

Englische Literaturwissenschaft

Prof. Dr. Stefan Horlacher

**Questions of Identity in Thomas Hardy's
Novels *Jude the Obscure* and
*The Mayor of Casterbridge***

Wed (3) GÖR 229

HS: 7 KP

SiH: 3 KP

What this seminar proposes to undertake is a) to give an introduction to one of the greatest novelists in English literature, b) to analyse two representative novels (*Jude the Obscure* and *The Mayor of Casterbridge*) with a view to c) the concepts or notions of identity, d) the social, legal and economic systems, e) the gender hierarchies and f) the conceptions of sexuality presented in the texts, including the notions of "New Man" and "New Woman." Most critics tend to ignore the eponymous hero of the novel and concentrate instead on Sue Bridehead, "perhaps the most remarkable feminine portrait in the English novel" (F. R. Southernington). In addition to this, we shall ask whether Hardy's novels deny the possibility of a meaningful existence or whether – in an existential and linguistic turn – they argue that it is absence which founds the *conditio humana*, and that it is lack which guarantees our freedom.

Given the neglect of – or even discrimination against – the male protagonist, it seems appropriate to shift the focus of critical attention. What applies to *Jude the Obscure* is equally valid for Hardy's novel *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, a novel remarkable for the way in which Hardy contrasts a pre-modern to a modern economy and a static to a flexible construction of identity.

A syllabus and a bibliography will be available at the first meeting.

Regular participation and the oral presentation of a short paper are expected.

Participants are required to have read *Jude the Obscure* before the beginning of the seminar.

Registration is required, so please sign up on a list at Mrs. Schmidt's office.

Recommended reading:

Thomas Hardy. *Jude the Obscure*. Penguin: London, 1998.

Thomas Hardy. *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. Penguin: London, 1997.