Chapter I

Introduction

This thesis attempts to interpret Thomas Hardy's (1840-1928) *The Well-Beloved* (1897), a 'minor' novel which traditional criticism has considered to be of little literary worth. The argument that this research puts forward is that this novel, ostensibly about artistic "failure", when studied in its development from serial to novel, can satisfactorily be interpreted and understood using Lacanian psychoanalysis. Such an analysis will enable us to reconsider the novel's status as a 'minor' work. The present study also hopes to throw some light upon the forces that were behind Hardy's unfortunate decision to give up novel-writing altogether.

The Victorian literary period was unique in that the novel, as a genre, began to dominate over the other kinds of writing. The uniqueness of the period was enhanced by the numerous literary journals, magazines and
circulating libraries which exerted a tremendous force not only upon the reading public but also upon the writers themselves, making or marring their futures. The following section tries to describe this period in which Hardy began to write novels.

Section 1
Hardy in the nineteenth century

Though the origins of the English novel go back to Daniel Defoe (1660-1731) and Samuel Richardson (1689-1761), it was only with Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832) and Charles Dickens (1812-1870) that the novel came to be accepted as a new genre in literature. In its early stages, influenced by the strict, puritanic outlook of the times, the novel was considered to be detrimental to civilised society, particularly because it encouraged the imagination of the reader; but the immense popularity of this new form of writing across classes led to its domination of the Victorian literary arena. Whereas in the early nineteenth century the novel was more of a romance - fanciful and imaginative in nature and was identified with escapism - around the mid-nineteenth century the historical romance came to the fore and by the time Hardy's works were being published, realism as a narrative technique was asserting itself. While realism initially meant a faithful reflection of life as it was seen in the external world, gradually novelists began to explore the human psyche. As a late
Victorian novelist, Hardy brought significant changes to the tradition of novel-writing in both content and form. In his book *The Novel in the Victorian Age* (1986) Robin Gilmour mentions that forty thousand novels were estimated to have been produced between 1837 and 1901 (p. 1). Among these Hardy's works of fiction are important on two counts at least.

It is a well-documented fact that Hardy's novels sought to depict the changing rural atmosphere in England during the late Victorian period. Most critical works dwell so much upon this aspect of Hardy's writing that he has been considered primarily a rural annalist, or a regional novelist. Criticism of Hardy's works has constantly stressed the fact that he was a chronicler of the rural way of life, a view reinforced by Raymond Williams' study on Hardy in *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence* (1971). Most of the studies on Hardy acknowledge this quality of Hardy's writing in passing, but some works are specifically directed towards describing this element in more detail. A sampling of such books highlighting Hardy as a rural chronicler would include *Thomas Hardy* (1954) by Douglas Brown, *Thomas Hardy: The Forms of Tragedy* (1975) edited by Dale Kramer, and *Thomas Hardy and Rural England* (1972) by Merryn Williams. Such a view of Hardy is supported, indirectly, by a growing number of books on the topography of Hardy's "Wessex" and other similar studies detailing the area where the action of most of his novels takes place. These include Hermann Lea's *A Handbook to the Wessex Country of Mr. Thomas Hardy's Novels and Poems* (1906) which
is probably the earliest of such works, Denys Kay-Robinson's *The Landscape of Thomas Hardy* (1984), Desmond Hawkins' *Hardy's Wessex* (1983) and *Hardy Country* (1983) by Gordon Beningfield. While these studies are certainly important, as they help to make visible the imaginary "Wessex", they however, tend to limit Hardy's prowess as a novelist to just these aspects, to the exclusion of many other, perhaps equally, if not more, important, facets of his writing.

Another reason for choosing Hardy for this research is to study his craft of novel-writing. The changes that Hardy brought about in novel-writing are significant. The multiple endings in novels like *The Return of the Native* (1878) and *The Well-Beloved* (1897), the urge to make strong, social critiques of the times as in *The Woodlanders* (1887), *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891) or *Jude the Obscure* (1896) and the growing interest in the psychology of his characters (detailed in section 3 of Chapter II of the present study) are some of the distinguishing features of Hardy's works. These departures from Victorian conventions of novel-writing make Hardy an important link between the Victorian and modern literary periods. This view is supported by poets like Auden and Larkin (see John Lucas's *Moderns and Contemporaries. Novelists, Poets, Critics*, 1985, p. 113) and novelists like D.H.Lawrence (see Perry Meisel in *The Myth of the Modern: A Study in British Literature and Criticism after 1850*, 1987, pp. 11-36) and Virginia Woolf (see *A Modernist Reader. Modernism in England 1910-1930*, ed. Peter Faulkner, 1986, p. 106) who have openly accepted Hardy's influence on them.
It may also be observed that Hardy is one of the important novelists who herald the arrival of the novel as an art-form. This view coincides with Kenneth Graham's observation in *English Criticism of the Novel 1865-1900* (1965) that from the mid-nineteenth century the novel came to be considered first as a medium of instruction, then as a medium of entertainment before, finally, towards the end of the century, being granted the status of an art-form in its own right (p. 1-11). Recent critical views, notably those of Hillis Miller and Rosemary Sumner (detailed in section 3 of Chapter II of the present study) tend to consider *The Well-Beloved* an important novel on Art; This dissertation tries to go a step further, highlighting the condition of Hardy's artist and his development, making it possible for us to classify this work as a *kunstlerroman* - a genre of writing which describes the formation of a young artist.

If Hardy's works indicated a change from the traditional manner in which novels were written, they were only reflecting the spirit of the times. Victorian England was characterised by the spirit of change. It was a world of upheaval where old customs and manners were giving way to new ideas. It was also an age of contrasts. A point that Herman Biondi puts across effectively in his book *Victorian Britain* (1970):

...an era in which centuries-old traditions were to come into head-on clash with new ideas, in which the social and economic structure of the country was to be transformed. Wealth jostled with
poverty, humanism with barbarism, lofty intellectuallism with grinding illiteracy, idealism with soulless greed. During Victoria's sixty-four years on the throne, Britain reached the height of her imperial power and splendour. Her reign saw the abolition of slavery, the rise of the trade unions, the introduction of a general education and public libraries, the extension of the franchise and a considerable amount of penal reform.

(pp. 14-15)

The shift from an agrarian to an industrial economy was probably the single most crucial factor which influenced all other aspects of Victorian life. Earlier, England was a rural economy and the sprawling fields were tended by innumerable labourers; with the agrarian revolution, farming became mechanised, many labourers were laid off and they migrated to the towns where the industrial revolution had transformed these places into mills, factories, mines and industries with all their attendant evils.

In the factories and work places the working hours were long - sometimes as long as sixteen hours, even for women and children - and the work often dangerous; wages were meagre but it was better than starving to death. Robin Gilmour stresses that an "unprecedented increase in population" (p. 2) was the background against which all other factors were arrayed to give the Victorians a sense that the age was one of change. While the population in these industrial towns doubled, housing and sanitation, however, did not keep pace with the influx from the villages. Row upon row of badly ventilated
monstrosities were constructed to house these poor workers. In these unplanned towns there was little or no sanitation. Often whole families were crowded into single rooms leading to, among other things, incest. Richard Altick, in his comprehensive study, *Victorian People and Ideas* (1974) notes that for most of the working poor it was a hand-to-mouth existence relieved only by “taverns, gin-shops, brothels, occasional cock-fights” (p. 45). Disease, as a result of the poor working conditions and bad sanitation, and dissipation, as a result of the frustrations with a dissatisfied lifestyle, were rampant and took their toll.

A positive outcome of the large number of industries in England at this time was the rise of the middle-class. Altick clarifies that this middle class, as they are popularly referred to, was not a cohesive group but rather a loose conglomeration of “manufacturers... commodity brokers, financiers, foreign traders, providers of consumer goods and services to an increasingly wealthy home market” (p. 27). This rising class made sure that they were heard and seen, their wishes respected and their ranks eventually represented in Parliament.

While the masses languished in the filth and grime of the industrial towns, immortalised by Charles Dickens and Gustave Dore (1833-1883) in their novels and paintings respectively, a growing number of people made strenuous efforts to highlight and change the unhappy lot of the majority. Some writers like Carlyle (1795-1881), Arnold (1822-1888), Ruskin (1819-1908) and Engels
(1820-1895) spoke out against this soulless greed; others like Lord Ashley (1801-1885), later Earl of Shaftesbury, tried to get Parliament to pass Bills to set right working conditions. This was made possible with developments like Chartism, the Reform Bills and the general move towards socialism and democracy.

The first Reform Bill of 1832 was brought about not only by the new "middle-class", but also, as Barry Supple says in his chapter "The Governing Framework: Social Class and Institutional Reform in Victorian Britain" in *The Victorians* (ed. Laurence Lerner, 1978), by "the pressure from many sections of the working classes eager for fundamental constitutional change" (p. 97). Foremost among these constitutional reforms was that of universal male franchise which at the time was limited to only the landowning classes. The results of the First Reform Bill are aptly summarised by G. Kitson Clarke in his *The Making of Victorian England* (1977) where he comments on the middle-class and their involvement with the Reform Bill:

Nor did the middle class, however defined, dominate the country after 1832. Certainly they were deemed to be politically important at the time of that Reform Bill, and that Bill was proposed and passed largely as a recognition of their importance; but after the Bill the final control in politics still lay without question in the hands of the old governing classes, the nobility and gentry.

(p. 7)
The discontent soon led to the People's Charter of 1838, popularly called Chartism, which mainly sought improvement of working and living conditions, adult male suffrage and equal electoral constituencies. In Parliament the Charter was defeated and led to widespread revolts all over Britain; to contain the rebellion from the working class, many were jailed or transported to Australia for penal reform - a classic example being that of the "Tolpuddle Martyrs" to whom a memorial has been erected in Dorchester (Hardy's Casterbridge).

Repeated presentation of the Charter in Parliament in 1839, 1842 and 1848 met with failure against a background of mass strikes and threats of social unrest, compounded by a famine in Ireland. It was in 1867, with the second Reform Bill, that the middle class received the right to vote and finally it was only with the Third Reform Bill of 1884 that the two million agricultural labourers received the vote (Altick 94). For the middle-class these political upheavals together with changes in religion (the growing number of low Churches and rise of the Oxford Movement), political philosophy (the coming of laissez-faire and Utilitarianism as dominant ideologies) and the economy, changed their way of life and indeed the whole character of social life in Victorian Britain.

With the gradual improvement of working conditions from the middle of the century onwards, workers and the wide spectrum of people constituting
the 'middle class' slowly realised that there were other forms of entertainment besides taverns, gin-shops, brothels and occasional cock-fights. Such new forms of entertainment were "music halls, cheap theatres, sporting matches, choral societies, entertainments at church or chapel, public parks, railway excursions" (Altick p. 61). Reading too was increasingly becoming popular.

Without a doubt, the slow but steady growth of popular education and the establishment of public libraries did help to make reading popular with the masses; but what actually made books and papers such a readily available source of instruction and entertainment (keeping in mind the dominant Utilitarian philosophy of the times) were the developments in printing technology. Whereas Guttenberg had invented and started using moveable type in 1454, in 1798 Earle Stanhope replaced the wood printing press with one of iron. The benefit was that these types lasted longer than the wooden ones, bringing in profits to the presses. In 1814 Friedrich Koenig began to use steam power to run the press and in 1866 the Walter press made use of curved plates and continuous rolls of paper. While the speed of printing improved tremendously, the quality of the final product was also enhanced.

All these developments coupled with the repeal of the Stamp duty on newspapers in 1855 made available at very cheap rates mainly papers but also books on a wide variety of topics - religious tracts, 'penny dreadfuls', 'shilling shockers', papers where sensational tales featured and where novels
were serialised, Sunday papers devoted to politics and crime, novels in parts and whole, the standard three-deckers and also in cheap editions, and pornographic literature - Steven Marcus's study *The Other Victorians* (1966) shows how pornography too served a particular purpose at the time - catering to the varied wants and requirements of huge, bustling cities like London and Birmingham. Another reason which helped foster the reading habit all over the country was that with the advent of the railways these books and more importantly, newspapers, reached the distant corners of Britain in a very short time linking up the people with developments and events in other parts of the country.

A significant development of the Victorian age was the gradual transformation of reading from a personal, individual act to a family activity. It was quite common in a middle-class Victorian home to find the members of the family gathered around to listen to one person read from a paper, a novel or a book - the most common book being the Bible.

It is important here to touch upon the influence of the circulating libraries which had mushroomed in most towns in England at this time. In the early days of the circulating libraries in the eighteenth century the reading matter purveyed by them was perhaps heterogenous and undiscriminating. We may remember the censorious judgement pronounced on these libraries by Sir Anthony Absolute and Mrs. Malaprop in Sheridan's *The Rivals* (1775). By the
middle of the nineteenth century however, the libraries appear to have become more selective in their holdings and begun to act as censors themselves. These libraries had to be kept in mind by the novelist who aspired for monetary success because they were the largest buyers of the three-volume editions, also known as "three-deckers", that were brought out by the publishing houses.

The influence of such libraries, Mudie's in particular, is by now part of the history of Victorian censorship. This lending library which was started in 1842 from a shop in Bloomsbury ushered in a change that was to encourage the reading habit. Edward Mudie reduced the annual subscription of library members to one guinea per exchangeable volume or two guineas for four. Yet another factor that popularised the library was its strict control over what was stocked so that the family reading circle was not embarrassed by what was read at home. In Gilmour's words "Value for money and fitness for family readership, boosted by advertising and efficient distribution throughout the country and overseas, made Mudie's pre-eminent for almost 50 years" (p. 8).

While publishing thrived as an industry, the natural outcome of such a strong sense of what was 'proper', exhibited, for example, through censorious circulating libraries, was that the editors of publishing houses had to pay particular attention to ensure that their publications adhered to the norms of Victorian propriety. Revision, bowdlerization or sometimes even outright rejection was the unhappy fate of many a manuscript sent in for publication because it did not meet the stringent standards of Victorian morality.
The common practice at the time was for a novelist to send in his/her manuscript initially for serial publication in one of the papers. A detailed account of the choices open for an aspiring author is given by Kathleen Tillotson in her 'Introductory' in *Novels of the Eighteen-Forties* (1954, pp. 20-47). Robin Gilmour and J.A.Sutherland also have illuminating details to offer in *The Novel in the Victorian Age* and *Victorian Novelists and Publishers* respectively, on the manner in which novels were published. Sutherland's book has a chapter devoted to Hardy's launch as a novelist by Tinsley Brothers. The weekly or fortnightly episode gave the novelist not only the time he/she desperately required to prepare the next episode but more importantly, it gave the novelist a chance to gauge public opinion and respond to the episode just published. The next instalment was suitably modified and altered to conform to the requirements of the editors and readers.

Tillotson gives us many instances where public opinion helped the author craft subsequent episodes. Dickens altered the character of Mrs. Mowcher in *David Copperfield* (1850), after Mrs Seymour Hill, the person on whom the character was modelled, wrote in to complain and threatened to sue the author (see also Gilmour pp. 7-9). Tillotson also records the letters that Thackeray (1811-1863) received with suggestions as to who should marry whom in *Pendennis* (1850). But perhaps the best known instance of public opinion altering the fate of a literary character is that of the return of Sherlock Holmes. In 1893 Conan Doyle had sent the master sleuth to his death over a
waterfall but bowing to public pressure Holmes was resurrected in *The Hound of Baskervilles* (1902). In such a manner, serials helped the Victorian author feel the pulse of the reader. In cases where there was no direct communication between author and public, rough estimates of the response could be had from the sales figures. Accordingly changes were incorporated. The success of a serial version often led to the work's publication as a novel. This was one peculiar manner in which novels were written at the time and it was not uncommon to have serial and novel versions of the same work with significant changes.

One of the significant conventions of Victorian novel-writing was the "happy-ending". Gilmour notes:

This predilection for the happy ending and the loveable character is more deeply rooted in Victorian taste than we like to think today, and it was potentially in conflict with another assumption of the period, that art should take its material from ordinary life and deal with it in an appropriate manner.

(p. 9)

Most of Hardy's novels too reveal this particular trait of Victorian novels. *The Return of the Native* (1878) and *The Woodlanders* (1887) are two such examples.
In *The Return of the Native* (1878) Hardy clearly states that he had intended the novel to end with the deaths of Eustacia and Wildeve, but in deference to the readers’ expectations he offers a different ending where Diggory Venn the reedleman finally gets to marry Thomasin, providing for the standard ‘happy ending’ that was a Victorian norm. Hardy’s note is retained in later versions of the novel as for example in the 1967, Macmillan edition, where a footnote at the conclusion of the penultimate chapter of the novel (after the deaths of Eustacia and Wildeve by drowning) says:

The writer may state here that the original conception of the story did not design a marriage between Thomasin and Venn. He was to have retained his isolated and weird character to the last, and to have disappeared mysteriously from the heath, nobody knowing whither - Thomasin remaining a widow. But certain circumstances of serial publication led to this change of intent.

Readers can therefore choose between a choice of endings, and those with an austere artistic code can assume the more consistent conclusion to be the true one.

(p. 402)

Again, in *The Woodlanders* (1887), Hardy had originally intended the novel to end with Giles’ death but when it was finally published as a novel, he had worked out an ending where Fitzpiers and Grace Melbury renew their relationship though Hardy hints that this renewed romance will not last. Hardy himself notes in *The Life And Work Of Thomas Hardy By Thomas Hardy*
regarding this novel that "no happy ending was intended" (Millgate ed. 1985, p. 220).

These are just two instances to highlight the changes that Hardy brought between the serial and novel versions to suit the demands of his Victorian readers, but after a study of his career as a novelist we realised that almost all of Hardy's novels had been subjected to editorial changes.

Section 2
Hardy in the canon

Thomas Hardy's literary output consists of fourteen novels, several collections of poems and a verse-drama *The Dynasts* (1903-1908). Hardy is probably the only Victorian writer whose literary reputation has been constituted through his poems and his novels; but even here there is a clear distinction. Hardy's reputation as a novelist rests mainly on a small group of seven novels which are often referred to as the 'major' novels; the remaining novels have been, by and large, neglected or have been dismissed as 'minor' works.

It is important to bear in mind the circumstances under which Hardy began to write his novels. Today with literary agents and publishing houses teeming the world over, novel-writing may not be as risky a career as it
probably was, more than a hundred years ago, when Hardy first decided to try
his hand at writing novels. What rendered the risk more acute was the fact
that Hardy had been trained as a draughtsman and he had no financial backing
either, his father being a mere stone mason. Hardy realised that though he had
a penchant for writing - in London while training as a draughtsman he had
won a prize for an article he wrote for the Royal Institute of British Architects
(Millgate 1985, p. 44), he needed to identify a common ground of appreciation
with his Victorian readers which would ensure public approval and eventually
monetary success (ibid 105). Towards the realization of this objective, his first
few novels were meant to gauge the tastes of the Victorian reading-public.

Hardy’s first published novel Desperate Remedies was written in the
sensational-novel pattern of Wilkie Collins. It was published in 1871. His second
novel Under the Greenwood Tree (1872) had a rural locale. Hardy seemed
to have realised that these novels with a rural locale had a popularity with the
reading public and the pastoral theme was developed through Far From the
Madding Crowd (1874) upto The Return of the Native, published in 1878.

Within ten years of having started out as a novelist Hardy had
established himself as an important and popular Victorian novelist. Once he
had assured himself of a stable reputation and more importantly, a stable
income, Hardy now began to write about social themes that had all along
remained a concern to him.
As he moved from the pastoral framework to novels with social themes, Hardy questioned Victorian attitudes towards marriage, sex, religion and education. His non-conformist attitude was nowhere more evident than in his two novels *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891), and *Jude the Obscure* (1896). When Hardy subtitled *Tess* "A Pure Woman" he had already placed himself as a target for reviewers and moral custodians of Victorian society. When *Jude* was published a few years later, the hue and cry it raised isolated him from the Church of England, got the book banned from public libraries and made him take the unfortunate decision of having nothing more to do with fiction writing. In his own words in *Life*, "A man must be a fool to deliberately stand up to be shot at" (ibid. 259).

If, during his lifetime, Hardy's works were subjected to alterations by editors on behalf of the reading public, after his death in 1928, the power to comment on and edit his works lay with his publishers (Macmillan mainly), editors of magazines and journals, and increasingly, the literary establishment which had started prescribing Hardy's texts for study in schools and colleges. The problem of what constitutes "literature" is taken up some paragraphs later; the role that the critical establishment plays in defining "literature" has already been dealt with by Peter Widdowson in the chapter "The critical constitution of Thomas Hardy" (pp. 11-76) in *Hardy in History. A Study in Literary Sociology*. Widdowson notes that
the critic, too, is a 'social phenomenon' who selects and organises the facts/texts according to his/her positioning in history... who 'writes' Literature from the perspective of a historical and ideological present

(p. 13).

Today, critical assessment of Hardy as a novelist has largely been directed by what traditional criticism of Hardy's works, limited mainly to academic circles, has decreed as the 'major' novels. Seven of the fourteen novels constitute these 'major' novels. They include *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872), *Far From the Madding Crowd* (1874), *The Return of the Native* (1878), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *The Woodlanders* (1887), *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891) and *Jude the Obscure* (1896). The remaining seven novels have generally been overlooked by the critical industry. This has been effected by dismissing them as 'experiments', or as 'mistakes' but the most potent way in which these works have been consistently kept out of the canon has been by classifying them as 'minor' novels. How did this classification come about and what have its effects been?

Though Hardy started writing novels in 1867 - *The Poor Man and the Lady*, Hardy's first novel was written in the second half of that year but it was never published, and the manuscript was lost or destroyed (Pinion p. 15) - he had not, obviously, planned out his novels to fall within certain categories. It was only in 1912 when a definitive edition of his works was published, by which time he had given up writing novels altogether, that Hardy classified the works into three major groups under:
1. **Novels of Character and Environment**
   - Under the Greenwood Tree
   - Far from the Madding Crowd
   - The Return of the Native
   - The Mayor of Casterbridge
   - The Woodlanders
   - Tess of the d'Urbervilles
   - Jude the Obscure
   - Wessex Tales (short stories)
   - Life's Little Ironies (short stories)

2. **Romances and Fantasies**
   - A Pair of Blue Eyes
   - The Trumpet-Major
   - Two on a Tower
   - The Well-Beloved
   - A Group of Noble Dames (short stories)

3. **Novels of Ingenuity**
   - Desperate Remedies
   - The Hand of Ethelberta
   - A Laodicean
   - A Changed Man (short stories)
Hardy's 1912 classification of the fourteen novels and the short stories into the above three groups seems to have helped direct the growth and development of Hardy studies in later years. (It is important here to make a crucial distinction between Hardy studies and Hardy's popularity among the general reading public. Whereas Hardy studies is a predominantly academic discipline oscillating within and outside the 'canon' of literature based on varying factors, Hardy's popularity among lay readers has often been a constant.)

Critics, biographers and reviewers have all acknowledged and constantly reiterated this three-layered classification in the public mind to order the works into a qualitative hierarchy. Though in later years the classification was reduced to 'major' and 'minor' the sense of a qualitative difference among the novels had already been initiated. In Thomas Hardy: The Critical Heritage (1970) R.G. Cox documents a review which had appeared as early as June 1913: when the new Wessex edition had just been published, this is what Charles Whibley writing in Blackwood's Magazine notes: "...That he himself [Hardy] is conscious of a certain variety in his novels is made evident by his own wise classification, which all his readers will readily accept..." (Cox p. 411).

Whether or not Hardy's classification had been deliberate is something we can only speculate on, given the fact that Hardy was a very secretive person and left little of his working notes, diaries or papers behind
for scholars to go by. However Michael Millgate, Hardy scholar and biographer, refers in his book *Testamentary Acts* (1992) to this three-layered grouping and says that the division is conscious and intentional:

... most significant of all, perhaps, was the division of the fiction volumes into separate categories, ostensibly descriptive but effectively judgemental - an obviously descending order of 'Novels of Character and Environment' (including all novels now conventionally identified as 'major'), 'Romances and Fantasies' and 'Novels of Ingenuity'... It is true that Hardy once told Sir Frederick Macmillan that he had devised the system in order to give journalists and reviewers, 'something to discuss', but the act of classification, with the discriminations it so clearly implied, obviously constituted a conscious gesture of canon-formation...

(p. 119)

What is disturbing here is that it is taken for granted that the two categories - 'Romances and Fantasies' and 'Novels of Ingenuity' - are collapsed into one single group which over time has become the so-called 'minor' novels. The strengths of the 'major' novels and the weaknesses of the 'minor' novels polarise the works into two distinct groups which are constantly reiterated in the public mind through the opinions of critics/reviewers in the press and also by the literary institution(s). Such reminders keep alive the distinction and reinforce their qualitative difference.
Norman Page, one of Hardy’s more popular critics, has in his *Thomas Hardy* (1977), identified the ‘major’ novels on the basis of a few distinguishing traits. These are: a predominantly rural locale, descriptions of working classes, an evocative style and pictorialism or word-painting (Page pp. 36-64). But even Norman Page’s classification of Hardy’s oeuvre into major and minor pays obeisance to Hardy’s 1912 grouping and corresponds to it. The outcome of these and similar critical surveys has been to elevate the ‘novels of character and environment’ into a group of texts, commonly understood as the ‘major’ novels, that are constantly circulated within the canon of literature.

Norman Page also identifies certain flaws which are present in Hardy’s novels but which are less evident in the ‘major’ novels. The flaws are a lack of complexity of plot, laboured dialogues and incredible coincidences. Added to these, Norman Page also detects that the ‘minor’ novels “somehow failed to engage Hardy’s full creative interests and energies...”he [Hardy] shirked or was driven to shirk the deeper issues they [the novels] were capable of raising” (Page p. 90).

Norman Page is not alone in ascribing to the ‘major’ fiction certain homogenising qualities. He is in fact part of a tradition that sought to link up a few novels on the basis of a common framework of themes or qualities popularised by critics like David Cecil and Ian Gregor among others. This has led to the treatment of Hardy as a chronicler of rural lives, as a regional
novelist, sometimes even as a Victorian pessimist or seeing in his works certain repetitive structures. But critical hindsight has proved that this kind of 'essentialism', while creating the impression of a neat and organic whole, need not always work to the benefit of our understanding of an author's oeuvre.

It is interesting to note here how Hardy's 1912 classification of his fictional works into three groups has, over the years, been reduced to a rather simple 'major-minor' classification. Whereas Hardy's evaluation and classification is thematic, the current classification in literary-critical circles (of 'major' and 'minor') is more a value-based polarisation. Who does this valuation and what is its basis?

Two essays in particular have aided this study to a better understanding of how some literary works become a part of the canon of literature. The first is Frank Kermode's essay titled "Institutional Control of Interpretation" (1979) where he argues that 'true interpretation is a consensus among partners'. Kermode explains how the institution that defines and creates the canon is itself created by a tacit understanding and acceptance of some notions - what may be called ideology. This institution controls the choice of texts, ensures that the interpretation of texts falls within a range sanctioned by itself and attends to the training of people who will, in course of time, reproduce and propagate this institution and its ideology. Only such texts as fall within the range sanctioned by the institution gain entry and form a part of the canon.
It sometimes happens that a work challenges the tenets of the institution, and in such a situation the institution deals with the threat by either accepting the new work and granting it a status within the canon or by de-recognising it as having little or no real value. Another possibility also exists for such texts which challenge the tenets of the institution, and this is to make new readings of such marginal texts.

The second essay is Louis Althusser's seminal work titled "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus" (1971). In this essay Althusser states that among the many arms that the state has to ensure its hegemony and power, education and the family are among the most potent. Working at an ideological level (in direct contrast to the Repressive State Apparatus, which functions at a physical level) education fosters in the people notions of 'freedom' and 'conscience' and through these modes the ideology of the state is transmitted and strengthened. The literary institution too works like the state. By certifying or by de-recogising a work, the institution reiterates its own power. The canon is formed by the institution declaring some selected works to have literary value and to be worthy of study within the literary establishment. The work of propagating this canon is carried out directly by teachers within the establishment and by critics/reviewers outside the institution. The works in the canon look back to the institution to grant them authenticity/literary value and through this a cycle is established that is self-propagating and perpetual.
Returning to Thomas Hardy, Peter Widdowson's study is revealing in this respect. In this important work Peter Widdowson examines at length the processes that have contributed to the creation of a certain kind of Hardy. In his detailed study of the ways in which Hardy has been represented, Widdowson shows us how Hardy has been 'constructed' as a rural annalist/pessimist/tragedian. But Widdowson is also aware that

'Thomas Hardy' has been produced and reproduced in history in a certain guise and for a certain purpose by the dominant cultural apparatuses - not, of course, consciously and conspiratorially, but in the silent and naturalising processes which tirelessly confront us with the images of human life and experience we genuinely believe to be true.

(p. 6, emphasis mine)

These naturalising processes have produced a Hardy who, as Widdowson effectively reveals in the book, is either a rural annalist or an author who wrote universal tragedies. This has led to Hardy being included in
the canon of English Literature but only on the basis of certain literary-humanist criteria. Hardy's position within the canon was a precarious one, often being pushed to the margins when criticism sought out qualities other than what Hardy's major novels projected (or what critics thought they projected). The canon sought out the strengths of these major novels - summed up in Norman Page's four traits which identify Hardy's major fiction - and on the basis of these strengths Hardy's position within the canon was ensured but not secured.

This however, is not to imply that the critical industry deliberately cast Hardy in a particular role. Criticism as a discipline sought to appraise novels and works of art by varying parameters at different times. (This point is revealed particularly in this century by the changing critical schools of thought like New Criticism, Reader-Oriented theories, New Historicism, Deconstruction etc. and its influence in 'creating' literature. Also refer to Barbara Hernstein Smith's article "Contingencies of Value" in *Critical Inquiry* Sept.1983, where she mentions that one of the most fundamental characteristics of 'literary value' is its mutability and diversity.) As a result Hardy's works were evaluated by varying standards at different times and his position, consequently, within the canon of English Literature, has been a changing one. In the one hundred and thirty years since Hardy began writing his novels, available and popular criticism has influenced and directed our understanding of Hardy and has presented a picture of Hardy that, though not complete, is often mistaken for one.
Another crucial aspect that has contributed substantially to the 'creation' of a certain kind of Hardy is the role played by publishing houses in making available only certain texts from an author's oeuvre. This point is dealt with, again by Widdowson, in the chapter titled "Thomas Hardy' in Education" (pp. 77-92). Widdowson lays bare the truth that "what publishers make available delimits the syllabus" - a point that the conditions under which the present study has been carried out aptly illustrates.

The present study of The Well-Beloved is based on Macmillan's Greenwood Edition which in turn is based on the 1903 edition of the novel. An edition of The Well-Beloved containing both the serial and novel versions of the story is even now, at the time of writing this thesis, not freely available in India. A protracted search for such an edition containing both endings in colleges and universities in Chennai and Hyderabad proved to be futile and such a copy (Hillis Miller's 1976 edition of the novel) was finally located at the British Library, Trivandrum. Tom Hetherington's edition of the novel (Oxford, 1986) had to be specially procured from outside India. Major publishing houses in India are yet to make this novel freely available and little need be said about smaller publishing companies. All this proves how, often, non-academic factors influence the presence and position of an author on the curriculum and contribute towards the prevalence of a certain view of the author among the reading public.

Publishing houses would not like to invest in printing and making
available texts that are not prescribed because that would be "bad economic policy". And where courses in British or Victorian or nineteenth-century fiction require texts on Hardy the logical thing to do would be to prescribe texts that are readily available. When texts have been prescribed and when college and university libraries have invested their funds in purchasing a certain text, it is only "natural" that they prescribe this text for some years till the investment has paid off. John Rodden's example in "Reputation, Canon-Formation, Pedagogy: George Orwell in the Classroom" (College English 53:5, Sept. 1991) clearly brings out the economic factor that is also an important consideration:

when a high school has purchased six hundred copies of a book, it will not only use them year after year, but often assigns them, round robin, to several different grades throughout the year, thus maximising their economic value through continuous use - hence the practical payoff in investing in an author acceptable at many levels.

(p. 522)

The fallout of such a policy, in Hardy's case, is that the 'minor' novels continue to remain minor and neglected. Caught in such a bind between economic compulsions and academic and scholarly considerations the fact, in most cases, is that it is often the economic factor that leads to the choice of texts.

The status of an author within the canon is one that is decided
and enforced - again, naturally and in ways which conceal their tremendous ideological power for persuasion - primarily by the academy, that is, institutions of learning. The work of propagating a canon is carried on directly by teachers within the establishment and by critics outside it. It is possible for an author to be on the margins or sometimes even outside the canon while enjoying a popularity. The distinction here is between being a classic author and a popular one. Thomas Hardy's is one such case.

Outside the academy, Thomas Hardy and his works enjoy a popularity among people that is reflected in the increased sale of his books, the increase in the number of visitors who come to the 'Hardy country' looking for places from the fictional 'Wessex' of his novels and from the growing interest evinced in movements like the Thomas Hardy Society. But popularity need not be synonymous with a canonical status and there is a subtle way in which, sometimes, popular opinions, intuitively formed, are awed and overwhelmed by seemingly better-informed ideas emanating from the academy. This seems to have worked in Hardy's case and this interference from the academy has been responsible for the stock responses to Hardy. Such responses, deliberate or otherwise, have stifled the growth and understanding of Hardy's multifaceted personality as an author. It seems only fair that the academy should take the initiative in setting right this balance and towards this end it is only appropriate that we now shift our focus to a study of the 'minor' novels.
The 'minor' novels, as criticism has classified them, are *Desperate Remedies* (1871), *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873), *The Hand of Ethelberta* (1876), *The Trumpet-Major* (1880), *A Laodicean* (1881), *Two on a Tower* (1882), and *The Well-Beloved* (1897). These seven novels constitute a half of the total output of Hardy's creative endeavours in fiction. They were published during the span of his career as a novelist and extend from *Desperate Remedies*, his first novel, published in 1871, to *The Well-Beloved*, his last one, published in 1897. There have been a variety of reasons that have been put forward to relegate these novels to the background of Hardy's achievements in fiction, but the one commonly advanced is that these novels are artistically wanting and thematically unsound - the very reasons given for *The Well-Beloved* being grouped under the minor novels.

Using Lacanian psychoanalysis this study hopes to show that Hardy's last published novel was by no means his least significant.

An important reason for the choice of psychoanalysis as a critical tool for analysing *The Well-Beloved* was that Hardy believed that "the serious interest of *The Well-Beloved* lies in its psychological exploration" (quoted from *Life* by Rosemary Sumner p.36). Also, a survey of Hardy criticism reveals that psychoanalysis was never a popular school of criticism with Hardy critics. Nevertheless Hardy's understanding of the working of the human psyche is a point that many critics appreciate in the 'major' novels. The present study
attempts to prove that Hardy’s ability to understand the working of the human mind was just as good in the “minor” novels too. In the roughly one hundred and thirty years that Hardy criticism has been in existence, Hardy’s reputation has seldom been constant within the literary canon. Having discussed how works become ‘Literature’ within the academic institution in the earlier paragraphs, the remaining portion of this chapter tries to trace, in a general manner, the course of Hardy criticism during the author’s lifetime and after his death.

For most writers in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the power of the few literary journals was one that could break or mould them. John Keats is probably the classic case of an author whose life, in literal and figurative terms, had been stifled by critics and editors of these journals and this is aptly illustrated by this quotation from Byron’s poem *John Keats*:

Who killed John Keats?
‘I,’ said the Critical Quarterly
So savage and Tartarly,
“Twas one of my feats.

Hardy’s experience with editors and critics was not very different from Keats’. The most damaging blows to Hardy’s reputation, during the author’s lifetime, came from critics who thought Hardy was deliberately being
pervasive by describing in his novels subjects that were not meant for family reading. Added to these there were comments of influential critics like Henry James who found fault with Hardy's style of writing - a charge that was to remain a constant obstacle to Hardy's reputation as a writer of some importance - and thought that this was an author who was merely trying to imitate George Eliot. The fact that Hardy decided to give up writing novels in the face of such criticism lent credibility, in a way, to these charges. But, on the other hand, we may speculate that had he continued to write, the results may have been positive for his reputation as a novelist.

In the decades following Hardy's death, his works were not favourably received by the academic institution. In 1932, T.S.Eliot's lectures at the University of Virginia which came to be published under the title "After Strange Gods" had a negative effect on Hardy's growth. Eliot says:

The work of the late Thomas Hardy represents an interesting example of a powerful personality uncurbed by institutional attachment or by submission to any objective beliefs; unhampered by any ideas, or even by what sometimes acts as a partial restraint upon inferior writers, the desire to please a large public.....He was indifferent even to the prescripts of good writing: he wrote sometimes overpoweringly well, but always very carelessly, at times his style touches sublimity without ever having passed through the stage of being good.

(pp. 54-55)
Those familiar with Hardy's life and work will be surprised by the charges that Eliot makes against Hardy. While it may be true that Hardy's style of writing is open to debate on its quality, depending on the proclivities of the critic, it is most unfair to Hardy to say that he wrote carelessly. Biographers and students of Hardy have stressed the fact that Hardy agonised over his writing, spending days sometimes, reworking drafts, a point noted by Tom Hetherington in his "Note On The Text" (pp. xxix - xxxiii) to *The Well-Beloved*.

Yet another damaging blow to Hardy's reputation within the canon was delivered by F.R. Leavis's decision to exclude Hardy from 'the Great Tradition'. As R.P.Bilan observes in *The Literary Criticism of F.R.Leavis* (1979), Leavis's exclusion of Hardy was "intimately connected to personal qualities that he [Leavis] admires in the artist's character", the personal quality under discussion here being the ability of novelists to put forward a response to life that is "unquestionably positive...and who affirm - even if in an exploratory manner - positive values". R. P.Bilan mentions that such a criterion would naturally rule out Thomas Hardy because "in Hardy the positive forces of life are almost inevitably destroyed" (p. 127). While all this goes to show the debatable nature of 'objective criticism', the damage had been done to Hardy's reputation. With the advent of New Criticism Hardy's literary reputation further dipped. Particularly damaging were the pre-conceived ideas about Hardy's "laboured" style and "difficult" style of writing which did not find favour with this school's critical framework of close reading of texts. It was only in the
seventies, with the advent of 'critical theory', that Hardy's works began to be understood and read from various critical positions.

During all these changing fortunes in Hardy's literary reputation, there were the occasional and important studies of Hardy's works based on different psychoanalytic theories. Such studies very often dealt with the 'major' novels and more often than not, certain recurrent themes. In this connection it was quite striking the way clinical psychoanalysis tried to justify a person's ailments and show that they were not isolated, inexplicable and 'aberrant' developments but that they were, rather, the results of experiences that were rooted in the real world but which followed the dictates of the subject's desire.

A second reason for using psychoanalysis was the fact that this school of criticism depended almost entirely only on the discourse of the person or the text under study. In contrast to this, other schools, for example biographical criticism, laid emphasis on material outside the actual discourse. Especially with Hardy, the biographical material available was open to debate as to its authenticity. This is borne out by Michael Millgate's revelation of Thomas Hardy as the real author of The Life and work of Thomas Hardy 1840-1928 (1962). So also the controversy in the seventies initiated by Lois Deacon's Providence and Mr.Hardy (1966), where she proposes that Hardy fathered a son through his cousin Tryphena Sparks. This was disproved by Robert Gittings in an appendix to Young Thomas Hardy (1978) (quoted in An Annotated
Bibliography of Thomas Hardy p. 16) These and other such conflicting material - for example James Gibson's article in The Thomas Hardy Journal, May 1994, critically evaluates Martin Seymour Smith's latest biography of Hardy and lists its shortcomings. The credentials of a school like Psychoanalysis are particularly excellent in this context especially because it goes strictly by the information that is provided by the subject under study, normally the patient, but here, in this study, the text.

An important reason for choosing Lacanian psychoanalysis was that it seemed to be the most recent of the schools of analysis, within psychoanalysis itself, and it seemed to hold the potential for making some significant contribution to Hardy criticism. The difficulty in using Freudian criticism was that it was predominantly a male-oriented critique. A Jungian analysis of The Well-Beloved, as Chapter II shows, was already available and thus the choice was narrowed down to Lacanian psychoanalysis.

Lacanian psychoanalysis is a daunting literary/critical rapid in which astute minds have floundered. Keeping in view this fact and also the fact that the exact interpretation of many of Lacan's original insights have been limited on account of the problems in translating a work as resonant as Lacan's is, philosophically, critically and from its position as literature (Wilden viii), this study restricts itself to a very modest portion of Lacan's oeuvre and this is the theory of the three orders. This study proposes that the characters studied here move from the Imaginary order to the Symbolic order through the intervention of
the father-figure. The Symbolic order, according to this study, is limited to the sphere of social relations and a character enters this phase of social transaction as a conscious 'subject' only when he/she can break away from an Imaginary unity with the first object of its desire - the mother.

One of the criticisms levelled against psychoanalysis is that it uses a branch of knowledge, normally applied to human subjects, to interpret literary characters (Emanuel, Berman eds. pp. 202-216). The present research justifies the using of Lacan's theory of the three orders on the basis that literary characters too, though they have had no childhood, are in a process of growth, increasing in stature and in our understanding of them as characters as they develop through actions and speech-acts and so they too, in a way, may be compared to human subjects, as they evolve between the covers of the book.

Psychoanalysis is by no means the final word on The Well-Beloved. There are other themes in the novel that have been dealt with by other critical studies and more themes will continue to surface as newer and more appropriate critical tools are deployed. But the motivating reason for using Psychoanalysis as a critical tool for this study was an intuitive feeling of its appropriateness to The Well-Beloved. This intuition will be vindicated in the following chapters which try to explain the logic of psychoanalysis (in much the same way as Freud tried to interpret dreams and slips of the tongue). In the process this dissertation hopes to show that Hardy's last novel is by no means the least among his works.