

## REVIEWS

**The Penguin Classics Thomas Hardy (1997): *The Pursuit of the Well-Beloved* and *The Well-Beloved*, edited by Patricia Ingham; and *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, edited by Keith Wilson**

Penguin, from whose texts teachers of literature have benefited for so long, has embarked on the Penguin Classics Thomas Hardy under the general editorship of Patricia Ingham. The series has an editorial policy of considerable interest. The aim is to include all Hardy's prose fiction. Two volumes of the short stories will be treated separately; with one exception all texts will be under a general determination to present the first edition in volume form. Hardy's frequent revisitings of his texts, in particular his developing revisioning of his conception of Wessex materialised in the "Wessex Novels," are mostly shown in the explanatory notes. The aim is to present Hardy's texts "as Hardy's readers first encountered them, in a form of which he in general approved, the version that his early critics reacted to." The Penguin editions, then, question the teleological assumption of authorship which Hardy himself gives some signs of adopting (by conceptual shaping of his novels that includes textual revisitings), and which an editor taking the substantives of the 1912-13 Wessex Edition into any earlier printed version is also adopting.

A second distinctive feature of the editorial policy is to include all contemporary line-drawing illustrations, and an appendix on the artist and the illustrations. To any teacher of the Victorian novel who has encouraged students to recognise the importance of the relationships that exist between the letterpress and the illustrations in fiction from the 1840s to the 1890s, and to understand the kinds of reading that these relationships enabled, this policy will be welcome. Any editor has to cope with so many variables. Taking as the most important these three: the nature of the text; the presumed readership of the edition; and the condition of the editor herself or himself as subject to the constraints and objectives of a general editorial policy; how successful are the first two examples of the Penguin Hardy?

Patricia Ingham's *The Pursuit of the Well-Beloved* and *The Well-Beloved* is the more significant of the two in prompting useful re-reading of Hardy. Her edition is the first fully to reprint *The Pursuit* from the *Illustrated London News*, 1 October to 17 December 1892. Her introduction persuasively justifies the printing and the reading of *The Pursuit* and *The Well-Beloved* as different novels. An introduction that critically exploits their differences is followed by notes that economically notice the linkages and contrasts between them. The two are treated "as a double form with not merely alternative *endings* but alternative *texts*, an either/or structure." Her reading of Hardy's questioning of "conventional gender power-hierarchy" is further evidence of the vigour that varieties of feminist approaches have brought to the reading of Hardy's fiction in the last twenty years. There is a convincing argument against Hillis Miller, enabling Ingham to reach the points that together these novels interrogate and redefine values of

“women-focused art,” and the relativity of male and female as agents in the drama and as those who treat the other as objects. The “Note on the History of the Texts” gives a reasoned revision of orthodox notions of the textual history and presents the 1897 version as “by no means a ‘reprinting’ but a radical rewriting, related to both *The Pursuit of the Well-Beloved* and *Jude the Obscure*.” Hence this Penguin Classics Hardy becomes an essential set of documents for re-reading Hardy’s last prose fictions. In one respect only does Patricia Ingham’s edition seriously fall down. On Walter Paget as illustrator, the points of detail are lost on anyone who cannot find *The Illustrated London News*. Why are they not reprinted, when the letterpress is?

Keith Wilson’s *The Mayor of Casterbridge* shows some of the merits of his General Editor’s achievement, but opens up some insecurity in the foundations of editorial policy together with some weakness in the interpretation of it. As both editors are well aware, the *first* readers of Hardy were readers of serial versions. The Penguin *Mayor* shows the strain in the assertion that “the present edition offers the text as Hardy’s readers first encountered them.” Wilson’s *Mayor* gives us the illustrations from the *Graphic* serial with the text (as per policy) of the first volume form. To remove this disjunction, and to encounter the text of *The Mayor* as those readers who were really the first to experience it, we have to resort to the notes, supplemented perhaps with Dale Kramer’s Oxford text, which takes its accidentals from the MS, and, where necessary, from the *Graphic*. The Penguin *Mayor* thus represents somewhat of a wavering in its resolution of competing commitments, namely to the socialised textual condition of serialisation (including magazine editor, illustrator, and author, as people holding expectations of what was demanded by a reading public buying matter besides Hardy’s) and to the textual condition of a more privately envisaged author whose words were clothed in a typically highly-developed house-style of the first book publisher. Dale Kramer’s Oxford edition cuts through this problem to the MS, holding in effect that the Hardy of the MS and of the 1912-13 Wessex Edition are not identical but are, nevertheless, the coterminous and crucial agents of the production of the novel that we know as *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. It further holds that one can resort to the serial where the MS is incomplete, because authority is divisible between accidentals and substantives. Wilson’s Penguin edition, while helpfully and honestly directing the reader to debates on Hardy’s textual problems, has a nervously defensive remark that “punctuation theory” has become “a somewhat contentious topic” by which to usher in a very brief justification of the rejection of deference to the “manuscript’s questionable and incomplete authority” and of the decision to privilege the house-style of the first book version. As so often happens, the general editorial policy is adduced in partial (and self-) confirmation of the particular decision.

All this may be read as an indication of an understandable uncertainty in both volumes about the presumed readership of the Penguin Classics Hardy. A reader who is assumed not to want an argument in “punctuation-theory” (whatever that is) does need to know what a variorum edition is (if only to accept that this volume does not claim to be one—*Mayor*, page 323); a reader who is presumed to need the meaning of “petite,” “epiderm,” and “masking” in Ingham’s volume is yet asked to manage with Wilson’s

own unglossed “terpsichorean joy” in his Introduction; those with an interest in the heightening of colloquialism in direct speech in *The Mayor* are told neither of the change in Chapter 37 of “mandy” (applied to Henchard in MS—1895 revising copy) to “hontish” in subsequent printings nor of its significance, being left rather to infer that it has none. And in both editions, readers are presented not only with the important Map of Wessex from 1895-96 but with new maps of Casterbridge and The Isle in Ingham. This strong pull of the empirical is in editions seeking to be all things to all readers. Could we have the coach-times from Casterbridge to Budmouth, please?

So facetious a question is not the right note to end a short review of the Penguin Classics Hardy. Wilson’s introduction is a competent analysis of the patterning of human relations in *The Mayor*. Both volumes have judicious lists of further reading, although Wilson’s omission of the economic history of K.D.M. Snell is a serious lack on the agricultural context. This series promises to be useful and affordable to late twentieth-century readers, many of whom will not need reminding that the reproduction of a nineteenth-century title-page and of an 1843-48 print of an irrelevant bearded man on the cover do not necessarily augment the texts of Hardy “as his readers first encountered them.”

**John Winter**

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***Victorian Women Poets: An Anthology*, edited by Angela Leighton and Margaret Reynolds. Oxford: Blackwell, 1995. (Distributed in Australia by Allen & Unwin.)**

***Nineteenth-Century Women Poets: An Oxford Anthology*, edited by Isobel Armstrong and Joseph Bristow with Cath Sharrock. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996.**

These two important anthologies belatedly appeared almost simultaneously two years ago to supply a need which had been evident for at least twenty years before that. Now with the imminent paperback publication of the Armstrong/Bristow anthology (the Leighton/Reynolds was initially issued both in hardback and paperback) both are more accessible as teaching texts. It is therefore ironic that at the time when it is becoming increasingly difficult to justify a course solely on nineteenth-century women poets—at least at the undergraduate level—suitable and ample materials are only now available to do just that. Prior to this I had resorted to photocopied handouts for any poems (usually by lesser known poets not included in standard anthologies) that I wished to include in my nineteenth-century women’s writing course. Unfortunately this practice might have to be continued for courses which range across the genres because of the high cost of even the paperback (\$45 for the Leighton/Reynolds, the Armstrong/Bristow price not yet known), making both anthologies more suitable (at least economically) for more focused postgraduate work and, of course, as essential library reference texts.