

INTRODUCTION

The Woodlanders appeared first in serialized form in *Macmillan's Magazine* (May 1886 to April 1887) and *Harper's Bazar* (15 May 1886 to 9 April 1887). The English first edition in three volumes was published by Macmillan on 15 March 1887. Numerous reprints and editions of the novel followed within the author's lifetime and it has never been out of print. As pointed out in the General Editor's Preface, this edition aims to reflect Hardy's original artistic intention and represent the novel as it would have been initially read by his Victorian readers. The accompanying textual apparatus allows the modern reader to trace the novel's evolution, not only up to its presentation in the first English edition, but through succeeding volumes over the next quarter of a century for which Hardy supplied revisions (to both substantives and accidentals).

The Genesis and First Publication of the Novel

Hardy's eleventh published novel, *The Woodlanders* was the book he once claimed to like 'as a story, the best of all'.¹ This does not mean that he necessarily found the novel's gestation either easy or pleasurable. Indeed, certain remarks he made whilst writing it suggest that he found the process far from pleasurable. Although he probably intended the remark more generally, it was to the time that he was working on *The Woodlanders* that he referred with his comment: 'Hardy by this time had quite resigned himself to novel-writing as a trade, which he had never wanted to carry on as such. He now went about the business mechanically'.² The original idea for 'a woodland story' seems to have been in Hardy's mind in 1874 or early 1875 but was put aside at that time. He took up the story in 1885, noting: 'November 17th–19th. In a fit of depression, as if enveloped in a leaden cloud. Have gone back to my original plot for "The Woodlanders" after all. Am

¹ Michael Millgate, *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1984) (hereafter *LW*), p. 520.

² *LW*, p. 189.

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working from half-past ten a.m. to twelve p.m., to get my mind made up on the details'.³ This gives an insight into his mood at that point, but also bears witness to the time and effort he took in order to begin it on good foundations, and to his desire to do so.

After a decade either lying dormant or slowly incubating in his imagination, the novel finally became a reality as a result of an approach by Macmillan the publisher. In August 1884, we are told, 'Off and on he was now writing *The Mayor of Casterbridge*; but before leaving London he agreed with the Macmillans to take in hand later a story of twelve numbers for their magazine, no time being fixed. It came out two years later under the title of *The Woodlanders*.'⁴ Although Mowbray Morris was editor of *Macmillan's Magazine* when the story eventually began to appear in May 1886, early negotiations over *The Woodlanders* were carried out with Frederick Macmillan and John Morley (1st Viscount Morley of Blackburn, the Liberal politician, who was editor of the magazine 'for eighteen months in 1883 to 1885').⁵

The initial agreement was made between Hardy and Alexander Macmillan when Hardy 'called in person', but no record was made, which thus necessitated Frederick Macmillan asking Hardy what details had been settled concerning date of publication and price:

I was delighted to find when I came back from America last autumn that you had arranged to give us a novel for 'Macmillan's Magazine'.

Unfortunately as you called in person no letter was written you & my partners cannot find any memorandum made at the time as to the date at which the publication of the story was to begin & the price to be paid for it. Perhaps you will kindly let me know what was arranged.

My reason for writing to you now is that we have had the offer of a story for publication at the end of this year, but if that is the date for yours we shall not consider it. My uncle has an idea however that you spoke as though you would not be sorry to have a longer time for the completion of your novel & if this is the case it might be a convenience to you if we could sandwich in something else between Mrs. Ritchie's novel & yours. Will you kindly let me know how this is?⁶

³ *LW*, p. 182.

⁴ *LW*, p. 175.

⁵ Simon Nowell-Smith, *Letters to Macmillan* (London: Macmillan, 1967) (hereafter Nowell-Smith), p. 161.

⁶ Letter dated 17 March 1885, now in DCM.

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On 15 October the previous year Hardy had received a letter from John Morley: ‘We shall speedily want a novel for Macmillan’s Magazine. May I ask whether your Muse (if Fiction be a Muse) will help us? We should all much like it, if you are in a position to open negotiations.’⁷ Dale Kramer comments on this: ‘It does not appear that Hardy answered Morley’s letter, or that Morley told any of his colleagues that he had written it.’⁸ This is quite feasible, but it is also possible that this letter represents the company’s first approach to Hardy, and that Hardy’s reply to it was in the form of a personal visit, as he was in London at the time. Such an interpretation depends of course upon how long Hardy was in London: the phrase ‘before leaving London’ is not very specific, nor is Frederick Macmillan’s ‘last autumn’, both of which might allow Hardy to have visited Macmillan in October in response to Morley’s letter. Whatever the truth, neither the case of Morley’s letter nor that of Alexander Macmillan’s undocumented meeting gives a favourable impression of the efficiency of Macmillan’s office systems or internal communications.

Hardy wrote in reply to Frederick Macmillan’s letter (from Shire Hall Place, Dorchester, 18 March 1885):

On referring to my diary I find that the arrangement I made with Mr Macmillan Senr. & Mr Craik was that the novel should begin about next January (the exact month being left undecided) – that the price should be £600, for 12 numbers – this to cover Macmillan’s Magazine serial rights only – that the question of your publishing the 3 volume form of the story should be left open for the present.

It would suit me just as well – indeed rather better – if my story were to begin, say, about March or April instead of January. The space thus gained between Mrs Ritchie’s story & mine might afford room for the other novel. Therefore I hope you will consider the Magazine’s convenience in that matter, & let me begin whenever the interposed story ends.⁹

Matters seem to have been left thus until it became necessary to be more specific about the starting date. Hardy received a letter from Morley on 25

⁷ Letter in DCM.

⁸ Dale Kramer, ‘Revisions and Vision: Thomas Hardy’s *The Woodlanders*’, *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 75 (1971), p. 199.

⁹ BL, Add. MSS 54923, fos. 9–10; *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy*, ed. Richard L. Purdy, Michael Millgate and Keith Wilson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978–2012) (hereafter *CL*), 1, pp. 131–2.

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November,¹⁰ the exact contents of which are not known, but it is possible that this letter was prompted by an imminent shortage of magazine copy, as the ‘offer of a story for publication at the end of this year’ had not been fulfilled. Whatever the precise facts of the case, Hardy wrote to Frederick Macmillan on 27 November outlining his progress with the novel, and giving his own thoughts about the starting date, pointing out a particular difficulty arising from the serialization of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* at the beginning of the year (1886):

I have been working at the story for some little time – though it has hardly passed out of the chaotic stage as yet. As far as I am personally concerned I could begin in the March, or April number, at latest. But a story long ago promised to the Graphic makes its appearance there in January, ending in May. I had hoped it would have come earlier, but the illustrations caused a delay. Do you think the slight overlapping of the two stories may be disregarded? My own feeling is that it would be better to keep them clear of each other: but to do this we should be brought on to June. Therefore though in my own judgment June would be desirable I leave the choice of date entirely in your hands – especially as I may have put you to some inconvenience already by delay. To set against this however there has been the advantage of a longer time for incubation – a great gain, for I am very anxious that the story may be in every way worthy of the high character of the magazine.¹¹

The last sentence here may seem to contain a mild attempt at flattery, but together with the first sentence of the letter it reveals that Hardy had already spent a considerable amount of time and care planning *The Woodlanders*.

As a compromise between running *The Woodlanders* at the same time as the *Graphic* serialization of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and delaying until June, Frederick Macmillan settled on May for the first instalment.¹² Hardy accepted that date and offered Macmillan the serial rights for America also for ‘some moderate additional sum per month’.¹³ Macmillan apparently did not respond to this offer (or Harper offered more attractive terms), so the novel appeared in America in *Harper’s Bazar*.

Hardy sent copy to the publishers in monthly instalments, although the fair copy had often been made beyond the end of the particular instalment

¹⁰ LW, p. 182.

¹¹ BL, Add. MSS 54923, fos. 11–12; CL 1, pp. 138–9.

¹² Letter 3 December 1885, now in DCM.

¹³ Letter to F. Macmillan, 21 January 1886, BL, Add. MSS 54923, fos. 13–14; CL 1, p. 141.

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due to be sent. The manuscript which was used as printer's copy for *Macmillan's Magazine*, marked with compositorial stints and containing a considerable number of leaves wholly or partly in Emma Hardy's hand (some 128 out of 498), is extant in its entirety. The first instalment was sent to Macmillan in March 1886. Hardy evidently left the choice of title to the publishers. Frederick Macmillan wrote:

I read the first instalment of your story last night & was greatly delighted at the way in which it starts, but it is impossible from what is before us to form any opinion as to the relative pertinence of the two titles you suggest. I have, however, no hesitation in giving my preference for 'The Woodlanders' as being in itself a more attractive title than 'Fitzpiers at Hintock', & I find that our Editor Mr. Mowbray Morris has the same feeling. As therefore you kindly offer us the choice we will adopt 'The Woodlanders'.¹⁴

The continuation of this letter raises the question of editorial influence in a wider sense than choosing a title:

In the proof which Mr. Morris returns this morning I notice that he has marked one or two little things several of them obviously printers' blunders. He has also marked with his pencil 'horizontalty' an unusual & perhaps not very pleasant looking word, and 'Evidence' used as a verb. But you must understand that these are merely suggestions and that we have no desire to 'Edit' your work in any impertinent way.

'Horizontalty' was revised for *Macmillan's Magazine* (though not for the *Harper's Bazar* and American first edition texts, copy for which may have been already posted to America), but 'evidenced' remains in all texts. It may therefore be possible to take Macmillan's assurance of non-interference as genuinely meant and assume that editorial changes may only have been made with authorial permission. Nevertheless, Mowbray Morris certainly made decisions concerning how the material was to be divided into its monthly instalments, and he was not above offering quite pointed advice on the novel's tone. On 19 September 1886 he wrote to Hardy:

I have had to cut the Woodlanders (which is, I think, a particularly good number) short at chapter twenty-six – as it happens, a very convenient resting place: and I send you the remainder of the proof, which may be useful.

¹⁴ Letter 29 March 1886, now in DCM.

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You will, I am sure, not mind my giving you a gentle hint on one small matter – the affair between Miss Damson and the Doctor. I am not afraid (as you may imagine) for my own morals: but we have, I fancy, rather a queer public: pious Scottish souls who take offence wondrous easily ... Of course, it is very annoying to have to reckon for such asses: still, I can't help it; an Editor must be commercial as well as literary; and the magazine has scarcely so abundant a sale that I can afford to disregard any section of its readers. So, I think, if you can contrive not to bring the fair Miss Suke to too open shame, it would be as well. Let the human frailty be construed mild.¹⁵

The evidence of the manuscript shows that Hardy was quite capable of editing his work himself to suit the sensibilities of the magazine readership, and Morris's altering of instalment divisions does not mean that material was omitted, merely that it was held back until the following month. However, there may be instances (for example, a lengthy passage concerning an episode in church, from edited text 321–2) where material was omitted by reason of authorial artistic considerations or because of an editorial decision, whether based on fear of upsetting readers or the purely practical motive of having insufficient magazine space.

Hardy maintained the same time schedule for submission for the third instalment – that is, Macmillan received in May copy for the July issue. He had given his address as the Saville Club (on fo. 133 verso of the manuscript), and Frederick Macmillan wrote on 31 May, 'I have taken a note of your new address and have told the printers to send you a proof of Part III of "The Woodlanders" – They promise it today.'¹⁶

This was evidently a temporary address, because letters written by Hardy in June bear the address '14 Bedford Place, Russell Square'; a letter from Frederick Macmillan at this time also gives this address and the fourth instalment (on MS fo. 133A) requests that the proofs should be sent to

¹⁵ Letter in DCM. With one exception, all texts of *The Woodlanders* within Hardy's lifetime have chapters numbered (usually in roman numerals) from 1 to 48. The exception is the first edition, which, being copy-text for the present edition, has passed this on. Where there are references to chapters beyond 16 and confusion is possible, the 'three-volume' chapter reference is given in brackets; for example, xxvi (2.x) means chapter 26 in other versions is chapter ten of Volume 2 of E1 and the edited text.

¹⁶ Letter 31 May 1886, in DCM.

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Hardy at '28 Upper Bedford Place, Bloomsbury'.¹⁷ Although most of *The Woodlanders* was written while Hardy was at Max Gate (his house on the outskirts of Dorchester), he was writing during his stay in London, as is shown by his remark in a letter to F. Macmillan in June 1886, 'I hope to call on you soon; but I have put off all such pleasures till I get a safe distance ahead with the Woodlanders'; and the request for proofs suggests that he also carried out his proofreading obligation there.¹⁸

While still in London Hardy had written to George Gissing, 1 July, mentioning *The Woodlanders*: 'It would have made a beautiful story if I could have carried out my idea of it: but somehow I come so far short of my intention that I fear it will be quite otherwise – unless I pick up towards the end.'¹⁹ There may be a certain amount of false modesty in these words, but they indicate he is still wrestling with shaping his material; and it may be that he needed to be away from London the better to concentrate on that. The fifth instalment requests (on MS fo. 180) that proofs be sent to Max Gate, which means that Hardy had either returned to Dorset by this time or expected to return very soon, which is confirmed by his autobiographical comment: 'At the end of July they returned to Max Gate, where he went on with *The Woodlanders*.'²⁰

On 4 February he noted: '8.20 p.m. Finished "The Woodlanders". Thought I should feel glad, but I do not particularly, – though relieved.'²¹ He sent the final instalment to Macmillan on 8 February 1887, which, in conjunction with the dates for the first and third instalments, shows that a similar timetable was probably adhered to throughout.

That this schedule was not influenced by consideration of the novel's publication in book form is evident because no decision had been made concerning its book publication when Hardy had agreed to undertake a story for *Macmillan's Magazine*, and Macmillan did not agree until February 1887 to publish *The Woodlanders* in book form. Moreover, the exact amount

¹⁷ Letters dated 6 and 9 June, BL, Add. MSS 54923, fos. 15 and 17; *CL* 1, pp. 146 and 148. Macmillan's letter is in DCM.

¹⁸ Letter 9 June 1886; *CL* 1, p. 148.

¹⁹ *CL* 1, p. 149.

²⁰ *LW*, p. 190.

²¹ *LW*, p. 191.

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of royalty was not finally fixed until 6 May (i.e. after the novel had already been published in three volumes). After he had sent the final batch of copy for the novel's serialization Hardy wrote to Frederick Macmillan (from Max Gate, 9 February 1887):

I sent the end of 'The Woodlanders' to the editor yesterday, & the question now arises of the publication of the story in book-form. You inquired of me some time ago on the matter, & should you wish to undertake it I shall have much pleasure in coming to terms with you if possible.

I cannot give you any idea as to the probable demand. I am expecting a good sale – on the other hand my last story did not sell so largely as it might have done – owing, I was told, to the plot not being romantic, nor the accessories rural. As the reverse is the case with the present one we may anticipate better things.

I imagine there is matter enough for 3 volumes – though in reading the chapters through I may perhaps shorten passages that seem tedious.²²

Macmillan agreed, and on 15 February 1887 Hardy replied to his letter:

I am in receipt of your letter of yesterday – & am quite satisfied with the terms you suggest. I may say that I have received various sums for the library edn. of my past 3 vol. novels, from £500 to £200, but as it is 4 years since I published a novel in 3 volumes (the last filling only two) I do not know what the present one is worth, & feel the force of what you say as to the uncertainty. I am therefore quite willing to let the payment be based on the sale – if you would prefer that alternative.

However this may be, I will regard the question settled as to the book being published by you, & will send a revised copy of the story for the printers in the course of a few days, there being a few discrepancies here and there in the serial issue. Perhaps you will kindly let me have the magazine proofs of the concluding chapters for this purpose.

With regard to the date I am rather bound by Harpers, who complain if we are very early on this side. I should think March 15th a suitable time – if you see no objection.²³

The penultimate paragraph establishes fairly explicitly the precise relationship between the *Macmillan's Magazine* text and that of the first edition; and the final sentence indicates the close liaison with the American

²² BL, Add. MSS 54923, fo. 20; CL 1, p. 161.

²³ BL, Add. MSS 54923, fos. 22–3; CL 1, pp. 161–2.

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publisher, who would be concerned about how the English publication date might affect their own arrangements. A detailed account of the novel's genesis from manuscript to first edition (and beyond) is given by Dale Kramer.²⁴

The novel was published in three volumes by Macmillan on 15 March 1887, the date Hardy had originally suggested (and the day after the Hardys had set out on a trip to Italy). Macmillan evidently preferred 11 March but were delayed by technical difficulties. Frederick Macmillan wrote (24 February 1887), 'I find that it will not be possible to get "The Woodlanders" printed and bound by March 11th & we have therefore arranged to publish on the 15th the date originally suggested by you. I have told my Harpers agent.'²⁵

The English first edition was issued at 31s. 6d. A second (revised) edition in one volume (which used revised plates of a Colonial Edition) came out in August of the same year (price 6s.), and was reprinted in 1889 (price 3s. 6d.).²⁶ The amount of royalty agreed upon was seven shillings per three-volume set and 'one-sixth' for the second edition. Macmillan wrote: 'In view of your generous offer to make the author's payment for the 3 volume Edition of "The Woodlanders" dependent on the sales, I write to propose that we should give you a royalty of 7/- (seven shillings) per copy on all that we sell of that Edition and if this is satisfactory I shall be happy to send a cheque immediately for the copies already sold.' He also reported that 'the sale of "The Woodlanders" shows signs of going on though not as fast as I could wish. Mudie has had 25 copies since you were here.'²⁷ On 9 May 1887, Hardy received 'Fifty Pounds making in all Six Hundred Pounds for the right to print "The Woodlanders" in "Macmillan's Magazine";²⁸ on the same day Macmillan paid him fifty pounds for the right to print and publish *The Woodlanders* in their Colonial library (to which sum he had agreed in a postscript to his letter of 15 February).²⁹

²⁴ Kramer, 'Revisions and Vision', pp. 195–230 and 248–82.

²⁵ Letter in DCM.

²⁶ *Macmillan's Bibliographical Catalogue 1843–1889* (1891), p. 514 and p. 628.

²⁷ Frederick Macmillan to Hardy, 5 May 1887, DCM; and Hardy to Macmillan, 6 May 1887, BL, Add. MSS 54923, fo. 24; *CL* 1, p. 164.

²⁸ BL, Add. MSS 54923, fo. 26.

²⁹ BL, Add. MSS 54923, fo. 27; *CL* 1, p. 162. Macmillan's Colonial Library contained a number of contemporary works in an edition 'intended for circulation only in India and the British Colonies' (as declared in each of its volumes). All of Hardy's works of fiction were eventually included.

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The negative comments made by Hardy during the time he was writing the novel are counterbalanced to an extent by his verdict on what he had achieved in 1887: ‘The year has been a fairly friendly one to me. It showed me and Em the south of Europe ... It has given me some new acquaintances, too, and enabled me to hold my own in fiction, whatever that may be worth, by the completion of “The Woodlanders”.’³⁰ The somewhat dismissive ‘whatever that may be worth’ shows a man not getting carried away; but, now that the toil is over, there is the sense that he takes some satisfaction in his creation, confirmed by his later admission to like it ‘*as a story*, the best of all’.

Contemporary Reaction to the Novel

Contemporary reviews of the first edition of *The Woodlanders* were broadly complimentary concerning Hardy’s achievement, but not without some quite specific criticisms. R. H. Hutton described it as ‘a very powerful book, and as disagreeable as it is powerful’;³¹ and his words were echoed by William Wallace, who wrote: ‘*The Woodlanders* is decidedly the best and most powerful work Mr Hardy has produced since *Far from the Madding Crowd*. With the possible exception, also, of *Two on a Tower*, it will be regarded as his most disagreeable book.’³² A review in the *Dublin Daily Express* stated: ‘The moral tone of the book is decidedly bad. We are introduced to all sorts of meanness and wrongdoings of various kinds, but there is no retribution, nor even repentance, and the result is, therefore, not only disagreeable, but false to nature, for the instinctive demand for what is called poetic justice is based upon moral truth.’³³

The aspect that they and others found particularly ‘disagreeable’ was the portrayal of Fitzpiers, which they might have accepted had Hardy explicitly condemned him, his actions and his morals. As Hutton comments: ‘It is a picture of shameless falsehood, levity and infidelity, followed by no true repentance, yet crowned at the end with perfect success; nor does Mr Hardy seem to paint his picture in any spirit of indignation that redeems

³⁰ *LW*, p. 212.

³¹ *Spectator*, 26 March 1887, p. 419. Full reference to newspaper and magazine reviews is given here only for the first instance.

³² *Academy*, 9 April 1887, pp. xxxi, 251.

³³ *Dublin Daily Express*, 1 April 1887.