

CINEMATIC HARDY: AN ARTIST AHEAD OF HIS TIME?

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis engages with the idea of Thomas Hardy's fiction being comparable to modern cinema and aims to explain this apparent anachronism. For this purpose I identify a poetics of cinema, distinct from the medium of film. In the first chapter I analyse Hardy's writing in terms of this poetics and demonstrate that his narrative technique functions primarily in a cinematic manner. This discussion covers his consideration and employment of perception, his method of investing descriptions of setting and atmosphere with symbolic import, and his use of mimesis and diegesis in constructing a narrative. In the second chapter I set Hardy's writing in its historical context to explore its apparent ahistoricism, examining firstly the scientific and technological developments which created a new understanding of perception in the nineteenth century, and then the ways in which Hardy's engagement with the arts allowed him to express this modern sensibility. By this I demonstrate that Hardy is simultaneously in step with the foremost thinkers of his time and avant-garde in his incorporation of modern cultural impulses into his fiction.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

*Crowd* — *Far From the Madding Crowd*

*Greenwood* — *Under the Greenwood Tree*

*Jude* — *Jude the Obscure*

*Mayor* — *The Mayor of Casterbridge*

*Return* — *The Return of the Native*

*Tess* — *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*

*Tower* — *Two on a Tower*

*Woodlanders* — *The Woodlanders*

## INTRODUCTION

The phrase ‘Cinematic Hardy’ may seem problematic upon first consideration; indeed, taking it as a reference to Hardy’s fiction in relation to the film medium, its anachronistic nature cannot be denied. However, on an intuitive level, I have always found that reading his writing is comparable to a cinematic experience, with his narrative technique creating the effect of a film being played out in the imagination, and this is a response which has been repeatedly recorded in critical evaluations of his work.<sup>1</sup> There is no possibility of direct influence of the cinema upon Hardy’s writing, the first public picture show having been screened in December 1895, the month following the publication of *Jude the Obscure*, his final novel, that November. Furthermore, despite this apparent historical proximity of his fiction to the development of the film as a narrative medium, it is not the silent, black and white films of the early cinema of which his style is evocative, but the medium as we know it today, with full use of colour and sound, and complex cinematography. I aim to explain this apparent anachronism by considering the style and techniques of cinema as distinct from the film medium. This poetics, which I am terming cinematic due to its common association with the film medium in modern culture, is equally identifiable in Hardy’s fiction: a method of presentation and narrative which seems more aligned with the culture of today than with the traditional fiction of the Victorian period.

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<sup>1</sup> See Joseph Warren Beach, *The Technique of Thomas Hardy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1922), pp. 134-57; David Cecil, *Hardy the Novelist* (London: Constable and Co, 1954; repr. 1978), pp. 56-7; David Lodge, ‘Thomas Hardy and Cinematographic Form’, *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, 7 (1974), 246-54; Joan Grundy, *Hardy and the Sister Arts* (London: Macmillan, 1979); Terry Wright ‘“Hardy as a cinematic novelist”: three aspects of narrative technique’, in *Thomas Hardy on Screen*, ed. by T. R. Wright (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 8-19; Roger Webster, ‘From painting to cinema: visual elements in Hardy’s fiction’, in *Thomas Hardy on Screen*, pp. 20-36.

Whilst fiction and film have obvious differences in the ways in which they convey narratives, with fiction functioning through the medium of words whilst film communicates with vision and sound, there are some inherent similarities. David Lodge describes the way in which, at the most fundamental level, they both may be considered metonymic forms, functioning on a basis of contiguity and typically in a linear fashion temporally, in order to achieve verisimilitude in the presentation of experience.<sup>2</sup> Many writers in the Modernist period such as Dorothy Richardson, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and Christopher Isherwood engaged directly with cinema in their imaginative and non-imaginative writing as well as in wider cultural activities. The fact that this engagement was positive, with them drawing parallels between the techniques and potential of the two media similarly indicates an intrinsic similarity between them. There has been a lot of critical attention in recent years to the interrelation of modernist literature and early cinema; Laura Marcus argues, for example, that Woolf and Richardson develop ‘a literary equivalent to the cinematic aesthetic’ in their writing.<sup>3</sup> Whilst my study will obviously share something with this work in terms of basic principles of comparison between the two media, there is clearly not the same direct relationship between Hardy’s writing and modern cinema which can be identified between, say, Richardson’s novels and the films she was reviewing in her regular articles for the film journal *Close Up*.

Despite the fact that there was no overlap between the writing of Hardy’s fiction and the film industry, his works were adapted as films, well within his lifetime.<sup>4</sup> However, this opportunity for direct comparison between the rendering of Hardy’s novels in his own

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<sup>2</sup> David Lodge, *The Modes of Modern Writing* (London: Edward Arnold, 1977), pp. 73-124.

<sup>3</sup> Laura Marcus, ‘Cinematic Realism: “A recreation of the world in its own image”’ in *A Concise Companion to Realism*, ed. by Matthew Beaumont (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 195-210 (p. 198). See Marcus, *The Tenth Muse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Laurel Harris, ‘Hearing Cinematic Modernism in the 1930s’, *Literature & History*, 21 (2012), 67-75.

<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of Hardy’s dealings with the film industry, see Matthew Sweet, *Inventing the Victorians* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001), pp. 31-4.



writing and in the cinema of the early twentieth century emphasizes the disparity rather than the similarity between the two, with Hardy himself apparently identifying no especial cohesion. His reference, in his explanation of his decision to sell the rights of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* for film production, to 'an exhibition of successive scenes from *Tess* (which is, I suppose, what is meant)',<sup>5</sup> serves as a reminder of the limitations of early films, with the film consisting rather of filmed tableaux with title cards to explain the action, than being a continuous and self-sufficient narrative. His comment after viewing the film, that '[i]t was a curious production, & I was interested in it as a scientific toy; but I can say nothing as to its relation to, or rendering of, the story', seems to emphasize the idea that the narrative technique and artistry of Hardy's writing which seems cinematic today found, at this time, greater expression in his original writing than in its equivalent in the film medium.<sup>6</sup> Whilst much of the limitation in this case may be attributed to the fact that the film belongs to the silent era, ironically an adaptation of Hardy's 1872 novel *Under the Greenwood Tree* was the first all-talking film made in Britain<sup>7</sup>. Although this appeared in 1929, a year after Hardy's death, and consequently we can have no gauge of what his reaction to it would have been, Paul Niemeyer describes the negative reaction it received with contemporary audiences, with critics disparaging the filmmaker's decision to rely upon the addition of clichéd action scenes and folk songs to exploit the sound element, rather than adhering to and engaging with Hardy's text.<sup>8</sup>

The idea of cinema as an art form which is not tied solely to the medium of film, nor limited by the timescale of the cinema itself, has been explored previously. Lodge, in his

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<sup>5</sup> *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy*, ed. by Richard Little Purdy and Michael Millgate, 7 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), IV, p. 140.

<sup>6</sup> *Collected Letters*, p. 312.

<sup>7</sup> Paul J. Niemeyer, *Seeing Hardy* (London: McFarland & Company, 2003), p. 254.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 254-5.

description of the similarity between realistic novel and film asserts that ‘novelists were in fact presenting action cinematically long before the invention of the moving-picture camera’.<sup>9</sup> Leon Edel similarly identifies a likeness between the presentations of narrative, claiming that nineteenth century realists such as Balzac seem to have ‘had a prevision of cinema’ and stating:

Novelists have sought almost from the first to become a camera. And not a static instrument but one possessing the movement through space and time which the motion-picture camera has achieved in our century.<sup>10</sup>

His reference to ‘the early “cinema”, devised in fiction’<sup>11</sup>, succinctly encapsulates the idea of cinema as a set of stylistic techniques which were originally developed in fiction before being adopted by filmmakers, and arguably given greater fulfilment by the development of modern cinematic apparatus. Leslie Fiedler certainly endorses this view in his description of the novel as the original form of pop-art, with cinema considered as almost a descendent, appropriating the popular novel’s subjects and techniques. He describes the transition between the dominance of the two forms as a metamorphosis, with novels ‘being merely the embryos of the films they finally become, a kind of chrysalis yearning to be a butterfly’, and attributes this to a determinism on the part of the novelists themselves, claiming that ‘from the start, certain popular novelists apparently yearned for, dreamed the invention of, the movies’.<sup>12</sup> Whilst this view endorses the idea I am proposing of the possibility of describing pre-cinematic fiction in terms of cinema, it views the nineteenth-century novel retrospectively as a pre-cursor to the development of the film medium,

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<sup>9</sup> Lodge, *The Modes of Modern Writing*, p. 87.

<sup>10</sup> Leon Edel, ‘Novel and Camera’, in *The Theory of the Novel*, ed. by John Halperin (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 177-88 (p. 177).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 182.

<sup>12</sup> Leslie A. Fiedler, ‘The Death and Rebirth of the Novel’, in *The Theory of the Novel*, pp. 189-209 (p. 192).

rather than as a form which may be viewed as creating and employing the cinematic style in its own right. In an alternative approach Alan Spiegel addresses the idea of the cinematicness of novels within their own cultural context, associating it with a reification of the novel form and its narrative materials. He identifies a trend within literature throughout the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries which ‘diminish[es] the status of the object as a total and self-sufficient presence ... by mediating the object through the singular distortions of an eye that sees like a camera’, leading to ‘the special epistemology of the cinema – and to its culmination in Joyce’.<sup>13</sup> The idea of cinema in literature is not limited solely to the field of literary criticism; Sergei Eisenstein, generally considered a crucial figure in the development of modern cinema, acknowledged the importance of literature in the development of film artistry, describing Joyce’s *Ulysses* as ‘the most interesting phenomenon for cinema in the *West*’.<sup>14</sup>

Comparisons have, of course, been previously drawn between Hardy’s fiction and cinema. As early as 1922 Joseph Warren Beach describes *The Mayor of Casterbridge* as ‘reminding one often of the moving picture’.<sup>15</sup> He uses the term ‘Movie’ pejoratively, referring to ‘the crude and vulgar art of the cinematograph’ and criticizing the way in which the story is ‘told in outline’ as though it were a film scenario. Obviously the moving pictures to which he is referring are the films of the silent era, but his observation of the way in which many of Hardy’s scenes work by ‘making their appeal directly to the sense of sight’ is pertinent equally to an analysis of his technique in terms of the functioning of modern cinema. Indeed, his conclusion that Hardy’s technique in this novel is, in its way effective, seems prophetic of the subsequent achievements of cinema despite his

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<sup>13</sup> Alan Spiegel, ‘Flaubert to Joyce: Evolution of a Cinematographic Form’, *NOVEL*, VI (1973), 229-43 (p. 233).

<sup>14</sup> S. M. Eisenstein, *Selected Works*, 3 vols (London: BFI, 1988-96), I (1988), p. 96.

<sup>15</sup> Beach, p. 134.

previously dismissive attitude, as he acknowledges the power of the way in which Henchard is ‘made to live as few figures live in history or fiction’, and commending the way in which ‘[s]o vivid is the presentation by this method of pictured moments, so complete and moving the illusion of life’.<sup>16</sup> David Cecil in 1954 similarly celebrates this aspect of Hardy’s writing, claiming that ‘[n]o other English novelist has so great a power of visualisation and describing it as ‘the basis of his whole method’.<sup>17</sup> This leads to the comment that ‘[h]is technique, oddly enough, is that of the modern director of films’, and the statement, in the discussion of his use of mimesis as a narrative device, that:

When the plot rises to its crisis, Hardy’s visualising power burns all the brighter. Once more like a film producer, he often makes his climax a silent one. The dramatic moment expresses itself in action rather than words.<sup>18</sup>

Two decades later, David Lodge in his seminal 1974 essay ‘Thomas Hardy and the Cinematographic Form’<sup>19</sup>, makes an extended comparison between the narrative functioning of Hardy’s fiction and modern cinema, taking colour and more technologically advanced filming possibilities into consideration. He too focuses on the visual aspects of Hardy’s writing, justifying his description of him as a ‘cinematic novelist’ by the fact that he is one who:

deliberately renounces some of the freedom of representation and report afforded by the verbal medium, who imagines and presents his materials

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 147, p. 146, p. 143, p. 157.

<sup>17</sup> Cecil, p. 56.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 56, p. 57.

<sup>19</sup> Lodge, ‘Thomas Hardy and Cinematographic Form’. I will refer throughout to the later version of this essay, ‘Thomas Hardy as a Cinematic Novelist’, in David Lodge, *Working with Structuralism*, (New York: Routledge, 1978).

in primarily visual terms, and whose visualisations correspond in some significant respect to the visual effects characteristic of film.<sup>20</sup>

This led to a number of critics in the 1970s and 80s engaging with the idea of his ‘cinematicness’ in some capacity or another, most notably Joan Grundy. She argues in her 1979 work *Hardy and the Sister Arts* that his writing draws upon many different art forms in order to create as total an illusion of life as possible and it is in this “synthesis of the arts” with its corresponding “synchronisation of the senses” that his style appears cinematic.<sup>21</sup> She claims, moreover, that the affinity between his art and that of film ‘is a matter of ontology, not simply of technique’, stating that his ‘view of life itself as a kind of book written in a universal sign-language of the visible seems to join life, literature and cinema together in a circle of identity’.<sup>22</sup> In more recent years critics such as Paul Niemeyer, Terry Wright and Roger Webster have taken the cinematic interpretations of his novels as an inspiration to identify what is inherently cinematic about Hardy’s writing. Niemeyer claims that Hardy uses ‘the language of the cinema’ and analyses the way in which his novels are ‘driven by *perspectives*’, though his study focuses upon thematic rather than physical perspectives.<sup>23</sup> Wright and Webster, meanwhile, both concentrate on formal properties of Hardy’s fiction, with Wright focusing on three aspects of his narrative technique in an attempt to make a connection between ‘narratological description of the formal properties of the texts to reader-response analysis of the “effect” these structures have upon readers and spectators’,<sup>24</sup> while Webster, argues that it is due to the influence of

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<sup>20</sup> Lodge, ‘Thomas Hardy as a Cinematic Novelist’, p. 96.

<sup>21</sup> Grundy, p. 184.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109, p. 132.

<sup>23</sup> Niemeyer, *Seeing Hardy*, p. 36, p. 5.

<sup>24</sup> Wright, p. 8.

contemporary art that Hardy's writing 'accentuates the visual in ways which anticipate the advent of cinema'.<sup>25</sup>

It is clear, then, that proposing a discussion of Hardy's works in terms of their cinematic nature is not original in itself, nor is it an area which has been ignored by eminent critics in this field; however, most of the works discussed above have addressed primarily one or another aspect of his style in terms of cinema, and there has been a heavy bias towards the discussion of purely the visual aspects of his writing in these terms.

Whilst some scholars, such as Grundy and Webster have addressed the factors which may have contributed to the development of his style in this way, this has been almost solely in terms of the arts, and taking only the cinematic aspects of his style directly associated with those influences into account. The intention of my study is to gain a comprehensive view of the cinema of Hardy's writing, establishing both the way in which the term may be applied to his fictional technique, and the way in which this technique interrelates with the context in which it was developed. For the purposes of this thesis I am using the term 'cinematic' to refer to a poetics in which the narrative is constructed from a range of different signifiers presented in the text, with the emphasis being upon the provision, or transcription, of physical perceptions to tell the story and evoke the atmosphere. The primary authorial function in this technique, is that of manipulating the materials provided and the way in which they are presented, rather than narrating in a traditionally diegetic manner. In the first chapter I will explore Hardy's use of this narrative technique; although his epic-drama in verse *The Dynasts* lends itself to discussion in terms of cinema with its shifting perspectives and impossible stage directions, and has indeed been discussed thus,<sup>26</sup> I will limit my analysis to his novels and short stories in which his narrative technique is

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<sup>25</sup> Webster, p. 34.

<sup>26</sup> See John Wain introduction to *The Dynasts* (London: Macmillan, 1965); Grundy; pp. 117-25.

more subtly and completely rendered. While drawing upon a wide range of his fictional works, I will refer particularly to his 1878 novel *The Return of the Native*. This novel is where my engagement with Hardy's fiction began, and my first impression was that of its cinematic nature; indeed the seed of this thesis lies in that initial experience. My decision to draw so heavily upon one work in particular is not intended to imply that the cinema of Hardy's fiction is limited mainly to this one novel, and will not, I hope, be reductive to my study, but is rather to enable me to explore and demonstrate the ways in which the different elements I am discussing work together in a manner which may be identified across his fictional corpus. In the second chapter I will explore the influences upon Hardy's literary imagination which allowed for the development of this cinematic technique, grounding my discussion in a study of the cultural impulses within his contemporary society and personal experience to avoid the impression of a retrospective teleology. In order to do this, this research will draw upon many different aspects of nineteenth-century culture and understanding. My aim in analysing Hardy's writing both in terms of its functioning and its relation to its historical context, is to establish both the intrinsic nature and the cultural significance of his cinematic style, ascertaining the way in which his writing may be considered *avant-garde* in its relation to wider cultural developments.

## CHAPTER 1: HARDY'S USE OF A CINEMATIC POETICS

The cinematic poetics in the film medium communicates primarily by the provision of visual and aural stimuli which the viewer has to perceive, interpret and synthesize in order to understand the narrative. Whilst the possibility of providing his reader with direct sensory perceptions is not available to Hardy in his verbal medium, he transcribes in words the sights and sounds which are necessary to convey the information crucial to his plots. It would be an exaggeration to claim that this is the only way in which he narrates, and there are throughout his writing numerous instances of traditional fictional technique such as authorial interjections and free indirect discourse. However, this is not the primary manner in which he communicates; he prefers to show rather than tell his stories, with the practice of showing including the aural as well as the visual channel. There is always, in his fiction, a very clear sense of not only what is happening, but how it is happening, where it is happening, the atmospheric circumstances in which it is happening, and from what perspective the perception of the occurrence is taking place. As such, there is a very strong illusion, as in a film, that it is a concrete reality to which we are being afforded access. This access, however, is not a simplistic omniscient perception, but one which is continually manipulated, with the circumstances of the perspective we are granted playing as crucial a narrative role as the existence or occurrence of that which we are being invited to perceive. It is the manner in which these transcribed perceptive opportunities are presented and juxtaposed, edited one might say, that conveys the elements and atmosphere necessary to an understanding of the plot. Indeed, the expressive potential of every aspect



of the fictional realities and perceptive processes are exploited by Hardy in his construction of narrative, with a strikingly cinematic result.

### **The Use of Perception**

One of the most striking aspects of Hardy's fiction is the clarity of the visual elements of his writing, with impressively detailed descriptions of characters and scenes which are often discussed in terms of pictorialism. Grundy, for instance, claims that '[m]ost of the time in reading his work [...] we are looking at pictures',<sup>1</sup> whilst J. B. Bullen describes his style as comprised of a succession of pictures, which 'pass with such rapidity that they create an almost cinematographic effect; but in fact they are not moving pictures, but a series of "stills"'.<sup>2</sup> The refutation of the comparison of Hardy's style to cinema on these grounds is interesting given that the moving pictures of cinema itself are traditionally comprised of 'a series of "stills"', the impression of motion being created by the quality of illusion due to swift and rapid succession, with which he credits Hardy's writing. It is also rather mistaken to assume that all of the pictures within Hardy's writing are indeed static ones. The description of the heathmen standing around their bonfire in *The Return of the Native*, for example, is self-consciously pictorial in the way that 'the brilliant lights and sooty shades which struggled upon the skin and clothes of the individuals standing round caused their lineaments and general contours to be drawn with Dureresque vigour and dash'.<sup>3</sup> However, the passage equally self-consciously develops upon the basic pictorial mode, with the description of the way that '[a]ll was unstable; quivering as leaves,

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<sup>1</sup> Grundy, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> J. B. Bullen, *The Expressive Eye* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986), p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Hardy, *The Return of the Native*, ed. by Tony Slade (London: Penguin, 1999), p. 21.

evanescent as lightning' (p. 21), meaning that the picture is defined by movement, rather than stasis.

In her exploration of 'the Fictional Eye' in Hardy's early novels, Judith Bryant Wittenberg places an emphasis upon the idea of movement, using terms such as "moving picture" and "living picture" to describe his writing, and claiming that:

It is erroneous to speak too emphatically of the "paintings" in Hardy's novels in that he is as interested in using his verbal tools to capture human action and the changing effects of light and alterations in perspective as he is in fixing fully static moments.<sup>4</sup>

She also engages with the idea that some passages of Hardy's writing may be regarded as a series of stills, but contrary to Bullen regards this as an integral part of the overriding sense of motion throughout his writing:

a dominant defining quality of the heroines in Hardy's early novels is the liveness with which they move, so that underlying even the most seemingly static Hardy scene is the sense in which it is just on the point of changing; often one can discern a whole series of individual "frames", as on a strip on film'.<sup>5</sup>

Webster similarly addresses the way in which moments of stasis contribute to a wider sense of motion and temporality, stating that 'what seems uppermost in Hardy's deployment of visual techniques in fictional narrative is the transient and captured moment

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<sup>4</sup> Judith Bryant Wittenberg, 'Early Hardy Novels and the Fictional Eye', *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, 16 (1983), 151-64 (p. 160).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160.

which implies a kinetic and dynamic movement and context'.<sup>6</sup> This idea of a captured moment is effectively illustrated by Hardy's own statement introducing the description of Liddy crossing the swamp to her distressed mistress in *Far From the Madding Crowd*: 'Bathsheba never forgot that transient little picture'.<sup>7</sup>

Whilst Hardy does indeed devote much space within his fiction to the description of landscapes and scenes which may be viewed in painterly terms they are by no means the only ways in which the visual imagination is engaged; indeed his fiction is filled with visual effects which are beyond or outside the realm of pictorialism. In the description of Eustacia's bonfire, for instance, Hardy notes the way in which '[i]n the smooth water of the pool the fire appeared upside down' (*Return*; p. 59). A little further on, he describes an apparently disembodied hand feeding the fire, the rest of the body being obscured by the darkness, whilst the hand is illuminated by the flames. Indeed, vivid visual details are often the effect of the interplay of light and darkness; as some of the villagers stand outside Boldwood's door during his Christmas party in *Far From the Madding Crowd*, for example, Hardy describes the way in which, as the door opened and closed 'a golden rod of light would stripe the gravel for the moment, and vanish again, leaving nothing outside but the glowworm shine of the pale lamp' (p. 323). In his short story 'An Indiscretion in the Life of an Heiress', a revised version of his first, unpublished novel *The Poor Man and the Lady*, Mayne's observation of his wife re-entering her familial home is strikingly rendered in visual terms as he sees her:

crossing the grass and advancing, a mere dot, towards the mansion. In a short time the appearance of an oblong of light in the shadowy expanse

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<sup>6</sup> Webster, p. 23.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Hardy, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, ed. by Rosemarie Morgan (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 266.

of wall denoted to him that the door was open: her outline appeared on it; then the door shut her in, and all was shadow as before.<sup>8</sup>

Silhouettes feature almost as a motif in Hardy's writing, often, as in the start of *Return*, against the sky, but also in other manners, as with the silhouetted shadow upon the blind of Stephen kissing his mother observed by Elfride in *A Pair of Blue Eyes*. The description of shadows is another common feature of Hardy's writing. Wildev's first appearance is signalled by Thomasin's and Mrs. Yeobright's view through a window of '[a] vast shadow, in which could be dimly traced portions of a masculine contour, blott[ing] half the ceiling' (*Return*; p. 45), for example, while there is an incredible clarity in details such as that in Bathsheba's initial meeting with Troy, as the lantern 'sent over half the plantation gigantic shadows of both man and woman, each dusky shape becoming distorted and mangled upon the tree-trunks till it wasted to nothing' (*Crowd*; p. 142), contributing to the impression of a fully realized three dimensional scene.

This vividness of detail is not restricted to purely visual elements of his novels, however, aural detail also playing a hugely important role in the creation of an illusion of reality. His second novel *Under the Greenwood Tree*, which is often written off as the most pictorial and static of his novels, departs from and develops upon the traditional pictorial mode from the very beginning. Although it is subtitled 'A Rural Painting of the Dutch School' by Hardy himself, it opens with a paragraph of aural description of the wood, and the statement that '[t]o dwellers in a wood, almost every species of tree has its voice as well as its feature'.<sup>9</sup> The effect of this is to undermine the charge of simplistic pictorialism on three counts: firstly in its assertion of the importance of the sense of

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<sup>8</sup> Thomas Hardy, *An Indiscretion in the Life of an Heiress*, ed. by Terry Coleman (London: Hutchinson, 1976), p. 120.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Hardy, *Under the Greenwood Tree*, ed. by Tim Dolin (London: Penguin, 2004), p. 7.

hearing to portray a scene; secondly, the sobs, rustles and whistles to which he refers are explicitly the product of movement of the trees; finally in the basic and undeniable fact that sounds take place in time. Consequently, the passage creates a sense of kinesis and temporality as well as providing a vivid sense impression of the wood. This method of describing a darkened scene through the sounds of vegetation is an important element of Hardy's writing, creating a more total representation of the scene and the way in which it is experienced by the characters within the text. Aural description is an important aspect of the portrayal of Egdon throughout *The Return of the Native*, contributing to the vivid impression of the particular setting. Most notably, there is an extended description in Chapter VI of the 'linguistic particularity of the heath' (p. 56), but references to the sounds of the heath and its interaction with other elements of the scene are interspersed throughout the narrative. As Captain Drew and the reddleman travel across the heath in 'tacit conversation' (p. 15), for example, Hardy notes that: '[t]here were no sounds but that of the booming wind upon the stretch of tawny herbage around them, the cracking wheels, the tread of the men, and the footsteps of the two shaggy ponies which drew the van' (p. 14). As well as creating a general sense of the peculiar atmosphere of the heath, such descriptions also add to the impression of the scenes of particular episodes of the story, contributing to the sense of drama and foreboding. During the tragic climactic events of Book Fifth, for example, '[t]he noise of the wind over the heath was shrill, and as if it whistled for joy at finding a night so congenial as this' (p. 354). Similarly, as Mrs Yeobright rests on her fatal trip across the heath, the 'battered, rude, and wild' (p. 271) trees under which she takes shelter, 'kept up a perpetual moan which one could hardly believe to be caused by the air' (p. 272). However, whilst the 'wind-voices' and 'sylvan

language' of the natural scenery are perhaps the most obvious examples,<sup>10</sup> they are not the only way in which he utilizes sound detail. He provides, for example, the aural complement to the above-quoted description of the light from Boldwood's door: when it is opened by a villager 'the hum of bustle rolled out as a wave upon a still strand ... and was deadened to a murmur when he closed it again' (*Crowd*, p. 326), emphasizing the contrast between the atmosphere within and without the house. Sound is also used to establish plot details, such as in the episode of Grace and Mrs. Charmond losing themselves in the depths of the forest in *The Woodlanders*, where their situation is communicated by the fact that '[a]ll sound of the woodcutters had long since faded into remoteness' (p. 238).

The use of visual and aural details in these ways create a vivid illusion of reality, with movement and the passage of time which is akin to that provided by the moving pictures and sound effects of film. The role played by this manner of presentation, however, is not purely clarity of effect, but to present things to the reader as they are initially physically perceived within the text. Rosemarie Morgan observes that '[t]he spectatorial mode of the motion-picture story necessarily engages audiences in direct sensory experience',<sup>11</sup> and this may similarly be used to describe Hardy's writing itself, though the sensory experience is communicated to the reader through the verbal medium rather than directly via the visual and aural faculties. Wright identifies the correlation between Hardy's manner of presentation and cinema, describing the way in which, by 'providing the audience through intermediate filters and focalisers with vivid visual and aural stimuli' which he 'has to mediate [...] verbally', he employs 'the same narrative technique'.<sup>12</sup> As

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<sup>10</sup> Thomas Hardy, *The Woodlanders*, ed. by Patricia Ingham (London: Penguin, 1998), p. 239; Thomas Hardy, *Two on a Tower*, ed. by Sally Shuttleworth (London: Penguin, 1999), p. 123).

<sup>11</sup> Rosemarie Morgan, 'Staging the *Native*: aspects of screening *The Return of the Native*', in *Thomas Hardy on Screen*, pp. 108-23 (p. 108).

<sup>12</sup> Wright, p. 12.

Manston observes a train in the darkness in *Desperate Remedies*, for example, Hardy's description enacts his perceptive process: 'he saw rise up from among the trees a fountain of sparks and smoke, then a red glare of light coming forward towards him; then a flashing panorama of illuminated oblong pictures; then the old darkness, more impressive than ever' (p. 151).<sup>13</sup> The presentation of phenomena in this manner of primary physical perception has the effect, as Grundy notes, of placing the reader in the position of the characters. She describes the effect of this in terms of characterization in her discussion of the introduction of Dick Dewy at the beginning of *Under the Greenwood Tree*, stating that '[b]efore we see him, Dick has been made known to us through his experience, which we have shared'.<sup>14</sup> As such, through this shared experience, the reader is engaged with the characters in a direct manner, akin to that described by Morgan in the second part of her description of the way in which an audience is engaged with a film: 'more complicitly, the listener-spectator is conjoined to speaker-performer in the same spatio-temporal experience'.<sup>15</sup>

Hardy's consideration of perception also relates to the use of particular and often unusual perspectives throughout his writing, as the narrative adopts specific perspectives according to the way in which it is being focalized at any given point. This is sometimes in accordance with the perception of a character, as with the description of the heath from Clym's point of view following his ocular affliction, where the perspective is 'of a curious microscopic sort' (*Return*; p. 247). Often events are presented in a manner which makes use of a particular point of view according to characters' positioning, such as Eustacia catching sight of Clym's face in her looking-glass following the revelation of the details of

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<sup>13</sup> Thomas Hardy, *Desperate Remedies*, ed. by Mary Rimmer (London: Penguin, 1998), p. 151.

<sup>14</sup> Grundy, p. 129.

<sup>15</sup> Morgan, p. 108.

his mother's death, and a comparable episode in *The Woodlanders*, where Grace is disconcerted to see Fitzpiers momentarily awaken and meet her eyes in his parlour mirror. The positing of a perspective looking into a building from outside is common throughout his works; often this is through windows, but sometimes through an aperture in a wall, as when Eustacia spies and eavesdrops upon the mumming rehearsal in the fuel-house in *Return*, and De Stancy voyeuristically observes Paula in her gymnasium in *A Laodicean*. Another such episode, as Oak looks down through the roof of the byre at Bathsheba and her aunt at the beginning of *Far From the Madding Crowd* also provides an unusual perspective in that he is posited on higher ground, and as such is looking down upon them from above. Hardy repeatedly uses this 'bird's eye aerial view' (p. 13) of subjects, in a manner not aligned with a possible human perceiver, but rather stretching the potential of a hypothetical observer, as in the comment that, as Eustacia and Wildeve cross the heath in the twilight, '[t]o an eye above them their two faces would have appeared amid the expanse like two pearls on a table of ebony' (*Return*, p. 259), or attributed to that of 'birds on the wing' (*Crowd*, p. 109). The presentation of characters and events from particular perspectives often has specific significance; the aerial description of figures in the middle of the vast expanse of the heath vividly depicts their comparative fragility and vulnerability, for example, whilst the motif of the view through a window or aperture connotes separation and inaccessibility. The effect of Hardy's use of multiple perspectives may be demonstrated by the initial description of the town in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*:

To birds of the more soaring kind Casterbridge must have appeared on this fine evening as a mosaic-work of subdued reds, browns, greys, and crystals, held together by a rectangular frame of deep green. To the level eye of humanity it stood as an indistinct mass behind a dense stockade of



limes and chestnuts, set in the midst of miles of rotund down and concave field. The mass became gradually dissected by the vision into towers, gables, chimneys, and casements, the highest glazings shining bleared and bloodshot with the coppery fire they caught from the belt of sunlit cloud in the west.<sup>16</sup>

This combination of different perspectives creates a composite view and builds up an overall impression of the town, a microcosmic example of Hardy's use of perspective throughout his work.

### **The Means of Expression**

One of the primary methods of communication in Hardy's writing is through the investment of details with deeper significance than that of an impression of realism. Perhaps the most often-cited example of symbolism is the appearance of blood on the ceiling announcing Tess's murder of Alec; Tony Tanner, for example, describes the way in which this is the climax of a thread of symbolic use of the colour contrast between red and white throughout the novel, which is 'the embryo of the whole book and all that happens in it'.<sup>17</sup> Hardy's description of the patch of blood as having 'the appearance of a gigantic ace of hearts' is, if taken too literally and out of context, a fantastic artistic imposition upon verisimilitude.<sup>18</sup> Wright, for instance, describes it as 'a marvellous example of Hardy's veering from realism to outrageous symbolism'.<sup>19</sup> However, Hardy does not actually

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<sup>16</sup> Thomas Hardy, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, ed. by Keith Wilson (London: Penguin, 2003), pp. 27-8.

<sup>17</sup> Tony Tanner, 'Colour and Movement in Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*', *Critical Quarterly*, 10 (1968), 219-39 (p. 221).

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, ed. by Tim Dolin (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 382.

<sup>19</sup> Wright, p. 12.

expect his reader ‘to accept a ceiling literally assuming the shape of a gigantic playing card’<sup>20</sup>, stating quite explicitly that it is merely that an ‘oblong white ceiling, with [a] scarlet blot in the midst’ (p. 382), a realistic detail, is suggestive of an ace of hearts due to the colour contrast, but the idea of power and love suggested by the connotation of an ace of hearts emphasizes the significance of Tess’ deed. Another detail of the novel for which it is hard to resist a symbolic interpretation is that of the dying pheasants, persecuted for pleasure by a shooting party, the description of which, as Tanner notes, echoes the description of the girls tormented by love at the dairy,<sup>21</sup> as well as suggesting the victimization of a defenceless creature at the will of stronger powers. A similar instance to which comparable significance may be attached is that of the rabbit caught in the trap in *Jude the Obscure*, the sound of whose cries distresses Jude and Sue as they suffer under the rigid beliefs and mores of their society.

Such details which convey import beyond a function as part of the plot, while remaining naturalistic, are prevalent throughout Hardy’s writing. As noted earlier, Lodge describes the way in which, in accordance with Jakobson’s theory of the ‘binary opposition between metaphor and metonymy’, film and fiction may both be described as metonymic art forms.<sup>22</sup> Although symbolist fiction, he argues, tends rather to the metaphoric pole and is consequently less ‘cinematic’, he addresses the possibility of the interrelation of the two poles, where metonymic details can have metaphoric significance. It is this idea of contiguous symbolism which may be most accurately used to describe Hardy’s style, whereby without departing far from verisimilitude he conveys great symbolic import through his use of visual and aural detail, colour, light and shade. Indeed

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>21</sup> Tanner, p. 224.

<sup>22</sup> Lodge, *Modes of Modern Writing*, p. 73.

Lodge discusses this element of Hardy's writing, relating it to the way in which his technique is cinematic, claiming that 'Hardy's most stunning visual effects are [...] never introduced just "for effect" [...]; they are invariably part of some larger aesthetic and thematic pattern', and stating:

Hardy uses verbal description as a film director uses the lens of his camera – to select, highlight, distort and enhance, creating a visualised world that is both recognisably "real" and yet more vivid, intense and dramatically charged than our ordinary perception of the real world.<sup>23</sup>

Bullen similarly discusses the way in which he invests naturalistic detail with symbolic import, noting the way in which he 'uses sunlight, darkness, firelight, or lamplight as emblems of states of consciousness or moral enlightenment'. He cites as examples the way in which '[t]he darkness of Bathsheba Everdene's fir plantation, the obscurity of Egdon Heath, the impenetrable blackness of Cranborne Chase in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, and the dark nights of *Jude the Obscure* are all ... suggestive of mental and moral perspectives'.<sup>24</sup> The first three of those examples refer not only to a general state of darkness, but to a state firmly associated with a specific place, and thus a quality which is an intrinsic part of the setting. Egdon Heath, perhaps the most extended use of a single setting, is continually described in terms of 'obscurity', with statements such as '[t]he masses of furze and heath to the right and left were dark as ever; a mere half-moon was powerless to silver such sable features as theirs' (p. 130), and 'darkness had to a great extent arrived hereon, while day stood distinct in the sky' (p. 9). Beside the provision of a suitably dramatic atmosphere for the events of the novel, the description of the heath in

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<sup>23</sup> Lodge, 'Thomas Hardy as a Cinematic Novelist', p. 103, p. 97.

<sup>24</sup> Bullen, p. 12.

these terms serves the narrative function of, as Bullen states, suggesting the mental and emotional obscurity of the characters, and creating a sense of ill-omen and foreboding. Its darkening nature and inability to be illuminated not only reflects the failure of Clym's attempts to bring enlightenment and modernity to its inhabitants, but indicates from the beginning the futility of such hopes.

The significance of setting throughout Hardy's writing cannot be overestimated, functioning as an integral element of the plot, as well as effecting atmosphere and characterization, rather than merely being a backdrop against which the events are played out. Hardy himself hints at the stature with which he regards setting in his term 'Novels of Character and Environment', under which heading he categorized most of his eminent works, putting physical place on a par with humanity and suggesting the interrelation and interdependence of the two. Lodge identifies this as a fundamental part of his cinematicness, claiming that he seemed, 'like a film-maker ... to conceive his fictions, from the beginning, as human actions in a particular setting', and attributing his power as a novelist to 'his ability to make concrete the relationship between character and environment in a way that is both sensuously particular and symbolically suggestive'.<sup>25</sup> This relationship between the human and natural elements of the novel is extremely powerful in *Return*; Clym, it is stated, 'had been so interwoven with the heath in his boyhood that hardly anybody could look upon it without thinking of him' (p. 168), and the eponymic reference to him as 'the Native' tellingly links him fundamentally to his physical place of origin. However in the case of Eustacia the interlinking extends to a physical resemblance. The statement, for example, that '[t]o see her hair was to fancy that a whole winter did not contain darkness enough to form its shadow. It closed over her forehead like

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<sup>25</sup> Lodge, 'Thomas Hardy as a Cinematic Novelist', p. 97.

nightfall extinguishing the western glow' (p. 68), chimes with the way in which the heath, which has itself been likened to black hair in the reference to the white road crossing it as 'like the parting-line on a head of raven hair' (p. 13), is able 'by its mere complexion' (p. 9) to add 'half-an-hour to eve' (p. 9) and 'intensify the opacity of a moonless midnight to a cause of shaking and dread' (p. 9). Although this may seem a fanciful association, continually the characters are described as physically blurred with the heath; Clym, for instance, is barely discernible as he works upon it and is described pictorially in his relation to the wider scene: '[h]e appeared of a russet hue, not more distinguishable from the scene around him than the green caterpillar from the leaf it feeds on' (p. 270).

Throughout the novel characters are seen appearing from the landscape, as when 'moving figures began to animate the line between heath and sky' (p. 287), and disappearing into it, as in the description of Eustacia and Wildeve's departure from the barrow: '[t]heir black figures sank and disappeared from against the sky. They were as two horns which the sluggish heath had put forth from its crown, like a mollusk, and had now again drawn in' (p. 87). The very choice of twilight as the time for the setting of the beginning of the novel means that most of the figures are introduced as blurred with the landscape as part of a common silhouette, and that of Eustacia in particular; as the reddleman observes her upon the barrow the 'scene was strangely homogeneous. The vale, the upland, the barrow, and the figure above it, all of these amounted only to unity' (p. 17). The identity between them is also rendered aurally as her first utterance blends with the sounds of the heath: 'her articulation was but as another phrase of the same discourse as theirs. Thrown out on the winds it became twined in with them, and with them it flew away' (p. 57). This accord with the heath, suggested by both visual and aural correlation, means that descriptions of the mood and atmosphere of the heath may be taken as illustrative of elements of

Eustacia's mentality. Bullen describes this novel as the one in which Hardy develops his technique of 'employing setting as a vehicle for emotion' (p. 89), and this is certainly apparent in his depiction of Egdon in accordance with Eustacia. As she wanders the heath shortly before her death, for example, the terrible storm and complete darkness of the atmosphere echoes her despair; indeed, as Hardy explicitly comments, '[n]ever was harmony more perfect than that between the chaos of her mind and the chaos of the world without' (p. 345).

F. B. Pinion describes Hardy's use of scenes such as this which 'may be broadly described as "psychological"'. It is a concrete and sometimes poetic way of expressing states of mind, feelings, and moods in the protagonists themselves'.<sup>26</sup> Perhaps the clearest example of external phenomena expressing interiority is in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, where the changing locations echo and illustrate the changing fortune and mental state of Tess, who herself often appears, Tanner observes, 'almost more as a colour value in a landscape than a human being'.<sup>27</sup> The beauty and ethereality of Var Vale, for instance, into whose mist it is necessary to descend 'to read aright' (p. 104) is the location of Tess' greatest happiness in the novel, though the emphasis upon the mist suggests the delusive quality of the contentment the place and its inhabitants offer. The contrast of the landscape at Flintcomb-Ash, 'a starve-acre place' (p. 284), which is bleak, barren, and 'in colour a desolate drab' (p. 285), matches the contrast in Tess' situation. However, the alteration in scenery in accordance with mental state, beyond that of actual geographical relocation, is demonstrated by the way in which, following the shattering of Tess' illusions of happiness after her wedding, the country around Talbothay's dairy itself is changed: 'The gold of the summer picture was now gray, the colours mean, the rich soil mud, and the river cold' (p.

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<sup>26</sup> F. B. Pinion, *Thomas Hardy: Art and Thought* (London: Macmillan, 1977), p. 25.

<sup>27</sup> Tanner, p. 221.

251). There is a similar contrast in *The Woodlanders* between ‘the gorgeous autumn landscape of White-Hart Vale’ (p. 204), which, as Simon Gatrell notes, is ‘overflowing with fruition’ as the illusion of the possibility of happiness with Giles presents itself to Grace,<sup>28</sup> and the general claustrophobic and stifling atmosphere of the dense woodland, where:

The leaf was deformed, the curve was crippled, the taper was interrupted;  
the lichen ate the vigour of the stalk, and the ivy slowly strangled to  
death the promising sapling (p. 52).

The description of the wood in this way recalls the swampy hollow, upon the verge of which Bathsheba spends the night in *Far From the Madding Crowd*, ‘the general aspect of [which] was malignant’ (p. 264) and which ‘seemed a nursery of pestilences small and great’ (p. 265). The appearance of this dangerous and unpleasant scene, in contrast to the tone of pastoral idyll throughout much of the novel, is suggestive of the misery and danger of Bathsheba’s position. Expressiveness of setting is not limited to rural scenes: the descriptions of Christminster in *Jude the Obscure*, for example, echo Jude’s response to the city and the academic life it signifies, initially appearing from a great distance with ‘a halo of light or glow-fog overarching the place against the black heavens behind it’.<sup>29</sup> Upon his arrival however, even in his initial romanticized view during his nocturnal perambulation, he cannot help noticing ‘the rottenness of the stones’ (p. 79), and the next morning it seems that ‘something barbaric loomed in the countenances of all’ (p. 83). Indoor settings may similarly be employed to express emotion and emphasize aspects of characterization, as in the confession scene in *Tess*, where ‘the red-coaled glow’ from the

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<sup>28</sup> Simon Gatrell, ‘Wessex on film’, in *Thomas Hardy on Screen*, pp. 37-49 (p. 44).

<sup>29</sup> Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, ed. by Dennis Taylor (London: Penguin, 1998), p. 23.

fire appears to Tess to imbue the room and all within it with ‘a Last Day luridness’ (p. 225), whilst ‘[a]ll material objects around announced their irresponsibility with terrible iteration’ (p. 227). The investing of natural and inanimate phenomena with aspects of human emotion and mentality, allows Hardy to represent the interior aspects of his characters within his technique of signification through externalities.

### **The Construction of Narrative**

Central to Hardy’s construction of narrative is his use of spectators within the text, from whose perspective and through whose perception his fiction is narrated. This aspect of his writing was a conscious decision from the very beginning; in his letter to Alexander Macmillan re *The Poor Man and The Lady* he ‘insisted that the novelty and subtlety of the book lay in its use of the point of view of “a comparative outsider”’.<sup>30</sup> The events and characters throughout his fictional works are almost always observed from the perspective of either one of the characters, a hypothetically invoked figure, or an unspecified consciousness, denoted by comments such as ‘one would have noticed’, or by abstract verbs of perception. These observers act as intermediaries between the phenomena reported and the reader, thus executing the function of the camera in film. Wright identifies this as one of the three main correspondences between Hardy’s technique and that of film, describing ‘his use of particular observers or focalisers (the cinematic equivalent for which is the filtering of what is seen by the camera through the “eyes” of a particular character)’.<sup>31</sup> Whilst he is referring specifically to the narrative adopting the perspective of a certain character, the narrative is almost always posited from a

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<sup>30</sup> Michael Millgate, *Thomas Hardy: A Biography Revisited* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 101.

<sup>31</sup> Wright, p. 8.



particularized perspective and filtered accordingly. Hardy's use of this device is notable in the opening chapter of *Return*, where despite the fact that the heath is described in a state apparently devoid of human occupants, the description focuses upon the effects of the landscape upon a human subject, with only a short paragraph devoted to 'intelligible facts regarding landscape' (p. 11).

When, in the second chapter 'Humanity appears upon the scene' (p. 13), the characters also are introduced as though through the perception of some observing consciousness, firstly that of an assumed general spectator of the scene and then one adopting the perspective of one or another of the characters themselves, with the characters thus being described in a very distanced and externalized manner.<sup>32</sup> However, even after the reader has been granted more intimate knowledge of characters and situations this method of presentation is not abandoned; indeed it is closely interlinked with Hardy's general method of presentation through physical perception. In the ninth chapter, for example, although the reader has been made aware of the relationship between Eustacia and Wildeve, and their intention to continue it, their second meeting is communicated via the perception of Venn, who 'saw a female shape floating along the ridge and the outline of a young man ascending from the valley' (p. 83) but 'owing to a cross-wind the conversation of the trysting pair could not be overheard' (p. 83), meaning that the reader also is denied knowledge of their conversation. This is typical of Hardy's technique of communicating such events; it is strikingly similar, for instance, to Oak's observation of the meeting of Bathsheba and her lover, where he sees 'her form upon the sky ... A figure apparently rose from the earth beside her. The shape beyond all doubt was Troy's. Oak would not be even a possible listener' (*Crowd*; p. 170). Narration in this manner is dependent upon external

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<sup>32</sup> This has been discussed frequently in terms of Hardy's use of the visual and his cinematic style. For the most thorough analysis see Lodge 'Hardy as a Cinematic Novelist'.

phenomena testifying for internal ones, and variations of the word 'evidence' recur repeatedly throughout his work. One such example of externalized 'evidence' of emotion is that of Eustacia's mental distraction as she wanders the heath:

[She] noticed nothing just now, and a clue to her abstraction was afforded by a trivial incident. A bramble caught hold of her skirt, and checked her progress. Instead of putting it off and hastening along she yielded herself up to the pull, and stood passively still. When she began to extricate herself it was by turning round and round on her axis, and so unwinding the prickly switch. She was in a desponding reverie (*Return*; p. 59).

Another example which is similarly reflexive of this technique is the attitude of Angel Clare the morning after his wedding, as '[h]is air remained calm and cold, his small compressed mouth indexing his powers of self-control' (*Tess*, p. 235). Although often emotion and intent is communicated thus, another device Hardy uses is that of soliloquy, with characters vocalizing their wishes and thoughts aloud whilst alone. He sometimes justifies his presentation of thoughts in this manner, as with Fanny Robbin who, he comments as she drags herself to Casterbridge, 'was not given to soliloquy; but extremity of feeling lessens the individuality of the weak as it increases that of the strong' (*Crowd*; p. 231), and Fitzpiers, who is described in *The Woodlanders* as having a habit 'commoner in dreamers of more advanced age than in men of his years ... of talking to himself' (p. 134). Thus Hardy communicates through their vocalized thoughts, in these cases, the pathos of Fanny's determination in the face of her suffering and the nature of Fitzpiers's emotional and rational response to Grace.

In his analysis of ‘Mimesis and diegesis in modern fiction’ Lodge describes the potential for the fusion of the two in reported speech, stating that this ‘was to be elaborately exploited by the novel, which uses reported speech extensively – not only to represent speech, but to represent thoughts and feelings which are not actually uttered aloud’.<sup>33</sup> While Hardy does use this at times throughout his writing, he generally opts to present thoughts and emotions in a more purely mimetic manner by use of the techniques and devices discussed above. Indeed, his narrative style as a whole functions largely through mimetic techniques, as for example, with his use of externalized perception and provision of necessary plot details through dialogue. This aspect of his usual style is particularly apparent when contrasted with the more traditional authorial omniscient narrative of his rather atypical 1880 novel *The Trumpet-Major*. This emphasis upon mimesis accords with the trajectory in narrative technique noted by Lodge, who identifies in the modern novel ‘an increasing dominance of mimesis over diegesis’, and claims that although diegesis ‘does not completely disappear from the modernist novel ... it does become increasingly intractable’. He names Hardy as one of the novelists in whom one ‘can see the strain’, describing the way in which he ‘uses tortuous formulae to avoid taking responsibility for authorial description and generalization’.<sup>34</sup> However, whilst it is clear that Hardy’s writing shows a conscious effort to privilege mimesis as a means of communication, he may be seen as consciously employing diegetic technique in other ways than that of straightforward authorial statement. Peter Brooks, in his description of the way in which the limited use of mimesis in novels creates the need for diegesis, claims: ‘Fictions have to lie in order to tell the truth: they must fore-shorten, summarize,

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<sup>33</sup> David Lodge, *After Bakhtin* (London: Routledge, 1990) p. 29.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 37-8.

perspectivize, give an illusion of completeness from fragments'.<sup>35</sup> This definition is illuminating in respect to Hardy's narrative technique and the use he makes of framing, perspectivizing, and controlling the information provided and withheld. This diegetic mode, of manipulating what information is provided and how it is presented, is a crucial aspect of the cinematic technique.

In his analysis of the way in which the changing use of perspective in fiction led to the 'evolution of a cinematographic form', Spiegel describes Hardy's style as 'scenographic', that is, one in which 'the objects within any given spatial field are seen continuously and as wholes as if on stage at the theater', as opposed to 'cinematographic', as film space is 'more fluid and varied than theatre space and characteristically presents a partialized space with aspects of the object severed from the whole by the frame of the camera'.<sup>36</sup> Whilst Hardy does not, perhaps, present such fragmented views within individual frames as those Spiegel identifies in the writing of Henry James and James Joyce, the description of his style in this way implies a presentation in a manner which enables immediate cognition of the totality of what is to be perceived. However, his narration often works upon the basis of limitation of perception by the perspective adopted, whether the limitation is effected by distance, lighting, or other physical conditions. The film theorist Louis Giannetti describes the considerations and effects associated with the manipulation of perspective in presenting characters, stating that 'the less we see, the more mysterious and inaccessible [they] will seem'.<sup>37</sup> This is a technique Hardy often employs, and may be effectively demonstrated in a discussion of the introduction of the characters of Thomasin and Eustacia at the beginning of *Return*, both of whom initially remain largely unknown

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<sup>35</sup> Peter Brooks, *Realist Vision* (London: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 6.

<sup>36</sup> Spiegel, p. 236, p. 232.

<sup>37</sup> Louis Giannetti, *Understanding Movies*, 12<sup>th</sup> edn (London: Allyn & Bacon, 2011), p. 75.

entities, creating a sense of mystery surrounding them and their situations. The initial presentation of Thomasin is of her being transported in the reddleman's van, where the reader, along with Captain Drew, is denied a direct view of her, with her presence being denoted merely by the sound of her cries and the actions and statements of the reddleman. Although the perspective subsequently shifts to that of the reddleman himself and the reader may thus have been granted access to a more complete perception of her due to his perspective being privileged in this way, instead the focus is turned outwardly upon the surrounding heath. The positing of the perspective alongside the heathmen in the following chapter allows for the presentation of a conversation between them in which the history of Thomasin and her engagement with Wildeve is communicated. That the old man was correct in his supposition that the reddleman's passenger is 'that girl of Blooms-End, who has been talked about more or less lately' (p. 16), and that the girl thus alluded to is she who has been the topic of the rustics conversation is suggested by the appearance of the reddleman from the darkness into the light of the bonfire to enquire the way to Mrs. Yeobright's house. In the next chapter, this identity is corroborated as Thomasin herself is finally revealed by the narratorial perspective entering the reddleman's van, before being established concretely by her dialogue with her aunt and Wildeve.

The mystery surrounding the character of Eustacia is maintained for a longer time however, as the presentation of her is limited to partial glimpses of her in the darkness and the firelight and the way in which she is described by the conversation of the rustics. The perspective in the sixth chapter is that of an unspecified spectator following and observing her, and is initially almost as distanced as that of her by the reddleman as 'The Figure against the Sky', noting only that 'a closely wrapped female figure approached the barrow from that quarter of the heath in which the little fire lay' (p. 55). A comprehensive

description of her physical appearance is delayed until the seventh chapter, with the most detail afforded being the description of her profile against the clouds as being suggestive of ‘the features of Marie Antoinette and Mrs. Siddons’ (p. 57). However, even here the overall nature of her appearance is obscured, as that may be ascertained, Hardy comments, only by ‘what is called the play of the features’, and ‘the mobile parts of her countenance could not be seen’ (pp.57-8). Just as the reader is denied access to an observation of her appearance, so too are they for a long time denied the opportunity to learn more of her character through her speech, her tacitness being ensured primarily by the distance maintained between the observer and the observed, and secondarily by her appearance in isolation. When she does break silence, her first utterance is not speech but ‘a lengthened sighing, apparently at something in her mind which had led to her presence here’ (p. 57). Her own speech is preceded by the speech of others discussing her, in a manner typified by Timothy Fairway’s reference to ‘the lonesome dark-eyed creature up there that some say is a witch’ (p. 52). These verbal reports correlate with the way in which she has herself appeared as a dark and isolated figure in a dark and isolated setting, shunning the company of others and piquing the curiosity of the observer as the ‘queen of the solitude’ (p. 18). Indeed the distanced and extremely limited way in which her character is introduced enacts the way in which she is perceived by the other inhabitants of the heath, who are only able to regard her from a distance due to her physical isolation and social superiority. The creation of this sense of mystery and romance about her and her situation by the narrative is crucial to the reader’s understanding of the plot, as it is this mystique which is a determining element of the later events of the novel, constituting a large part of her allure to Wildeve, and catalysing her relationship with Clym.

Another way in which the perception of the characters and events being described is problematized is, as Webster observes, ‘the shifts, fractures, and dislocations in narrative’.<sup>38</sup> Hardy’s use of multiple spectators and focalisers rather than a consistent viewpoint has the effect of producing, rather than simply a more externalized version of an omniscient narration, a narrative which is fragmented. As well as confounding a straightforward perception of the novels’ subjects, these fractures often result in, or rather allow for, ellipses, another aspect of Hardy’s writing which Wright describes as fundamental to the ‘cinematic’ quality of his style.<sup>39</sup> These ellipses serve to obscure events, sometimes with the result of delaying an understanding of events and thus creating suspense, and sometimes in a manner which problematizes our comprehension of events, as a full knowledge is never provided. The death of Eustacia exemplifies the latter category, as the reader is granted only snapshots of different perspectives of the event. Initially there has been the suggestion that she was contemplating ending her life with her grandfather’s pistols, and she is then described giving the pre-arranged signal to Wildeve that she will meet him in order for him to assist her escape to a new life abroad. She is next described in her journey to meet Wildeve, a description which concludes with her sunk down upon the ground, crying bitterly, bewailing her misfortunes and the inevitable misery of life to her, and stating her conviction of the impossibility of proceeding in her planned escape: this is the final depiction of her, alive, that the reader is granted. The perspective subsequently shifts to describe Susan Nunsuch creating a wax effigy of her, sticking pins into it and holding it in the flames to begin to melt, before casting it finally into the fire. Next there is Venn’s report of hearing a woman crossing the heath past his van ‘sobbing or crying’ (p. 357). Her actual demise is described aurally, as it is perceived by Clym and

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<sup>38</sup> Webster, p. 20.

<sup>39</sup> Wright, p. 8.

Wildeve: ‘a dull sound became audible above the storm and wind. Its origin was unmistakable – it was the fall of a body into the stream adjoining, apparently at a point near the weir’ (p. 360). A direct but obscured view of this ‘dark body’ (p. 361) is described as they rush to look into the weir; a suggestion that it is indeed that of Eustacia is provided as Venn arrives at the weir, and ‘amidst the glistening of the whirlpools and the white clots of foam, he distinguished a woman’s bonnet floating alone’ (pp. 362-3); and this identity is established as Venn drags her ‘cold form’ (p. 363) from the water. As such, the exact cause of her death, whether suicide, accident or the result of supernatural malevolence, remains unclear. Hardy chooses not to represent directly many such pivotal events in his novels, such as the rape of Tess, and the marriage of Bathsheba to Troy. Whilst the motivation in some cases, as with the suggested suicide and rape, may be rather that of necessity due to censorship than for aesthetic reasons, the employment of this technique is consistent with his general technique of narration in which he establishes facts by the provision of different details and aspects from various perspectives on a metonymic basis. The result is that the reader is required to piece together the narrative from these different elements; as Hardy himself put it in his essay ‘The Science of Fiction’: ‘[t]o see in half and quarter views the whole picture’.<sup>40</sup> He was extremely conscious of the power of details in conveying greater significance, noting in July 1892, that ““The art of observation”” lies in:

‘the seeing of great things in little things, the whole in the part – even the infinitesimal part. For instance, you are abroad: you see an English flag on a ship-mast from the window of your hotel: you realize the English navy. Or, at home, in a soldier you see the British Army; in a Bishop at

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<sup>40</sup> Thomas Hardy, ‘The Science of Fiction’, in *Thomas Hardy’s Personal Writings*, ed. by Harold Orel (London: Macmillan, 1967), pp. 134-8 (p. 137).



your club, the Church of England; and in a steam hooter you hear  
Industry'.<sup>41</sup>

This is an almost perfect definition of synecdoche, a technique which, as Lodge asserts, is a crucial aspect of cinema as well as Hardy's fiction. Indeed, the example most often cited in descriptions of the technique of synecdoche, that of Anna Karenina's discarded handbag as she commits suicide, is strikingly similar to the depiction of Eustacia's floating bonnet.<sup>42</sup>

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In his discussion of the methods of narration in the fiction film, David Bordwell argues that crucial to the analysis of film technique is the understanding of the way in which 'the spectator constructs the story out of stimuli'.<sup>43</sup> If 'reader' is substituted for 'spectator', this statement could equally be used to describe Hardy's narrative technique, whereby he builds up meaning through different aspects of his text, with the cognition of the story being the result of a comprehension and arrangement of stimuli. Bordwell goes on to argue that, whilst 'syuzhet patterning is independent of the medium; the same syuzhet patterns could be embodied in a novel, a play, or a film', 'style' in the sense of 'the film's cinematic devices', is 'wholly ingredient to the medium'.<sup>44</sup> This distinction corresponds to

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<sup>41</sup> Florence Emily Hardy, *The Later Years of Thomas Hardy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 9.

<sup>42</sup> For a discussion of this image in Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, see Lodge, 'Hardy as a Cinematic Novelist', pp. 95-6; Brooks, *Realist Vision*, p. 58.

<sup>43</sup> David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 15.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

that between *plot functions* and *indices* in considerations of adaptation from one medium to another, in which the latter is used to describe the means of establishing those aspects of the text or film which:

are crucial to the text in that they establish mood, tone, character, and the like; and they are important in that they indicate how the narrative should be *read*, but they do not in and of themselves move the narrative forward.<sup>45</sup>

The use of indices in Hardy's writing is, however, comparable to those of film in the emphasis upon mimetic, rather than diegetic description, and the cinematic quality of his method of establishing atmosphere and character is unmistakable. The emphasis, in communicating action and events also, upon providing information in a manner almost of direct observation, but controlling and manipulating the way in which it is presented, is similarly analogous to the way in which the narrative is constructed in film. As such, he does indeed employ the 'cinematic devices' of the fiction film: the poetics of cinema can indeed transcend medium, and are undoubtedly identifiable in Hardy's work. Webster argues that it is by his adherence to his own dogma, 'that light, colour, and certain scenes combined with a particular mode of regard are capable of rendering emotion and sensibility more readily than ratiocinative analysis', that Hardy's writing 'anticipates cinematic techniques'.<sup>46</sup> More essentially, I would argue, Hardy's employment of the same signification systems as those of cinema justifies the application of the term 'cinematic' to his writing itself.

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<sup>45</sup> Niemeyer, p. 48; see pp. 47-56 for a discussion of Brian McFarlane's approach to adaptation, and its relevance in the case of Hardy.

<sup>46</sup> Webster, p. 22.

## CHAPTER 2: THE CONTEXT OF HARDY'S CINEMATIC POETICS

Having established that Hardy's writing is cinematic, it is necessary to establish how he was able to develop a poetics which retrospectively seems to lend itself to a medium which was not, at that point, developed. It is a commonplace that the development of technologies themselves are not as simplistic as they are popularly regarded by the attribution of a certain date of invention, with the technologies being rather the result of a combination of cultural phenomena as well as scientific advances. The idea of the impact of ideology and historical circumstance is illustrated by Deleuze's statement that '[m]achines are social before being technical'.<sup>1</sup> Scott Hess takes a similar stance in his discussion of the development of photography, asserting that '[l]ike every other technology [...] photography originated not only out of technical capacity, but also out of social desire', and that it 'seems no accident [...] that photography was invented when it was'. His study is, indeed, comparable to mine in its identification of a photographic subjectivity in the pre-photographic era writing of Wordsworth.<sup>2</sup> Whilst this view privileges the social over technical aspects, Stephen Heath's proposition of a consideration of cinema as 'a multiply determined development', is perhaps most useful, and there have been numerous discussions of the cinema as a cultural phenomenon in these terms.<sup>3</sup> These studies differ greatly from the aims of this thesis to establish a context for the development of the poetics of cinema, although some aspects of technological advance described by

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<sup>1</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, trans. by Sean Hand (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Scott Hess, 'William Wordsworth and Photographic Subjectivity', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 63 (2008), 283-320 (p. 315).

<sup>3</sup> Stephen Heath, 'The Cinematic Apparatus: Technology as Historical and Cultural Form', in *The Cinematic Apparatus*, ed. by Teresa de Lauretis and Stephen Heath (London: Macmillan, 1980), p. 6. See also Michael Chanan, *The Dream that Kicks*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 1996); Joe Kember, *Marketing Modernity* (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2009).

them are relevant to the wider development of new ways of viewing and representing the world in the creation of a modern ideology, as is their method of considering science and culture as in a dialogic relationship. This chapter explores many of the aspects of nineteenth-century culture which were constitutive of modernity, and particularly those elements with which Hardy most directly engaged and whose influence upon his work is apparent. Accordingly, I will discuss firstly the scientific, philosophical and technological developments of the nineteenth century to demonstrate the modernity of his manner of viewing the world, and subsequently the influence of the arts, in terms of both tradition and contemporary development, which allowed him to create a style articulating and embodying this modern sensibility.

### **The Science of Perception**

Throughout the latter half of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century there was a dramatic shift in the scientific and philosophical understanding of vision and the ways in which visual technologies could be created and used. Over the past two decades critics have explored the ways in which the new physiological understanding of how vision was constituted radically altered the way in which vision itself could be viewed.<sup>4</sup> As different physiological processes were discovered and were increasingly regarded as of great importance to the visual process, the traditional assumption of objectivity of vision came to be replaced by an emphasis upon the subjectivity of the visual experience. Scientists and philosophers such as Goethe, Schopenhauer and Müller

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<sup>4</sup> See Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer* (London: MIT, 1992); *Victorian Literature and the Victorian Visual Imagination*, ed. by Carol T. Christ and John O. Jordan (London: University of California Press, 1995); Kate Flint, *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

investigated and described the ways in which the visual perception of the mind is created by the physical and mental processes of the subject themselves. Goethe, for instance, in the opening paragraph of his 1810 *Theory of Colours*, the first section of which is entitled ‘Physiological Colours’, explicitly addresses his privileging of subjectivity in vision: ‘We naturally place these colours first, because they belong altogether, or in a great degree, to the *subject* – to the eye itself’.<sup>5</sup> He goes on to distinguish his attitude from that of his predecessors by whom they were ‘banished into the region of phantoms’ with the assertion that they ‘belong to the eye in a healthy state’ and are ‘the necessary conditions of vision’,<sup>6</sup> claiming for these subjective phenomena, in the words of Crary, ‘the status of optical “truth”’.<sup>7</sup> Müller, in his *Elements of Physiology*, analyses the ways in which vision may be the result of mechanical blows and chemical changes as well as light falling upon the retina, similarly situating the production of vision within the human body and consciousness. The subjective nature of Müller’s understanding of sensual perception is apparent in the continuous repetition of the term ‘impression’ throughout the work.<sup>8</sup>

This obfuscation of an issue previously assumed to be clear and objective had a dramatic impact upon the nineteenth-century visual imagination, argues Jonathan Crary, describing a rupture between the traditional objective mode of vision, which he aligns with the model of the camera obscura, and the mode of vision informed by the new scientific understanding, delineating a modern observer who is acutely aware of the subjectivity of the visual experience. Although Crary posits this essential rupture in the early decades of the nineteenth century, he states that the resulting shift in the popular visual imagination

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<sup>5</sup> *Goethe’s Theory of Colours*, trans by Charles Lock Eastlake (London: John Murray, 1840), p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>7</sup> Crary, p. 97.

<sup>8</sup> Johannes Müller, *Elements of Physiology*, trans by William Baly, 2 vols (London: Taylor and Walton, 1838-42).

took time to impact upon wider culture, claiming that '[t]his palpable opacity and carnal density of vision loomed so suddenly into view that its full consequences and effects could not be immediately realized'. However, he describes the ways in which the work of some eminent nineteenth-century figures such as Ruskin and Turner indicate that 'by 1840 the process of perception itself had become, in various ways, a primary object of vision'.<sup>9</sup> As these developments in understanding were adopted by the culture of the nineteenth century, they resulted in, claims Kate Flint, an 'increasing awareness of the instability of the visual' and an understanding that 'a different subjectivity will ensure that [an object] is seen and interpreted in a different way; that new techniques of viewing will enable a different conceptualisation of the object'.<sup>10</sup> The recognition of the importance of this is a crucial aspect of cinematic presentation, argues Spiegel, writing that '[c]inematographic approaches to narrative materials' only occur when the novelist begins 'not only to see his object, but, at the same time, to see the way that it is seen; to render the meaning of the seen object itself as inseparable from the seer's position in time and space'.<sup>11</sup> This certainly is true of Hardy's use of particular perspectives throughout his writing, and may be attributed to his personal interest in the mechanics and implications of perception. Indeed, his work may be said to display a pre-eminence of the issue. His personal notes and early poetry, as well as his fiction make it clear that the nature of human perception was an area of immense interest to him from the beginning of his career. Bullen notes, for instance, the way in which throughout *Far From the Madding Crowd* 'Hardy dwells on the limitations of sight itself, and the language in which he describes these limitations is drawn from scientific accounts of the effects of light in the eye'.<sup>12</sup> His interest extended to the

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<sup>9</sup> Crary, p. 150, p. 138.

<sup>10</sup> Flint, p. 37.

<sup>11</sup> Spiegel, p. 232.

<sup>12</sup> Bullen, p. 78.

interaction of the visual experience with other aspects of the mind, in a manner which anticipates the focus upon the subjectivity of the human experience which was central to the work of many literary modernists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In a personal note in August 1865 he writes that '[t]he poetry of a scene varies with the minds of the perceivers. Indeed, it does not lie in the scene at all',<sup>13</sup> articulating a similar philosophy to that which inspired his 1892 memorandum:

We don't always remember as we should that in getting at the truth, we only get at the true nature of the impression that an object, etc., produces on us, the true thing in itself being still, as Kant shows, beyond our knowledge.<sup>14</sup>

This philosophy is clear also in the narratorial voice of his fiction, in statements such as, 'the world is only a psychological phenomenon' (*Tess*; p. 85), and the claim that '[i]n making even horizontal and clear inspections we colour and mould according to the wants within us whatever our eyes bring in' (*Crowd*, p. 14).

Such an understanding of perception and realization of the fallibility of the sense of sight may be assumed to inspire a questioning of the value of human vision as a ground of knowledge. However, vision is constantly privileged, even as its limitations are highlighted and acknowledged, and Hardy never attempts to undermine its intrinsic value, asserting its importance as the grounds of truth by making it the primary source of knowledge in his fiction. This apparently paradoxical attitude may also be observed in the philosophical and critical writing of Walter Pater, a contemporary and indeed acquaintance

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<sup>13</sup> Florence Emily Hardy, *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) p. 65.

<sup>14</sup> *Later Years*, p. 9.

of Hardy. In a famous passage from the conclusion to *The Renaissance* he describes ‘each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world’,<sup>15</sup> a sentiment which chimes with Hardy’s idea of the world as a ‘psychological phenomenon’, yet he defends the value of vision in his critique of Socrates, ‘who had always turned away so persistently from what he thought the vanity of the eye’, asking, ‘Ah, good master! was the eye so contemptible an organ of knowledge after all?’.<sup>16</sup> Ruskin addresses the consequences of the subjectivity of vision in drawing, claiming that ‘having once come to conclusions touching the signification of certain colours, we always suppose that we *see* what we only know, and have hardly any consciousness of the real aspect of the signs we have learned to interpret’. This necessitates, he proposes, the ‘recovery of what may be called the *innocence of the eye*’, a simple vision without consciousness of signification, ‘as a blind man would see [...] if suddenly gifted with sight’.<sup>17</sup> This unadulterated vision is echoed in Hardy’s description of a new-born calf mistaking a lantern for the moon due to its ‘inherited instinct having as yet had little time for correction by experience’ (p. 13) in *Far From the Madding Crowd*. Bullen links this episode to the wider exploration of the interaction of vision and knowledge in the novel, claiming that ‘like the calf’s, Bathsheba’s eyesight is corrected by experience’.<sup>18</sup> As such, Hardy simultaneously presents mental subjectivity as a possible limitation of and a necessary complement to vision, in accordance with his modern understanding of perception and with his own manipulation of perspective in his narrative.

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<sup>15</sup> Walter Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, ed. by Matthew Beaumont (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 119.

<sup>16</sup> Walter Pater, *Plato and Platonism* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), pp. 85-6.

<sup>17</sup> John Ruskin, *Elements of Drawing* (New York: Wiley and Halstead, 1858), p. 22.

<sup>18</sup> Bullen, p. 79.



In his discussion of the traditional, perspectival mode of vision, Crary describes the camera obscura as analogous to the detached eye of God, providing an objective view from a privileged perspective removed from the scene itself. This mode of vision seems equally akin to that of the traditional omniscient narrator of Victorian realist fiction, the very term ‘omniscient’ indicating a privileged and supernatural perception. Whilst in many ways Hardy’s narrative technique departs from the traditions of realist narration, there are aspects of resemblance in this idea of a detached and privileged observation. As such Hardy’s fictional voice appears to be aligned with this traditional model with its functioning as a decorporealized eye. Indeed, an experiment described by Descartes in his ‘Optics’ in which the lens of a camera obscura is replaced by a disembodied eye is reminiscent of Hardy’s use of a decorporealized visual organ in the description of the way the scene would have appeared to ‘an eye above them’.<sup>19</sup> However, Hardy’s narration differs crucially from this model in that, although he sometimes deploys a comparable viewpoint, there is no unified perspective in his writing, but rather a composite of different viewpoints aligned with the modern ideology with ‘destabilise[d] confidence in the equilibrium of the visual world’.<sup>20</sup>

Although sometimes the observation of Hardy’s narrative voice seems to be decorporealized, it does not follow, as with the camera obscura, that the observation is objective. Hess, in his discussion of Wordsworth’s ‘photographic subjectivity’, describes his method of creating a detached observer as his poetic voice and thereby ‘creating a “pure” subjectivity seemingly detached from its environment, its own embodiment and

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<sup>19</sup> René Descartes, *Descartes: Philosophical Writings*, trans. by John Cottingham and others, 3 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985-1991), I (1985), p. 166.

<sup>20</sup> Flint, p. 37.

other forms of relationship'.<sup>21</sup> This detachment from a physical sense of self, resonates with Crary's description of Schopenhauer's desire 'to establish a visuality that escaped the demands of [the] body', thus providing a "clear eye of the world".<sup>22</sup> However, Crary argues that Schopenhauer and his contemporaries were aware of the paradoxical nature of this desire; 'the "pure perception" of modernism' is, he claims, 'lodged in the newly discovered territory of a fully embodied viewer, but [its] eventual triumph ... depends on the denial of the body, its pulsing and phantasms, as the grounds of vision'.<sup>23</sup> As such, the 'pure perception', he claims, is an artistic ideal rather than an attainable possibility, describing Schopenhauer's engagement with the idea as 'a crucial anticipatory statement of modernist aesthetics'.<sup>24</sup> Whilst this vision may be described as 'pure' in its dissociation of vision from other aspects of the body's physicality, it is not divorced from the mental aspects of the perceptive process. Indeed, the psychological processes become the primary focus of observation.

This modern, aesthetic subjectivity may be used as a description of and explanation for the consciousness of Hardy's narration. Wittenberg identifies this detached mental perception as central to his fiction, stating that 'not only most of the characters but the narrator seem almost pathologically voyeuristic, reduced to the passive and visual absorption of sense data'.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, J. Hillis Miller describes the 'neutral power of watching' which characterizes Hardy's narratorial voice.<sup>26</sup> Hardy was certainly acutely conscious of the desire for an incorporeal vision, presenting an escape from the physicality of the body in terms of a poetic, escapist impulse in Tess' description of how "our souls

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<sup>21</sup> Hess, p. 294.

<sup>22</sup> Crary, p. 76.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 136.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 75. Millgate, (p. 185), notes that direct influence of Schopenhauer on Hardy is unlikely, rather the concurrence of idea is due to comparable ideology and wider cultural influence.

<sup>25</sup> Wittenberg, p. 115.

<sup>26</sup> J. Hillis Miller, *Thomas Hardy: Distance and Desire* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970) p. 89.

can be made to go outside our bodies when we are alive” (p. 120), and noting in *Two on a Tower* the intellectual merit of such a possibility in his description of St Cleve’s mental clarity as he is completely absorbed in his vision of space at the expense of propinquitous awareness (p. 58). The hypothetical observers of Hardy’s narratorial voice may be similarly described in terms of disembodiment; even when an actual person is evoked there is only a sense of mental presence with the physicality being addressed merely in terms of the perspective afforded by their location. They are, however, in a nearer relation to the scene than the consciousness of Wordsworth’s poetry with the inclusion of perception of other senses than that of sight, just as cinema creates a more total impression of a place than that provided by photographs. However, the focus remains upon mental reaction to sensual perception. If modernism, both of literary style and visual mode itself, is, as Crary claims, a delayed reaction to the shift to subjectivity, Hardy’s presence amongst the *avant-garde* of this movement may be attributable to his personal interest in the philosophy and scientific advancements behind it. Certainly this is a view shared by Nicola Joy Harris, who describes the way in which Hardy was ‘instrumental’ in incorporating such understanding into the realm of fiction, ‘by going to “Science and Philosophy” in the first instance’. Her exploration of the way in which this understanding contributed to creating his ‘kaleidoscopic eye’ relates his understanding and utilization of perception to his use of unstable and constantly shifting viewpoints, and goes some way to accounting for his deployment of a multi-perspectival narration.<sup>27</sup>

Scientific advancements in terms of technological developments certainly impacted greatly upon the nineteenth-century visual imagination in general, by providing new visual possibilities. Flint notes the ways in which new technologies of travel ‘permitted new

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<sup>27</sup> Nicola Joy Harris, “‘The Means of Seeing’: Looking at Reality in the Novels of Thomas Hardy” (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Birmingham, 1998), p. 2, p. 319.

positions of spectatorship which afforded an overview, an altered mode of vision'. She describes, for example, the development of the balloon, which provided new scope by allowing aerial vision.<sup>28</sup> This new scope may perhaps be an influence upon Hardy's use of the aerial perspective. More specifically, Hardy's interest in visual technologies and the associated new visual opportunities is apparent in his presentation of them in his writing. The startling and disconcerting power of the modern microscope, for example, is apparent in Grace's alarm at being invited by Fitzpiers to view brain cells of one of the villagers through one in *The Woodlanders*. In *Two on a Tower*, a novel which Hardy intended to present the overwhelming nature of wider space, he details extensively the technologies which have provided the means of this modern astronomical knowledge, describing the telescope and equatorial in terms of their ability to bring things into observable reach. As St Cleeve and Lady Constantine observe the stars through their new advanced observational equipment, Hardy emphasizes the supernatural visual power afforded by such technologies with the inclusion of comments such as, 'the ghastly chasm which they had bridged by a fragile line of sight' (p. 28). Hardy was certainly personally aware of the powers of the telescope, as testified by his description of watching a hanging through one in his youth.<sup>29</sup>

Hardy's interest in astronomy is demonstrated by his engagement with contemporary scientific writing, and the scientific elements of the novel draw heavily upon this.<sup>30</sup> The degree to which he kept abreast of modern technological advancements may be seen in the striking similarities between his discussion of astronomical procedures in the novel and that of Richard Proctor in an article 'The Photographic Eyes of Science' published the

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<sup>28</sup> Flint, pp. 8-9.

<sup>29</sup> *Early Years*, p. 37.

<sup>30</sup> For Hardy's research for *Two on a Tower* see Dongkuk Kim, 'Hardy's Use of Astronomy in *Two on a Tower*', *The Hardy Society Journal*, 8 (2012), pp. 62-72.

following year. In this article Proctor comments upon the fallibility of the human eye in empirical research, though not in the spirit of Socrates. He asserts that the eye is still the source of knowledge in modern science, ‘though with its powers increased and in a sense multiplied’ by technology. Describing the effects of powerful telescopes upon human understanding, in a manner echoing that of Hardy, he claims that ‘now that stars and suns outside our range of vision have been brought into our ken, there is no limit to the range of our conceptions’.<sup>31</sup> He goes on to address the weaknesses of the eye which cannot be rectified by the telescope, claiming that photography provides the answer to many of these deficiencies and concluding that ‘with photography, spectroscopy, polariscopy, and other aids, science promises soon to be Argus-eyed’.<sup>32</sup> This idea of creating an understanding of a whole from many different perspectives and methods of perception chimes with the way in which in Hardy’s narration, an understanding of the plot is the result of an amalgamation of different perspectives, rather than being provided as a cohesive whole. Morgan describes Hardy’s use of scientific visual possibilities as part of his “‘cinematographic” insights’ in a manner which echoes Proctor’s claims for science, writing:

He [...] sought, he said, to make visible that which is normally unseen. This implies a proleptic understanding of visual technology. Likewise he viewed the world microscopically, telescopically, even kaleidoscopically: I would call this attribute “spectroscopic” – it is the gift of a film director’.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Richard Proctor, ‘The Photographic Eyes of Science’, *Longman’s Magazine*, November 1882, pp. 439-62, (p. 440).

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 462.

<sup>33</sup> Morgan, p. 122.

Whilst it is certainly true that such technologies are an important constituent element of his cinematic use of perspective, the idea of his vision as proleptic is a little misleading; rather it is the result of his active engagement with contemporary scientific and technological advances.

The photographic camera was indeed one of the most revolutionary visual technologies of the nineteenth century, apparently providing a means of capturing objective visual truth in the manner proposed by Proctor. However, photography's status as an objective source of evidence was not as straightforward as such accounts would suggest. Many recent critics have challenged the traditional assumption of the Victorians' faith in photography's empiricism. Jennifer Tucker, for example, states that '[a]lthough nineteenth-century faith in photography was powerful, the idea that people [...] accepted photographs at face value is exaggerated and misleading'.<sup>34</sup> This nineteenth-century scepticism is apparent in James Mussell's discussion of the contemporary debates about the empirical value of astronomical photographs as to 'both their accuracy and corresponding value as evidence'.<sup>35</sup> His exploration of the potential for error and variation throughout the different stages of the photographic process concludes that it was clear for the Victorians, as it is for us today, that although the photographic technology offered potential objectivity, this very objectivity is dependent upon human agency. Tucker further complicates the issue of photography's empiricism in her discussion of the idea of conscious manipulation in and around the practice, declaring that 'we must see scientific photographs ... as objects having social purposes'.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Jennifer Tucker, *Nature Exposed* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2005), p. 4.

<sup>35</sup> James Mussell, 'Arthur Cowper Ranyard, *Knowledge* and the reproduction of astronomical photographs in the late nineteenth-century periodical press', *BJHS*, 43 (2009), 345-80 (p. 346).

<sup>36</sup> Tucker, p. 240.

Other critics explore photography in relation to the arts, demonstrating that the idea of photographic truth is illusory in that often the subjects of photography were carefully manipulated in accordance with artistic and social principles.<sup>37</sup> Daniel Novak explores the nineteenth-century awareness of this and ‘redefines what “photographic realism” meant for the Victorians’, claiming that, as for them normal photographs were unfulfilling with figures looking wooden and unrealistic, ‘[i]n the face of visual dissolution, art photography set out to restore aesthetic unity, and in the process it produced realism itself as a photographic fiction’.<sup>38</sup> He discusses composition photography in particular, in which the final print is an amalgamation of parts of different negatives: a conscious attempt to create an impression of a reality from which it was not taken and which most probably never existed. Victorian photographers were self-reflexive about such processes, writes Novak, citing Henry Peach Robinson who claimed: ‘I maintain that I can get nearer to the truth ... with several negatives than with one’.<sup>39</sup> Again, this idea of composite views, which was central to both artistic and scientific practices, resonates with Hardy’s use of different, partial perspectives to create an impression of an entire reality.

This concept of a conscious human manipulation of an objective actuality producing a greater reality resonates with Hardy’s famous statement about the subjects of art:

As, in looking at a carpet, by following one colour a certain pattern is suggested, by following another colour, another; so in life the seer should watch that pattern among general things which his idiosyncrasy moves

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<sup>37</sup> Michael Bartram, *The Pre-Raphaelite Camera* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1985); Jennifer M. Green, “‘The Right Thing in the Right Place’: P. H. Emerson and the Picturesque Photograph’ in *Victorian Literature and the Victorian Visual Imagination*, pp. 86-110; Nancy Armstrong, *Fiction in the Age of Photography* (London: Harvard University Press, 2002); Daniel A. Novak, *Realism, Photography, and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

<sup>38</sup> Novak, p. 6, p. 4.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

him to observe, and describe that alone. This is, quite accurately, a going to Nature; yet the result is no mere photograph, but purely the product of the writer's own mind.<sup>40</sup>

It is ironic that Hardy here uses photography as the contrast to selective art, taking it to represent the objective recording of all detail without discrimination. However, it would seem that using the idea of photography in a pejorative sense was a commonplace in Victorian literary criticism. Arthur Waugh, for example, in his criticism of the exaggeration of the realist style, claims that although frankness is necessary in literature, an excess of 'indomitable and damning sincerity' is undesirable, with the effect that 'art is lost in photography' (p. 204),<sup>41</sup> whilst George Eliot criticized Dickens' style for being like a "sun-picture".<sup>42</sup>

Although Hardy used photography to signify bad literary technique, his attitude towards the relationship between art and photography is ambiguous. Millgate notes the extent to which he collaborated with Hermann Lea on a book of photographs of Dorset, entitled *Thomas Hardy's Wessex*, and although this was quite possibly motivated primarily by commercial reasons, the fact that he effectively endorsed a book of photographs mapping his fictional locations onto actual ones suggests that he did not see the literary imagination and photography as mutually exclusive.<sup>43</sup> He was certainly aware of the manipulative possibilities in photography, and his interest in such procedures is demonstrated by his inclusion of a 'forged photograph' as a plot device in *A Laodicean*.<sup>44</sup> In this episode he emphasizes the illusory nature of 'such pictures' (p. 283), stating that for some viewers at

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<sup>40</sup> *Early Life*, p. 198.

<sup>41</sup> Arthur Waugh, 'Reticence in literature', *The Yellow Book*, 1 (1894), 201-19 (p. 204).

<sup>42</sup> Quoted in Novak, p. 7.

<sup>43</sup> Millgate, p. 389.

<sup>44</sup> Thomas Hardy, *A Laodicean*, ed. by John Schad (London: Penguin, 1997), p. 293.



least the picture ‘had all the cogency of direct vision’ (p. 283). Indeed, this subtle manipulation of objectivity and human intervention is analogous to Hardy’s narration, with its apparent objectivity which is, upon closer consideration, continually filtered through the perception of some or other consciousness.

There were many other visual technologies and practices developed throughout the nineteenth century which grew out of and in turn impacted upon the popular visual imagination, influencing conceptualization and presentation of reality. Crary describes how devices such as the thaumatrope and phenakistiscope, which drew upon the new understanding of the working of the eye to create the illusion of motion in a picture, led to ‘an increasing abstraction of optical experience from a stable referent’, a phenomenon he refers to as ‘the “uprooting” of vision’.<sup>45</sup> Later in the century improved photographic techniques enabled the development of motion-capture photography by Eadweard Muybridge, Étienne-Jules Marey and Pierre Janssen which revolutionized the understanding of motion. Janssen developed his photographic revolver, which was developed by Marey into the photographic gun, a pre-cursor of the modern motion-camera, in an attempt to accurately capture the Transit of Venus in 1874. Hardy’s evident interest in astronomy indicates that he would have been acquainted with the accounts of the scientific observations of the Transit ‘written in the chronicles of the Astronomical Society’ (p. 245) referred to in *Two on a Tower*, and as such would have been aware of these new methods of capturing reality. The creative potential of chronophotography is retrospectively evidenced by its place in the history of cinema; as Marta Braun notes Marey’s ‘single-lens, slotted disk shutter camera is the technical base of cinema’. Indeed, Braun argues that this creative potential was contemporaneously realized, stating that ‘the

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<sup>45</sup> Crary, p. 113.

images he made with his chronophotographic camera were integrated wholesale into the paintings of artists who sought a visual expression for the sensation of time and motion with which they would define modernity', and that Muybridge, in his own chronophotography, '[m]ost often was not using his camera as an analytical tool at all but was using it for narrative representation'.<sup>46</sup>

Throughout the century there were many technologies invented and developed upon from earlier forms which provided proto-cinematic experiences, such as the magic lantern and the panorama. Chanan claims that 'the invention of film was partly the result of attempts to develop and "improve" these popular forms'.<sup>47</sup> As such, although cinema itself was not to begin in even its earliest form during the period of Hardy's fictional composition, many aspects were already manifest in Victorian culture. Grundy has explored in depth the ways in which 'panoramas and dioramas, galanty-shows, and the magic lantern' impacted upon Hardy's imagination,<sup>48</sup> and it is to this that some of the most strikingly cinematic details may be attributed, often making use of colour and lighting effects which are aligned with those of modern, not early, cinema. Details of description may indeed be shown to demonstrate the influence of such technologies; the statement in *Jude the Obscure*, for example, that 'a jet of white steam was travelling from the left to the right of the picture' (p. 208) may seem to us like a film director's note, but in its description of a localized movement against a static background it bears an even more striking resemblance to a slide in a magic lantern show. Similarly, the descriptions of the effects of changes of weather and light upon landscapes such as 'the dawn grew visible in the north-east quarter of the heavens, which, the clouds having cleared off, was bright with

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<sup>46</sup> Marta Braun, *Picturing Time* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 349, p. 249.

<sup>47</sup> Chanan, p. 47.

<sup>48</sup> Grundy, p. 107.

a soft sheen' (*Return*; p. 232) and '[t]he low land grew blacker, and the sky a deeper grey. When the landscape looked like a picture blotted in with ink [...]' (*Mayor*; p. 223), which seem like panoramic landscape shots may be more closely aligned to panoramas in the traditional sense, in which lighting effects would be projected onto painted scenes to give the impression of temporal and meteorological alterations. Indeed, as Grundy notes, Hardy repeatedly directly refers to both the panorama and the magic lantern throughout his fiction. The impact of popular nineteenth-century entertainments upon Hardy's method of narration, as well as simply as a descriptive device, may be demonstrated in his description of Susan Nunsuch seeing Eustacia appear in the light from her cottage door, where the dramatic and apparently supernatural nature of the vision consolidates her opinion of Eustacia as a witch, and catalyses her subsequent, possibly fatal actions:

The door was ajar, and a riband of bright firelight fell over the ground without. As Eustacia crossed the firebeams she appeared for an instant as distinct as a figure in a phantasmagoria – a creature of light surrounded by an area of darkness: the moment passed, and she was absorbed in night again. (p. 342)

Just as new physiological knowledge of the eye radically altered the understanding of vision, new technologies introduced new aspects of visuality and raised new questions about perception. The invention of methods of creating the illusion of movement and the passage of time led to an increasing dynamism of the visual imagination, meaning that artistic representations need no longer be merely static with these kinetic possibilities. Technologies which provided superior capacities for visual perception and recording highlighted and revealed the shortcomings of human perception and the ways in which

misperceptions may occur, whilst the development of the photographic process, in many ways analogous to the functioning of the eye, provoked consideration of the potential for manipulation within an ostensibly objective practice, which correlated with and contributed to contemporary debates about fiction. The influence of these developments upon Hardy is suggested by his personal engagement with scientific and philosophical accounts of the nature of perception, evidenced by a plethora of notes about the subject throughout both his published and personal writing. This influence may consequently be seen to elucidate the nature of his presentation and use of perception in his fiction. Many of the technologies discussed above were rooted in scientific experimentation and developed into forms of entertainment, and similarly Hardy used his keen scientific awareness to inform and inspire his writing. As he himself wrote in his essay upon ‘The Science of Fiction’, these two aspects of the creative process are inseparable: ‘Art is science with an addition, [...] some science underlies all Art’.<sup>49</sup> In the following section I will explore the methods of representation in the arts upon which he drew in constructing his narratives in accordance with his scientifically-based ideology.

### **The Influence of Art**

Hardy’s engagement with art relates to and corresponds with his understanding of perception, in both his emphasis upon subjectivity in artistic representation, and in his belief that different forms of art are different ways of capturing and representing an essential artistic truth. Often he refers to ‘Art’ as a whole, rather than specific forms, and it is clear from both his writing and his life that his appreciation of art was not confined

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<sup>49</sup> Hardy, ‘The Science of Fiction’, p. 134.

simply to literature. His understanding of the arts was the result of both natural sympathy and conscious effort; his knowledge of fine art history was the product of a deliberate auto-didacticism throughout his years as an architectural apprentice in London, and he enthusiastically attended plays and concerts throughout his life.<sup>50</sup> This close engagement has inspired a strong critical tradition exploring different ways in which his interaction with art informed and influenced his literary imagination.<sup>51</sup> Whilst most of these have focused upon purely the visual arts, a consideration of the influence of other arts such as music and drama is also necessary to an understanding of his methods of representation. Many aspects of his cinematic technique may be seen to be borrowed from different art forms, though by Hardy's own dogma, the idea of borrowing is perhaps a little misleading. Indeed the unity of the arts was a central part of his literary ideology, manifest in his poem 'Rome: The Vatican: Sala delle Muse', for example, and in his disparaging comment that 'probably few literary critics discern the solidarity of all the arts'.<sup>52</sup> Grundy has explored at length the way in which Hardy's engagement with art forms as apparently disparate as fine art, drama, nineteenth-century popular entertainments, music, dance and architecture contributed to his literary imagination, and argues convincingly that his writing is always mediated through other forms. She attributes this underlying principle of his work to his personal world view, which 'sees life as every kind of show', and claims that for him the two are experientially equatable: '[a]rt, like life, is for Hardy a matter of seeing and feeling'.<sup>53</sup> Whilst this study is invaluable, and Grundy does indeed discuss at length the way in which his 'Composite Muse' relates to the cinematic quality of his writing, the focus of my own discussion is an attempt to demonstrate the ways in which Hardy's

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<sup>50</sup> See Millgate, pp. 76-9.

<sup>51</sup> See Pinion, pp. 16-34; Tanner; Bullen; Grundy; Webster, for a range of different interpretations.

<sup>52</sup> *Later Years*, p. 77.

<sup>53</sup> Grundy, p. 15, p. 17.

understanding of art, both inspired by traditions and in empathy with new developments, contributes to the development of his cinematic poetics.

An aspect of Hardy's writing which undoubtedly derives from his engagement with the pictorial arts, and was nurtured by his early career as an artist, is his focus upon technical aspects of visual constructions.<sup>54</sup> This plays a cardinal role in his creation of particularized perspectives in the presentation of scenes. Bullen notes that Hardy's use of pictorial composition as an integral process of his literary methods was self-acknowledged: 'He confessed to at least two of his biographers that ideas which were later clothed in verse or prose frequently presented themselves to him at first as pictures, and were first set down as pen-and-ink or pencil drawings'.<sup>55</sup> The resulting focus upon the way in which subjects are viewed as crucial to the construction of meaning is a fundamental part of the cinematic poetics. The filmmaker Marcel Carné similarly links cinematic art to fine art practices, claiming that in constructing a film shot '[o]ne must compose images as the old masters did their canvases, with the same preoccupation with effect and expression'.<sup>56</sup> It is not only upon the artistic practices of traditional compositions that Hardy's writing draws, however; the 'unexpected angles' which were increasingly favoured by artists in the second half of the nineteenth century are suggested by the unusual perspectives adopted by Hardy, these new methods of presentation expanding his range of expressive possibilities.<sup>57</sup> As in the description of Casterbridge, he uses a combination of different methods of framing and composition to provide a composite of different views, each fulfilling a different function in the illustration of different aspects of the town.

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<sup>54</sup> For a detailed discussion of Hardy's use of the pictorial arts see Grundy pp. 18-69; Bullen pp. 11-30.

<sup>55</sup> Bullen, p. 4.

<sup>56</sup> Quoted in Giannetti, p. 44. For a discussion of the formal properties of the *mise en scène*, see Giannetti, pp. 44-91; David Bordwell, *Figures Traced in Light* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

<sup>57</sup> John House, 'Framing the Landscape', in *Critical Readings in Impressionism and Post-Impressionism*, ed. by Mary Tomkins Lewis (London: California University Press, 2007), 77-100 (p. 86).

One of the most important features of art to Hardy is the idea of selection. In a series of personal notes, he seemingly engages with Ruskin's famous advice to young artists to 'go to Nature in all singleness of heart',<sup>58</sup> explicitly rejecting the idea of a lack of selection as a means to a greater truth in artistic representation, questioning, for example, 'if Nature's defects must be looked in the face and transcribed, whence arises the *art* [...]?'<sup>59</sup> In a note from August 1890, he describes the relation of art to reality in a statement which may be taken as an explication of his own literary technique:

Art is a disproportioning [...] of realities, to show more clearly the features that matter in those realities, which, if merely copied or reported inventorially, might possibly be observed, but would more probably be overlooked. Hence "realism" is not Art'.<sup>60</sup>

This self-acknowledged technique of using selection as a means of presenting particular realities is almost identical to that described by Lodge as the method of the film director with the lens of his camera.<sup>61</sup> Hardy's response to his visit to an Impressionist exhibition in 1886 also centres upon the idea of subjectivity and selection, as he writes that:

their principle is, as I understand it, that what you carry away with you from a scene is the true feature to grasp; or in other words, *what appeals to your own individual eye and heart in particular* amid much that does not so appeal, and which you therefore omit to record.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, 5 vols (London: George Allen, 1898), I, p. 448.

<sup>59</sup> *Early Years*, pp. 150-1.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 299.

<sup>61</sup> Lodge, 'Thomas Hardy as a Cinematic Novelist', p. 97; quoted in Chapter 1.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 241.

This rather reflexive personal interpretation of the Impressionist credo includes the comment that their technique is ‘even more suggestive in the direction of literature than that of art’, reinforcing the idea of the oneness of the arts, and explicitly linking his appreciation of artistic techniques to his own writing.<sup>63</sup> Hardy, at least in his early career, would not have been influenced by the Impressionist movement itself, which only came into being as a definite movement in 1874, the year in which *Far From the Madding Crowd* was published, and did not immediately have effects in Britain. However he was influenced by the general movement towards subjectivity in the visual arts throughout the nineteenth century which culminated in the art we would today term ‘impressionist’. His technique of communication through manner of presentation is clear in the ‘impression-picture of extremest type’ (p. 11) of Marty South’s hair at the beginning of *The Woodlanders*, which, in contrast with the more objective description of the girl and her surroundings in the preceding paragraphs, is rather illustrative of Barber Percomb, the focalizer, and his relation to the girl, than of the ostensible subject of the ‘picture’. Similarly, in the description of Fancy as Dick Dewy catches sight of her in Budmouth, the way in which she is described effectively communicates the effect of her appearance upon him:

An easy bend of neck and graceful set of head; full and wavy bundles of dark-brown hair; light fall of little feet; pretty devices on the skirt of the dress; clear deep eyes; in short, a bunch of sweets: it was Fancy!

(*Greenwood*; p. 93)

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 241.



The sense of motion in Hardy's depiction of scenes, and the 'transient little picture[s]' in his writing are also unmistakably impressionist in impulse.<sup>64</sup>

Hardy's use of landscape also seems to draw upon nineteenth-century fine-art culture, with its prominence in his fiction mirroring the greater emphasis upon landscape painting throughout the century, instead of its traditional relegation to the bottom of the artistic hierarchy.<sup>65</sup> Different methods of portraying landscape were developed, and the influence of this range of manners of representation is evident in the ways in which Hardy presents setting to fulfil different narrative functions. The influence of the picturesque ideology, which retained sway throughout much of the century, is clear in Hardy's descriptions of panoramic landscapes, such as the Vale of Blackmoor in *Tess*. The 'prospect position',<sup>66</sup> common in the picturesque and evident in the way the hypothetical traveller regards the landscape 'extended as a map beneath him' (*Tess*; p. 12), conveys a sense of the vastness of the landscape, and the use of painterly terminology in such descriptions serves to create a vivid visual representation of the scene in which the action is to be set: '[t]he atmosphere beneath is languorous, and is so tinged with azure that what artists call the middle distance partakes also of that hue, while the horizon beyond is of the deepest ultramarine' (p. 12). Despite Hardy's renunciation of the idea of faithful objectivity in Ruskin's statement about Nature, his descriptions of natural phenomena often correlate with the style of the Pre-Raphaelites, who championed the aesthetic value of intensely realized detail in adherence to the dictum to study Nature 'laboriously'.<sup>67</sup> There is, for instance, a striking resonance between the description of rabbits as they appear to Clym, with 'the hot beams blazing

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<sup>64</sup> *Crowd*, p. 266; quoted in Chapter 1.

<sup>65</sup> E. H. Gombrich, *The Story of Art*, 16th edn (London: Phaidon, 2007), pp. 490-7.

<sup>66</sup> Hess, p. 287.

<sup>67</sup> Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, I, p. 448. For a discussion of detail in Pre-Raphaelite landscapes, see Elizabeth Prettejohn, *The Art of the Pre-Raphaelites* (London: Tate, 2007), pp. 174-8.

through the delicate tissue of each thin-fleshed ear, and firing it to a blood-red transparency in which the veins could be seen' (*Return*; p. 247) and the depiction of an identical effect in the ears of the sheep lounging upon a cliff in William Holman Hunt's *Our English Coasts, 1852*.<sup>68</sup> The most profound influence of nineteenth-century landscape developments upon Hardy's style, however, was the movement towards subjectivity in its appreciation and representation, with the associated use of nature as a means of expressing elements of humanity. John House describes the increasing value placed upon 'the artist's subjective engagement with nature's fleeting effects', as 'this sensibility best expressed the emotion of the scene'.<sup>69</sup> It is this idea of nature as a means of signification which is central to Ruskin's description of the importance of 'the great poet's or painter's knowledge' of natural phenomena, 'that he may render them vehicles of expression and emotion'.<sup>70</sup> This is fundamental to the art of J. M. W. Turner, whose paintings Ruskin declared to be 'the utmost perfection of landscape art',<sup>71</sup> and whose influence upon Hardy was profound and self-acknowledged. The creation of artworks that are not "simply natural" is the main attraction of Turner's art to Hardy,<sup>72</sup> who noted in an appreciation of his works that 'each is a landscape *plus* a man's soul', an analysis he concludes with the observation that '[h]ence, one may say, Art is the secret of how to produce by a false thing the effect of a true'.<sup>73</sup>

Whilst these remarks ostensibly refer simply to a subjective approach to the representation of landscape, Turner's works may be seen as bearing the marks of humanity apart from the subjectivity of the artist himself, with the natural elements of the scene

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<sup>68</sup> William Holman Hunt, *Our English Coasts, 1852*. 1852. Tate (43.2 × 58.4cm).

<sup>69</sup> House, p. 87.

<sup>70</sup> Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, I, p. xxxvi.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xxxvi.

<sup>72</sup> *Early Life*, p. 242.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 283-4. Cf. Peter Brooks, *Realist Vision*, p. 6; quoted in Chapter 1.

echoing and illustrating the emotions of his artistic figures. Eric Shanes claims that his figures may be considered as central to his art, arguing that ‘human motives and associations often provided Turner with the fundamental concept around which he organised his works’, and demonstrating the way in which the natural elements of his work reflect and emphasize qualities of the figures within them.<sup>74</sup> Certainly art’s capacity to invest natural and inanimate objects with human sentiment was of interest to Hardy throughout his career. In 1878, for instance, he noted his sympathy with the method of Boldini and Hobbema, ‘of infusing emotion into the baldest external objects either by the presence of a human figure among them, or by mark of some human connection with them’.<sup>75</sup> Hardy’s own use of the landscapes within his novels as a means of conveying emotional and psychological aspects of the characters inhabiting them would consequently seem to draw upon the methods of representing such qualities in painting; it is a critical commonplace, for example, that his use of chiaroscuro is a result of the direct influence of Turner,<sup>76</sup> whose chief subject was, in Hardy’s own words: ‘*light as modified by objects*’.<sup>77</sup> Pinion attributes this aspect of Hardy’s technique directly to the ‘artistic genius’ of Hardy’s own literary imagination: ‘[a]n artist will often find a concrete way of expressing experience far more intensely and vividly than the psychological or realistic writer; and here Hardy excels’.<sup>78</sup>

Hardy’s drawing of inspiration from and uniting of different art forms echoes that of Turner himself, in his aim to create a sense of narrative in paintings. John Gage notes Turner’s own emphasis upon the importance of “poesy” in painting, describing the way

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<sup>74</sup> Eric Shanes, *Turner’s Human Landscape* (London: Heinemann, 1990), p. 11.

<sup>75</sup> *Early Life*, p. 158.

<sup>76</sup> See, for example Grundy, pp. 50-64; Bullen, pp. 197-9.

<sup>77</sup> *Early Life*, p. 283.

<sup>78</sup> Pinion, pp. 18-9.

in which, ‘to the end of his career [he] continued to feel an urge to unite the visual and the literary, and it should never be supposed that he was, on any level, anything other than a poetic painter’.<sup>79</sup> His literary imagination was nourished not only by poetry, however, but also by drama, and his ‘lifelong pleasure in the theatre’, claims Andrew Wilton, ‘affected his whole approach to pictorial representation’.<sup>80</sup> James Hamilton describes this ‘theatrical treatment’ of subject matter in paintings such as *England: Richmond Hill, on the Prince Regent’s Birthday*, where the facial expressions and physical attitudes of the figures give the impression of a ‘ripple of excitement through the painting’ creating the sense ‘that something significant is happening’.<sup>81</sup> This something, he infers, is the arrival of the Prince himself, outside the painting and in the position of the viewer themselves; ‘[i]f this is Turner’s intention’, he concludes, ‘it is a characteristically dramatic narrative engagement’.<sup>82</sup> This dramatization of pictorial subjects came to be hugely popular during the mid-nineteenth century, leading to the development of a specific genre of narrative painting, with the works of such artists as David Wilkie, Thomas Webster and W. P. Frith being wildly popular with the public, and almost undoubtedly an influence upon Hardy.<sup>83</sup> The Pre-Raphaelite artists, with whose work Hardy was also well acquainted, similarly drew heavily upon literary traditions in their art, and their symbolism resonates with Hardy’s. The bird ensnared by the cat in the background of Hunt’s *The Awakening Conscience*, or the calf being driven to market in Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s *Found*, for example, convey comparable import to the dying pheasants in *Tess*, or the rabbit dying in

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<sup>79</sup> John Gage, *J.M.W. Turner: ‘A Wonderful Range of Mind’* (London: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 205.

<sup>80</sup> Andrew Wilton, *Turner in his time* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987), p. 44.

<sup>81</sup> James Hamilton, *Turner’s Britain* (London: Merrell, 2003), p. 133.

<sup>82</sup> James Hamilton, *Turner: A Life* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1997), p. 194.

<sup>83</sup> See Grundy, pp. 30-4 ; Bullen, p. 22, pp. 43-6.

the trap in *Jude*.<sup>84</sup> There is also a similar use of symbolism in the depiction of character; the influence of Rossetti is unmistakable in the description of Eustacia, with her ‘Pagan eyes, full of nocturnal mysteries’ (*Return*; p. 68), and her deep black hair, and indeed a Pre-Raphaelite sensibility seems apparent in Hardy’s almost fetishistic descriptions of many of his heroines’ abundant and loosened hair, as a signifier of their sexuality and desirability.<sup>85</sup> This nineteenth-century interrelation of the narrative, pictorial and theatrical arts, which formed ‘one living tissue’,<sup>86</sup> is of huge relevance to the centrality of mimesis to Hardy’s narrative technique.

Indeed, this is an aspect of his art about which Hardy was self-reflexive, famously noting in 1886 that ‘[m]y art is to intensify the expression of things, as is done by Crivelli, Bellini, etc., so that the heart and inner meaning is made vividly visible’.<sup>87</sup> Similarly in 1889 he made a note upon the way in which different aspects of the artistic subjects may be conveyed by purely visual means: ‘[i]n a Botticelli the soul is outside the body, permeating its spectator with its emotions. In a Rubens the flesh is without, and the soul (possibly) within. The very odour of the flesh is distinguishable in the latter’.<sup>88</sup> Although less explicitly acknowledged, the debt of Hardy’s mimetic technique to drama is also clear, drama being an art form which exemplifies, as Lodge notes, ‘[p]ure mimesis’.<sup>89</sup> Dramatic speech is also included within the practice of mimetic ‘showing’ as it is communicating through the voice of a character rather than an authorial narrator, and certainly Hardy utilizes extensively dialogue and soliloquy in his fiction to establish situations rather than

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<sup>84</sup> Hunt, *The Awakening Conscience*. 1853-4. Tate (76.2 × 55.9cm); Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Found*. 1854-81 (unfinished). Delaware Art Museum (91.4 × 80cm).

<sup>85</sup> See Bullen, p. 105, for a discussion of the influence of Rossetti’s *Astarte Syriaca* on Eustacia; see Brooks, *Realist Vision*, pp. 54-70 for a discussion of the use of fetishism in metonymic presentation.

<sup>86</sup> Martin Meisel, *Realizations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 3.

<sup>87</sup> *Early Life*, pp. 231-2.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 285.

<sup>89</sup> Lodge, *After Bakhtin*, p. 28.

providing narrative in authorial statements. However, nineteenth-century theatre placed the emphasis upon communication by visual means, an emphasis which was particularly heightened, as Grundy observes, in the popular sub-genre of melodrama, as the ‘language of melodrama is primarily not one of words, but one of action and spectacle’.<sup>90</sup> Brooks describes this emphasis upon non-verbal signification and the way in which meaning is constructed through the use of multiple types of signification, claiming that:

the drama of the sign is played out across a whole scale, or staff, of codes – or perhaps more accurately, a set of different registers of the sign, which can reinforce and also relay one another. Melodrama tends toward total theatre, its signs projected, sequentially or simultaneously, on several planes.<sup>91</sup>

This method of communication led, he claims, to the ‘transformation of the stage into plastic tableau, the arena for represented, visual meanings’, and notes the increasing importance of stage setting as an expressive medium. Gesture is also a crucial method of communication in this genre, with ‘[a]cting style [being] predicated on the plastic figurability of emotion, its shaping as a visible and tactile entity’.<sup>92</sup> Although it is particularly striking in melodrama due to its ‘excess’ and ‘heightened dramatization’,<sup>93</sup> such methods were central to nineteenth-century theatre as a whole. The importance of gesture and expression in dramatic art, for instance, is noted by the celebrated actress Ellen Terry, with whom Hardy was acquainted and who was so struck by the dramatic potential of his work that she personally requested, he notes, ‘an opportunity of appearing in the part

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<sup>90</sup> Grundy, p. 91.

<sup>91</sup> Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination* (London: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 46.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

of “Tess” should he dramatize the novel.<sup>94</sup> In her advice to aspirants she includes the exhortation to ‘have a reason for every action on the stage. Every movement, every look of the eye, should tell to some purpose; there should be no meaningless gesticulation’.<sup>95</sup> Hardy’s description, in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, of the possibility of interpreting communication through action and expression seems almost a comment upon his own use of this dramatic technique in the transcribed gestures in his writing: ‘[n]ot to hear the words of your interlocutor in metropolitan centres is to know nothing of his meaning. Here the face, the arms, the hat, the stick, the body throughout spoke equally with the tongue’ (p. 60). The use of setting with the inclusion of panorama and diorama, and special effects with lighting and gauzes were also hugely important means of visual signification in the theatre in general, with the illusion of realism being of increasing importance throughout the century. This means of conveying aspects of the narrative through the mimetic properties of multiple facets of the characterization, setting and action, and its consequent reliance on active mental participation of the audience in the construction of meaning, is of unmistakable relevance to Hardy’s cinematic technique.

Although the visual elements of Hardy’s writing predominate, his inclusion of aural detail, as discussed in Chapter 1, is of undeniable importance, and his exploitation of the expressive qualities of sound may be attributed, in part at least, to his enthusiastically passionate engagement with music from an early age. Page observes Hardy’s assimilation of his own art to music in his comparison of his own career to that of Verdi, stating that ‘it is clear that for him the comparison between an operatic composer and a novelist-poet was

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<sup>94</sup> *Later Years*, p. 33.

<sup>95</sup> Ellen Terry, Chapter VIII, in *The Actor’s Art*, ed. by J. A. Hammerton (London: George Redway, 1897), pp. 171-6 (p. 176).

a perfectly workable one'.<sup>96</sup> His incorporation of a musical sensibility into a literary one is clear in his use of music as a frame of reference in his writing, and in his employment of its communicative techniques in his descriptions of sound. Certainly, in aural details such as his description of Eustacia's voice as recalling the viola, and his reference to Tess' 'tones suddenly resuming their old fluty pathos' (*Tess*; p. 378) in her re-encounter with Angel, Hardy's writing may be considered musical in its use of sound quality for the production of sentiment. In the descriptions of the sounds of settings also there are repeated references to music, such as the trees outside Oak's hut, which 'wailed or chanted to each other in the regular antiphonies of a cathedral choir' (*Crowd*; pp. 8-9). The description of Egdon is particularly rich in its musical nature, with the '[t]reble, tenor, and bass notes' of the wind over the furze, the 'baritone buzz of a holly tree', and the 'shrivelled and intermittent recitative' of the heath bells (*Return*; p. 56); indeed, the musical expressiveness of Hardy's description is testified by the way in which it inspired Holst's composition of the symphonic poem *Egdon Heath*. Hardy's use of the expressive natures of transcribed sounds draws directly and explicitly upon his musical knowledge and sympathy, and is, as Grundy observes, correlative with the use of background music in film.<sup>97</sup>

The term '[a]coustic pictures' (p. 87), included in his description of Egdon, succinctly describes the synaesthetic effect achieved by Hardy's inclusion of different arts and their associated modes of representation in his descriptive style. In this, the film medium's direct adoption of the techniques of many art forms may be seen to be anticipated, with the common aim of synthesizing in order to create an art with the utmost clarity of effect and

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<sup>96</sup> Norman Page, 'Art and aesthetics', in *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Hardy*, ed. by Dale Kramer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 38-53 (p. 46).

<sup>97</sup> Grundy, p. 161.



expressiveness possible. Hardy's conviction of 'the solidarity of all the arts' opens up a plethora of representation methods which assists in the creation of a narrative technique which conveys import through many different aspects of the text. In his discussion of the relevance of the visual arts to Hardy's writing, Webster claims that 'Hardy's developing interest in painting and the visual arts ... means that his novels can be read as more innovative and experimental and thus situated closer to modernism than has often been appreciated'.<sup>98</sup> He links the fragmentation of Hardy's narrative and the emphasis upon multi-perspectival presentation to the influence of developments by artists such as Turner and the Impressionists. However, whilst Hardy is undoubtedly deeply influenced by the movements in art throughout the nineteenth century, this cannot be extricated from the influence of other sources of knowledge upon his literary ideology. Hardy's understanding of modern theories of perception and representation of reality may be seen to stem rather from his knowledge of the scientific and philosophic discoveries and advances of his time, in accordance with the way in which these developments were adopted by revolutionary artists. With this personal and literary ideology, the arts, both in their traditional forms and in the contemporary developments, provide a means of expressing his modern view of understanding and presenting the world. The modern emphasis upon the compilation of knowledge from multiple sources to construct understanding is echoed in Hardy's employment of the techniques of a wide variety of different artistic movements and genres in order to convey meaning through many different aspects of characterization, setting and action in his fiction.

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<sup>98</sup> Webster, p. 34.

## CONCLUSION

In his 1888 essay 'The Profitable Reading of Fiction', Hardy described the relationship between the reader, the text, and the writer in his interpretation of the process of writing and reading fiction:

the appreciative, perspicacious reader [...] will see what his author is aiming at, and by affording full scope to his own insight, catch the vision which the writer has in his eye, and is endeavouring to project upon the paper, even while it half eludes him.<sup>1</sup>

This statement is illustrative of the extent to which his cinematic technique was a conscious process, in its emphasis upon conveying a 'vision', rather than telling a story. The highlighting of the importance of the reader's use of insight is also illuminating. It may be argued that the semiotics of the verbal medium function very differently from the direct visual and aural symbols in the film medium, but focusing rather upon the type of information being conveyed to the imagination of the reader or viewer and the way in which it contributes to the creation of an understanding of the narrative as a whole, collapses the distinction between the functioning of the two media. Certainly the idea of the reader constructing the vision 'in his insight' is equally applicable to the film medium; in his discussion of the significance of Eisenstein's revolutionary approach to theorizing film, Bordwell claims that, '[p]erhaps most productive is the assumption that the story action is not in the film but in the spectator's mind; it becomes a construction which the

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Hardy, 'The Profitable Reading of Fiction', in *Thomas Hardy's Personal Writings*, pp. 110-25 (pp. 116-7).

viewer puts upon a configuration of stimuli'.<sup>2</sup> Consequently the method of both fiction, in Hardy's view, and film may be seen to be an attempt to provide the reader or viewer with the necessary information to actively construct the narrative in their imagination. The type of information and the manner in which that information is manipulated in Hardy's narrative stimuli functions in a cinematic manner, as established in Chapter 1. The distinction between his use of the cinematic style and that of the fiction film is merely that his narrative is 'project[ed] upon the paper' and mediated through words, rather than through visual and aural symbols projected upon the screen in the cinema.

Hardy's statement may be regarded as a succinct encapsulation of his cinematic technique; indeed it seems almost uncanny in the use of the term 'project'. However, his fictional style, despite its apparent anachronism, may simultaneously be regarded as firmly rooted in the scientific and cultural impulses of its own age. One of the most integral features of Hardy's technique is the fragmentation of the narrative, and this can clearly be seen to be a product of the developing modern idea that there is no way of obtaining a comprehensive, objective view of life, and that understanding must rather be gained through the synthesis of many different perspectives and by the result of many different perceptive techniques. The way in which Hardy drew upon science, technology and the arts to create these different methods of conveying aspects of his narrative is evident from his style, and similarly demonstrates a widened scope of imaginative and narrative materials which resonates with the modern emphasis upon multimedia in the arts. As such, the cinematic nature of Hardy's writing may be seen to be a direct result of his engagement with modernity, and the way in which he draws upon these scientific, philosophical and cultural developments explains why his style seems in step with such a modern art form as

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<sup>2</sup> Bordwell, p. 14.

cinema. Indeed, the very fact that his style accords so well with that employed in a dominant contemporary art form testifies to his status as a strikingly modern thinker for his period, and truly an artist ahead of his time.

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