
Genetic Criticism, Textual Criticism and the Creative Process

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In the context of the Anglo-French nature of this conference, and having in mind the contemporary prominence of “la critique génétique” in France, Sanae and Kazuhiro have asked me to address the question “Why do most critics of Hardy’s work pay little attention to the evolution of his texts?” and their speculation that the cause lies within the development of Anglo-American textual studies leads them to ask me to consider how textual studies can contribute to the interpretation of literary texts.

So I will begin this afternoon by addressing these issues, and in the second half I will offer some concrete examples of how a study of the witnesses to a work can assist interpretation.

Let me first make a few definitions, and I apologise in advance to those who are familiar with what I am describing. Genetic criticism is concerned with uncovering and exploring processes of writing through a study of materials that constitute what has come to be known as the *avant-texte* of a work—that is notebooks, manuscripts, typescripts, proofs—whatever comes before the established text. The conclusions reached by a genetic critic do not necessarily have to do with the established text; and may not even be concerned with the identity of the author (though most are); what is aimed at is the reconstruction and analysis of the processes by which a work moves in time and space towards one of several or many possible conclusions in an established text.

By contrast Anglo-American textual criticism is centrally concerned with the established text—indeed its fundamental goal has been to establish a single satisfactory text of a work, and to present in an apparatus the evidence for change to the work over time. During the same forty years that have seen the development of genetic criticism in France the theoretical basis of textual criticism in England and America has radically shifted away from a central concern with the intentions of the author to a central concern with the range of influences that combine to make a text what it is: the means of production and distribution, contemporary social issues and concerns—and the author’s intentions in so far as they can be established on objective grounds.

Now, I hope you will forgive me if I place myself in relation to all this. I am both a textual critic and a genetic critic (though perhaps an imperfect one) of the work of the English novelist and poet Thomas Hardy, and I plan to discuss the questions Sanae and Kazuhiro have raised primarily through my own work.

The first question, you will remember, was “Why do most critics of Hardy’s work pay little attention to the evolution of his texts?” First I have to accept the truth of the observation—and indeed I would go further and say that on the whole most criticism of most English writers with

which I am familiar pays little, or indeed no attention to the process by which the text to which they refer evolved. Moreover it is also true, and even more shamefully true, that most Anglo-American critics do not even know what state of the work it is that they quote in their analysis. I say that this is shameful because—and here let me return to Hardy as a specific example—there are two cheap, readily available and scrupulously edited paperback editions of Hardy's fiction, one issued by Penguin and the other in the Oxford World's Classics series, both of which contain detailed information about the various states through which the work passed, and notes containing the most interesting evidence of change. But these notes of necessity only offer a small fraction of what might be taken into account. So, why don't critics seem to be concerned with the process by which Hardy's work came to be what it is? I have four answers:

First, the necessary documents are not readily available to the literary critic. Hardy's manuscript materials are scattered around the world; two of the most interesting groups have been published in facsimile (those relating to *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *The Return of the Native*) but even these facsimiles are not present in many university libraries. Only two of his novels have been published in full scholarly editions (*Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *The Woodlanders*). Otherwise critics would have to do original research amongst the documents themselves. There is much less excuse for students of Hardy's poetry for Samuel Hynes's edition contains full information about textual variation.

A second and related point is that the growth in importance of Genetic Criticism in France has been greatly assisted by the establishment of the *Institut des Textes et Manuscrits Modernes* as part of the *Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique*. There is no comparable state-supported centre for the study of texts and manuscripts in either Britain or the United States, and thus no permanent centralised forum for the discussion and promotion of issues relating to the literary creative process.

Thirdly, the critical editions that **have** been published are hefty volumes and require careful and logically applied attention to use. Here's a sample from *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (fig. 1). Now I don't think it is particularly complicated to follow—but then I wrote it. Friends and acquaintances have asserted otherwise, and have argued that the complexity of the footnoting turns first-time users away. It is certainly true that such a format is not an ideal way of making clear the fluid nature of the text—but every other way of trying to do this in a printed book also runs up against the limitations of print as a medium.

A fourth reason for the apparent lack of interest of Hardy's critics in the development of his works is institutional: in both Britain and America there is tremendous pressure on academics to publish books and articles. In America tenure and promotion depends upon production, as do salary raises; in Britain the same is true, but there is the added pressure that each English Department's funding for research depends upon the amount (and quality) of material produced over a given period. The study of the *avant-texte*, of the evolution of a work, is extremely time-consuming, and the reward uncertain, so there is little incentive to pursue it when excellent critical analysis of established texts—of whatever origin—produces a satisfactory institutional response.

Before turning to the second and (as I see it) more important question—how does the study of the process of writing contribute to the interpretation of literary texts?—I should like to outline what I see as a solution to most of the obstacles I have just outlined.

The solution, I believe, lies, as the solutions to so many problems lie, in the universality of the internet. A group of Hardy scholars is at the beginning of the process of developing all-inclusive knowledge-sites for his works—sites in which all the *avant-texte* and all the substantive witnesses to the work will be available as images and in transcription, linked, annotated, together with

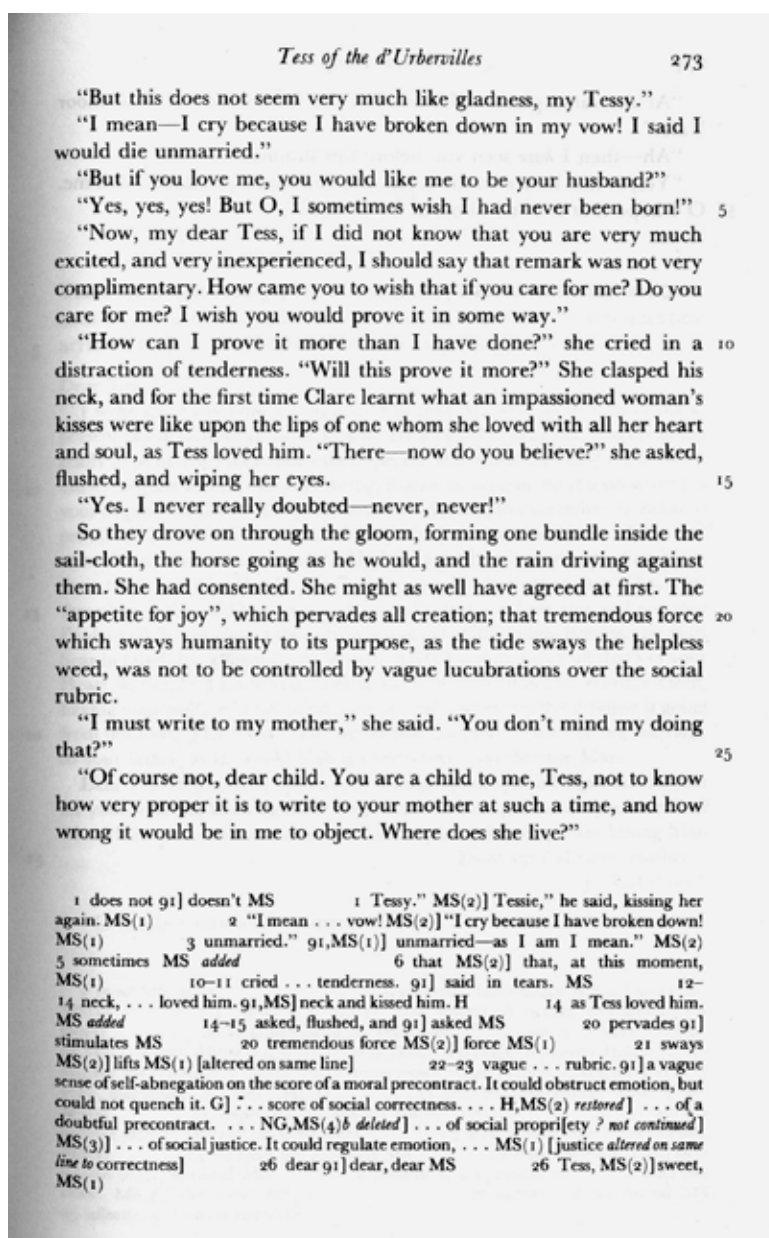


fig. 1

every external document that anyone might think relevant to the study of the work's genesis and process—newspaper and journal articles, music, paintings, extracts from books, maps—all this in an environment accessible to everyone, to which anyone may (with safeguards) contribute. To be more specific, I'm currently involved in two grant-proposals, one to create a preliminary archive of witnesses for all of Hardy's fiction, the other for a full knowledge-site for one Hardy novel (*Under the Greenwood Tree*). This is the way forward—in particular because our vision is directed not just at the diligent academic user who will be interested to look for an archive like this, but at the ordinary reader of Hardy (of whom there are still very many); we anticipate applications for smartphones and I-pads and their equivalents, which will make it possible for the most casual of readers to see that the text is not a unitary stable thing, and to discover, if they have only marginal interest, how it has changed over time. Thus soon even the laziest of Hardy's critics will have all the genetic material available to them in the most convenient way possible. Then, perhaps, we shall see critics paying attention to how what they are writing about came to be what it is.

Let me now turn to the issue of what interpretive leverage we can gain by studying the evolution of the work of Thomas Hardy.

If genetic criticism is the study of the *avant-texte* narrowly defined as prepublication materials then as far as Hardy is concerned, there is singularly little to go upon. There survives only one notebook of any direct relevance to a novel, and that consists of a series of historical notes made in the British Museum for his only properly-called historical novel *The Trumpet-Major*.¹ I do not say these notes are of no interest, but they do not provide much material that is of assistance in elucidating the process of writing the novel, beyond the fact that he wanted to get as much of the detail surrounding the narrative as accurate as possible. There are also three volumes of literary notes—commonplace books one might call them—and again they are of considerable general interest in assessing the influences on Hardy as a writer, and very occasionally they can be made to shed light on the early thoughts about a work.² Hardy burned most of the notebooks in which he wrote down ideas and their development at the time in his seventies when he was writing his autobiography (cast in the third person as the work of his wife), and the rest were destroyed by his wife after his death. The published autobiography, however, does contain hints for novels taken from these notebooks—take *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* for example.

When Hardy was first thinking about the novel in the summer of 1888 he wrote of his visiting the district he gave to Tess's childhood, Blackmoor Vale, and in the same note he makes the contrast between its little Dairies and the great Dairies of the Froom where she goes later to work. The note also includes a reflection on the social decline of the Hardy family as the d'Urberville family has declined.

A little later there is "When a married woman who has a lover kills her husband, she does not really wish to kill the husband, she wishes to kill the situation. Of course in Clytaemnestra's case it was not exactly so, since there was the added grievance of Iphigenia, which half-justified her"³. Evidently Hardy expected readers to say the same kind of thing about Tess's murder of Alec—half justified by his treatment of her.

A little later still there is "But these [society] women! If put into rough wrappers in a turnip-field, where would their beauty be?"⁴ This is exactly how Hardy invites us to see Tess at Flintcomb Ash, where both the narrator and Alec find Tess seductively beautiful.

These notes are all very well, but as evidence they have been doctored, sanitised and extracted from their context in his notebooks and then published; there's no manuscript context to work with.

One last example, however, does give me a chance to present a first sample of how a study of the early witnesses to the text of a novel can provide interpretive ammunition. Hardy also put this note in his autobiography:

Thought of the determination to enjoy. We see it in all nature, from the leaf on the tree to the titled lady at the ball.... Even the most oppressed of men and animals find it, so that out of a thousand there is hardly one who has not a sun of some sort for his soul.⁵

This is a perception that runs throughout the novel:

1 *The Personal Notebooks of Thomas Hardy* ed. Richard Taylor (London: Macmillan, 1978).

2 *The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy* ed. Lennart Björk (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1985); *Thomas Hardy's "Poetical Matter" Notebook* ed. Michael Millgate and Pamela Dalziel (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009); *Thomas Hardy's "Facts" Notebook* ed. William Greenslade (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

3 Florence Emily Hardy, *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy* (London: Macmillan, 1928), pp. 289–90.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 293.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 279.

The irresistible, universal, automatic tendency to find sweet pleasure somewhere, which pervades all life, from the meanest to the highest, had at length mastered Tess. (Chapter 16)

And again:

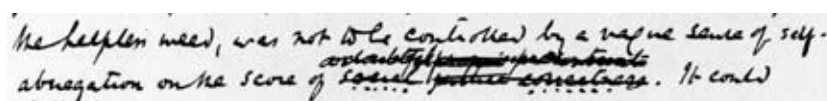
So the two forces were at work here as everywhere, the inherent will to enjoy, and the circumstantial will against enjoyment. (Chapter 43)

Or this:

She had consented. She might as well have agreed at first. The ‘appetite for joy’, which pervades all creation; that tremendous force which sways humanity to its purpose, as the tide sways the helpless weed, was not to be controlled by vague lucubrations over the social rubric. (Chapter 30)

This last passage (the page of the Clarendon edition of the novel on which it appears is reproduced above on p. 59) is particularly interesting because, if you examine the early states of the text, you can see that Hardy had considerable trouble with its last phrase, which unfortunately became at the end of a process of change the quite awful “vague lucubrations over the social rubric” that you see. The evolution of the phrase also offers an excellent example of the complexities that the student of the genesis of a Hardy work can face.

The first reading in the manuscript was “a vague sense of self-abnegation on the score of social justice.” (fig. 2) Almost at once he decided to cancel “justice”, and to replace it first of all with “propriety; but before he could finish the word decided “correctness” was preferable. This is a highly significant change, for in effect he replaced what Tess thought with what the narrator thought. Tess’s religious and social education drove her to believe that, because of her sexual union and child with Alec d’Urberville, it was morally just for her to refuse to love Angel Clare. The narrator on the other hand has no doubt that no moral imperative is involved in the issue—that in trying not to give in to her love for Angel, Tess was merely behaving as Victorian social conventions suggest to her she should behave.



the helpless weed, was not to be controlled by a vague sense of self-
~~abnegation on the score of social justice~~
 abnegation on the score of ~~social justice~~ ^{correctness}. It could

fig. 2

The remaining changes were made for a quite different reason. When Hardy sent the manuscript of the novel to the English magazine *The Graphic* he knew that the editor would not allow the implied rape scene to appear in its pages, so, for this serialisation alone, Alec organises a fake marriage ceremony so that afterwards Tess will agree to have sex with him. This substitution has the embarrassing implausible effects of making Tess feel guilty for not being able to tell the difference between a real registrar of marriages and a false one, and making Angel brutally reject her on the same grounds. In a slight attempt to mitigate these consequences of his self-censorship he made a fourth change to the manuscript reading. The cancelled words “a doubtful precontract” are written in the blue ink that he used throughout the manuscript to indicate temporary alterations for the *Graphic* alone (though I’m afraid I only have a black and white reproduction, so you can’t see the difference). The change (it certainly shouldn’t be called a revision) made direct allusion to the serial’s fake marriage, and this wording was set in proof for the *Graphic*. Before Hardy could look at the proofs, though, copies were sent to several provincial newspapers which had paid for syndication of the novel, where this version of the phrase was duly published. However, when Hardy

got to read the *Graphic* proofs he decided to alter “doubtful precontract” to “moral precontract”. The only reason I can think of for this change is that he had the conventional bourgeois audience of the *Graphic* in mind and was further pandering to what he thought would be their assessment of Tess’s obligations.

But there were also transatlantic complications. Hardy had agreed to send a further set of proofs to America for serialisation in *Harper’s Bazar*, and he knew that the American editor would not object to the implied rape; so, on this set of proofs he deleted the whole fake marriage, and for the passage we are looking at, reinstated the second manuscript reading, so that the first American readers of *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* saw “a vague sense of self-abnegation on the score of social correctness.” And in fact they were the only readers to do so, for when Hardy came to prepare the novel for its publication in three volumes he revised the whole phrase to the unhelpful and academic obscurity of “vague lucubrations over the social rubric”—which is where we began. It is hard indeed to imagine Tess lucubrating even vaguely, and though the origins of “rubric” in the red inked type used in liturgical books fits in with the imagery of redness that is associated with Tess throughout the novel, it is in every other way quite inappropriately associated with her by the narrator.

It is a massive task to give to the development of a whole novel this kind of detailed attention; but if you do, then other places will occur to you, where Hardy works hard to find the right words to express what he feels about the social conventions concerning relations between the sexes. One of these comes at the end of chapter 13, for which, unfortunately, the manuscript is missing. Thus the earliest state of the sentence that concludes the chapter is found only in the syndicated provincial serialisations of the novel that were made from unrevised proof-sheets of *The Graphic*—I used *The Nottinghamshire Guardian*—but this state presumably represents the final reading in the manuscript. It is:

She might have been a party to the tampering with a **good necessary** law, but with no law known in the environment in which she fancied herself such an anomaly.

As I have said, Tess’s religious and social education has forced her to believe that in having sex with Alec outside marriage she is guilty of sin and thus alienated from the innocent natural world about her, and presumably the “good necessary law” is that sex outside marriage is a sin—and it is necessary for the effective organisation of Victorian society. But the substitution in the *Graphic* of a false wedding for the rape meant that in proof for *The Graphic* Hardy changed the sentence to read:

She might have been a party to the tampering with a **social** law, but with no law known in the environment in which she fancied herself such an anomaly.

The only law she had been an unwitting party to tampering with, in this version of the novel, was that one has to get married before an officially licensed registrar—a social law. On the proofs he sent to America for *Harper’s Bazar* (you will remember that he excised the fake marriage for America) he also altered “good necessary law”, but for a different reason:

She might have been a party to the tampering with a **necessary social** law, but with no law known in the environment in which she fancied herself such an anomaly.

Here Hardy more deliberately sets aside any notion of the ethical value of the customary teaching that sex outside marriage is wrong, “a good ... law”.

In the first English edition of 1891 he addressed a separate issue: the sentence as it stood in *The*

Graphic implied in “a party to” that Tess had been a more or less willing participant in her sexual relationship with Alec. What the narrative tells us of those few weeks *does* allow such a conclusion, but it should be remembered also that it was for this version of the novel that Hardy added as subtitle “A Pure Woman faithfully represented by Thomas Hardy”, and we should not be surprised that he chose to stress her initial unwillingness and the psychological and perhaps physical force that Alec used on her—so the sentence becomes:

She **had been made to break a necessary social law, but no** law known in the environment in which she fancied herself such an anomaly.

The first edition went through four impressions in a few months and the publishers were soon anxious to bring out a cheaper one-volume edition. Hardy’s ideas about the novel were still in ferment. In revising for the first edition he had been concentrated on arguing Tess’s innate purity, and this allowed the survival of the idea that the law that Tess was forced by Alec to break was socially necessary; but he rectified the situation in the one-volume edition:

She had been made to break an **accepted** social law, but no law known in the environment in which she fancied herself such an anomaly.

This is the revision that allowed the passage to contribute in its indirect way to what had become by 1892 Hardy’s consistent attack on Victorian attitudes towards sexual relations. Society at large may accept its customary practice as law, but the narrator of the novel is no longer prepared to do so. It is a short step from this position to Jude Fawley’s view that in fifty years marriage will be irrelevant to sexual relations and the rearing of children.

Let me retreat to generalisation again for a moment. If we define the *avant-texte* narrowly, then for Hardy the manuscript that went to the printer most often is really the only *avant-texte* to consider. But on the other hand Hardy never rested satisfied with his work, and, as we have seen, whenever his publisher told him that they were interested in putting out a new edition of anything, he provided revisions. So I propose to define the *avant-texte* somewhat differently in Hardy’s case, and consider the last version of the work that he revised the established text, and everything that went before it as *avant-texte*. Much, then, of the material to be studied is not manuscript, but it is all part of Hardy’s process of writing. Much of the work I have done over the last forty years has studied this process; and that is why I think of myself as a genetic critic, though perhaps of an English rather than a French variety. This means, amongst other things that I am more centrally interested in the author, and in discovering larger patterns in the process of change, not just in relation to a single novel or poem, but across the whole of an author’s work—macro rather than micro genetic criticism. For instance I have explored what I call Hardy’s habit of gentrification in his earlier fiction.⁶ In almost all the novels he wrote before 1880 for which manuscripts survive, the earliest material evidence shows that the important characters start at a socio-cultural level identical with or very close to that of the generality of characters in the narrative, and that over time, in the manuscript, in implied proof and in the published editions, they move upward socially.

Thus, in *The Return of the Native*, Eustacia Vye was originally called Avice, and was no different from the other Heath-dwellers—her parentage was quite unromantic; Damon Wildevé was originally called Toogood, and instead of an engineer and dilettante innkeeper from beyond the Heath, was an itinerant herbalist; Clym Yeobright was originally an assistant in a jeweller’s shop in a nearby seaside town before he returned to the Heath, but by the end of the process he had

6 Simon Gatrell, *Hardy the Creator: A Textual Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 39–44.

become the manager of a jewellery house in Paris; Diggory Venn the reddleman had always been a reddleman, a travelling seller of dye to shepherds, but in later versions of his character he had been a prosperous dairy-farmer who had only taken up the reddle trade as a temporary remedy for a broken heart, and who might (and does) return to dairy farming whenever he feels like it.

In *Far From the Madding Crowd* Gabriel Oak was originally no more than a shepherd on an equal standing with the other workfolk of Weatherbury, while rather than being the illegitimate son of an aristocrat, Frank Troy was merely a sergeant in the dragoon guards.

In *Under the Greenwood Tree* Keeper Day was raised through successive revisions from a simple woodsman to head forester on an extensive aristocratic estate, the rich Farmer Shiner had originally been an innkeeper, and the Vicar, Mr Maybold, didn't appear in the novel at all.

Let me give you just one example of how the process works in detail. This is from *A Pair of Blue Eyes* of 1873; and for those of you who do not know the novel, Stephen Smith is the son of working-class parents who has been educated above his social position, trains as an architect, and returns by chance to his birthplace to oversee the restoration of the local church. He lodges with the vicar Mr Swancourt, with whose daughter Elfride he falls in love, and she with him. She has no idea of his parentage, though, and preparatory to Stephen asking the vicar for her hand in marriage he tells her (in chapter 8) about his father and mother.

Over most of the history of the text Elfride hears that Stephen's father is "a cottager and journeyman mason"—almost what would today be called a bricklayer; but when Hardy revised the novel in 1912 for the second collected edition of his work, the Wessex Edition, he altered his status to that of a "working master-mason", significantly raising his standing in the community to a builder, an employer of men. His mother also worked (unlike the women in a middle-class professional family), and Hardy had more trouble in working out for himself what she might have done. There are three versions of her occupation in the manuscript, the first two cancelled. (fig. 3) The earliest reading is heavily inked out, but I am virtually certain that it reads: "She was a washerwoman." To take in washing is among the humblest kind of work he could have thought of. The second cancellation is easier to read: "She was a weeder." When I first deciphered this I had no idea what a "weeder" did, but obligingly Hardy realised that Elfride probably would have had no idea either, so he added a fragment of dialogue on the blank page opposite; under the cancellations it reads (fig. 4):

"What is a weeder?"

"A person who weeds in a gentleman's garden. It is a regular occupation for country women, and it was my mother's."

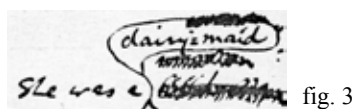


fig. 3

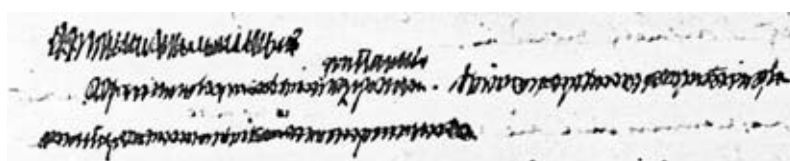


fig. 4

This work is equally humble, and in Stephen's description it includes a direct reference to her employer, who might well have been Elfride's father (notice that Hardy added the word "gentleman's" as an afterthought. In the end Hardy thought this might humiliate Stephen too

obviously, and the final manuscript reading is simply “She was a dairy-maid.” And this is how it appeared in the serialisation in *Tinsley’s Magazine* and in the first book edition. However, when the novel was included as part of the first collected edition of Hardy’s fiction in 1895 he decided it was necessary to give her a superior kind of ancestry, and Stephen’s speech becomes: “Her people had been well-to-do yeomen for centuries, but she was only a dairymaid.” Her family has come down in the world like the Hardys and the Durbeyfields. But this is not the last change. For the Wessex Edition, the text that is mostly read these days, Hardy added a further explanation: “Her people had been well-to-do yeomen for centuries, but she was only a dairy-woman, having been left an orphan.” And he made a second change in case metropolitan readers should not appreciate the distinction between a dairy-maid and a dairy-woman: Stephen goes on in the manuscript “She continued to attend to a dairy long after my father married her,” (fig. 5) (and it is worth pointing out that the handwriting here is not Hardy’s, but that of the woman he was soon to marry, Emma Lavinia Gifford—but that is another story). In the Wessex Edition “She continued to manage a dairy ...” Thus over nearly 40 years Mrs Smith has ascended the social ladder from washerwoman or weeder to the manager of a dairy.

fig. 5

There are both local and general reasons for these changes. Hardy needed to sell his novels, and his readership was the professional middle class; it was not until *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* really that a central character remained throughout the novel’s evolution, by status, if not by nature, a regular member of the agricultural working class, and he even feels obligated, in a relatively late addition to the manuscript, to give her an aristocratic ancestry. In the case of Stephen Smith, though, there are some practical plot-driven reasons. In many of Hardy’s novels there is a social inequality between the romantic (or sexual) leads; his first unpublished novel was called *The Poor Man and the Lady*, and though the genders are sometimes reversed, as in *The Hand of Ethelberta* or *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, the problems of erotic relationships across class-divisions were often at the forefront of his mind. In the process of his own marriage from the rural working class into the professional middle-class he had encountered the kind of profoundly unpleasant social hostility that Stephen is shown by Elfride’s clergyman father:

“Foh! A fine story. It is not enough that I have been deluded and disgraced by having him here, —the son of one of my village peasants, —but now I am to make him my son-in-law! Heavens above us, are you mad, Elfride?” (Chapter 9)

As a washerwoman or a weeder he would at least have been justified in calling Mrs Smith a “village peasant”; as the manager of a dairy (and with her husband as a master-mason), she would scarcely be a peasant, and the vicar’s snobbery would become even more insulting. At the same time Hardy felt that he had to give Stephen parentage that made it at least plausible that they should have been able to afford him a good education and the premium for his architectural training.

You get the point, I hope. You couldn’t know any of this unless you had examined every stage of Hardy’s process of revision for the novel—and you couldn’t begin to generalise about Hardy’s practice in raising the class-status of the characters in his early novels unless you had examined the process in each of his novels.

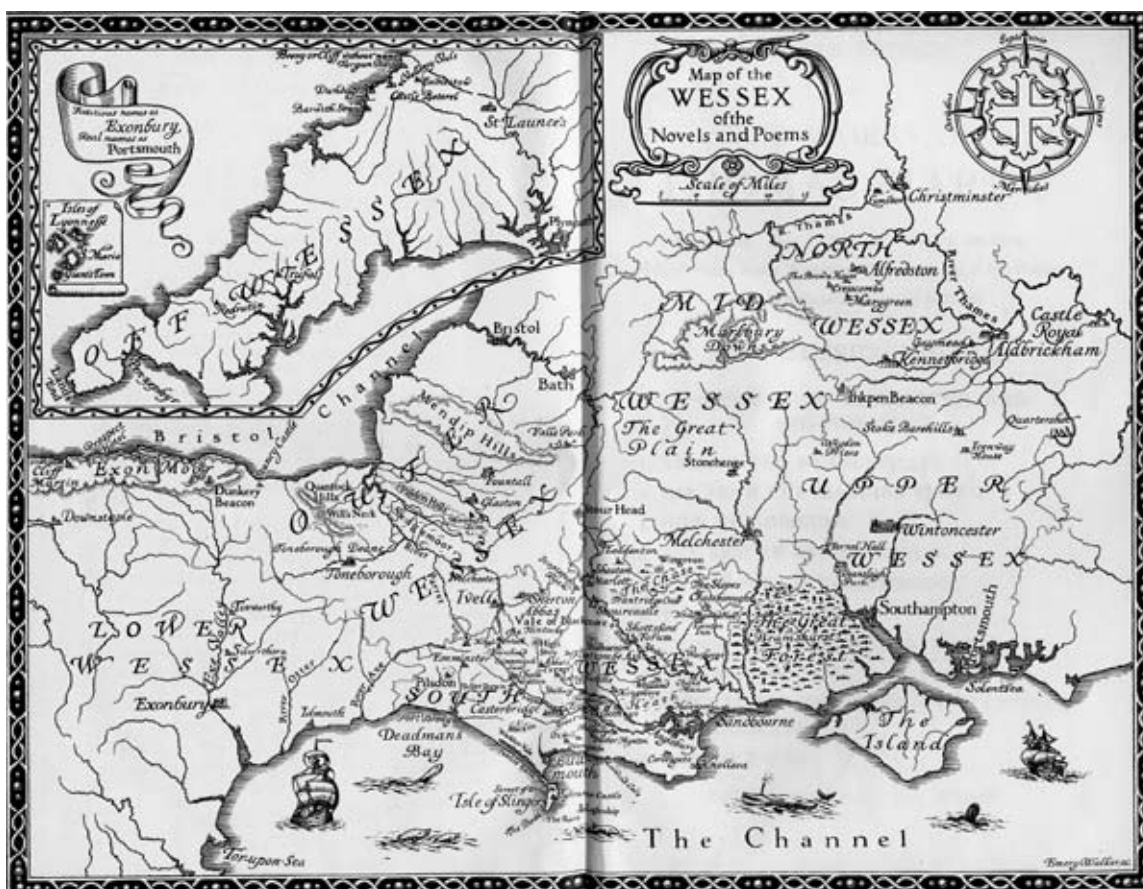


fig. 6 Wessex map

If I had time I should like to move from a discussion of this issue that affects some of Hardy's work, to consider in detail another that is important throughout his work, in both prose and verse—how the idea of Wessex as a part real, part dream country in which his fictions had their being developed in his creative imagination over time. I will just outline what investigation of this question involves, and if what I say interests you, then you can read all about it in a book I wrote a few years ago called *Thomas Hardy's Vision of Wessex*, a book that required analysis of the process of change in every work he wrote.

The map appended to the 1912 Wessex edition of his work (fig. 6) shows what Hardy meant by part real, part dream country. The outline is that of south-west England; the hills and rivers have English names, as do some large towns; the county boundaries are English, but their names are imagined; the other places have invented names (though many refer transparently to the English name), as do a few other natural features. Hardy wrote in the General Preface to the Wessex edition about how he had by then come to conceive of Wessex:

At the dates represented in the various narrations things were like that in Wessex: the inhabitants lived in certain ways, engaged in certain occupations, kept alive certain customs, just as they are shown doing in these pages.

He added that he believed the novels “preserve ... a fairly true record of a vanishing life”. The question I set out to answer was by what process does Wessex come to mean this for him? Let me put it very briefly and schematically. There were four stages, broadly defined:

The first is pre-Wessex: Hardy's first three novels and most of his fourth were written before

he began to see that it might be useful to define fictionally the district and culture that he was creating, with invented place-names, out of the realities he knew best.

Then Wessex became a convenience for him. In his fifth novel Wessex became established as a rural district that contrasted with the urbanities of London, but his following four novels take the matter little further.

The third stage I call new Wessex. Hardy built himself a house in his home town Dorchester in the early 1880s, the first house he had owned, and this assertion of permanent residence in the heart of Dorset/Wessex suggested to him a new view of his fiction. In *The Mayor of Casterbridge* of 1886, for the first time, Hardy linked most of his fiction together through the place-names he had invented for each of them. Casterbridge—his fictional version of Dorchester—became the commercial and social centre of a region that included the country of most of his previous work; and he cemented this interconnection by including, also for the first time, characters from an earlier novel in the action of the one he was writing. And, what is in some ways even more interesting, for the first time in his work he acknowledged that some of his readers were not only making connections between his fictional places and the real ones he based them upon, but were actually visiting the real places as literary tourists. *The Mayor of Casterbridge* is mostly set in the 1840s, and he ended a description of a row of houses with the comment that they were “now in great part pulled down,” as if he were writing a guide-book rather than a novel (Chapter 36).

Finally Hardy moved to identify Wessex fully with England. It was in the manuscript of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* in 1890 that for the first time Hardy began dividing up Wessex into counties which had the same boundaries as those of England. At the same time he began to be scrupulous about ensuring that the directions and distances between his fictional places matched those to be found in England. The climax of this process came with the publication of the first collected edition of his work in 1895–6. Hardy had to decide how to treat novels that he had written twenty or more years earlier, long before Wessex had become so important to him, long before he thought of himself as a cultural historian as well as a novelist. Well, as we know, he decided to rewrite their environments to conform with what I've called new Wessex, and to add such social or cultural details as would help this integration. He was revising twelve novels, as well as writing a thirteenth, and so it is not surprising that he wasn't able to be exhaustively thorough in this process; but when he looked at his work again for his second collected edition, the Wessex edition of 1912 he tried very hard to eliminate surviving inconsistencies between Wessex and England (though a couple of novels proved still recalcitrant in this respect).

There is of course very much more to say on this evolution—but I hope I have said enough to convince you that, though the labour in comparing version after version of novel and poem after novel and poem is considerable, the rewards are also considerable.

I should like, in response to some discussion during the earlier part of this conference, to end with a very brief glance at a quite different consequence of the study of Hardy's manuscripts. Punctuation is not often considered even by scholars who have an interest in the evolution of texts, but—at least in the case of Hardy's work—this is unfortunate. A study of the relationship between Hardy's manuscript punctuation and that in the first printed version of his works reveals several interesting and perhaps surprising facts. One is that no coherent house-style in punctuation was applied to Hardy's texts in the print shop—each compositor had preferences and dislikes and followed them; another is that throughout his career Hardy used markedly lighter punctuation than any printing house was prepared to accept, so that, for instance, an average of between five and seven commas were added to each page of the Wessex edition of all the novels I have examined; a third is that often, particularly in speech, when following a standard pattern of punctuation compositors

effaced Hardy's careful notation of how the words were spoken. But more destructive than any of these impositions on Hardy's words are the places where the standardisation of punctuation creates a change in meaning. Here is just one example that relates back to Angel Clare's response to Tess's sexual encounter with Alec, and her baby. He gives his reason for being unable to stay with her after this revelation; in the manuscript Hardy wrote: "I cannot ... without despising myself, and what is worse, perhaps despising you" (chapter 36). The compositor of the passage added a conventional comma after "perhaps," and so in proof for the serialisation it became: "I cannot ... without despising myself, and what is worse, perhaps, despising you." As a consequence instead of having Angel say that he would despise himself if he remained with Tess, and that a worse potential result would be that he might come to despise Tess also, in the serial he says that he would despise himself and would also despise Tess, which would possibly be worse than despising himself—an even more unpleasant sentiment.

There are hundreds of similar instances in Hardy's work where the meaning is changed by the alteration of his manuscript punctuation by the text's first compositors, and the discovery of these is not the least of the tasks that confronts the textual critic or the genetic critic.