one kind of exposition and another. John Bayley starts by establishing a difference between Hardy the private 'noticer' of things and people, and Hardy the professional author committed to interpreting these observations to his readers. The vital ingredients of eroticism and humour are analysed in detail, as are the unusual ways in which passiveness, 'pessimism', and anthropomorphism function in the poems and novels. Professor Bayley shows that the rewards of reading Hardy are today greater than ever, although they are not necessarily those which

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the reader expects to find, or has been taught to look for.

At the very outset Professor Bayley states: "Although every Hardy text is far more effectically aesthetic than anything of theirs (Defoe, or Meredith) - he is in a sense the least aesthetic of all English novelists." In the light of this remark Professor Bayley does away with all statements applied by James and Stevenson to Hardy's novels. But he adds in reading Hardy if disappointment comes it is due to "Hardy's seeming lack of desire to speak" but it is a reaction much more intimate and intermingled, which is an assert in itself - we are in a master's hand.

John Bayley compares Hardy to his Giles Winterbourne, for he is by nature, as a novelist, 'one of those silent unobtrusive beings' who 'scrutinise others' behaviour' the more closely in consequence, but he does so with such an independence and makes no claim to being a law unto itself.

Quietly and unobtrusively, Hardy presented life's contradictions Hardy indicated that he did not care for standardisation and the mass grouping

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of ideologies. His was the politics of an 'Intrinsicalist'. Bayley says that the social comment most frequently made in the novels "is that there is no such thing as class solidarity; the work - folk of a country place resolve themselves when closely observed into individuals just as different from each other as those in London drawing-rooms." He was on the side of any improvement and "living was something for each individual to do in his own way." The most Victorian thing about his novels says Professor Bayley is, their plot: the least, their sense of time, place and event." A further point about Hardy is that there are no norms, no steady pressure of belief or philosophy or message such as all other novels of his time were conditioned by.

John Bayley affirms that Hardy is no 'coterie writer' of the type of Eliot and Lewis. He has never had a coterie following, of the sort that exiles like Lawrence and James Joyce attracted. He kept to himself as far as his position in the public eye was and he considered this kind of dolitariness a privilege, one he made the most of. Bayley summed up what seemed to be Hardy's curious and unique kind of anthropomorphism: "Keep yourself to yourself,

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91 Ibid., p.13.
92 Ibid., p.13.
while at the same time wondering about others". 93
But Bayley sees this as an advantage for he declares
that withdrawal and misunderstanding become in Hardy's
method artistic assets of the first value. Therefore
Hardy's world is much more one of stasis and acceptance
than his public supposed, an acceptance based on
his imagination of things and people, dead or alive,
communicating with as only through the strength of
their difference. This cast of his mind become more
conscious as he thought more about art, and as public
expectations of his art, increased with fame.

One of the great skills of Thomas Hardy,
says John Bayley that made him so arresting, "is
that the closer and more satisfyingly he sees things,
and the more 'humanity' he endows them with, the
more cut off they are. Further, Bayley has a point
to make about Hardy's humour. Whether the humorist
is obviously on duty in his fictions, as in the scenes
at the melt-house in Far from the Madding Crowd,
or in the Chunch vault in A Pair of Blue Eyes, he
has no trouble in making clear that his natural port
was 'comick', as Dr,. Johnson said of Shakespeare.
Says Bayley: "He was liberated by working in a medium
he had taken on professionally, and he could get
across to readers at home in the same medium." 94

94 Ibid., p.70.
The nature of such comedy is nothing less than things as they really are: its principle is the presentation in art of the incongruity of life. No doubt Hardy enjoyed the humour. It was one of the ways in which consciousness made existence tolerable.\textsuperscript{95} Says Bayley, "that he is a humorist - even too much of one - is his defence against critics who don't know a joke when they see it."\textsuperscript{96}

Bayley next takes up Hardy's great talent of relating memory to visual or physical impression, something that always fascinated him. Hardy himself described the experience as "a state of mind which takes cognisance of little things, without at the time being conscious of them, though they return vividly upon the memory long after."\textsuperscript{97} In Desperate Remedies and \textit{Far From the Madding} this idea revives graphic illustration, and says Bayley, "it is the most important way in which Hardy gets inside some of his characters, without either analysing or taking them over."\textsuperscript{98} So memory now becomes a very important aspect of Hardy's art as a novelist.

\textsuperscript{96}\textit{Ibid.}, p.70.
\textsuperscript{97}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 80-81.
\textsuperscript{98}\textit{Ibid.}, p.81.
Bayley points out, as part of Hardy's 'pansonical' side, the novelist displays what he knows with the relish of a sermonist providing himself agile in scriptural text and interpretation. Says Bayley, "his passion for painting and literature is infections, and his communication of it wins the sympathetic reader completely."99 Further, Hardy had taken a keen delight in art and culture and he knows how to use them as assets, in pursuit not only of fame and fortune but of love itself.

Hardy was further a master in the presentation of social differences. His characters divide into those who are aware, like Elizabeth Jane, of the conditions which life seems to demand of them, and of the kind of rewards it offers, and of those who 'love it desperately', however little they may be aware of the fact, and who are for that reason outside - more or less the kind of consciousness which Hardy disposed of, the kind of which he is the master in his poems.

Hardy excels in portraying personality by means of place and event, and their intersection. We have too the close proximity of trees and other living things in a wood at night, where each sound

or movement conveys the unheedingness of each to the other. Hardy himself describes such a situation after, numbering with pleasure the different responses of leaves, plants and grasses to wind and rain. Says Baley, "the reader - with an equal pleasure - is made aware of all, though no effect is definitively in change. It seems to be our own activities among the constituent parts of the writing that give us our sense of what is going on."\textsuperscript{100}

In Bayley's account, a claim is made for the stature of the earlier and less considered novels. For example he claims that Ethelberta is not a failure: and that it does not show, as most Hardy critics assume, that he had no sense of how to handle a social and metropolitan them. Rather, "he had too much sense of it." Said Bayley, "Ethelberta, like Hamlet, is an imaginative impression of 'court life', about which the novelist is too intrigued to be sure-footed. Yet for Shakespeare himself no English writer is more naturally a courtier than Hardy."\textsuperscript{101} Yet both ethelberta and A Laodicean says Bayley, "does show us something about Hardy's originality. The two pieces of fiction are more characteristic, more concentratedly Hardyan and also more dynamically doctrinaire, novels."\textsuperscript{102}

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., p.153.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., p.152.
Bayley does devote the last section of his account to *Tess*. Hardy 'loved' *Tess*, so much is clear. *Tess* was not only a potent influence on Lawrence's imagination - as he makes clear in his study of the Hardy novels - but strikes the present day reader too as having a good deal in common with the atmosphere of the Lawrence world, the world of symbolic divisions which confronts us, for example, in *Women in Love*. Says Bayley:

The triumph involved in *Tess*’s creation, a triumph whose limitations constitute the book’s essential form, is the bringing together of such an objective and traditional idea of a milkmaid with the Hardyan intimacy of a 'sensitive soul'.

Before Bayley moves into Hardy’s character portrayal of *Tess* he cites other examples of persons in his novels who have been endowed with the grandest of literary parallels.

Clym toils in discovery like Oedipus; Bathsheba at the crisis of her marriage utters a cry recalling that of Christ from the cross.

But Bayley goes on to state such parallels on references, "Are like those of the author and his characters to events in the Bible they impose no burden of significance on themselves or the reader."

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But there is no such inevitability in the analogies which attend his imagination of Tess. It appears that Hardy had put so much of himself into Tess. Like Madame Bovary, says Bayley, Tess is closely identified with her author, and yet presented with an appearance of objectivity. Therefore, Hardy's portrayal of Tess is as close to the life he had created. Tess like Emma Bovary has been shaped by her society. Tess & Emma Bovary are not a part of the worlds they have to live in. Says Bayley: "Both exist to embody, as they superlatively do, their creator's sense that consciousness cannot be at home in the conditions of existence." Bayley notes that in general, Hardy does not 'merge' with his routine experience of his characters; he lets the two lie side by side while experience is noted between them. But with Tess says Bayley: "It is very definitely Hardy's experience of the mature as of the youthful author. Hardy creates his heroine in order both to disown the world, and to rejoin it by being at one with its victim, the heroine." In short Bayley concludes this section of his account by stating: "If Tess is in its way the formal culmination of methods always congenial to Hardy fiction - the natural uses of inconsistency and separation."  

107 Ibid., p.186.  
108 Ibid., p. 191.
There is no doubt says Bayley that Tess is one of Hardy's greatest successes as a novelist.

Tess was his own fantasy in a very particular sense, but any market researcher today could see it has exactly the right ingredients for popular success - a beautiful and persecuted heroine, the victim of social injustice, a hanging, and above all the romance of history brought up to date - any of us might be descended from D'Urbervilles, or their equivalent, which makes identification all the more seductive. Moreover as in all the most successful best sellers, Hardy was himself firmly in the grip of his own fantasy which turned out to raise a fervent echo in so many other bosoms.109

This is a radically very different approach to Tess from that of T.S. Eliot, Henry James, and F.R. Leavis who agreed that Hardy is not finally for them a great writer. But Bayley is different in his approach for he says, "Nothing in him can be revealed which Hardy has not, quite simply, revealed himself."110 Of all novelists, Hardy makes the things that he invents appear most like the things that have taken place throughout the time of man, and before it. Like Knight, on the 'cliff without a name', we confront with him the eye of the fossil embedded in the rock.

To use Hardy's own words, he is an 'unobtrusive'

110 Ibid., p.231.
process. No other author appears to make his true greatness out of less than Hardy, nor does it without any of the creator's egocentric energy, and will to power. Says Bayley, "his style is never taken in by its own pretension to epic size and philosophic weight."\(^{111}\)

In terms of approach the accounts of the critics of this phase are essentially complex and imaginative. This shows that Hardy's work is not as simple as is made out to be. No longer do we hear the old familiar cliches - Hardy's Irony, Hardy's Fate and Destiny, his range, his pessimism and the like Hardy in the 70's began to be seen less as a traditional Victorian novelist and more as a pioneer in the novel.

Critics of the 70's had become highly resourceful and began to see Hardy in the light of his affinities with twentieth century novelists. This is beginning to be examined. His ideas on man and society are now seen to have much in common with some aspects of twentieth century thinking, including existentialism, as Roy Morrell (1965) and Jean Brooks have suggested.

Roy Morrell in Thomas Hardy, the *Will and Way*, made a breakthrough in 1965. He proved irrefutably that Hardy was right in asserting that he was not a 'Fatalist and pessimist'. And suggested that he was looking forward as well as back, and had affinities with the Existentialists. The book was an important turning point because it rejected the patronised, traditional, nostalgic Hardy and suggested his relevance to the modern world.

To a certain extent criticism that came during this phase had one major draw-back. Though highly resourceful, in trying to modernise Hardy, writers tended to say too much. This leads to a lot of distortion in their accounts, and in certain cases the work becomes an end in itself.

The earlier critics seemed to have understood better the milieu of Hardy's novels. They remained closer to the man and wrote essentially in the context of Wessex. But Hardy originally conceived, however, this 'world' had a crucial limitation which Hardy soon recognized: it could make his work narrow and stereotyped. He was aware of the pecuniary value of a reputation for a speciality . . . . yet he had not the slightest intention of writing for ever about
sheep farming, as the reading public was expecting him to do, and as, in fact, they presently resented his not doing. It was in the process of writing The Return of the Natwe, with the introduction of Clym, that Hardy realized that Wessex need no longer he thought of as 'writing about sheep-farming" but, in Matthew Arnold's phrase, could be made to include 'the dialogue of the mind with itself'. Into Wessex Hardy was able to introduce not simply the structure provided by indigenous customs and plots, but more inclusively, the structure of a contemporary consciousness ambivalent in its sympathies, sceptical in outlook. The development of Wessex could, in other words, be made commensurate with the development of the author.

With Hardy's change in attitude, critics of the 70's approached him in a way different from those contemporary ones. Now the critics began to study his novels in terms of imagery, metaphor, rather than emphasise plot and story. Some began to refer to Hardy's art as cinematographic - where his novels have been compared to the work of a director prolix in stark images and novel camera-angle.

Other critics began to ask the question
what other writer has given more to the world, than the generous, compassionate Thomas Hardy? A Critic like John Bayley was able to use in Tess and Herchard characters created on the heroic scale. This does not mean that Hardy is the equal of Shakespeare, but it does mean that he is one of those who most nearly rival him, like Chaucer, with whom he has so much in common. Then, Hardy was among the leaders of thought in his age, a meliorist who realised the potential grandeur of man, yet one driven to despair by the slowness of his progress.

In Jude, written twenty years before the first World War, he had asked, "When people of a later age look back upon the barbarous customs and supersitions of the times that we have the unhappiness to live in, what 'will' they say? What, one wonders, would he say of the times the critics of the 70's lived and wrote nearly a century later? But, then, as he wrote in one of his loveliest lyrics: "I shall mind not, slumbering peacefully."112

Each of the critics of the 70's has displayed the kind of rich durable regard which Hardy calls for. There is beyond doubt in their assessments a

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good range and balance in the totality of Hardy's concerns. The approaches and interpretations are diverse, yet there is an implicit and lively interplay of argument.

Death came to Hardy in 1928, and now after another fifty years critics of the 70's have remembered with affection and gratitude "another tradesman's son", witty and like Shakespeare, a lover of humanity.