



Thomas Hardy and Desire: Conceptions of the Self

Jane Thomas

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At the centre of Hardy's aesthetic practice is the recognition of desire as a necessary and fundamental condition of human existence. Yearning, disappointment, frustration and loss determine the relationship of his characters and poetic personae to the world and the systems in which their sense of self is expressed and constituted. Yet his work also explores the positive, dynamic and productive dimension of desire. Structured around the themes of home and homelessness; eroticism; Poor Men, Ladies and social aspiration; the transgressivity of cross dressing; the creation of 'sapphic spaces'; aesthetic desire and its fulfilment in the achieved work of art, *Thomas Hardy and Desire* demonstrates Hardy's commitment, as an artist in pursuit of 'a way to the better', to exploring how the energy of desire pushes beyond the boundaries of class, sexuality, gender and even language itself to bring new ways of being and doing into the realm of knowledge.

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