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Article Title: Writers-in-Residence: Women Teachers and the Formation of Character in Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*

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to for support, the Stockwell Round Robin, so named because its circular arrangement obscured the ringleader, was a rare form of collective self-representation.⁴

Owing to one particular signatory, the petition also influenced what was to become a classic depiction of the Victorian teacher training college in fiction.⁵ Thomas Hardy's cousin Tryphena Sparks signed the appeal while training in London. Since her enrolment in January 1870, she had been far from her family home in Dorset and was one of those the petition sought to protect. Sparks's early death in 1890 prompted Hardy's interest in writing about teacher training institutions. Ideas for *Jude the Obscure* (1895) were, as he explained in the preface to its first edition, 'jotted down in 1890, from notes made in 1887 and onwards, some of the circumstances being suggested by the death of a woman in the former year.'⁶ Hardy consulted his sisters, Mary (1841–1915) and Katharine (1856–1940, known as Kate), who had both trained in Salisbury and worked as teachers throughout the South West from the early 1860s and late 1870s respectively. In 1891 he was accompanied on one of two training college visits by Joshua Fitch, Chief Inspector of Women's Training Colleges (1885–1894), thereby entering a gentlemanly inspectorate and encountering the views of those who established and maintained the institutions that his female relatives had passed through.

Hardy's varied engagement with teacher training is rarely mentioned in accounts of Melchester College in *Jude*. Critics have understood the fictional institution as a sentimental association with either his sister Mary or his cousin Tryphena, or alternatively as foreshadowing the oppressive conventions in which Sue Bridehead feels pressured to live with her husband, the schoolmaster Phillotson.⁷ However, when Sue is severely disciplined by the college authorities for her night-time absence, 'seventy young women, of ages varying in the main from nineteen to one-and-twenty' rush to her defence. The Melchester 'seventy', echoing the petition that Hardy's cousin added her name to, sign 'a round robin [...] asking for a remission of Sue's punishment' that is then 'prepared and sent in to the principal'.⁸ Like the same-sex friendships from which Hardy's cousin and sisters are known to have benefited when training and working as teachers, Sue's college peers exhibit what Sharon Marcus calls the 'egalitarian affection' that often characterized the relationships that Victorian women maintained outside of marriage.⁹

What can these two related acts of writing — one petition now held in the archive of the British and Foreign School Society, the other represented in fiction — tell us about the experience of, and ideas about, women teachers in the final decades of the nineteenth century?¹⁰

⁴ Female teachers were only able to join the National Union for the Education of Women in 1872, see Dina Copelman, *London's Women Teachers: Gender, Class and Feminism 1870-1930* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 201–2.

⁵ Robert Gittings mentions this petition briefly in *Young Thomas Hardy* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), p. 175, but its relationship to *Jude the Obscure* has otherwise gone unremarked.

⁶ For alternative explanations of the 'woman' to which this note refers, see Michael Millgate, *Thomas Hardy: A Biography Revisited* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 318–320.

⁷ F. B. Pinion, 'Review of F. R. Southerington's Edition of *Jude the Obscure*', *Notes and Queries*, 19.11 (1972), 430–31; Gittings, pp. 174–77; Millgate, *Revisited*, pp. 322–23; Claire Tomalin, *Thomas Hardy: The Time-Torn Man* (London: Viking, 2006), pp. 57–60.

⁸ Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, ed. by Dennis Taylor (1895; London: Penguin, 1998), III-3. Further references are given as original part/chapter numbers after quotations in the text.

⁹ Celia Barclay, 'Mary Hardy and Annie Lanham', *Thomas Hardy Journal*, 12.1 (1996), 57–61; G. F. Bartle, 'Some Fresh Information About Tryphena Sparks: Thomas Hardy's Cousin', *Notes and Queries*, 30 (1983), 320–22; Sharon Marcus, *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 21.

¹⁰ For a summary of this invaluable collection of archival materials relating to nineteenth-century elementary education and teacher training, see G. F. Bartle, 'The Records of the British and Foreign

Firstly, they challenge accounts of such colleges as institutions of discipline that either silenced the voices of students or subjected them to read, write, and speak in ways that fall in line with authorities. These petitions instead show trainee teachers responding to authority. Recent scholarship has addressed the challenge to Foucault's account of the totalizing 'disciplinary power' of Victorian institutions that this poses, for example in Jane Hamlett's work on the material lives of inhabitants in asylums, lodging houses, and schools, where 'decorative acts' reveal the agency of those living within spaces otherwise planned and determined for them.¹¹ Historians of education such as Catherine Burke and Ian Grosvenor have in a similar vein analysed buildings, photographs, and other material records to locate exchanges between contemporary ideas about education and the experiences of students.¹² In her study of prisoner testimonies, Helen Rogers has even shown how dialogue and exchange were features of interactions in the strictest penal institutions.¹³

A petition, by its very nature, demands this degree of attention to dialogue and compromise. While the Stockwell students acknowledge the structure of power in which they are writing — appealing to the management committee for a 'favourable answer' and signing 'yours most respectfully' — their very act of writing threatens dominant authority. Additionally, the educational leaders to whom they address their demands would not have recognized subjugation as a feature of a training exercise designed to cultivate autonomy and moral standing. Accounts that depict women students as passive subjects of control also discredit the very tangible positions of professional responsibility that training enabled. As Carol Dyhouse writes in her landmark study of the late-Victorian socialisation of girls, the profession of education was 'one of the few areas of public life where women [...] achieved a measure of status and authority'.¹⁴ Jane Martin develops this argument to show how the expansion of elementary schools during the later decades of the nineteenth century provided opportunities for women to become involved in decision-making and play 'a crucial role in the formation of the state education system both as teachers, as school managers and as members of the School Board'.¹⁵ By taking the Stockwell student teachers' petition as its starting point, this article registers women shaping a profession in which they had become by far the largest constituent.

School Society at Borough Road', *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 12.2 (1980), 1–6.

¹¹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, ed. by Alan Sheridan (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), p. 170; Jane Hamlett, *At Home in the Institution* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2015), p. 3. See also Lisa C. Robertson, "'We Must Advance, We Must Expand': Architectural and Social Challenges to the Domestic Model at the College for Ladies at Westfield'", *Women's History Review*, 25.1 (2016), 105–23.

¹² See for example Catherine Burke, Ian Grosvenor, and Peter Cunningham, 'Putting Education in Its Place: Space, Place and Materialities in the History of Education', *History of Education*, 39.6 (2010), 677–80.

¹³ Helen Rogers, 'The Way to Jerusalem: Reading, Writing and Reform in an Early Victorian Gaol', *Past and Present*, 205.1 (2009), 71–104.

¹⁴ Carol Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (London: Routledge, 1981), p. 23.

¹⁵ Jane Martin, *Women and the Politics of Schooling in Victorian and Edwardian England* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1999), p. 4. For contributions by middle-class women to the profession see Christina de Bellaigue, 'The Development of Teaching as a Profession for Women before 1870', *The Historical Journal*, 44.4 (2001), 963–88; Stephanie Spencer, 'The Lady Visitors at Queen's College: From the Back of the Class to a Seat on the Council', *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 36.1 (2004), 47–56.

While these exchanges between marginal and dominant voices remain at work in the fictional depiction of the Round Robin, once written into the pages of Hardy's novel the student teachers face a struggle of another kind. Novels, like colleges, were governed by certain rules, but characters and narrators, like management committees and students, began to question the reach of one another's authority. Amanda Claybaugh has in this context argued that the Round Robin challenges the very rules of Hardy's novel, briefly comparing the actions of the Melchester students to a utopian form of writing that might one day draw Sue away from the tragic plotline. For Claybaugh, the petition resists the narrator as much as the fictional educational authority by holding 'the space of the classroom open within the narrative by refusing to allow any plot to fill it'.¹⁶ This article aims to develop Claybaugh's comparison by arguing that Hardy's novel and Victorian teacher training held certain representational practices in common. It compares the ways in which observation, inspection, resistance, and protest functioned in both domains and thereby makes the case that the 'formation of the character' of the teacher — a phrase coined by the pioneer of this kind of training, James Kay-Shuttleworth — also concerned Hardy as a novelist.¹⁷

1. The Formation of Character

'It was indeed now that I realized what life would be to me and although I felt no disappointment I was not cheered by the prospect', wrote Mary Hardy, Hardy's eldest sister, in 1863 after taking up her first teaching post at the Denchworth School in Wantage. Mary had been encouraged towards an independent profession ever since her mother, Jemima Hardy, had expressed the wish that her children never marry.¹⁸ Following a standard two-year programme at the Diocesan Training College for Schoolmistresses in Salisbury, Mary reacted with resignation to a setting where impoverished pupils seemed to 'live in a period much earlier than our own' and where an irregular supply of drinking water 'tells painfully on the health of the villagers'.¹⁹ Similar concerns were noted by their younger sister, Kate, when she began her first teaching post in 1879 at Sandford Orcas near the Somerset/Dorset border. Alongside other day-to-day observations in the school's logbook, she noted that '[t]he children [are] in a very backward state'.²⁰ The resignation of the Hardy sisters to this deprivation was a trait that the educationist James Kay-Shuttleworth had specifically hoped to cultivate. As a Poor Law Commissioner in the 1830s, he had struggled to find teachers with a reformist zeal who did not quickly become dissatisfied by the difficult circumstances in which they worked. The system of training that he subsequently devised, which was to become the blueprint of Victorian elementary teacher training more generally, centred on what he called 'the formation of the character of the schoolmaster'.²¹ Inspired by the popular schools in Switzerland, this system sought to transform the teacher's own perception of their role from 'a situation of humble toil'

¹⁶ Amanda Claybaugh, 'Jude the Obscure: The Irrelevance of Marriage Law', in *Subversion and Sympathy*, ed. by Martha C. Nussbaum and Alison L. LaCroix (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 48–62 (p. 60). Karin Koehler argues that writing plays an important role for enabling idealism in *Jude the Obscure*, see *Thomas Hardy and Victorian Communication: Letters, Telegrams and Postal Systems* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 109–129.

¹⁷ James Kay-Shuttleworth, *Four Periods of Public Education* (London: Longman, 1862), p. 399.

¹⁸ Millgate, *Revisited*, pp. 25–26.

¹⁹ Dorchester, Dorset County Museum (DCM), Thomas Hardy Memorial Collection, Mary Hardy's Memoir. For a comprehensive account of Mary and Kate Hardy as teachers on which this analysis draws, see Michael Millgate and Stephen Mottram, 'Sisters: Mary and Kate Hardy as Teachers', *Thomas Hardy Journal*, 25 (2009), 4–24.

²⁰ Dorchester, Dorset History Centre (DHC), Sandford Orcas School Logbook, February 1879.

²¹ Kay-Shuttleworth, p. 399.

to ‘one of comparative ease’.²² Drawn from either working or lower-middle class families, elementary school teachers were required to assume a ‘humble and subordinate position’ of ‘modest respectability’ next to the local clergy who tended to be responsible for their supervision.²³

Kay-Shuttleworth had intended this idea of character to support teachers in the wider social mission of which they were a part. Moral leadership was critical to this ‘utopian project of educational character building’, as Lauren Goodlad describes it.²⁴ In this sense ‘character’ denoted ‘the possession of certain highly-valued moral qualities’ and, as Stefan Collini explains, in liberal circles stood for ‘striving, self-reliant, adaptable behaviour [...] inherently tied to movement and progress’.²⁵ The benefits of these individual traits were to be felt among a wider group. ‘Character’, explained Robert Owen in *Essays on the Formation of Human Character* (1817), ‘may be given to any community, even to the world at large, by the application of proper means’. Or, as the critic and schools inspector Matthew Arnold later wrote, the character of a well-trained schoolmaster ‘cannot fail in the end to tell powerfully upon the civilization of the neighbourhood’.²⁶ It was character that Arnold’s father, Thomas, also aimed to foster at Rugby School, where a gentlemanly elite, preparing to govern not only the ‘neighbourhood’ but the nation itself, were introduced to the ideals of Christian manliness.²⁷ Both father and son drew upon a new understanding of character as an acquired rather than inherent set of traits. Kay-Shuttleworth’s model training college at Battersea, established in 1840 and widely imitated following the Whig victory of 1846, became an important symbol of this malleability. It stood for the hope of securing, as Goodlad writes, ‘pastoral care for the building of character in a nation of allegedly self-reliant individuals and communities.’²⁸ In effect, cultivating ethical and autonomous teachers became the guiding ideal for an increasingly bureaucratic and rule-orientated system of Victorian education and training.

Much of this idealism had faded by the time that Mary and Kate Hardy entered the Diocesan Training College for Schoolmistresses at Salisbury in 1860 and 1877 respectively (the gap was due to their being born fifteen years apart). What remained from the earlier period, however, was the conviction that the teacher, having acquired the necessary moral grounding, would occupy an autonomous position in the parish, independent of either the pupils’ families or the local clergy. The isolation resulting from this ambiguous social position caused Hardy to later write that his sister Mary had ‘been doomed to school-teaching, and organ-playing in

²² Quoted in R. W. Rich, *The Training of Teachers in England and Wales During the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933), p. 57.

²³ *Report of the Committee of Council on Education 1843-44* (London: HMSO, 1844), II, p. 90. For the class and gender of teachers see Copelman, pp. 31–56; Frances Widdowson, *Going Up Into the Next Class: Women and Elementary Teacher Training, 1840-1914* (London: Women’s Research and Resources Centre, 1980).

²⁴ Lauren Goodlad, *Victorian Literature and the Victorian State: Character and Governance in a Liberal Society* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), p. 171.

²⁵ Stefan Collini, ‘The Idea of “Character” in Victorian Political Thought’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 35 (1985), 29–50 (pp. 33, 42).

²⁶ Robert Owen, quoted in Lauren Goodlad, ‘Moral Character’, in *Historicism and the Human Sciences in Victorian Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 128–53 (p. 131); Matthew Arnold, *Reports on Elementary Schools: 1852-1882* (London: HMSO, 1910), p. 52.

²⁷ John Chandos, *Boys Together: English Public Schools, 1800-1864* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); Heather Ellis, ‘Thomas Arnold, Christian Manliness and the Problem of Boyhood’, *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 19.4 (2014), 425–41.

²⁸ Goodlad, *Victorian Literature*, p. xiv.

this or that village church, during all her active years'.²⁹ At her final post as a headmistress at the National School in Bell Street, Dorchester, Mary recalled a prominent family inviting her for 'a very good dinner in elegant style'. But, she noted with a tone of frustration, 'it is the best place I go to here. Nobody else asks me to dinner or treats me like a lady'.³⁰ Hardy explored these concerns about the social position of teaching in *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872), when the village schoolmistress, Fancy Day, becomes unsatisfied by parish life dominated by organ playing and teaching. Kate, known for being the more sociable of the Hardy sisters, made a similar complaint in a letter to Hardy's wife Emma, explaining that

I've got such a pretty hat for every day. Trimmed with India muslin and lined with old gold plush. Its a Rubens I think — at least that is what such ones are called in the fashion book. I look very tempting in it I assure you but whats the use.³¹

Bought with the wages from her teaching, Kate's hat marks out forms of dress and social activity that fall outside her work. By alluding to the hat's status ('what such ones are called in the fashion book') and its appeal to a potential suitor ('very tempting'), she suggests the possibility of a romantic relationship yet at the same time expresses frustration ('but whats the use') that her working role discourages one. Kate is also responding to the increasingly gendered terms of elementary school teaching: whereas the number of male and female teachers was fairly even in the 1850s, by the final decades of the nineteenth century the balance was shifting towards women — and by 1914 just one quarter of the profession were male.³² The idea of character was now being used to draw on the moral standards of domesticity, so as to address the perceived threat that these increasing rates of professionalization posed to family structures. Even though Kate was neither a wife nor a mother, teaching was increasingly being presented as an expansion of (rather than an alternative to) those roles.³³

In these terms, an 1882 contribution to *The Schoolmistress* asked its readers: 'What is a school in its highest sense? Is it not an enlarged home?'³⁴ This was an accurate description of the Hardy sisters' working arrangements from June of that year when Kate had applied to assist Mary at the Dorchester National School and share a residence at nearby Woolaston Road. In her appeal to the school managers, Kate extends the boundaries of her professional duty beyond the working day and into the homely hours of the evening:

besides doing the usual school work I wish to help my sister in the long hours which she spends attending to the Needlework etc. and which takes up most of her spare time after the other teachers have gone home.³⁵

²⁹ Thomas Hardy, *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy*, ed. by Michael Millgate (London: Macmillan, 1984), p. 402.

³⁰ DCM, Mary Hardy to unknown recipient, 28 January 1881.

³¹ DCM, Kate Hardy to Emma Hardy, undated [mid-1882]. Punctuation is given as in the original.

³² Widdowson, pp. 7–8.

³³ For the maternalism that enabled middle-class women's participation in the public sphere, see Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States* (London: Routledge, 1993). For maternalism and women's higher education, see Laura Morgan Green, *Educating Women: Cultural Conflict and Victorian Literature* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2001), pp. 1–23; for differences with elementary school teaching, see Copelman, pp. 3–53.

³⁴ 'Married or Single?', *The Schoolmistress*, 25 May 1882, p. 147.

³⁵ DCM, Kate Hardy to the Committee of the Dorchester National Schools, 3 June 1882.

The sisters had lived and worked together in the past when, as a child, Kate had joined newly qualified Mary at Denchworth.³⁶ She later joined Mary as her pupil teacher at the National School in Piddlehinton. Marcus has shown that such arrangements were fairly common, operating in comparable, if distinct, terms to the norms of family and marriage.³⁷ Sparks similarly lived with her sister Rebecca whilst teaching in Plymouth.³⁸ For Hardy's relations, as for other teachers of their generation, domestic models often helped to enable the freedoms of a professional life.

In *Jude* the appeal of teaching is described by Sue as 'an occupation in which I shall be more independent' (II-4). Sue first welcomes the ordered and disciplined training environment as a necessary step for enabling freedom. She compares the effect of a mallet and chisel upon Jude's hands to the way that training will shape her for a professional role: 'I think it is noble to see a man's hands subdued to what he works in', she remarks, adding, 'Well, I'm rather glad I came to this training-school, after all. See how independent I shall be after the two years' training!' (III-1).³⁹ But the chores required of her at the college, far more extensive for women than for men, causes her to notice the resemblance between Kay-Shuttleworth's style of 'hot-house training' and the structures from which she is trying to escape.⁴⁰ By the time that Sue reveals to Jude 'with something of shame' that a regime of 'rough living' has left her 'dreadfully hungry' (III-3), both states have become too much to bear.

Sue finds that teaching allies with the traditional family structure in other ways. Before entering into a relationship with either Jude or Phillotson, both of her suitors interpret the profession as the basis for marriage. Jude engineers Sue's first teaching post to draw her closer to him, barely disguising that his 'ardour in promoting' her career does not in fact arise 'from any other feelings towards Sue than the instinct of co-operation common among members of the same family' (II-4). Sue is then asked to reimagine her work with Phillotson 'set in a large double school in a great town', living 'as married school-teachers often do' (III-1). She resists this convergence of domestic and professional roles by later asking him, by this time both her manager and husband, to permit her to elope with Jude. Although Phillotson agrees to giving 'my tortured wife her liberty' (IV-6), his colleague Gillingham is far less sympathetic, appealing to 'the question of neighbours and society' and evoking the school as a means of avoiding 'general domestic disintegration' (IV-4). Any hope that teaching will support the kinds of freedom for which Sue is so eager disappears when, in an episode that lays bare the repressive implications of an 'enlarged home', Phillotson is summoned to a School Committee to explain why he had permitted Sue's relationship with Jude and thereby respond to the charge of 'condoning [...] adultery'. As Jacqueline Dillion highlights in her reading of this scene, the Committee insist on 'methodical procedure' in their response to Phillotson.⁴¹ Despite his defence that 'the matter was a domestic theory which did not concern them', Phillotson is dismissed when the panel conclude 'that the private eccentricities of a teacher came quite within their sphere of control, as it touched the morals of those he taught' (IV-6).

To support their judgment, the school authorities lay claim to an expanded field of moral authority by incorporating the domains of the family and religion into the schoolroom.

³⁶ Millgate and Mottram, pp. 8–9.

³⁷ See Millgate, *Revisited*, pp. 25–26; Marcus, *Between Women*.

³⁸ Tomalin, p. 404.

³⁹ For this alliance of Victorian masculine self-discipline and feminine self-denial, see James Eli Adams, *Dandies and Desert Saints: Styles of Victorian Masculinity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), pp. 107–48.

⁴⁰ For college chores, see Copelman, p. 137. Kay-Shuttleworth's phrase is quoted in Frank Smith, *The Life and Work of Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth* (London: J. Murray, 1923), p. 328.

⁴¹ Jacqueline Dillion, *Thomas Hardy: Folklore and Resistance* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 88–90.

The 1871 Stockwell round robin petition had resisted such expansion by seeking to protect the students' holidays to recover from their training, explaining that 'already, several of the Students are very unwell, and they will scarcely have time to regain their strength if their holidays be so short'.⁴² The college authorities, on the other hand, had as early as 1834 argued that health concerns were due to 'the very short period we are able to keep' trainees at college.⁴³ The conflict intensified in January 1874 when the management committee threatened the restorative capacity of the family by permitting only monthly home visits. In subsequent letters of opposition from family members, home is celebrated as a place of respite from the rigours of the institution, with one parent explaining how the 'salutary effect' of weekly visits had meant that her daughter's 'health had been invariably good', but this would suffer 'if she is there any longer period, owing to the coldness of the dormitories and corridors'.⁴⁴ Another parent concludes that the college had ruptured the confidence that the students had placed in them by extending the period of study: 'by breaking faith with young people, you give them a precedent for breaking faith with you.'⁴⁵

Although Sue, unlike the Stockwell students, wants teaching to provide complete freedom from the conventional family, she also finds cause for 'breaking faith' with the college authorities. The novel connects marriage and education — both implicated in what the educational historian Dina Copelman calls the training of 'young women in humble femininity' — as institutions from which Sue has to escape from.⁴⁶ At Melchester she climbs through 'the back window of the room in which she had been confined, escaped in the dark across the lawn, and disappeared' (III-3). At Phillotson's house she 'mounted upon the sill and leapt out' (IV-4). Sue's radicalism at this moment in the novel demands escape, not reform. She rejects Phillotson's attempt to provide a more accommodating form of marriage and dismisses improvements to such places as the university at Christminster as merely 'new wine in old bottles' (III-4).⁴⁷

By 1895 the traditional residential institutions that Hardy's relatives attended were in fact offering more comfortable environments to their students. Like the new day training colleges, they began imitating the model of the university colleges. Hardy became closely involved with Fitch, who was the person responsible for such adaptations of teacher training to the liberal currents of *fin-de-siècle* culture. Since his time as Principal of Borough Road (Stockwell's partner college) in the 1850s, Fitch had argued that teachers should be exposed to the influences of secondary and higher education. In an article for a popular magazine in 1864, 'The Education of Women', he called on teachers' work to be 'heightened and purified', evoking Tennyson's sentimentalized depiction in *The Princess* (1847) of 'sweet girl-graduates with their golden hair' prior to the opening of Queen's College the following year.⁴⁸ When the

⁴² BFSS/3/6/6/Petition.

⁴³ *Report from the Select Committee on the State of Education: With the Minutes of Evidence* (London: HMSO, 1834), p. 232.

⁴⁴ BFSS/3/6/6/Letters Requesting Leave, 1871–1874/Letter to Alfred Bourne from W.H., 31 January 1874. Spelling is given as in the original. For a comparable interaction between home and the institution in the context of public schools, see Jane Hamlett, "'Rotten Effeminate Stuff': Patriarchy, Domesticity, and Home in Victorian and Edwardian English Public Schools', *Journal of British Studies*, 58.1 (2019), 79–108.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*/Letter to Alfred Bourne from H.L. Raven, 31 January 1874.

⁴⁶ Copelman, p. 137.

⁴⁷ For Sue's radical views on higher education see Jonathan Godshaw Memel, "'Making the University Less Exclusive": The Legacy of Jude the Obscure', *Neo-Victorian Studies*, 10.1 (2017).

⁴⁸ Joshua Fitch, 'The Education of Women', *Victorian Magazine*, 2 (1864), 432–53 (p. 433).

Cross Commission was formed in 1888 it noted the ‘self-denial, watchfulness, and ungrudging labour’ that had instead developed, recommending significant reform.⁴⁹

In 1894 Fitch was then asked to summarize the changes that the Cross Commission had brought about. He reported that teachers were now having ‘happier and more dignified memories of their college life’ and noted ‘a distinct gain [...] to their own personal freedom, and the cultivation among them of the art of self-government’:

I found prevalent in some of the colleges petty and unwise rules regulating the dress of the students, requiring them when walking out to march two and two, in procession, as if they were in a girls’ boarding school or an asylum, and imposing upon them a needless amount of domestic service. Some of these usages seemed to me to have been deliberately designed *many* years ago to give to the young people a humble view of their office and to check undue ambition.

Given the emphasis that Kay-Shuttleworth had placed on autonomy and moral independence much earlier in the century, Fitch’s comments were less pioneering than they appeared to be.⁵⁰ The accompanying need for teachers to remain humble and for their training to ‘check undue ambition’ had lessened, however. According to Fitch, teachers should now be

trained and accustomed to use as much freedom as is compatible with reasonable discipline. The guarded and sheltered life [...] is not altogether a healthy life for young people at the age of 20, who have to be trained for self-government and for the duties of a liberal profession.⁵¹

The notion that the teacher needed to stand on their own two feet was well established, but of greater significance to the purposes of this article is the passage’s coupling of a ‘liberal profession’ with an older fondness for ‘reasonable discipline’ — a combination that a gentlemanly inspectorate was charged with overseeing.

2. The College Inspectorate

When Hardy joined Fitch as a member of the Athenaeum Club in 1891 the pair visited Whitelands Training School for Schoolmistresses in Chelsea, London, to observe how character was being reworked in the years following the Cross Commission. The Athenaeum provided Hardy with access to an elite group responsible for inspecting public institutions, shown when another member, the Commissioner for Lunacy in England and Wales, Clifford Allbutt, invited him to a large private lunatic asylum in the same year.⁵² While institutions had for many centuries been endowed with resources and prestige by prominent visitors, the state was now sending gentlemanly inspectors and commissioners to measure and evaluate their performance. Training colleges were on Hardy’s mind, of course, due to the death of his cousin Sparks the previous year. He was aware that such institutions had changed since his sisters’

⁴⁹ *Final Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Elementary Education Acts* (London: HMSO, 1888), p. 94.

⁵⁰ Christopher Bischof identifies liberal ideas in discourses of the 1850s, see “‘A Home for Poets’: The Liberal Curriculum in Victorian Britain’s Teachers’ Training Colleges”, *History of Education Quarterly*, 54.1 (2014), 42–69.

⁵¹ J. G. Fitch, ‘Report for the Year 1893 on the Training Colleges for Schoolmistresses’, in *Report of the Committee of Council on Education, 1893-94* (London: HMSO, 1894), pp. 155–204 (p. 159)

⁵² Hardy, *Life*, pp. 247–48.

time at Salisbury — Kate had reported in 1882 that trainees were now ‘having rather better times than we used to have’ — but the invitation to a training college exposed him to a quite different type of institution, one that Fitch believed could become a new model.⁵³ In a previous inspection report Fitch had celebrated ‘the mental activity and the spirit of work which pervade[d]’ Whitelands, as well as ‘the attention paid to the development of the artistic sense among the students’. John Ruskin had become a ‘great friend to the college’, contributing objects that included ‘The Ruskin Cabinet’ containing sixty paintings by Ludwig Richter, Albert Durer, and Joseph Turner.⁵⁴ Fitch ensured that Hardy’s visit coincided with the May-Day Festival, the best-known of the ‘new and promising experiments’ that Fitch admired at the college.⁵⁵ Introduced by Ruskin in 1881, the ceremony was a costumed re-enactment of the Persephone myth and, as Jacqueline Dillion has shown recently, resembled the May Day rituals that Hardy depicted in *The Return of the Native* (1878) and *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* (1891).⁵⁶ May Day distinguished Whitelands from the seemingly more utilitarian focus of the other colleges, with the *Pall Mall Gazette*, for example, lauding the festival’s ‘spiritual and stimulating influence’ and speculating that it could address the ‘deficiencies of our national curriculum’ if imitated across the nation.⁵⁷ Hardy’s own account of the visit exposes the paternalistic undercurrents of a seemingly progressive initiative:

a community of women, especially young women, inspires not reverence but protective tenderness in the breast of one who views them. Their belief in circumstances, in convention, in the rightness of things, which you know to be not only wrong but damnably wrong, makes the heart ache, even when they are waspish and hard [...] You feel how entirely the difference of their ideas from yours is of the nature of misunderstanding [...] There is much that is pathetic about these girls, and I wouldn’t have missed the visit for anything.⁵⁸

The ‘protective tenderness’ felt towards ‘pathetic’ young women is typical of the fascination with girlhood that, as Catherine Robson has shown, affected Victorian men of letters more generally.⁵⁹ By noting ‘their belief in circumstances, in convention, in the rightness of things’, Hardy shows how a feminine individuality that celebrated the ‘cultivation of the artistic sense’ was only to be performed in settings finely choreographed by the college authorities.⁶⁰

According to the sociologist Erving Goffman, the function of the kind of ‘institutional display’ that Fitch and Hardy observed was to demonstrate that ‘everything is all right on the

⁵³ DCM, Kate Hardy to Emma Hardy, Thursday [1882?].

⁵⁴ Joshua Fitch, ‘Whitelands’, in *Training Colleges for Schoolmistresses*, ed. by Howarth Barnes and Joshua Fitch (London: H. Barnes, 1891), pp. 261–71 (p. 269). Earlier Whitelands ‘friends’ included Charles Dickens and Angela Burdett-Coutts, see Bischof, pp. 64–68.

⁵⁵ Fitch, ‘1893’, p. 204.

⁵⁶ Dillion, *Folklore and Resistance*, pp. 143–63.

⁵⁷ ‘Letter 95’, *Fors Clavigera*, John Ruskin, *The Works of John Ruskin*, ed. by Edward Tyas Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 39 vols (London: George Allen, 1903–1912), vol. XXIX, p. 496. Malcolm Cole, *Be Like Daisies: John Ruskin and the Cultivation of Beauty at Whitelands College* (St Albans: Brentham Press, 1992). For Ruskin’s efforts in women’s education, see Dinah Birch, ‘“What Teachers Do You Give Your Girls?”: Ruskin and Women’s Education’, in *Ruskin and Gender*, ed. by Francis O’Gorman and Dinah Birch (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 121–36; ‘A May-Day Festival’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 2 May 1885.

⁵⁸ Hardy, *Life*, pp. 246–47.

⁵⁹ Catherine Robson, *Men in Wonderland: The Lost Girlhood of the Victorian Gentlemen* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001).

⁶⁰ Fitch, ‘1893’, p. 204.

inside' and to remind students of the 'connection, bureaucratic and subordinated, to structures in the wider world'.⁶¹ Watching the May Day Festival was also a way for external visitors to maintain the kind of 'judicious and watchful but kindly discipline' that Fitch had commended on an earlier inspection of Whitelands.⁶² In 1888 the government had made clear that they expected an 'inspectorate' — their 'eyes and ears' — to be 'men of wide and liberal training', reinforcing Arnold's earlier description of Kay-Shuttleworth as 'the indomitable man'.⁶³ Female inspectors had been employed by the London School Board to examine needlework, but a proposal to extend this to more general responsibilities was rejected on the grounds of the 'serious practical difficulties' that would result, as well as the claim that 'mistresses themselves are said to prefer to have their schools inspected by a man rather than by one of their own sex'.⁶⁴ It was Hardy's literary standing, as well his gender, that made him a suitable companion for Fitch. The practice of writing shared characteristics with the inspection of educational institutions — both were distinguished by, in Mary Poovey's words about men of letters more broadly, an 'ability to write in a certain way, with an acceptable breadth of allusion, and according to recognized paradigms, genres and modes of address'.⁶⁵ The connections between observation, display, and power were to be just as vital to Hardy's translation of this institutional performance into fiction, as he became implicated, both as a novelist and honorary inspector, in the practices through which character was imposed. Later that same year he expressed discomfort with this idea that literary writing might overlap with the operations of the state. Responding to a proposal for government awards for leading authors, he wrote that 'the highest flights of the pen are mostly the excursions and revelations of souls unreconciled to life, while the natural tendency of a government would be to encourage acquiescence in life as it is.'⁶⁶ Hardy maintained that his aim was to challenge rather than support the more conservative actions of the state, noting after the publication of *Jude* that 'tragedy may be created by an opposing environment either of things inherent in the universe, or of human institutions'.⁶⁷ Turning away from Whitelands, Hardy's account of Melchester began to critique the misery that could be caused by such institutions. That misery was not evident from the performances and the inspections that he had witnessed, but had instead emerged from his female relatives who had trained in such places.

Kate, Hardy's younger sister, had particularly struggled during her time at college. But incorporating her experience into the pages of a novel posed ethical dilemmas. Having passed through the often-disheartening setting of the college, Kate risked having her experience repurposed in equally disempowering ways. However, in an 1882 letter to Hardy's wife Emma, she provided her permission: 'I don't mind if Tom publishes how badly we were used'.⁶⁸ Kate

⁶¹ Erving Goffman, *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* (1961; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), pp. 96, 97, 96.

⁶² Fitch, 'Whitelands', p. 265.

⁶³ *Elementary Education Acts* (1888), pp. 73, 74, 73; Matthew Arnold, quoted in Thomas Adkins, *History of St. John's College, Battersea: The Story of a Notable Experiment* (London: National Society's Depository, 1906), p. 32. For the influence of women in other aspects of elementary education see Patricia Hollis, *Ladies Elect: Women in English Local Government, 1865-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 71–194.

⁶⁴ *Elementary Education Acts* (1888), p. 75.

⁶⁵ Mary Poovey, *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 107. On men of letters in educational spheres, see Cathy Shuman, *Pedagogical Economies: The Examination and the Victorian Literary Man* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

⁶⁶ Hardy, *Life*, p. 252.

⁶⁷ Hardy, *Life*, p. 290.

⁶⁸ DCM, Kate Hardy to Emma Hardy, 1883.

still felt the effects of the college when in 1897 Hardy invited her to Salisbury following her retirement, reassuring her that she would have ‘no unpleasant reminders’ because the college building was ‘emptied for the holidays’.⁶⁹ It may be Kate’s hardship that threatens to undercut the paternalist oversight of the narrator in *Jude*, in the following description of the Melchester students lying in their dormitories:

Half an hour later they all lay in their cubicles, their tender feminine faces upturned to the flaring gas-jets which at intervals stretched down the long dormitories, every face bearing the legend “The Weaker” upon it, as the penalty of the sex wherein they were moulded, which by no possible exertion of their willing hearts and abilities could be made strong while the inexorable laws of nature remain what they are. They formed a pretty, suggestive, pathetic sight, of whose pathos and beauty they were themselves unconscious, and would not discover till [...] the storms and strains of after-years. (III-3)

This passage, occupied by a tragic mismatch between the perspectives of the observed and the observer, shares many similarities to Hardy’s earlier account of institutional spectatorship at Whitelands. The use of ‘pathetic’ repeats the collective vulnerability of the young women, but when compared to the notes on Whitelands this extract more overtly questions how the gendered conventions have come into being, with training likened to being ‘moulded’ according to natural laws suggesting a more focused interest in the process by which feminine traits are instilled. ‘No possible exertion’ can alter this process ‘while the inexorable laws of nature remain what they are’. Of course, such ‘laws’ are far from inexorable, and the key to their being resisted lies in the gap between the viewpoints of the students, of which we are aware but know little, and the ways in which they are described. In particular, this passage shows the narrator’s willingness to speculate about thoughts and feelings that are hidden from view and deduce, to borrow Ruth Livesey’s comments on the practice of late-nineteenth century social investigators, ‘an interior self from external description, and transcribe this for a readership’.⁷⁰

Such resistance is developed further when Sue emerges from her first spell at the college. The story is now told from the position of Jude who, desperately in love and ‘quite overcome with emotion’ after a period spent apart, notices the ways that ‘she was not as he had seen her last’. The narrator explains that ‘all her bounding manner was gone; her curves of motion had become subdued lines. The screens and subtleties of convention had likewise disappeared’ (III-1). However, the incessant observation and inspection of Sue’s appearance opens up a more general critique of the regime of character building to which she has been subjected:

She wore a murrey-coloured gown with a little lace collar. It was made quite plain, and hung about her slight figure with clinging gracefulness. Her hair, which formerly she had worn according to the custom of the day, was now twisted up tightly, and she had altogether the air of a woman clipped and pruned by severe discipline, an under-brightness shining through from the depth which that discipline had not yet been able to reach. (III-1)

⁶⁹ Thomas Hardy to Kate Hardy, 7 August 1897, in *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy*, ed. by Richard Little Purdy and Michael Millgate, 7 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978–1988), II (1980), p. 172.

⁷⁰ Ruth Livesey, ‘Reading for Character: Women Social Reformers and Narratives of the Urban Poor in Late Victorian and Edwardian London’, *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 9.1 (2004), 43–67 (p. 45).

The narrator describes Sue as nearly, but not entirely, subsumed by the emotional effect of work and study. On the one hand, the college does its disciplinary work upon material surfaces — its fabric impresses itself upon the skin, it tightens her hair, the boundaries of Sue are ‘clipped’ and ‘pruned’. On the other hand, the earlier impression of Sue with which Jude and the reader are familiar is associated with depth, or ‘under-brightness’. This evokes an inner light that is struggling to repel the forces of external constraints, thereby anticipating Sue later submission to convention at the novel’s end.

In *Jude*, then, the clinging of fabric and the twisting of hair — the material effects of training — denote the futility of character building to reach down into an inner depth reified as ‘under-brightness’. In her analysis of a comparable description in *Our Mutual Friend* (1864), Goodlad shows how earlier fiction expressed uncertainty that teacher training could alter deeply rooted characteristics. According to Goodlad, the schoolmaster Bradley Headstone’s class origins undermine his professional development, such that ‘his ineradicable lowborn nature’ is ‘stultified and perverted by hothouse experimentation’.⁷¹ In this reading Dickens reinforces the boundary between inner life and outer appearance, and, in so doing, casts doubt on an early-Victorian optimism that moral traits could be produced in similar ways to physical characteristics.⁷² While this scepticism continues in Hardy’s depiction of training later in the century, there is greater speculation about the inner characteristics that survive training undisturbed. In Hardy’s short story ‘A Mere Interlude’ (1885), for example, the schoolmistress Baptista Trewthen is described as a ‘young woman with scarcely emotions or character’ who ‘showed the traits of a person who had something on her mind’.⁷³ Like Headstone, Trewthen is at odds with the profession in which she has been trained, but Hardy’s reader discovers little more about, in the words of the narrator, ‘what lay hidden within’. Such ineffability is developed in *Jude*, where Sue’s ‘curious unconsciousness of gender’ places her beyond either the reach of the training college or the society in which it operates (III-4).⁷⁴ Sue is in this sense comparable to Lucy Snowe in Charlotte Brontë’s *Villette* (1853), whom Monica Cohen has read as resisting efforts to ‘process her psyche into a form, a regularity, a constitution that would no longer be so private as to be unrecognizable – to process her, in a sense, the way a novel would.’⁷⁵ Sue’s obscurity acts as a form of resistance on two levels, opposing both those who are seeking to describe her and those who are seeking to train her. The educationalist and the novelist, intent on giving form to character, find that interiority defies them.

3. Conclusion

Elusive Sue, transgressing the rules of the college authorities as well as the rules of the novel, makes evasion her strategy of resistance. In flight, she leaves behind a collective that is finding form and voice through their relations to one another. It was during a second college visit in

⁷¹ Goodlad, p. 176.

⁷² John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, ed. by Edward Alexander (1859; Peterborough (ON): Broadview, 1999), p. 104.

⁷³ Thomas Hardy, ‘A Mere Interlude’, in *A Changed Man and Other Tales* (1885; London: Macmillan, 1913), pp. 265–306 (p. 267).

⁷⁴ For contemporary ideas about sex and essentialism to which this relates see Angelique Richardson, *Love and Eugenics in the Late Nineteenth Century: Rational Reproduction and the New Woman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 164–65. Laura Green relates Sue’s androgyny to the novel’s idealisation of educational fulfilment, see *Educating Women*, pp. 101–28.

⁷⁵ Monica Feinberg Cohen, *Professional Domesticity in the Victorian Novel: Women, Work and Home* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 56.

1891 that Hardy encountered this other way of challenging those institutions that, as he put it, ‘encourage acquiescence in life’.⁷⁶ He visited Stockwell Training College on 24 June 1891, the same day as Octavia Hill, and found a place whose progressive reputation was attracting such trainee teachers as the humanitarian pioneer Eglantyne Jebb.⁷⁷ Hardy’s notes on the visit focus on a collective tradition in which existing students choose ‘*a daughter* from the list of junior girls who are coming. The senior is *mother* to the daughter for the whole year, and looks after her’.⁷⁸ The language of family renders the college a familiar and welcoming environment for its students, but, as Hardy’s relations knew well, the profession could foster new relationships of work and friendship that went beyond the norms of conventional domesticity. As Martha Vicinus has shown, sites as varied as deaconesses’ houses and reformed boarding schools could foster the ‘development of leadership skills, friendship networks, and a power base for public work’.⁷⁹ Sparks hoped that that this kind of communitarian spirit would continue throughout her teaching career, and, upon taking up her first permanent role as Principal Teacher at Plymouth Public Free School in January 1872, explained to Stockwell’s principal, Alfred Bourne, that she hoped to ‘feel that I am still attached to Stockwell and not forgotten’.⁸⁰

Stockwell was also where Sparks put her name to the petition with which this article began. The Round Robin suggested other ways for student teachers to challenge the authorities at a time when women were beginning to transform a profession in which they had become by far the largest constituent. The round robin brought new, otherwise overlooked, acts of writing into the novel. Character was no longer buried away and out of reach, nor dependent upon the attentions of a narrator or an inspector, but instead fostered through the relations and actions that the student teachers shared with one another.

Sue does not explore the possibilities that the Round Robin offers. Rather than involving herself in an emancipatory movement that requires her to stand beside others, she pursues the individual freedom of exile. But at the novel’s end Sue is made to bear horrific consequences for this choice, causing her to drastically submit to the pressures she had heroically resisted and return to her love-less marriage with Phillotson. Neither group nor individual action provide anywhere near satisfying resolutions in this novel, yet both show the tension between control and freedom that lay at the heart of Victorian character building. The teacher was the object of training — someone who was controlled and produced, in the desired form — while at the same time, training was the object of the teacher — a qualification, endowing status and freedom. As has been seen, this balance between control and freedom also affected Hardy’s novel writing, as the narrator of *Jude* struggled to observe, understand, and describe Sue.

Jude, a text that draws upon the contrasting perspectives of real and imagined students, teachers, inspectors, managers, educationalists, and politicians, shows how an apparently straightforward understanding of who or what a teacher was, and how this was to be fostered, was always up for dispute. At times the novel reflected the views of an inspectorate concerned with the formation of character, but it also accommodated those who challenged the representations that were otherwise imposed upon them, including Hardy’s sisters, his cousin,

⁷⁶ Hardy, *Life*, p. 252.

⁷⁷ British and Foreign School Society, *Report of the British and Foreign School Society, 1892* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1892), p. 90.

⁷⁸ Hardy, *Life*, p. 248, emphasis in original.

⁷⁹ Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women 1850-1920* (London: Virago, 1985), p. 7.

⁸⁰ Letter to Alfred Bourne from Tryphena Sparks, 30 Dec. 1871, quoted in G. F. Bartle, ‘Some Fresh Information About Tryphena Sparks: Thomas Hardy’s Cousin’, *Notes and Queries*, 30 (1983), 320–22 (p. 321).

the Stockwell students, and the fictional 'seventy' at Melchester. Those last two groups, lodging in the rooms of the college and depicted on the pages of the novel, became writers-in-residence.