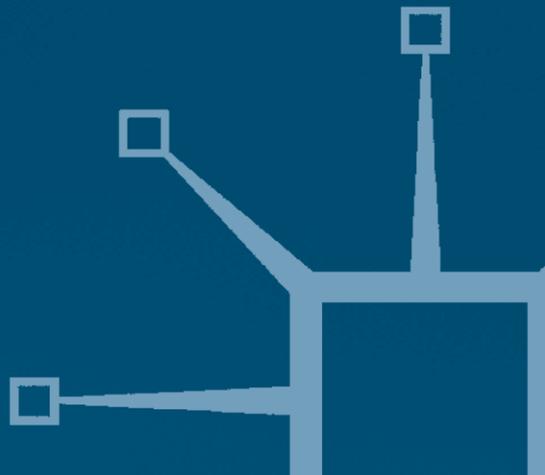


palgrave
macmillan

Thomas Hardy: Texts and Contexts

Edited by
Phillip Mallett



Thomas Hardy: Texts and Contexts

Also edited by Phillip Mallett

KIPLING CONSIDERED

RUDYARD KIPLING: *LIMITS AND RENEWALS*

A SPACIOUS VISION: ESSAYS ON HARDY

SATIRE

THOMAS HARDY: *THE MAYOR OF CASTERBRIDGE*

THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THOMAS HARDY

Thomas Hardy: Texts and Contexts

Edited by Phillip Mallett

palgrave
macmillan



Editorial matter, selection and Preface © Phillip Mallett 2002
Chapters 1–10 © Palgrave Macmillan Ltd 2002
Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2002 978-1-4039-0131-6

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission.

No paragraph of this publication may be reproduced, copied or transmitted save with written permission or in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under the terms of any licence permitting limited copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency, 90 Tottenham Court Road, London W1T 4LP.

Any person who does any unauthorised act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

The authors have asserted their rights to be identified as the authors of this work in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

First published 2002 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS and
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10010
Companies and representatives throughout the world

PALGRAVE MACMILLAN is the global academic imprint of the Palgrave Macmillan division of St. Martin's Press, LLC and of Palgrave Macmillan Ltd. Macmillan® is a registered trademark in the United States, United Kingdom and other countries. Palgrave is a registered trademark in the European Union and other countries.

ISBN 978-1-349-50766-5 ISBN 978-1-4039-1933-5 (eBook)
DOI 10.1057/9781403919335

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources.

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

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Thomas Hardy: texts and contexts / edited by Phillip Mallett.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

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

I. Mallett, Phillip, 1946–

PR4754 .T497 2002
823'.8—dc21

2002072327

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02

Contents

| | |
|--|------|
| <i>List of Figures</i> | vii |
| <i>Preface</i> | ix |
| <i>Notes on Contributors</i> | xxii |
| 1 Seen in a New Light: Illumination and Irradiation in Hardy <i>Michael Irwin</i> | 1 |
| 2 Hardy: the After-Life and the Life Before <i>Gillian Beer</i> | 18 |
| 3 'And I Was Unaware': the Unknowing Omniscience of Hardy's Narrators <i>Linda Shires</i> | 31 |
| 4 <i>A Laodicean</i> as a Novel of Ingenuity <i>Toru Sasaki</i> | 49 |
| 5 Whatever Happened to Elizabeth Jane?: Revisioning Gender in <i>The Mayor of Casterbridge</i> <i>Pamela Dalziel</i> | 64 |
| 6 'The Thing must be Male, we suppose': Erotic Triangles and Masculine Identity in <i>Tess of the d'Urbervilles</i> and Melville's <i>Billy Budd</i> <i>Richard Nemesvari</i> | 87 |
| 7 The Characterisation of Jude and Sue: the Myth and the Reality <i>John R. Doheny</i> | 110 |
| 8 'Done because we are too menny': Little Father Time and Child Suicide in Late-Victorian Culture <i>Sally Shuttleworth</i> | 133 |
| 9 Hardy and Biology <i>Angelique Richardson</i> | 156 |

| | | |
|----|--|-----|
| 10 | The Hunter–Gatherers: Some Early Hardy Scholars and Collectors <i>Michael Millgate</i> | 180 |
| | <i>Index</i> | 200 |

List of Figures

- 5.1 'Hay-trussing—?' said the turnip-hoer,
who had already begun shaking his head. 'O no.'
(*Graphic*, 2 January 1886) 65
- 5.2 The hag opened a little basket behind the fire, and,
looking up slyly, whispered, 'Just a thought o'rum in it?'
(*Graphic*, 9 January 1886) 69
- 5.3 The man before her was not Henchard
(*Graphic*, 6 March 1886) 70
- 5.4 'Well, Lucetta, I've a bit of news for ye', he said gaily
(*Graphic*, 17 April 1886) 71
- 5.5 'Then it's somebody wanting to see us both.'
(*Graphic*, 6 February 1886) 74
- 5.6 'Did you do it, or didn't you? Where was it?'
(*Graphic*, 27 February 1886) 75
- 5.7 Henchard, with withering humility of demeanour,
touched the brim of his hat to her
(*Graphic*, 10 April 1886) 76
- 5.8 Lucetta's eyes were straight upon the
spectacle of the uncanny revel
(*Graphic*, 1 May 1886) 77

Preface

Thomas Hardy's career as a writer began in 1865 with a short sketch, 'How I built Myself a House', and ended with the publication of *Winter Words*, his eighth volume of poems, not long after his death in 1928. With mathematical neatness, but some overstatement, it may be said to have taken a new direction at its mid-point, with the publication of his last novel, *The Well-Beloved* in 1897 and the appearance of his first volume of poems, *Wessex Poems* in 1898. If it is not quite accurate to think of Hardy as a Victorian novelist and a twentieth century poet – a fair number of the poems were written as early as the 1860s, and his interest in prose fiction continued at least until 1912, when he was revising his novels for the Wessex edition – it does help to suggest the scale of his achievement. But as Michael Irwin notices in the first sentence of the first essay in this volume, Hardy was consistent in his interests and attitudes throughout his long career. This consistency embraces many conflicting moods: the same scene, viewed in different lights, as Irwin goes on to show, may suggest different or contradictory meanings. Even so, to read his work is to become conscious of an imaginative coherence, a quality that justifies the word 'Hardyan'. The essays which follow return at different times to the question of the 'Hardyan', but they also address the specific features of single texts. Those who encountered, say, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, at the time of its first, anonymous publication in the Cornhill in 1874, had no sense of 'Hardy' as the future author of *Tess* of the d'Urbervilles, or as a poet, but only of the appearance of a new author, a possible rival to the George Eliot of her earlier novels if not of the recently published *Middlemarch* – unless, indeed, this was (as some suspected) George Eliot herself. One of the aspirations of this volume is to engage with individual novels and poems, and to recapture that sense of them as texts written, and demanding to be read, as separate works, each constructing its own fictional or poetic world, posing its own questions, and offering its own rewards.

There is a further aspiration, reflected in the title: *Thomas Hardy: Texts and Contexts*. A number of critics who ought to have known better have promoted the notion that because Hardy was 'self-taught', in Matthew

Arnold's terms a 'provincial', he is best regarded as a clumsy writer who occasionally stumbled into greatness. The crudest expression of this view comes from Somerset Maugham, who thought that even in formal dress Hardy had 'a strange look of the soil', but it has been shared by some distinguished critics, most notably F. R. Leavis. The scholarship of the last twenty years has, one hopes, pushed this nonsense aside for ever. To take only two examples. Lennart Björk's edition of *The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy* in 1985 established the range of Hardy's reading; Gillian Beer's magisterial *Darwin's Plots* (1983) provided an account of how deeply his reading in the biological sciences informed his work, just as it did that of George Eliot (also, one might add, 'self-taught', though it would be a brave reader who tried to patronise her). Rather than pity Hardy as someone who struggled and failed to grasp the inner meaning of 'culture', as (say) Matthew Arnold and T. S. Eliot have celebrated it, recent critics have explored his readiness to resist and challenge the often overweening claims made in its name. Whether as poet or as novelist, Hardy – though it ought not to be necessary to say it – knew what he was doing. He was a recalcitrant writer, not an uninformed one.

It is partly for this reason that a majority of the essays in this volume examine both Hardy's texts and their contexts. These contexts may be literary, derived from the expectations, sometimes generic, sometimes positional, raised by other writers; or extra-literary, shaped by the wider concerns of the intellectual community. So, for example, both Toru Sasaki and Richard Nemesvari discusses Hardy's interest in melodrama, a genre taken more seriously by Victorian writers and readers than it is now. Sasaki examines the ways in which Hardy constructs a poetic subtext to the melodramatic surface of *A Laodicean*; Nemesvari explores the way the stage villain or 'cad' could be used both to reinforce and to subvert stereotypes about male sexuality. Linda Shires takes as her topic the debate Hardy conducts with current thinking about the nature and responsibilities of art. The Romantic tradition left later writers burdened with a sense of their role as vates, bringing down from the mountaintops the truths which they alone could discern. Hardy refused to carry the burden; he was, as Linda Shires points out, too wily, too obdurately himself, to surrender his right not to know.

In early studies of Hardy's work, and not only of Hardy's, the notion of extra-literary contexts tended to mean 'background': a body of ideas picked up and used ('reflected') in his work, a sentence here, an image there, which the critic could summarise and footnote. This passive 'Life and Times' model was always unsatisfactory, and the better critics always moved beyond it. In the last two decades, however, critical

attention has increasingly returned to Hardy's engagement with the intellectual and affective life of the times in which his novels and poems were written, and which they both shaped and acknowledged. Nowhere has this been more true than where the issue has been his awareness of the changing directions of Victorian science.

Gillian Beer's essay in this volume takes its starting-point not from Darwin but from Hardy's note on one implication of Einstein's thought: that if 'things and events always were, are and will be', then Emma, his father and his mother might still be living 'in the past'. Here one might remark in passing on Hardy's continuing openness to the wider intellectual life; the contrary example might be his younger contemporary Rudyard Kipling, who suspected that the theory of relativity was a Jewish contribution 'to assisting the world towards flux and disintegration'.¹ More importantly, in touching on so many of Hardy's interests, in Einstein, in the work by Helmholtz and Maxwell on the conversion of energy into wave-motion, in heredity, in the decline of aristocratic families, and on his lifelong desire to see a 'real' ghost, Professor Beer's essay suggests how deeply scientific thought entered into his imaginative life, and how permeable were the barriers between disciplines whose various territories – physics, biology, history, theology – have since been claimed as the preserve of the specialist. Matthew Arnold might have thought the co-presence in a poet's mind of Einstein's theories and the desire to see a ghost a sign of his provinciality; Gillian Beer shows that it is rather a sign of the creative many-sidedness of Hardy's imagination.

The essays by Angélique Richardson and Sally Shuttleworth draw on Hardy's reading of the biologists and psychologists. Both reveal his sense that our explanations of human behaviour – whether they are offered formally, in narrative commentary, or informally, in the implied connections between cause and effect within the plot – have to be cast in ways which acknowledge the work of the scientists. Both make the further point that he was unwilling simply to assume that Nature, as described by the scientists, was the key to explaining Culture. As several critics have noticed, theories of heredity, construed as a system of inexorable laws, could be made to stand in for older ideas about 'Destiny' or 'Necessity'. Jude uses both the new and the old idioms to express his fears about inherited traits in the Fawley family, at one point quoting the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus, at another wondering if he carries within him 'the germs of every human infirmity'. But if the idea of heredity could be seen as Necessity under another name, it followed that the large questions raised in Greek drama, about the limits of human freedom, or the place of chance in human life, were not resolved, but remained to be asked anew.

Taken together, the essays by Gillian Beer, Angeliqe Richardson and Sally Shuttleworth demonstrate that there is more at stake in a discussion of 'Hardy and Science' than that he wrote about astronomy in *Two on a Tower*, or that a key chapter in *A Pair of Blue Eyes* displays his knowledge of geology. In the preface to the second edition of *Darwin's Plots*, Gillian Beer quotes from Darwin's chapter on 'Natural Selection': 'Let it be borne in mind how infinitely complex and close-fitting are the mutual relations of all organic beings to each other and to their physical conditions of life.' With the substitution of 'human' for 'organic', the sentence could be applied to Hardy's fictional world; often enough even that small change is unnecessary. Complexity, the endless process of interaction, the link between the physical and the moral, the persistence of the unforeseen, the provisionality of any one state or condition – these are as much part of Hardy's world as they are of Darwin's. It is in this larger sense that the essays gathered here engage with Hardy's 'contexts'.

* * *

The reader who wishes to explore a particular work by Hardy can turn at this point to, say, the essays by John Doheny and Sally Shuttleworth on *Jude the Obscure*, or to Richard Nemesvari and Angeliqe Richardson on *Tess*; the comments which follow acknowledge the editor's privilege of exploring and reflecting on some of the unspoken links between the essays.

The starting point of Michael Irwin's essay is Hardy's interest in the various effects of light (and darkness, which Hardy typically sees as something more palpable than the mere absence of light), an interest which reveals a 'habit' or style of seeing which is 'intimately connected with the way he apprehends life itself'. In a note made in 1887 Hardy wrote that his interest was in 'the deeper reality underlying the scenic', when the mind is awakened to the 'tragic mysteries of life' and brings to what it perceives a mood or feeling which 'coalesces with and translates the qualities that are already there'. The images of light and darkness in his work are used to gain access to this deeper reality; though 'reality' here is perhaps too absolute a term, since in Hardy's work, as Irwin shows, each mind brings something different to the seen. In one of the passages Irwin discusses from *Desperate Remedies*, the earliest of Hardy's published novels, the image is of a fireworks display and the framework on which it is set up. When the 'flaring illumination' dies down, all that is left is the blackened frame: so Miss Aldclyffe's passion burns itself out. In the 1892 version of Hardy's last novel, *The Well-Beloved*, the image is used again, and to the same effect. This time it is Pearston who sees the 'black framework'

where 'the flaring jets of the illumination' had once 'dazzled' him. In the 1897 version, however, it is used differently; here the blemishes of ordinary human life – the second Avicé is, unromantically, a washer-woman – are lost sight of against the 'shining out' of the 'more real' person within, and made 'of no more account in the presentation than the posts and framework which support a pyrotechnic display'. The same image is used to suggest both the creative seeing made possible by love, the face of the beloved irradiated by the fascinated gaze of the lover, and the bitterness of disillusion in the cold light of lost love.

The point is not that Hardy was a parsimonious writer, but that he was an obsessive one, endlessly revisiting his own material to see it from a different angle, and to elicit new and even contradictory meanings from it. In the 'Apology' to *Late Lyrics and Earlier*, he writes that 'the visible signs of mental and emotional life', including poetry, 'must like all other things keep moving, becoming'. Not to keep moving, to keep seeing things anew, is to cease to live. Hardy's refusal to accept any one meaning as final, his commitment, as Linda Shires puts it, 'to not having to know', is noticed in a number of the essays which follow.

In the course of his discussion Irwin quotes a characteristic passage from *Tess*, where a swarm of gnats seen in the moonlight are briefly 'irradiated as if they bore fire within them', then pass out of the light and are 'quite extinct'. 'Quite' as Christopher Ricks has pointed out in his study of Beckett, is a word with contradictory meanings: both 'absolutely' or 'finally', but also 'partly', or 'almost'.² Ricks is commenting on the first sentence of Beckett's *Malone Dies* – 'I shall soon be quite dead at last in spite of all' – and the sense in which we might become 'quite extinct' (but not totally extinct) is the subject of Gillian Beer's paper. In his ghosted autobiography (in this context that description seems apposite) Hardy claimed to have been among the earliest acclaimers of Darwin in 1859; in 1923 he speculated on the implications of Einstein's theory of relativity, which allowed the thought that his parents, and Emma, were 'living still in the past'. How to reach into the past becomes, Gillian Beer argues, 'the most intense question of Hardy's creativity'. What is the relation of that irradiated moment which is our lifetime to the past from which it came and the future into which it flees?

In this essay breath rather than light is the sign of life. Poetry belongs to the speaking voice, to our breathing selves, which die; the poem written down becomes an inscription, which has at least a chance to survive. The tension between the two, between breath and text, perhaps suggests why Hardy's poetry is so full of ruins, erosions, abraded surfaces – signs

that the inscription too fades, as 'Down their carved names the rain-drop ploughs.' Light and inscription come together in the poem 'Her Initials', where the speaker recalls writing 'two letters of her name' in a book of poems:

But from the letters of her name
The radiance has waned away!

Characteristically, Hardy imagines the same fate for himself, grown blank and rayless in someone else's mind (as in 'Memory and I') or in his own ('I Have Lived with Shades'). In 'He Revisits His First School', he wryly imagines his own disembodied state, as a ghost returning after his death. Elsewhere the self in the present moment is contemplated as the embodied ghost of some former identity: in *The Well-Beloved*, as a self bearing on face and body the inscriptions of its own former experiences; in 'The Pedigree', as a self whose every thought ('every heave and coil and move I made / Within my brain') can be seen as the re-tracing of moves made – inscribed – by an ancestor.

Yet (one of the many pleasures of reading Hardy is that there is always a 'Yet ...'), he can also imagine the self having a post mortem existence 'somewhere', in the 'upper air' perhaps, or in the 'visionless wilds of space': not, after all, quite extinct, just as Emma, in the 'Poems of 1912–13', may not quite be 'dissolved'. Professor Beer quotes briefly from 'The Voice', and it is tempting to see her essay as teasing out some of the implications of Hardy's 'lost' word 'existlessness' in the manuscript version of that poem: lost, because he substituted 'wan wistlessness', and doubly lost since it has not made it into the dictionaries, or even the computer spellchecks (mine offers, with a grim humour Beckett might have admired, 'No Suggestions'). Hardy, for once, is less grim, since the finality of 'existlessness' is made to give way to the more tentative 'dissolved to wan wistlessness'. Wistless' means 'inattentive, unobservant'; 'wistlessness' then is presumably the state of inattentiveness. Like existlessness, it undermines the possibility of 'the woman calling'. But it is hard to discount the sense that 'wistlessness' might mean not the state of being unaware, without knowledge, but rather the state of being beyond the knowledge of others: not non-existent, but on the very edge of consciousness, unreachable by the poet who falters on through the wind. Like Keats's Grecian urn, but unlike the more absolute 'existlessness', the word seems to 'tease us out of thought', enacting in itself the haughtiness of the poem.

It was Thomas Huxley who coined the word agnostic. Hardy admired Huxley, and might reasonably have adopted the word for himself. His insistence that no one perspective has authority is Linda Shires's point of departure. It had long been admitted in Victorian poetry that the speaker might be unreliable – Browning's use of the dramatic monologue depends on such an admission – and Hardy took this assumption into fiction, in particular in the use of narrators who are not so much unreliable as wilfully self-contradictory. Hardy was always alert to other possible points of view, both literally and figuratively. From the start of his career as a novelist he explored the effect of presenting a scene from the limited perspective of a single observer or participant, fusing dramatic action and psychological interest: Elfride as her actions were seen at that moment by Knight, or by Stephen, Sergeant Troy as he is first glimpsed by Bathsheba, and so on. Technically, this adds to the interest and excitement of a given scene or episode, but it also allows Hardy to resist the supposition that characters, readers and narrators naturally come together in a shared sense of reality. The narrator's Elfride is not Stephen's, nor Knight's, nor yet the reader's, and what is true about Elfride or Bathsheba in these early novels was to be still more true of Tess, or Sue, in the later ones. The 'central question' asked in Hardy's fiction, suggests Linda Shires, is why do we read and impose meanings as we do? Why, and under what constraints, do we 'see' Tess, or Bathsheba, and take our seeing for the reality? And, one might add (as John Doherty does, in his essay on *Jude*), how, and why, do the characters in the novels impose their meanings on others?

Toru Sasaki, who writes here on *A Laodicean*, one of Hardy's 'Novels of Ingenuity', is also interested in Hardy's experiments with fiction, primarily with his handling of melodrama. At its simplest, melodrama ties the reader's interest to a single incident, expected to be exciting in itself, but with the danger that the separate episodes might have no real unity. More rewardingly, one event may connect with another, to establish a pattern of meanings. Sasaki, like Irwin, makes the point that an episode narrated in literal terms may also be read as metaphor, to represent rather than to cause a mental state: in *A Laodicean*, Somerset's melodramatic entrapment in the turret of Castle de Stancy has no outcome in the plot, but prefigures his sense later of being confined within feelings and circumstances beyond his control.

But there is more at stake than the use of melodrama to express mood, and emotional need. The ingenuity of the novel, as one of the reviewers quoted by Sasaki observed, echoes the ingenuity and elusiveness of its central female character. Paula Power acknowledges the conventions about

class and courtship within which she is required to act only to express her rejection of them; when her uncle urges her marriage to de Stancy as 'such an obvious thing to all eyes', she declines to make the expected dénouement to her career: 'I don't care one atom for artistic completeness and a splendid whole.' Her situation is like that of the third Avice in *The Well-Beloved*, whose marriage to Pierston, in his and her mother's eyes at least, would make 'an artistic and tender finish' to the 'romance' of his life. In both novels the heroine refuses to provide the approved end to the story; both novels foreground their own conventions, as a means to reveal that current notions of 'realism', or of female sexuality, are alike ideologically constructed, and open to resistance. Ingenuity becomes a means to escape closure: another way of 'not having to know'.

Toru Sasaki's essay is one of five that concentrate mainly on a single piece of fiction. Pamela Dalziel's essay on *The Mayor of Casterbridge* looks into the circumstances of the novel's publication for a context, rather than outside, to the traditions of sensational and melodramatic fiction. N. N. Feltes has pointed out in *Modes of Production of Victorian Novels* (Chicago, 1986) that part of the meaning of a novel published in a magazine was carried in the meanings that were already there, in its layout, blend of fiction and non-fiction, etc., and in the readership these implied. Dalziel shows how Hardy took account of these other 'meanings', in this case as they were supplied by Robert Barnes's illustrations for the *Graphic*, where *The Mayor* first appeared as a serial. In the *Life*, Hardy cites the opinion of James Payn, the reader for Smith, Elder, that the novel might lack interest because it did not deal with the gentry, as 'a typical estimate of what was, or was supposed to be, mid-Victorian taste'. Barnes's work, as Dalziel shows, seems to have been shaped by similar concerns, since its effect is to raise the social level especially of the female characters. These are easily enough accepted by readers of the twenty-first century, but it is worth noting just how far they were from the conventions of Victorian fiction: Susan lives in a common law marriage with another man after she has been sold by her husband; Lucetta tries to avoid marrying the man with whom she had been compromised because she now finds she wishes to marry another; while Elizabeth-Jane is the illegitimate daughter of a haytrusser's wife and a sailor, who aspires to become the second wife of the Mayor. Barnes's illustrations helped to smooth these difficult paths, and in revising the novel for volume publication Hardy seems to have followed Barnes's lead. Dalziel's essay shows the complexity of Hardy's relation with his publishers and his readers, and the ways in which his conception of the novel was shaped and modified by the need to meet their expectations.

Richard Nemesvari takes Melville's *Billy Budd* as a 'useful coordinate text' to explore not just the treatment of female sexuality in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* – an obvious concern for readers of the 1890s, worried by what Mowbray Morris at Macmillan's called the 'succulence' of the novel – but also its treatment of masculinity. Like Sasaki, Nemesvari is interested in Hardy's use of melodrama. Contemporary readers were puzzled that Alec d'Urberville seemed so straightforwardly the stock figure of the cad, ruthlessly intent on the seduction of the innocent Tess. The effect of this figure, in Victorian stage melodrama, is to locate the hypocrisy of the double standard in a few extravagantly bad characters, rather than seeing it as inherent in what Mona Caird, in essays which Hardy almost certainly knew, identified as 'the twin-system of marriage and prostitution', with 'common respectable marriage' merely 'the worst, because the most hypocritical, form of woman-purchase'.³ But as Nemesvari shows, Hardy has his reasons for using this stock figure. Tess's refusal to play the innocent victim to Alec's seducer begins to suggest the insecurity which lies within male sexual desire. For a time Alec abandons his role as a villain and becomes a preacher; Angel Clare, in the aftermath of his marriage to Tess, is briefly tempted to play the cad with Izzy Huett. The momentary reversal of positions is significant. No less than Alec, Angel is baffled by his desire for Tess, which runs up against his sense of cultural distance from her, his belief in restraint as a virtue, and his unthinking assumption that any woman he could love must of necessity be a virgin, an 'Artemis' or 'Demeter', and not a fallen woman who has given birth to the child of another man.

Angel's crisis, Nemesvari argues, is illuminated by that of Vere in the contemporaneous *Billy Budd*, similarly caught between a desire he can neither acknowledge nor repress, and thrown into confusion by the forced recognition that Claggart – a man lower in the social scale, morally inferior – desires as he does: a recognition that de-sanctifies the desire, and forces it to recognise itself. So too Angel finds his own identity shadowed by Alec. Vere must dissociate himself from Claggart, and Angel from Alec, in order to preserve a frightened masculinity. Both Vere and Angel struggle for self-control, but in each case, two lives have to pay the price of their insecurity.

Nemesvari's essay is a contribution to the ongoing discussion of what, since Kate Millett's study was published in 1969, we have grown accustomed to refer to as the 'sexual politics' of Hardy's fiction. In her pages on *Jude the Obscure*, Millett writes trenchantly that Sue Bridehead is by turns an enigma, a pathetic creature, a nut, and an iceberg. John Doheny's essay on the novel is an attempt to discover which of these she

is, and in what ways, and why. He quotes part of a passage in the *Life* in which Hardy compares himself to Bellini, as one who tried in his art 'to intensify the expression of things' in order to bring out 'the heart and inner meaning'. Hardy's means, as several contributors to this volume observe, are often non-realist ones, but his aim, as expressed here and in other passages in the *Life*, has much in common with those of professed realists. Doheny returns us to the situation of the reader of the novel, to examine both the moment-by-moment development of the relationship between its central characters – more closely tracked than any other relationship in Hardy's fiction – in terms of what they tell each other, and what they hide, and the way in which the narrator at several key points refuses to claim the full rights of omniscience. There is a startling example of this at the end of the chapter in which Sue marries Phillotson, when for no evident reason, at least in terms of the plot, Sue goes back into Jude's house to find a handkerchief. Her lips part, as if she is about to speak: 'But she went on; and whatever she had meant to say remained unspoken.' There the chapter ends, leaving Jude, at the beginning of the next, to try to interpret a moment about which the narrator obdurately refuses to provide any further clues. As Linda Shires and Toru Sasaki both notice in their essays, Hardy's work often encourages the reader to regard gender, class and the like as social constructs; what Doheny explores is the way Jude and Sue make these constructions of each other, often ignoring or refusing to admit evidence that tells against their interpretations. His reference to the reader's feelings of 'irritated empathy' is a patiently reasoned version of Millet's more summary statement.

Sally Shuttleworth also writes on *Jude*, examining late nineteenth century debates about child suicide. As many readers have noticed, the 'character' – if that is not too strong a word – of Father Time, presented as 'the nodal point' in the relation of Jude and Sue, 'their focus, their expression in a single term', seems out of kilter with the generally realistic manner of the rest of the novel, as if a figure out of a play by Strindberg (at work on his *To Damascus* trilogy while Hardy was at work on *Jude*) had wandered into a novel by Zola. But as Professor Shuttleworth points out, the scene where the bodies of Little Father Time and his siblings are discovered still has the power to shock. We respond to the naturalistic aspects of the scene (brief as it is, it is presented in prosaic detail, allowing the reader no respite), at the same time as we refer to the strategies of contemporary expressionism. There is even a sense that expressionism is the only means to write narrative in the novel. In *The Woodlanders* (1887), describing Melbury's state of mind at the prospect of marriage between Grace and Fitzpiers, Hardy begins to push at the limits of the Victorian novel:

Could the real have been beheld instead of the corporeal merely, the corner of the room in which he sat would have been filled with a form typical of anxious suspense, large-eyed, tight-lipped, awaiting the issue.

There is something of this in the presentation of Little Father Time. In the 1880s and 1890s Hardy was at least half persuaded that heredity was the determining force in our natures: that, as one of the passages Hardy copied from Henry Maudsley's *Natural Causes and Supernatural Seemings* has it, 'everybody, in the main lines of his thoughts, feelings & conduct, really recalls the experiences of his forefathers'. It is easy to see why such speculations seemed to undermine the notion of 'character'. More than that, they threaten to dissolve the parent's relation to the child into a fascinated, and horrified, stare into the lineaments of one's own nature writ large: Jude considers suicide at the age of eleven, his eldest son kills himself at the age of nine, his last child is stillborn as Sue miscarries. . . .

One might turn back here to Gillian Beer's essay, which suggests that Hardy had hopes for survivals into the future; what if, after all, rather than adding a new note to the song of the universe, each new utterance is only a darker echo of an earlier one? Here, as elsewhere, Hardy refuses to admit one position as final. He can envisage the future both as the 'full-fugued song of the universe unending', and as the collapse of each hope into its own negation. Like other writers of the age, he seems to move between cautious meliorism and the fear of atavism in the moral world, the death of the solar system in the physical world: *fin de siècle*, *fin du globe*. But few writers were as willing as Hardy to let hope and doubt lie side by side. Sue imagines humanity as suffering more and more in the future, foreseeing, in Shelley's words, 'Shapes like our own selves hideously multiplied.' Four chapters later, Jude imagines an improved world: perhaps Christminster 'will soon wake up, and be generous' to men like himself. Hardy, committed 'to not having to know', makes no attempt to adjudicate between them.

Angélique Richardson's essay takes up the issue of Hardy's interest in Darwinian biology from another angle, beginning with the shift from the implications of the *Origin*, that evolution left little room for human agency, to the suggestion, more or less explicit in the *Descent of Man*, that sexual selection, the staple of the plot of any number of novels, was the central story in human existence. Hardy insisted that life was 'a physiological fact', and that literature had to address such facts. But it was unclear what these facts suggested. Was their effect to position men and women in nature to such a degree that their freedom was called into question? How did the human 'love plot' relate to the processes of