

THE CAMBRIDGE
COMPANION TO
THOMAS
HARDY

EDITED BY
DALE KRAMER



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, United Kingdom
<http://www.cup.cam.ac.uk>
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA
<http://www.cup.org>
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

© Cambridge University Press 1999

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1999

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

Typeset in Sabon 10/13 pt. [CE]

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress cataloguing in publication data

The Cambridge companion to Thomas Hardy / edited by Dale Kramer.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0 521 56202 3 – ISBN 0 521 56692 4 (paperback)

1. Hardy, Thomas, 1840–1928 – Criticism and interpretation.

I. Kramer, Dale, 1936– .

PR4754.C23 1999

823'.8–dc21 98–38088 CIP

ISBN 0 521 56202 3 hardback

ISBN 0 521 56692 4 paperback

CONTENTS

<i>Notes on contributors</i>	<i>page</i> xi
<i>Preface</i>	xv
<i>A chronology of Hardy's life and Publications</i>	xviii
<i>List of abbreviations and texts</i>	xxiii
1 Thomas Hardy: the biographical sources MICHAEL MILLGATE	I
2 Wessex SIMON GATRELL	19
3 Art and aesthetics NORMAN PAGE	38
4 The influence of religion, science, and philosophy on Hardy's writings ROBERT SCHWEIK	54
5 Hardy and critical theory PETER WIDDOWSON	73
6 Thomas Hardy and matters of gender KRISTIN BRADY	93
7 Variants on genre: <i>The Return of the Native</i> , <i>The Mayor of Casterbridge</i> , <i>The Hand of Ethelberta</i> JAKOB LOTHE	112
8 The patriarchy of class: <i>Under the Greenwood Tree</i> , <i>Far from the Madding Crowd</i> , <i>The Woodlanders</i> PENNY BOUMELHA	130

CONTENTS

9	The radical aesthetic of <i>Tess of the d'Urbervilles</i> LINDA M. SHIRES	145
10	Hardy and readers: <i>Jude the Obscure</i> DALE KRAMER	164
11	Hardy as a nineteenth-century poet DENNIS TAYLOR	183
12	The modernity of Thomas Hardy's poetry JOHN PAUL RIQUELME	204
	<i>Index</i>	224

I

MICHAEL MILLGATE

Thomas Hardy: the biographical sources

Although Hardy was, so remarkably, a twentieth-century poet as well as a nineteenth-century novelist, the date of his birth is now nearly one hundred and sixty years distant, the date of his death already seventy. His immense fame in his own lifetime aroused an inquisitiveness as to his personal life that he sought strenuously to resist, and since his death his continuing, even increasing, reputation and popularity have naturally attracted the attention of biographers. Notoriously, however, Hardy's concern for privacy extended beyond his own death, encompassed the destruction of most of his personal papers and the composition of his own posthumously published official "life," and was endorsed (even though they agreed on little else) by his literary executors.

In these circumstances, and at this distance in time, it seems appropriate to stand back a little from the narrative preoccupations of biography proper and attempt some examination of the sources currently available for the study of Hardy's life and career. Of particular importance are those documentary materials (notebooks, letters, manuscripts) already in print or on microfilm, their wide accessibility enabling students and readers everywhere to approach Hardy directly and establish a "personal" relationship independent of – though not necessarily uninformed by – the published biographies. Such firsthand experiences can be enriching in themselves, and the starting-points of individual scholarship. They can also serve as touchstones by which to assess the tone, temper, and interpretive biases of different biographers and interrogate not only the adequacy and accuracy of their evidence but also the specificity, or absence of specificity, with which the sources of that evidence are identified. At the very least, they sharpen awareness of just how "knowable" a figure Hardy is now or ever can be.

It is necessary to begin near the end, with Hardy's ghosting of his own official biography. Some time in the early summer of 1917, during the darkest days of the First World War and around the time of his own

seventy-seventh birthday, he began to collaborate with his second wife, born Florence Emily Dugdale, in the compilation of a record of his life that would be published only after his death and with her name alone on the title page. The hope and expectation was that its rich detail and intimate provenance would constitute a kind of pre-emptive strike and keep other biographers, potentially less sympathetic, effectively at bay. The Hardys evidently envisaged a biography on the “life and letters” model popular during the nineteenth century and not at that date challenged by Lytton Strachey’s *Eminent Victorians* (1918), and the two volumes that the widowed Florence Hardy eventually brought out, *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy 1840–1891* (1928) and *The Later Years of Thomas Hardy 1892–1928* (1930), were recognizably in that tradition. They presented their subject in a favorable light, told the story of his life from birth to death, revealed little of a truly private nature, but were diversified by personal anecdotes and previously unpublished observations and reminiscences that were important and fascinating – at least to Hardy’s admirers – simply by virtue of their derivation from such an obviously authoritative source.

The omnipresence of Hardy’s own hand and voice was evident from the first, and the title page of *Early Life* specifically acknowledged that the volume had been “compiled largely from contemporary notes, letters, diaries, and biographical memoranda, as well as from oral information in conversations extending over many years.”¹ But revelation of the full degree and actual character of the subject’s own participation came only with Richard Little Purdy’s demonstration that the two volumes published in Florence Hardy’s name in fact originated in a single composition entitled “The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy” and written in conditions of intense secrecy by Hardy himself (Purdy, pp. 262–73).² Florence Hardy, an expert typist, typed up the successive segments of the manuscript as Hardy completed them, and Hardy then burned the original handwritten pages.³ He was equally ruthless in dealing with his source materials. For both the structure and details of his narrative he drew heavily on the diary-notebooks – full of observations, summaries of old tales told and retold by family and friends, descriptions of people, places, and natural phenomena, plot outlines, verse fragments, and pencil sketches – that he had kept at least from his early twenties onwards. In copying old notebook entries, however, he did not hesitate to rephrase them – perhaps accidentally, he sometimes re-dated them as well – and once the work was finished the notebooks themselves were destroyed, either by Hardy himself or by his executors (his widow and Sydney Cockerell, director of the Fitzwilliam Museum) following his death.⁴

The Life of Thomas Hardy – to use the title under which *Early Life* and *Later Years* were later republished and became generally known – is beyond question a uniquely valuable source. It preserves personal details and comments about life and literature that might otherwise have been entirely lost. On the other hand, its contents and emphases were very largely determined by Hardy himself, many central episodes are mentioned only in passing or altogether ignored, and the transcriptions of notebook entries are always suspect – and always uncheckable, given the destruction of the notebooks themselves. *The Life* has dominated Hardy biography, in short, as simultaneously an indispensable resource and a formidable, sometimes absolute, barrier to knowledge. Biographers, understandably enough, have much deplored this situation, but it seems questionable whether it is one for which either Thomas or Florence Hardy can greatly be blamed.

Long troubled by the misrepresentations of journalistic interviewers and dealers in literary gossip, Hardy in his last decades was additionally distressed by the “impertinences,” as he saw them, of Frank Hedgcock’s intelligent critical biography of 1911 and Ernest Brennecke, Jr.’s more opportunistically compiled “life” of 1925.⁵ The appearance of such material did much to stimulate and sustain Hardy’s determination to protect his posthumous privacy by any means available, and while the methods chosen involved concealment and deception they in fact differed little, either in kind or degree, from those often adopted by the subjects of biographies personally “authorized” and subjected to pre-publication review. Final responsibility for the completion, revision, and publication of “*The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*” was in any case assigned to his widow, who kept the secret, put together the final chapters, added some characteristic anecdotes and a description of her husband’s appearance, and deleted – for his reputation’s sake – some lists of people encountered at London parties and a series of bitter comments on the critics of the last novels.

Such alterations have made it difficult to accept without qualification the frequent categorization of the published *Life* as Hardy’s “autobiography,” but that term can with greater validity be applied to *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy (LW)*, the version of the *Life* selected as citation text for the present volume. As signaled by its retention of Hardy’s original title and its identification of Hardy as author, the newer edition attempts, by reference to the surviving typescripts in the Dorset County Museum, to reconstruct the text as Hardy left it at the time of his death. Not even Hardy, however, could narrate his own death or determine the precise form of his life’s record, and the disappearance of the working diary-notebooks (apart from a few separated leaves) was to some extent offset by the preservation,

accidental or otherwise, of several notebooks devoted to specific topics and materials, and most of these have since been published.

The principal manuscripts of the novels and volumes of verse, as sent by Hardy to his publishers, have also for the most part survived, several having been presented in his lifetime to selected institutional libraries. He did not, of course, have the same control over his outgoing personal and business correspondence, but the seven volumes of *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy* (Letters 1–7) bear witness to the frequency with which – at least during the later years of fame – his letters were preserved by their recipients. Also published, at least selectively, are the letters his wives wrote about him, the impressions left by contemporaries in diaries and memoirs, the interviews by journalists – often eked out with unacknowledged borrowings from earlier interviews – and the more deliberate public pronouncements on a wide range of literary and social topics reprinted in *Thomas Hardy's Personal Writings* (PW). Supplementary material, largely unpublished – incoming correspondence, drawings and watercolors, family letters, documents, photographs, artifacts, oral and written testimony gathered from Hardy's relatives and contemporaries by early scholars in the field⁶ – can be found in a number of libraries, museums, and private collections in various parts of the world. In Dorchester itself are the evocative childhood items included in the Lock Collection of the Dorset County Library and the supremely important holdings of the Dorset County Museum, extensively (though by no means exhaustively) represented on ten of the eighteen microfilm reels of “The Original Manuscripts and Papers of Thomas Hardy,” sold to libraries in Britain and elsewhere by EP Microform from 1975 onwards.

On the basis of such alternative sources, published and unpublished, *Life and Work* can often be amplified and supplemented, questioned and corrected. Its basic authority, however, can less readily be challenged and displaced, and remains especially strong, if especially suspect, for the remoter and obscurer periods of childhood, youth, and early adulthood. Biographers typically depend upon their subject's own reminiscences for details of his or her childhood, and in Hardy's case that dependence is deepened by the paucity of alternative sources. Families such as his, situated towards the lower end of the early-Victorian socio-economic scale, would normally write few if any letters, nor, unless in trouble with the law, would they be named in local newspapers – or anywhere else, indeed, apart from tombstones, census returns, and the stark official records of births, baptisms, marriages, and deaths. It is from just such records, however, that family “trees” can be constructed and their dispersed branches geographically located, and recent research by local and family historians has

considerably expanded knowledge of the wider mesh of Hardy's family connections.⁷

Sources other than *Life and Work* can thus readily supply the information that Thomas Hardy was born on 2 June 1840 in the Dorset hamlet of Higher Bockhampton as the eldest of the four children of Thomas Hardy, a stonemason and jobbing builder, and his wife Jemima (born Hand), and that his father's self-employed status gave the family a modest level of economic independence that was still far removed from comfortable affluence. For more detailed insights, however, *Life and Work* is often the first and only resort, and it becomes necessary to read its generally positive retrospections of the childhood years as conditioned by elderly nostalgia and family piety. Hardy always recognized, and cherished, the profound importance of his having grown up within a rural community, participated in its seasonal occupations and festivals, and listened to the tale-telling and music-making of parents, relatives, and friends. Particularly significant were his family's association with Stinsford Church – especially as instrumentalists in the old west-gallery “choir” that was disbanded around the time of his own birth – and his own early religious commitment, acknowledged in *Life and Work* and further witnessed by the survival of heavily marked Bibles and prayer-books.⁸ That faith evaporated during his twenties, but he always retained a strong attachment to the hymns and services of the Church of England and to the Church's socializing functions.

The novel *Under the Greenwood Tree* looks back affectionately at that lost world of Higher Bockhampton and Stinsford, as do such poems as “Domicilium,” “One We Knew,” and “Afternoon Service at Mellstock.” But Hardy's childhood was not an Arcadian idyll. He was personally exposed to the exigencies of rural poverty; a surviving notebook fragment (Millgate, *Biography*, p. 34) reveals an early awareness of the more brutal aspects of his neighbors' lives; some of his many cousins were in the laboring class; several relatives were illiterate, or nearly so; and three entire families on his mother's side emigrated to Canada or Australia. At home, his father's easygoing habits and attitudes were more than offset by his mother's tough-minded determination to secure her children's futures in an unkind world. Hardy himself received his first formal schooling, at a newly opened village school, only at the age of eight, but between the ages of nine and fourteen he went on to receive excellent teaching, especially in mathematics and Latin, in schools conducted by Isaac Glandfield Last in nearby Dorchester. Textbooks, school prizes, neatly written exercises in mechanics, a receipt for the supplementary fee for his instruction in Latin, and other such items survive in the Dorchester collections as testimony both to Hardy's youthful diligence and to Jemima Hardy's

eagerness to propel him into the middle class. The receipt also survives for the £40 premium the Hardys paid for their elder son to be apprenticed to a local architect named John Hicks,⁹ whose office was next to the school run by William Barnes, the Dorset dialect poet.

Six years later, after completing his articles and working for a time as Hicks's assistant, Hardy moved, aged twenty-one, to London and a position (until the summer of 1867) as an assistant architect in the office of Arthur Blomfield, one of the busiest ecclesiastical architects of that period of intense urban expansion and renewal. *Life and Work* is a little thin in its coverage of the years with Hicks. For the years with Blomfield, on the other hand, it is rich in anecdotes, and these can be supplemented, at least for Hardy's working life, by the edition, in photographic facsimile, of his *Architectural Notebook*, containing professional jottings and drawings dating mostly from the 1860s but occasionally from much later periods.¹⁰ The *Collected Letters* also begins to be useful at this point: though little of Hardy's early correspondence survives, the edition does include a handful of lively and informative letters written from London to his sister Mary (*Letters* 1, pp. 1–7), then in the early stages of her schoolteaching career. Documentation remains scarce for his early relationships with women – the silent infatuation with Louisa Harding, the closer associations with Eliza Bright Nicholls and his cousin Tryphena Sparks¹¹ – and even for the important friendship with the brilliant but unstable Horace Moule, who committed suicide in 1873 (*LW*, p. 98).

It was while he was living in London – at various addresses helpfully located and described by Fran Chalfont¹² – that Hardy finally abandoned a long-cherished scheme of university education and subsequent ordination in the Church of England. Other alternatives to architecture were considered – a little notebook headed “Schools of Painting” has survived (*PN*, pp. 104–14), as have the textbooks he used when studying French¹³ – but his hopes and energies were chiefly redirected to literature and especially to the study and practice of poetry. Hardy described several of the poems he published in later years as having been first drafted in the 1860s (e.g., *CPW*, III, pp. 354–56), but no completed drafts from that period are known to be extant, nor is evidence available to support the claim (*LW*, p. 49) that he was submitting verses, unsuccessfully, to magazine editors by 1866. Limited insights into this fascinating stage in Hardy's creative evolution can, however, be obtained from the few surviving verse fragments,¹⁴ from the books – such as Nuttall's *Standard Pronouncing Dictionary*, Walker's *Rhyming Dictionary*, and editions of Shakespeare and the major English poets (now mostly in the Dorset County Museum) – that he bought, used, and often annotated in the mid-1860s, and from the recently edited

“*Studies, Specimens &c.*” notebook,¹⁵ largely devoted to exercises in the generation of poetic language and imagery.

When ill-health – blamed on insalubrious London conditions – brought him back to Dorset in the summer of 1867, Hardy found architectural employment first with Hicks, his former employer, and, following Hicks’s death in late 1869, with G. R. Crickmay, the Weymouth architect who had taken over Hicks’s practice. He also worked in London again from time to time, remaining almost continuously employed as an architectural assistant until committing himself full-time to literature in the summer of 1872. Nor did he abandon architecture out of any sense of professional or economic failure. His role was almost always secondary – involving the detailed elaboration of other people’s designs – but the numerous surviving examples of his work (in Dorchester, at the University of Texas, and in private hands) show that he was a thoroughly competent draftsman, knowledgeable about architectural history and styles, whom his employers did not hesitate to entrust with major responsibilities. Although he later expressed remorse, in “Memories of Church Restoration” (*PW*, pp. 203–17), for having assisted in some of the radical reconstruction of ancient structures typically practiced by Victorian church “restorers,” Hardy always valued his architectural background and drew upon it when designing a house for himself, lending practical assistance to the family building business, advising the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, even – in ways perhaps not yet sufficiently understood – in composing his own novels, stories, and poems. C. J. P. Beatty’s introduction to the *Architectural Notebook* can in these contexts be supplemented by his *Thomas Hardy: Conservation Architect*.¹⁶

It was Crickmay who commissioned the inspection of the Cornish church of St. Juliot that led in March 1870 to Hardy’s romantic first meeting with the Rector’s sister-in-law Emma Lavinia Gifford, whom he married (contrary to the wishes of both their families) in September 1874. That first encounter, so richly evoked many years later in Hardy’s “Poems of 1912–13,” is recorded in *Life and Work* (pp. 69–78) largely in terms of quotations (perhaps modified) from Hardy’s diary and longer extracts from memoirs Emma Hardy left behind her at her death. Since published separately and in their entirety as *Some Recollections*,¹⁷ the memoirs have a certain charm and an obvious biographical interest. Like her travel diaries,¹⁸ however, they throw little light on possible sources of the difficulties by which the marriage was subsequently beset. *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, the novel Hardy wrote with Emma Gifford’s assistance during the period of their engagement, does perhaps hint at the Giffords’ strong sense of class superiority, and at the Hardys’ responsive resentment, but intimate

conclusions can only riskily be drawn from Hardy's creating in Elfride Swancourt a character recognizably similar to his fiancée, or from the latter's evidently modeling on Hardy the unprepossessing Alfred During of her own unpublished Cornish story "The Maid on the Shore."¹⁹

Emma Hardy seems to have destroyed, in a moment of anger, both sides of the correspondence she and Hardy conducted during the four and a half years of their courtship, but her own part in that correspondence is attractively represented by two brief passages quoted by Hardy in his "Memoranda I" notebook (*PN*, pp. 6, 17), used around the time he was writing *Life and Work* to preserve whatever remained potentially "usable" in the old diary-notebooks he was reading through prior to their destruction. In *Letters of Emma and Florence Hardy* these fragments²⁰ contrast unhappily with the criticisms of her husband and his family Emma Hardy so vehemently voiced during the later stages of her marriage. A passionate letter of February 1896 (pp. 7–8) accuses Hardy's sister Mary of seeking to create divisions between Hardy and herself: "You are a witch-like creature & quite equal to any amount of evil-wishing & speaking – I can imagine you, & your mother & sister on your native heath raising a storm on a Walpurgis night." Visitors to Max Gate sometimes recorded the surfacing of marital antagonisms even on social occasions (Millgate, *Biography*, pp. 451, 481–82), but Hardy himself seems never to have commented on the marriage publicly – other than indirectly in such novels as *Jude the Obscure* and *The Well-Beloved* – or even in private correspondence. Such is the lack of evidence, indeed, that there seems no firm basis for determining what went wrong with the marriage or for discovering the nature of Emma Hardy's evident mental instability, let alone for apportioning blame as between husband and wife.

Emma Hardy certainly sought to assist her husband during the early stages of his career and seems (*LW*, p. 89) to have strongly supported the decision he made in 1872 to exchange the modest certainties of architecture for the headier if riskier possibilities of literature. On returning to Dorset in the autumn of 1867 Hardy had already begun to put aside poetry in favor of the better publication and financial prospects of prose fiction, only to encounter rejection of a first novel, "The Poor Man and the Lady," judged by prospective publishers as too openly hostile to the upper classes and by Hardy himself later on as "socialistic, not to say revolutionary" in tendency (*LW*, p. 63). Hardy reworked various sections of the long manuscript for absorption into other works, notably *Under the Greenwood Tree* and the novella-length story "An Indiscretion in the Life of an Heiress" (1878), but the non-survival of the novel itself has left fascinated Hardy scholars to speculate variously as to its original content and form. What can with

confidence now be said about “The Poor Man and the Lady” is drawn together by Pamela Dalziel in introducing the text of “An Indiscretion” included in her edition of Hardy’s *Excluded and Collaborative Stories*.²¹

In the instance of “The Poor Man and the Lady” – as on a number of later occasions in Hardy’s career – the account given in *Life and Work* can be read alongside surviving correspondence between the author and his actual or prospective publisher. The letters written to Hardy are generally unpublished – to be found in the Dorset County Museum²² or as copies retained in publishers’ archives – but much of what is known about the “Poor Man” derives from John Morley’s report on the manuscript and Alexander Macmillan’s remarkable letter to Hardy of 10 August 1868, and both were published, together with other letters Hardy received from the Macmillans, in Charles Morgan’s *The House of Macmillan*.²³ The history of Hardy’s dealings with Tinsley Brothers – publishers of his (partly subsidized) first novel, *Desperate Remedies*, and its immediate successors, *Under the Greenwood Tree* and *A Pair of Blue Eyes* – can similarly be followed through his letters to William Tinsley (in *Letters* 1) and Tinsley’s replies at Princeton University. And while Leslie Stephen’s commissioning of *Far from the Madding Crowd* for serialization in the *Cornhill Magazine* – perhaps the single most decisive event in Hardy’s career – is treated at some length in *Life and Work* (pp. 97–103), the important relationship between the two men receives further illumination from the little group of Stephen-to-Hardy letters printed by Purdy (pp. 336–39).

The development of Hardy’s fiction-writing career subsequent to the success of *Far from the Madding Crowd* is well enough known to be surveyed here in broad terms rather than title by title. The compositional and production histories of individual works – what was written and published when and in what circumstances – certainly fall within the purview of literary biography, and in Hardy’s case the identification and location of manuscript and other source materials are greatly facilitated by Purdy’s bibliography (though some manuscripts have since found different homes) and by the Hardy section of the *Index of English Literary Manuscripts*, prepared by Barbara Rosenbaum and providing both an introductory survey of the extant manuscripts and a separate listing for each individual document.²⁴ The manuscripts of *The Return of the Native* and *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* were published in facsimile by Garland Publishing of New York in 1986, having been included earlier – together with the manuscripts of *Under the Greenwood Tree*, *The Trumpet-Major*, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *The Woodlanders*, *Jude the Obscure*, and several of the poetry volumes – in the microfilm series issued by EP Microform. Reproduced in that same series, but more accessible in *Personal Notebooks*

(pp. 117–86), is the notebook of items about the Napoleonic period that Hardy compiled in preparation for writing *The Trumpet-Major*.

Examples of the construction of specific textual histories on the basis of original documents are provided by the introductions to the Clarendon Press editions of *The Woodlanders* and *Tess* and by John Paterson's and J. L. Laird's genetic studies of, respectively, *The Return of the Native* and *Tess*.²⁵ Hardy's working methods in general are best described in Simon Gattrell's *Hardy the Creator: A Textual Biography*.²⁶ Not yet fully explored, perhaps, are the pressures directly and indirectly exerted on Hardy – as a professional writer with no alternative sources of income – by the systems of literary production within which he was obliged to operate. Part of the difficulty here is that the British Library's rich Macmillan archive – no more than lightly skimmed in *The House of Macmillan* – is not matched by the surviving records of the other magazine and book publishers, British, American, or European, with whom Hardy had dealings.

Recent discussion of Hardy's work has rarely involved systematic discussion of his "philosophy" – in part, no doubt, because his thought itself is now seen to have been so little systematic – but a good deal of material is in fact available for the study of his ideas, and especially for the identification of books and articles that may have stimulated his thinking. Central here are the "Literary Notes" notebooks – begun in the mid-1870s, now edited and richly annotated by Lennart A. Björk as *The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy (LN)* – that contain, in the form of notes, summaries, transcriptions, and inserted cuttings and tear sheets, an ample record of books and essays that Hardy read and regarded as important for future intellectual reference or even, as Björk points out (*LN* 1, pp. xxii–xxvii), for possible employment in his own writings. That latter purpose was also served by an as yet unpublished notebook, appropriately headed "Facts, from Newspapers, Histories, Biographies, & other Chronicles – (mainly Local)," which Hardy used primarily for the collection of odd anecdotes and historical details, especially as found in the back files of the *Dorset County Chronicle*.²⁷

Observations, perceptions, asserted opinions, and allusions to books and authors appear numerous in *Life and Work*, and quotations from specifically literary texts can be found in the so-called "1867" notebook (*LN* 2, pp. 457–79) and the earlier "*Studies, Specimens &c.*" notebook. Other clues as to possible intellectual "influences" can be picked up from the pencil markings and brief annotations Hardy was accustomed to make in the books he owned and read: useful here are William R. Rutland's *Thomas Hardy: A Study of His Writings and Their Background*, Walter F. Wright's *The Shaping of "The Dynasts"*, and Dennis Taylor's *Hardy's*

Literary Language and Victorian Philology.²⁸ Regrettably, Hardy's library was dispersed in 1938, following the death of Florence Hardy, but some five hundred of the more important volumes were deposited in the Dorset County Museum, significant accumulations exist elsewhere (e.g., the Beinecke Library; Eton College), and information about books currently unlocatable can be found in the Hodgson & Co. sale catalogue for 26 May 1938 or, better, in the catalogues subsequently issued by the booksellers who were the principal purchasers on that occasion.²⁹

During the early stages of his life as a professional novelist – and as a married man – Hardy moved somewhat restlessly about, renting accommodation sometimes in London, sometimes in Dorset, once in Somerset. *Life and Work* records these various shifts, the particular vitality of the pages describing the twenty months spent in the small Dorset town of Sturminster Newton tending to confirm that period as indeed constituting what is called, in an uncharacteristic flash of intimacy, the marriage's "happiest time" (*LW*, p. 122). The Hardys' next move, to the London suburb of Tooting in March 1878, is said (*LW*, p. 121) to have been motivated by Hardy's feeling that "the practical side of his vocation of novelist" required him to live in or near London, and he did join the Savile Club at this time and form a number of literary and professional friendships. He was also tempted into the potentially profitable business of writing for the stage, although his experience with a dramatization of *Far from the Madding Crowd* – only glanced at in *Life and Work* (p. 158) – was discouraging enough to be left unrepeated, on anything like the same scale, until the London production of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* in 1925.³⁰

According to *Life and Work*, it was in the Tooting house that the Hardys' "troubles began" (*LW*, p. 128) – a further personal reference that serves, however enigmatically, to posit an earlier beginning to the erosion of the marriage than the scanty independent evidence might suggest. When Hardy fell seriously ill while writing *A Laodicean* in the autumn of 1880, it seems clear (though the manuscript itself does not survive) that Emma Hardy acted as a devoted amanuensis throughout its effortful completion. But problems certainly flowed from the subsequent decision to leave London – which had again proved inimical to Hardy's health – and return to Dorset, first to Wimborne in 1881, then two years later to rented accommodation in Dorchester, and finally, in 1885, to Max Gate, the villa-like house on the Dorchester outskirts designed by Hardy himself and built by his father and brother (see Millgate, *Biography*, pp. 256–64, and *PW*, pp. 191–95). In Dorchester Hardy's newly achieved middle-class status – emphasized by his appointment as a magistrate – was inevitably challenged

by local knowledge of his humbler past and suspicion of his faintly raffish profession. Little insight into such difficulties can be gained from contemporary sources or, indeed, from *Life and Work* – apart from the un glossed observation that “removal to the county-town, and later to a spot a little outside it, was a step [the Hardys] often regretted having taken” (*LW*, p. 167). Emma Hardy, however, clearly experienced in Dorchester (*Letters of Emma and Florence Hardy*, pp. 23, 48) a sense of personal ostracism intensified by what she saw as the open and even malevolent opposition of Hardy’s family.

Hardy himself, so some of his second wife’s comments would suggest (*Letters of Emma and Florence Hardy*, p. 141), seems always to have felt somewhat isolated from Dorchester and its people and largely ignored by the upper-class families living round about. To ask whether such slights were perceived not so much in personal as in social – that is to say, class – terms is indirectly to raise the vexed questions surrounding his annual visits to London and his friendships with people of rank, wealth, and fashion. The evidence here is scarcely in dispute, *Life and Work* itself supplying those lists of people encountered at social occasions that Hardy’s sterner critics have invoked as confirmation of his perceived snobbery and social ambition, the obverse, so to speak, of a profound sense of class inferiority and educational deprivation. Critics less stern might want to correlate such evidence with the circumstances of Hardy’s working life – the disappointments of his marriage, the cultural limitations of Victorian Dorchester, the still deeper isolation of Max Gate itself, the intensive daily routine of composition and correspondence – and make allowance for his (and his wife’s) entitlement to occasional pleasures and indulgences. As a professional novelist, sensitive to the comments of reviewers and largely dependent upon commissions from the editors of magazines, Hardy also found it important to maintain his contacts in the national center of literary life and literary business. The issue is almost entirely one of interpretation, likely to be decided by biographers on the basis of their personal and political preferences and life experiences.

Much the same can probably be said in respect of Hardy’s relations with women, both inside and outside of marriage. In 1893 he met and fell in love with Florence Henniker, aged thirty-nine, happily married, well-connected, and an aspiring novelist in her own right. Because most of his letters to her survive, as do a few of hers to him, it is possible to think of their somewhat unequal attachment as adequately documented and understood – especially in light of Pamela Dalziel’s authoritative analysis (*Excluded and Collaborative Stories*, pp. 260–82) of their collaboration in the short story called “The Spectre of the Real.” But such tidiness depends

in part upon the relationship's acknowledged lack of an actively sexual dimension. Where such a dimension is suspected, or not specifically disprovable, biographical prudence sometimes fights a losing battle against biographical prudence.

Just as it was always impossible to prove beyond question that a young man called Thomas Hardy and a young woman named Tryphena Sparks did *not* make love on a Dorset heath one summer afternoon in the 1860s, so it is necessary to entertain the possibility of an early-twentieth-century affair between Hardy and Florence Dugdale, schoolteacher and writer of children's stories, whom he met in 1905, when he was sixty-five and she in her mid-twenties. They were often alone together in London and elsewhere, sexual exchanges of some kind could have occurred, and Florence Dugdale did of course become the second Mrs. Hardy. But no evidence has emerged for the existence of an adulterous relationship, let alone for assigning it specific dates or a particular sexual character. That what is known about Hardy and Florence Dugdale points rather to the unlikelihood of such a relationship is almost beside the essential point – that speculative constructions cantilevered out over evidential voids belong to the genres of fiction and fantasy rather than to biography proper. Unfortunately, what prompts – and is taken as licensing – such excursions is precisely Hardy's reputation for secretiveness, as witnessed above all by the composition of *Life and Work* and the destruction of documents, and Florence Hardy's reputation as a loyal defender of her husband's privacy.

The circumstances in which Hardy wrote the manuscript of *Life and Work* were very different from those of his childhood, even though the Higher Bockhampton cottage was, and is, within easy walking distance of Max Gate (both are now the property of the National Trust and visitable at specified times), and Stinsford Church closer still. Much, indeed, had changed even since his years as a Victorian novelist. He was now financially secure, the late-nineteenth-century shift to a royalty system of literary reimbursement having enabled him to profit handsomely from the continuing popularity of his novels. He enjoyed an extraordinarily high reputation – his successes as a novelist having been reinforced by the publication (1904–08) of his “national” epic-drama *The Dynasts*, much admired if perhaps not so widely read – and in 1910 he had received the exceptional British distinction of appointment to the Order of Merit. His second marriage, in February 1914 (following Emma Hardy's death in November 1912), had materially added to his domestic comfort and, given his new wife's secretarial skills, to his professional efficiency. Above all, perhaps, he was now publicly, even famously, the poet he had always known himself to be, writing in many different meters and stanza forms³¹

on a wide range of subjects, from the most elevated to the most commonplace, and producing new collections with impressive regularity.

The “fair copy” manuscripts of all of Hardy’s poetry volumes have been preserved, essentially in the form in which they were submitted for publication; the manuscript of *Moments of Vision* has been published in facsimile, the remainder, excepting only *Human Shows*, were included in EP Microform’s microfilm series. Since these manuscripts show only last-minute revisions, and since very few of Hardy’s working drafts have survived, the variant readings recorded by Samuel Hynes (*CPW*) and James Gibson (Gibson, *Variorum Edition*) are chiefly reflective of Hardy’s numerous changes to successive editions. Hynes and Purdy are the best sources of basic information about poetry volumes and editions, Purdy and, especially, Rosenbaum the best guides to the existence and location of individual manuscripts.

Knowledge of Hardy’s reading is obviously important to an understanding of his relations with poetic predecessors, and familiarity with the various notebooks, *Life and Work*, and his own and his wives’ letters offers the surest route to the identification and exploration of events, scenes, memories, ideas, and images that could have served as starting-points for particular poems. Much of Hardy’s verse contains a strong autobiographical element – most remarkably, of course, the retrospective and remorseful “Poems of 1912–13,” written in the wake of Emma Hardy’s death. Clearly, there are real dangers in trying to establish detailed correlations between finished poems and biographical events, let alone in projecting the existence of such events on the basis of poetic evidence alone. At the same time, the poems in their totality constitute a body of evidence – capable of illuminating ideas, aspirations, emotions, and relationships – that has yet to be adequately interrogated, evaluated, and integrated into the overall biographical account.

The sheer quantity of evidence for Hardy’s famous last years is greater than for any other period. He was much visited at Max Gate by admirers, fellow writers, and friends, many of whom – for example, Edmund Gosse, Sydney Cockerell, Virginia Woolf, Edmund Blunden, Siegfried Sassoon, and Robert Graves – recorded their impressions in letters, diaries, and memoirs. Other, often meaner-spirited, glimpses of Hardy in old age – by servants, friends, and neighbors – appear, together with much that is useful (e.g., reprintings of Hardy family wills and sale catalogues of the Max Gate books and furniture) and some that is not, in the series of pamphlets edited and published by J. Stevens Cox between 1962 and 1971.³² Large numbers of Florence Hardy’s letters have been preserved, and although Hardy as he grew older tended to write fewer letters in his own person, let alone in his

own hand, some sense of the daily burden of correspondence during his last two decades can be obtained from *Letters* 6–7 and the mass of incoming letters in the Dorset County Museum, many bearing his penciled notes for replies to be written and sent by his wife or by her occasional assistant, May O'Rourke – later the author of *Thomas Hardy: His Secretary Remembers* (1965), one of the more substantial of the Cox pamphlets. From January 1921 onwards, Hardy himself kept a day-to-day record of events, interspersed with occasional observations and notes on his reading. Known as the “Memoranda II” notebook (*PN*, pp. 43–102), it formed part of the collection of documents, called the “Materials,” that was put together in order to assist Florence Hardy in completing the “Life” – for which, as noted earlier, the working typescripts extensively and (in all the circumstances) remarkably survive.³³

Hardy in his last decade devoted much time to tinkering with those typescripts – taking out some passages, introducing others – and Florence Hardy, as her letters make clear, became somewhat wearied by the resulting work, as by such other tasks as screening visitors, watching over Hardy's increasingly fragile health, and dealing daily with his business correspondence and with the several personal correspondences she herself kept up essentially on his behalf. She was also understandably if somewhat extravagantly distressed by her husband's infatuation, in his mid-eighties, with Gertrude Bugler, the young and beautiful Dorset actress who took leading parts in local dramatizations of his novels – most significantly, the title role in his own adaptation of *Tess*. But to see Hardy as monolithically mean, melancholy, reclusive, and exploitative of his wives is perhaps to rely too much on evidence generated largely by the depressive aspects of Florence Hardy's own personality and the retaliatory instincts of undertipped servants and disregarded relatives. It is also to endorse the surely questionable tendency, encouraged by the late date of the most accomplished portraits and photographs, to posit the famous final years, subject though they naturally were to many of the familiar frailties and anxieties of old age, as typifying Hardy's entire life and personality.

Some characteristics did of course persist to the end: the habits of thrift and economy inculcated in childhood; the long-established daily rhythms of solitary work. The quiet congeniality that had once made him welcome in London clubs and salons now brought him downstairs at teatime to meet an almost daily influx of visitors. But the challenge, biographically speaking, is somehow to come to terms with what is truly distinctive about Hardy's final years, his extraordinarily, even uniquely, sustained productivity as a poet. It is regrettable that so few working manuscripts of the poems survive, but even their comprehensive availability would not solve

the basic mystery of their production. The problem, inherent in literary biography itself, is rather that the central events in the lives of creative figures, their acts of creativity, are precisely those most resistant to exploration and explication. So that if Hardy is at this level indeed unknowable, that neither invalidates the biographical exercise nor diminishes the value and pleasure of sharing actively and independently in its processes.

NOTES

- 1 Florence Emily Hardy, *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy 1840–1891* (London: Macmillan, 1928), p. [iii]. See *LW*, p. [1].
- 2 A brief report of Purdy's findings appeared in the *New York Times Book Review*, 12 May 1940, p. 25.
- 3 For further details of composition and publication, see *LW*, pp. x–xxxvi, and *PN*, pp. [189]–202.
- 4 For the contents and consequences of Hardy's will, see Michael Millgate, *Testamentary Acts: Browning, Tennyson, James, Hardy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 153–61, 166–68.
- 5 Frank Hedgcock, *Thomas Hardy: penseur et artiste* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1911); Ernest Brennecke, Jr., *The Life of Thomas Hardy* (New York: Greenberg, 1925).
- 6 See especially Michael Rabiger, "The Hoffman Papers: An Assessment and Some Interpretations," *Thomas Hardy Year Book*, no. 10 (1981), pp. 6–50.
- 7 See especially Brenda Tunks, *Whatever Happened to the Other Hardys?* (Poole, Dorset: Brenda Tunks, 1990).
- 8 Dorset County Museum. For the religious contexts of Hardy's childhood and early adulthood, see the opening chapter of Timothy Hands, *Thomas Hardy: Distracted Preacher?* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1989).
- 9 Dorset County Museum. As James Gibson observes in *Thomas Hardy: A Literary Life* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1996), p. 14, the amount would not have been easy for the Hardys to amass.
- 10 *The Architectural Notebook of Thomas Hardy*, ed. C. J. P. Beatty (Dorchester: Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society, 1966).
- 11 For Louisa Harding and Eliza Nicholls, see Millgate, *Biography*, pp. 58–59, 84–85. Tryphena Sparks remains an interesting figure (see the articles by John R. Doherty in *Thomas Hardy Year Book*, no. 12 [1984] and no. 18 [1989]); for the deflation of earlier and more extravagant speculations about her relationship with Hardy, see *Victorian Fiction: A Second Guide to Research*, ed. George H. Ford (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1978), pp. 313–16.
- 12 Fran Chalfont, "Hardy's Residences and Lodgings: Part One," *Thomas Hardy Journal*, 8 (October 1992), 46–56.
- 13 Leonce Stièvenard, *Lectures françaises* (Frederick B. Adams collection); Alphonse Mariette, *Half Hours of French Translation* (Colby College).
- 14 Millgate, *Biography*, p. 89, quotes some early draft material preserved in Hardy's *Poetical Matter* notebook, compiled like "Memoranda I" (*PN*, pp. 1–40) while Hardy was re-reading the original diary-notebooks and now

Thomas Hardy: the biographical sources

- known to exist only as a photocopy in the Beinecke Library at Yale. See also Purdy, opp. p. 242.
- 15 *Thomas Hardy's "Studies, Specimens &c."* Notebook, ed. Pamela Dalziel and Michael Millgate (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).
 - 16 C. J. P. Beatty, *Thomas Hardy: Conservation Architect: His Work for The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings* (Dorchester: Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society, 1995). Beatty's unpublished doctoral thesis, "The Part Played by Architecture in the Life and Work of Thomas Hardy" (University of London, 1963), also remains useful.
 - 17 Emma Hardy, *Some Recollections*, ed. Evelyn Hardy and Robert Gittings (London: Oxford University Press, 1961).
 - 18 *Emma Hardy Diaries*, ed. Richard H. Taylor (Ashington and Manchester: Mid Northumberland Arts Group and Carcanet New Press, 1985).
 - 19 Dorset County Museum; microfilmed by EP Microform. See Millgate, *Biography*, p. 124.
 - 20 *Letters of Emma and Florence Hardy*, ed. Michael Millgate (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 3.
 - 21 Hardy, *The Excluded and Collaborative Stories*, ed. Pamela Dalziel (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 68–82.
 - 22 Though misnamed and far from perfect, Carl J. and Clara Carter Weber's *Thomas Hardy's Correspondence at Max Gate: A Descriptive Check List* (Waterville, Maine: Colby College Press, 1968) retains its usefulness as a guide to Hardy's incoming letters in the Museum.
 - 23 Charles Morgan, *The House of Macmillan (1843–1943)* (London: Macmillan, 1943), pp. 87–91.
 - 24 Barbara Rosenbaum, *Index of English Literary Manuscripts*. Volume iv: 1800–1900. Part 2: *Hardy–Lamb* (London and New York: Mansell, 1990), pp. 3–224.
 - 25 *The Woodlanders*, ed. Dale Kramer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981); *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, ed. Juliet Grindle and Simon Gatrell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983); John Paterson, *The Making of "The Return of the Native"* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963); J. L. Laird, *The Shaping of "Tess of the d'Urbervilles"* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).
 - 26 Simon Gatrell, *Hardy the Creator: A Textual Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).
 - 27 Dorset County Museum; microfilmed by EP Microform. For examples of Hardy's use of the notebook see Michael Millgate, *Thomas Hardy: His Career as a Novelist* (1971; Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1994), pp. 237–43.
 - 28 William R. Rutland, *Thomas Hardy: A Study of His Writings and Their Background* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1938); Walter F. Wright, *The Shaping of "The Dynasts": A Study in Thomas Hardy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967); Dennis Taylor, *Hardy's Literary Language and Victorian Philology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).
 - 29 See Michael Millgate, "The Max Gate Library," in *A Spacious Vision: Essays on Hardy*, ed. Philip V. Mallett and Ronald P. Draper (Newmill, Cornwall: Patten Press, 1994), pp. 139–49.
 - 30 See Pamela Dalziel, "Whose Mistress? Thomas Hardy's Theatrical Collaboration," *Studies in Bibliography*, 48 (1995), 248–60, and, for Hardy's theatrical

- activities generally, Keith Wilson, *Thomas Hardy on Stage* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1995).
- 31 See Dennis Taylor, *Hardy's Metres and Victorian Prosody* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).
- 32 Subsequently collected as *Thomas Hardy: Materials for a Study of His Life, Times and Works* (St. Peter Port, Guernsey: Toucan Press, 1968) and *Thomas Hardy: More Materials for a Study of His Life, Times and Works* (St. Peter Port, Guernsey: Toucan Press, 1971).
- 33 Dorset County Museum; microfilmed by EP Microform.