

EDITOR'S NOTES

Readers of the previous issue of this *Journal* (5.1) will have noticed that the font has been enlarged to what I hope is a more comfortable size: or at least might have done so, had they not been distracted by more than an hundred bizarre misprints, which at some point after proof-reading launched themselves from nowhere into the text, like Space Invaders in the old computer game. Our printers, Extemplo, in the person of Mark Downey, immediately accepted responsibility for the problem, and corrected it at their own charge. This was of course the right thing to do, but not every company does the right thing with such goodwill, and it's a pleasure to record the Society's thanks, and my own, both to Mark and to Ellis Sare for sending out the reset *Journal* so promptly.

Misprints are mostly frustrating, sometimes embarrassing, and occasionally entertaining. Franklyn D. Roosevelt was amused, though his staff were not, when the *Washington Post* reported 'FDR IN BED WITH A COED', rather than 'A COLD'. The Introduction to the 2009 edition of Tim Armstrong's excellent *Thomas Hardy: Selected Poems* discusses the way 'artists and drinkers' compete to be recognized as the true inheritors of a tradition, which is certainly memorable, and may even be true, but is less to the purpose than 'thinkers' would have been. And I suspect that when Linda Anderson saw the first copies of her valuable study of *Wells, Bennett and Conrad*, she was dismayed to find the latter credited as author of the novella 'Head of Darkness', rather than the less racy-titled *Heart of Darkness* the rest of us had been reading — though even this pales beside the undergraduate essay which with Joycean flair renamed Hardy's favourite contemporary poet as 'Algernon Swinebum'.

The most frequent error, and easy to miss in proof-reading, is the transposition of two letters. This is the sadly dull explanation of an otherwise startling moment in Chapter XV of the Norton edition *Far from the Madding Crowd*, when Gabriel Oak, coming to Bathsheba's defence, plants his fist on the table of Warren's Malthouse with '*marital* promptness and vigour'. Occasionally the same slip proves serendipitous, as when the printers of Yeats's poem 'Among School Children' changed 'solider Aristotle' (solider, that is, than Plato's world of ideal forms) into

‘soldier Aristotle’. Yeats, usually a compulsive reviser, was content to leave the mistake uncorrected; his editors weren’t, however, and ‘solider’ was restored after his death.

There are some faults one would not wish undone. Worn type, rather than a printer’s or proof-reader’s mistake, caused some older copies of Jim Gibson’s edition of Hardy’s *Complete Poems* to omit the full-stop at the end of ‘Where the Picnic Was’, so that it reads:

— But two have wandered far
From this grassy rise
Into urban roar
Where no picnics are,
And one — has shut her eyes
For evermore

It would be hard to imagine a more apposite or beautiful error.

Unlike Yeats, Hardy was wary about revising his poems, fearing (he told Robert Graves) that their ‘freshness’ might be lost. A. E. Housman makes the point eloquently in a discussion of Yeats’s revisions to his earlier poetry, which he suggests were made

only because the artist has gazed too long at his work, and because of that over-intensity the words have lost their magic for him, as all finite things do, through overfamiliarity; and he has found other words for his thought which are not better words, but only temporarily release the artist from the ache over absolute perfection unrealized.

This is critically astute about Yeats, especially those last six words, but it also suggests the creative struggles of a writer who chose the title *Last Poems* for what was only his second volume of verse, published fourteen years before his death (a third volume, *More Poems*, was printed posthumously, ‘by his permission, not by his wish’). Housman was decidedly not a poet for whom ‘Any little old song/Will do’.

It is a sadness to report the deaths in the past month of two distinguished Hardy scholars and teachers, Jean Brooks and Peter Widdowson. Both were active in the Hardy Society, Peter as an editorial adviser to the *Journals*, and Jean as a Vice-President. Their loss will be deeply felt. Tributes to them appear elsewhere in this issue.

Jean began her book on *Thomas Hardy: the Poetic Structure* (1971) by remarking that Hardy scholarship was flourishing, and the reader might question the need for another study of his work. Any such doubts were quickly dispelled by what followed: a deeply considered and intensely humane account of the way Hardy's personal voice affirms 'the response of living passion to the human predicament'. My own copy is filled with marginal notes agreeing and disagreeing with her analyses, sometimes with a tick or double tick, as for example next to her suggestion that the rhythmic pattern of 'The Voice' fits that of 'Haste to the Wedding', one of the traditional dances noted in the Hardy family's music manuscript book. There follows this comment:

Our response to this metrical reminder of [Hardy's and Emma's] early happiness counterpointing the poet's present desolation is rich and complex. Tune and voice rush inseparably on his musing memory: the personal loss is related to and ordered by the experience of the race in the lilting folk rhythm and curiously formal but deeply moving 'Woman much missed' and 'the woman calling' which frame the personal bereavement.

This is well said, but first it was well felt. Every page in the book carries the impress of the integrity which characterized all she did. She will be much missed.

Peter Widdowson spent a lifetime in higher education, working in the old polytechnics and new (post-1992) universities. His *Hardy in History: a Study in Literary Sociology* was first published in full in 1989 (parts had appeared earlier, in *The Thomas Hardy Annual* and in *Literature and History*, of which he was one of the founding editors), and it remains one of the most frequently cited books about Hardy of the past twenty years. It asked questions not only about Hardy's work, the novels in particular, but also about the way 'Thomas Hardy' has been constituted as a cultural figure: about how he has been taught and examined, filmed and televised, publicised and marketed, and about what aspects of his work might have

been ignored or downplayed to make him fit into a conventional view of English national culture, and of ‘English Literature’ as an academic discipline — or cause him to “‘disappear” in silence’, as happens, Peter points out, in F. R. Leavis’s *The Great Tradition*. The Hardy who emerges here, and in *On Thomas Hardy: Late Essays and Earlier* (1998), is less ‘universal’ and less existential, more ‘historical’ and more ‘disruptive’, than Jean Brooks’ Hardy (‘the human predicament’ is not a phrase Peter would easily have used without quotation marks), but his work, like hers, is marked by the critical energy of one to whom these things *matter*.

It is a real pleasure to congratulate Christopher Ricks, until recently Professor of Poetry at Oxford and Professor of the Humanities at Boston University, on the award of a knighthood in the Queen’s Birthday Honours list. Members of the Hardy Society will know him as a brilliant lecturer, most recently on Hardy’s use of rhyme at the 2008 Conference, but his work ranges widely, including books on Milton, Keats, Tennyson, T. S. Eliot and Bob Dylan — according to the *Guardian*, he owns 1700 bootleg outtakes and recordings of Dylan — as well as several collections of essays and reviews, and a magnificent three-volume edition of Tennyson’s *Poems* (my copy of the one-volume version runs to more than 1800 pages, cost a princely 84 shillings, and still stands as the best penny-per-page buy I have ever made). Writing on Dylan, Sir Christopher remarks that ‘the great artist is at once highly-trained and deeply instinctual’. The same terms might be used of his own critical writing, which is, among all its other merits, a joy to read. His knighthood is richly deserved.

Also knighted in the Birthday Honours list is the poet Andrew Motion. Sir Andrew, who will be reading his poems at the 2010 Thomas Hardy Conference in Dorchester, was Poet Laureate from 1999 to 2009 (exceptionally, he declined to hold the office for life). New readers might turn first to his *Selected Poems*, published in 1999, but he has also edited the work of other poets (including an anthology of Hardy’s poems for Everyman), and written two major biographies, of Philip Larkin (1993) and John Keats (1998). His *Wainewright the Poisoner*, a biographical novel about Thomas Griffiths Wainewright — painter, writer, murderer, and friend of Keats — appeared in 2001. In 2005 he helped bring online the Poetry Archive, containing both historic and contemporary recordings of poets reading their own work. To him also our congratulations.

Congratulations too to Trevor Johnson, who will give the London Lecture at Birkbeck College on Thursday 5 November, and to Michael Millgate, the *doyen* of Hardy studies, both of whom celebrate their eightieth birthdays during the course of this year.

‘Notes from Casterbridge’: our observant (and Dorset-based) Secretary, Mike Nixon, contributes a range of Hardy-related items. He begins with a recommendation that those who have the chance should visit Hamptonne Country Life Museum in Jersey, used for the 2005 ITV film of *Under the Greenwood Tree*. ‘Much is made of the filming, with many stills from the production, including the two rooms used extensively during the recording.’ More information from < www.jerseyheritagetrust.org >

He also reports the newspaper story that people live longer in East Dorset. Christopher Stocks, who lives on Portland, suggested in the *Daily Telegraph* that the reasons include a slower pace of life, distance from London, and no motorways, adding that Hardy would still recognise many of the views of ancient woods and downs. Asked why he enjoys living in Dorset, Julian Fellowes, President of the Hardy Society, said that ‘Dorset is a slightly secret county. People go to Devon and other places but don’t realise the beauty of Dorset.’

Mike highlights two other items in the media. In a recent Radio 4 programme, ‘Off the Page’, Francis Gilbert, an English teacher at a London comprehensive school and best-selling author of *I’m a Teacher, Get Me Out of Here* (2004), said that he was deeply troubled by the facile education that children receive today: ‘Thomas Hardy is a lot more worthwhile than teaching modern authors.’ Meanwhile, Michael Gove, Shadow Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, argued in the *Times* that we can still learn from the Victorian novelists, though he also thought that Hardy had a ‘gloomy, almost Greek, view that humankind was doomed to tragedy’, leading to a sense of bleakness: ‘Magnificent bleakness, but bleakness nonetheless.’ He went on to promote George Eliot, comparing her with the greats of Russian literature.

Mike as Secretary, and Malcolm Pfaff as Treasurer, represented the Hardy Society at the première on 4 July of the film of *Far From the*

Madding Crowd, made by the Gryphon School and Rosita Clark (and discussed later in this *Journal*). ‘All agreed the film was a triumph in all departments. And everyone who worked on the film, in front and behind the camera, was under 18 years of age. Latest feedback suggests interest from Australia and the USA, because it was picked up by CNN, and Rosita has been encouraged to enter the film into a number of categories for the youth film awards, backed by BAFTA in October. Well done to Rosita and all at Gryphon School.’

The cover illustration for this issue was drawn by George Louis Palmella Busson Du Maurier (to give him his full, splendid name) for the first instalment of *A Laodicean*, which began publication in the European edition of *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* in December 1880. Du Maurier (1834-96) had already illustrated *The Hand of Ethelberta* for the *Cornhill*; Hardy admired his work and sought him out for *A Laodicean*, perhaps on the basis that an artist who had made his reputation contributing to *Punch* would be suited to a novel subtitled ‘A Story of To-Day’, or perhaps, more simply, because they were fellow-members of both the Savile Club and the newly-founded Rabelais Club. Du Maurier was the only artist to illustrate two of Hardy’s novels.

The engraved drawing, full-page, appeared opposite the episode it represents, Paula’s refusal to be baptised (chapter 2), with the caption ‘But, My Dear Lady, You Promised!’ In the text, the reader witnesses events through Somerset’s eyes as he gazes in through a window. Unable at first to see Paula’s face, ‘His imagination ... set about filling the meagre outline with most attractive details.’ Du Maurier does the same on the reader’s behalf, bringing Somerset within the chapel (at the back, standing), and presenting the scene theatrically, with Paula in her ‘ample robe of flowing white’ beside the Minister, both figures strongly-lit and centre-stage. Hardy went with Henry Harper to discuss the drawing with Du Maurier in July 1880, five months before the first instalment went to press — and with most of the novel still to be written — so it presumably met with his approval. The stiffness of the grouping, with its dominating vertical and horizontal lines, underlines Paula’s refusal to be moved by the Minister’s appeal. It also suggests the *donnée* of the story, the puzzle of her Laodicean nature, which the succeeding pages will begin to

uncover: what *will* move this woman, and what sequence of events will bring her and Somerset face to face?

The death was announced on 18 July of the actress and broadcaster, and long-time Vice-President of the Hardy Society, Miss Jill Balcon. In a reading in Dorchester of her late husband's poems, she remarked wryly that she had graduated from being the widow (and editor) of the poet Cecil Day-Lewis, to the mother of the cookery writer Tamsin and the Oscar-winning actor Daniel, but this was to do less than justice to her long career on stage, screen and radio, and as a wonderfully expressive reader of verse.

A fuller notice of her will appear in a later issue of the *Hardy Society Journal*.