

論 文 【佳作論文】

Dickens, Hardy and “a London Particular”: Scientific Entropy, Medical Epidemiology and the Miasmatic Literary City

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I

On the 9th of June 1870, as he was crossing London’s Hyde Park, a young Thomas Hardy saw the announcement of the death of Charles Dickens (Florence Hardy, *Early Life* 101). The event was carefully recorded in his notes by Hardy, and was much later included in *The Life of Thomas Hardy*. The work of Dickens evidently made an impression on Hardy that lasted well beyond his youth into old age; he owned the complete set of Lloyd’s sixpenny Dickens (Millgate, *Thomas Hardy’s Public Voice* 317) while in a 1903 letter to an acquaintance, Hardy remarked “Dickens in his details of things” is “without a fellow, so special is his view” (Purdy and Millgate, *Collected Letters: II* 81). Dickens’ personified depictions of the great metropolis, from the foggy air to the ebb and flow of the Thames, created a unique image of the city as protagonist. This bequeathed a formidable literary and psycho-geographical legacy to later writers which functioned as both a key and a fetter. Hardy was well aware of this powerful literary influence; according to the American novelist Hamlin Garland’s account of a 1920s conversation with the Dorset writer, an aged Hardy had remarked how “the “Dickens tradition” still broods over London” and “our London novelists” (Gibson 197).

Dickens first established this tradition by capturing the excitement of the city streets in a series of brief sketches (1833-36) finally collected in one volume as *Sketches by Boz* in 1839. In the short piece “Shops and their

Tennants,” (1836) for example, the young Dickens noted what “inexhaustible food for speculation do the streets of London afford” (58). But Dickens’ London was also an entropic city, sickened by air-borne pollution such as the miasmatic air and the thick fog which Mr. Guppy in *Bleak House* (1853) described as “a London particular” (51). Hardy was similarly familiar with this particular London, moving to the metropolis in 1862 and living and working in the capital continuously until 1867. While Hardy is primarily thought of as a Dorset novelist, he was, like Dickens, keen to cultivate the image of himself as a Londoner. He described his 1860s experiences of the city as one which “only a young man at large in the metropolis can get . . . knowing every street and alley west of St Paul’s like a born Londoner, which he was often supposed to be” (Florence Hardy, *Early Life* 82). This is reflected in several of his works; many of the important scenes from his famous lost novel *The Poor Man and the Lady* (1867) were according to *The Life* apparently set in London (Florence Hardy, *Early Life* 82). Furthermore, his *oeuvre* contains two novels, *The Hand of Ethelberta* (1876) and *The Well-Beloved* (1897), and two short stories, “How I Built Myself a House” (1865) and “An Indiscretion in the Life of an Heiress” (1878) which are partly or chiefly located in the capital. In addition, 29 of Hardy’s poems were composed in London (Florence Hardy, *Early Life* 71), and a number of others used the capital as a setting.

From these works, and indeed the copious notes and references which Hardy made, we can also detect the influence of the writings of Dickens. This is not to say that Hardy’s works resemble Dickens’ novels, as they are stylistically and thematically very different. But this discussion will address some of the particular London connections that do appear to exist between Dickens and Hardy, despite the significant changes which took place across the city during the 1860s, the decade which was Dickens’ last and Hardy’s first as a writer. While Hardy’s work was chiefly published after the theory of miasma had been largely rejected (Bingham et al. 387-93), his antagonistic London fog resembled Dickens’ personified representation of the polluted air in *Bleak House*. Further, while the novels of Dickens preceded William Thomson’s

scientific theory of entropy (Smith and Wise 524), both writers offered similar depictions of London as an environmentally decaying city. During Hardy’s time in London, however, the railway system was expanded to compete with the omnibus (Inwood 547) and the Embankment (553), and the London sewers (434) were constructed, while medical epidemiological practice was gradually established, first by John Snow (Porter 412-13) and later by William Farr (Halliday 1470-71). Thus this discussion will demonstrate how Hardy’s literary city was also a London particular to him and his own time.

II

The novels and poetry of Thomas Hardy, which chiefly feature rural shepherds, farmers and milkmaids, seem a world away from the urban pandemonium of Dickens’ novels. Gabriel Oak, Eustacia Vye, Michael Henchard, Tess Durbeyfield or Jude Fawley appear to owe little debt to the likes of Mr. Jingle, Wilkins Micawber, Mrs. Gamp, Bill Sikes or Daniel Quilp. Yet in Hardy’s early notes, some of his character sketches appear rather Dickensian, and this may originate from his own experience of living in the London of Dickens’ time. When Hardy arrived in the great metropolis on April 17, 1862 he quickly found employment as an architect’s apprentice with Sir Arthur Blomfield at Adelphi Terrace, just off the Strand (Florence Hardy, *Early Life* 48). He occasionally took his lunch at Hungerford Market (55), now the location of Charing Cross Station, and it is also here where Dickens had labored as a child in Warren’s Blacking Warehouse (Wilson 52). Hardy’s stay in the city coincided with Dickens’ series of London public readings, and in an 1912 edition of the London periodical the *Bookman*, which was then celebrating the centenary of Dickens’ birth, Hardy writes “when a young man in London I heard him read from his books” (Millgate, *Thomas Hardy’s Public Voice* 328). He more specifically notes in *The Life* that in 1863, not long after his arrival in the city, he “attended the later readings by Charles Dickens at the Hanover Square Rooms” (Florence Hardy, *Early Life* 70). Dickens’

performances were known for their highly theatrical quality, during which the famous author was given to dramatically imitate his characters' facial features, quirks and accents. It is interesting that the novelist heroine of Hardy's *The Hand of Ethelberta*, makes her living as a writer in London by giving dramatic public readings of her work, and it appears likely, therefore, that Dickens' public performances of his characters made an impression upon the young Dorset writer.

An older Hardy partly conceded the influence of Dickens upon his own writing. In his 1912 piece for the *Bookman*, Hardy further commented on the great writer's legacy, initially stating "I do not know that my literary efforts owed much to his influence" before then, rather tantalizingly conceding "No doubt they owed something unconsciously" (Millgate, *Thomas Hardy's Public Voice* 328). This unconscious aspect cannot easily be located although Hardy was very aware of the power of Dickens' characterizations; he specifically cut out and recorded in his notebooks an article taken from *The Glasgow News*, 31 Jan 1907, that observed how the coming to life of characters in works by Shakespeare, Scott and Dickens occurred because a writer surrenders to "the magic power of the material in which he works," leading to a character coming "to play a part far more important than was first intended" (Björk 288). Some of Dickens' most vivid and memorable characters are wily cockney villains such as Grandfather Smallweed, Bill Sikes, Daniel Quilp and Fagin who perpetuate cunning acts of skulduggery. While none of the Londoners encountered in Hardy's writing seem to directly resemble Dickens' characters, in *The Life* one finds an account of William Tinsley, the Strand-based publisher of his first novel, the poorly selling *Desperate Remedies* (1871), which appears to come straight out of a Dickens narrative. Hardy felt Tinsley had ill-used him, having agreeing to publish the novel only on receipt of a 75 pounds advance from the Dorset author. Clearly very bitter about this experience, Hardy seems rather in revenge to have turned the Hertfordshire-born publisher into a cockney caricature. *The Life* tells how Hardy was approached by Tinsley on the Strand in 1872 and asked to provide new material, the publisher exclaiming

“Wot, now! Havent you anything written?” (Florence Hardy, *Early Life* 116) When Hardy remonstrated with Tinsley regarding the poor sales of *Desperate Remedies*, the publisher is recorded to have replied, “Pon my soul, Mr Hardy [...] you wouldn’t have got another man in London to print it! Oh, be hanged if you would!” (116) Hardy’s depiction of Tinsley here rather reminds the reader of the wily Mr. Slum from *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841) who craftily tries to persuade Mrs. Jarley to employ his services as an advertiser:

‘I came here,’ said the military gentleman, turning to Mrs. Jarley, - ‘pon my soul and honour I hardly know what I came here for. It would puzzle me to tell you, it would by Gad ... By the way- any orders? Is there any little thing I can do for you?’ (212)

Just as his plots turn more towards tragedy than comedy, however, Hardy’s characters are generally quite distinct from the type of figure encountered in Dickens’ work. In terms of identifying a Dickensian influence in Hardy’s writing, the unconscious aspect to which he refers can perhaps be encountered more discretely in his treatment of the city itself.

III

The genesis of Hardy’s representation of the London fog appears to owe a debt to Dickens and this can be traced to the lingering influence of miasmatic theory. For many centuries, medical theory had attributed sicknesses and fevers to miasma (Porter 10), and the belief persisted during the first half of the nineteenth century that disease was caused by the inhalation of vitiated air (Halliday 1469). Edwin Chadwick misdiagnosed the miasma as the chief cause of cholera in his *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain* in 1842, writing that “there is no one point on which medical men are so clearly agreed, as on the connexion of exposure of persons to the miasma from sewers, and of fever as a consequence” (371). The miasmatic

London air was also described by Dickens in *Dombey and Son* (1848) as “noxious particles that rise from vitiated air” (647), being further referred to as “foul with every impurity that is poisonous to health and life” (647). In the later works of Dickens, such as *Bleak House*, the threatening air was more broadly associated with the thick fog which hung over the city. For rural readers of Dickens’ novels, such as the young Hardy, his malevolent depictions of the foggy air would likely have established a particular set of visual expectations about the metropolis.

While it is unclear when Hardy would have first encountered Dickens’ works, he may well have done so growing up in Higher Bockhampton in Dorset. His mother Jemima was a voracious reader of classic and contemporary books, and, according to *The Life*, from 8 years old Hardy was already familiar with Dryden’s *Virgil* and Johnson’s *Rasselas* (Florence Hardy, *Early Life* 21). At around this time Hardy first visited London with Jemima on their way back from a family visit to Hertfordshire, briefly staying at The Cross Keys, St. John Street, perhaps chosen because of its connection with the poet Shelley. The inn, *The Life* tells us, was where “Shelley and Mary Godwin had been accustomed to meet at weekends” (21). It is not difficult to imagine the works of Dickens finding their way into such a literate household at around this time. What is more difficult to gauge is the impact that reading Dickens’ novels for the first time must have had on rural readers that had never visited the metropolis before, or those such as a young Hardy who had done so only very briefly. While many writers through history have relayed the excitement, pandemonium, squalor and vice of London, what was significant about Dickens’ literary city was the means by which it was transmitted to the public. Dickens’ novels, from *The Pickwick Papers* in 1837 to the unfinished *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* in 1870, were published during what has been referred to as the “distribution revolution” (Lightman 30). This revolution, the first phase of which took place from approximately 1830 to 1850, and which was characterized by the introduction and development of the Fourdrinier machine, industrial steam driven presses, case binding,

cheaper postal reform, and the institution of the railway system, saw writers able to reach a mass reading audience on a scale previously unimaginable (31). Dickens’ representations of London would therefore have offered readers a powerful and striking series of contemporary literary images of the nation’s capital.

Dickens’ novels seem directly relevant to the London newcomer; Murray Baumgarten has observed that Dickens’ books often feature arrival scenes, in which characters such as David Copperfield, Arthur Clenam, or Pip disembark in the city (220), and his readers also experience the same sense of arrival. This sense is particularly articulated by the London fog, which serves in Dickens’ work as a unique city-based landmark. The term “London particular” was not coined by Dickens, its use preceding the publication of *Bleak House* by over twenty five years (Taylor 22) but Mr. Guppy’s proud boast to the newly arrived Esther Summerson that the fog was “about a London particular” (51) provides within the architecture of the narrative the sense of a psychological and geographical threshold being crossed. For the newcomer, and indeed the reader, this distinguished the foggy, opaque city experientially from the clarity of what had passed before. Further, Dickens’ fog as “London particular” had a duality of function, and did more than transform the psycho-geography of the narrative; it was also the carrier of sickness and disease. In 1849, shortly after *Dombey and Son* was issued and three years before *Bleak House* was first serialised, London was afflicted by a particularly serious outbreak of cholera, which in the last three months of the year saw deaths total 12,847 (Barker and Jackson 279). The erroneous connection between the noxious air and disease was emphasised by Edwin Chadwick in 1842, his great report documenting “instances of disease and death occasioned by miasma” (375). During the first part of the nineteenth century, however, this image had already been established by illustrators such as Robert Seymour, who initially worked with the younger Dickens on an early version of *The Pickwick Papers* (Wilson 117). In Seymour’s illustration “Cholera ‘Tramples the Victors & the Vanquished both” (1833), the disease is drawn as a form of foggy, poisonous air, becoming

a personified antagonist. Later, in an extraordinary passage from Dickens' *Bleak House* the fog also becomes actively malevolent, spreading pain, suffering and the threat of death:

Fog everywhere. Fog up the river, where it flows among green aits and meadows; fog down the river, where it rolls defiled among the tiers of shipping and the waterside pollutions of a great (and dirty) city. Fog on the Essex marshes, fog on the Kentish heights. Fog creeping into the cabooses of collier-brigs; fog lying out on the yards and hovering in the rigging of great ships; fog drooping on the gunwales of barges and small boats. Fog in the eyes and throats of ancient Greenwich pensioners, wheezing by the firesides of their wards; fog in the stem and bowl of the afternoon pipe of the wrathful skipper, down in his close cabin; fog cruelly pinching the toes and fingers of his shivering little 'prentice boy on deck. (13)

Upon his arrival in London, Hardy's impressions of the city seem to reflect the descriptions that had flowed from Dickens' pen; he pointedly observed in retrospect that "It was quite Dickens' London in those days" (Millgate, *Thomas Hardy: A Biography Revisited* 75). Similarly, Hardy's early focus was the fog; working at Adelphi Terrace, Hardy's views of the Thames were frequently obscured by the 'London particular', so that in an 1863 communication to his sister Mary he bemoaned how, "To-day has been wretched. It was almost pitch dark in the middle of the day, and everything visible appeared of the colour of brown paper or pea soup" (Purdy and Millgate, *Collected Letters: 1* 3). The fog was to remain a topic of Hardy's fascination throughout the nineteenth century, occupying several of his letters to acquaintances. Much later, in an 1890 missive sent from his London club to his wife Emma, Hardy remarked chiefly upon the fog, writing "It is dense as a wall & black as soot to-night" (224).

During Hardy's time in London during the 1860s, however, the polluted city air began to lose its reputation as the chief carrier of disease due to the demise of miasma theory. One factor in its disappearance was a growing

awareness of how fog could occur naturally in areas that weren't polluted such as the countryside (Taylor 54), but the reemergence of cholera also played an important role in this change in perception. In 1849 the surgeon Dr. John Snow had published *On the Mode of Communication of Cholera* in which he directly questioned the theory of miasma, arguing that cholera could not be spread via the polluted air because the disease affected the intestines rather than the lungs (Porter 412-13). Snow's idea that cholera was a water-borne disease was at first ignored but gradually won converts; when the sickness struck London again in 1866, while Hardy was working at Adelphi Terrace, Snow's idea was finally confirmed by William Farr, thus at last disproving the long lingering theory of miasma (Bingham et al. 387-93). The foggy air began to represent a less immediate and deadly threat, but in Hardy's work of this period and indeed much later one still finds fog personified in a rather Dickensian fashion as both urban signifier and malevolent, sinister force. While living in Westbourne Park Villas, Bayswater, a western suburb of London, Hardy addressed the stifling fog in his 1866 poem “Dream of the City Shopwoman,” finally published in *Late Lyrics and Earlier* (1922):

O God, that creatures framed to feel
 A yearning nature's strong appeal
 Should writhe on this eternal wheel
 In rayless grime; (Hardy, *Complete Poetical Works: II* 379, 25-28)

In the poem, which describes the frustrated rural dreams of city-dwelling retailers, the fog functions like Dickens' ‘London particular’ as a liminal marker between the rural and urban worlds, but also as a harmful, oppressive force. The shop woman of the poem's title is thwarted in her dreams of escape and imprisoned within the “rayless grime” (379, 28). Hardy here combines two images of entrapment, the woman being metaphorically shackled to an industrial wheel surrounded in thick fog, conveying the sense of hopeless imprisonment.

Hardy's London fog is more actively personified in the much later 1899 poem "A Wife in London," published in *Poems of the Past and the Present* (1901), where his personal experience of the city appears to merge with the type of anthropomorphic foggy air encountered in *Bleak House*. In the first stanza of the poem Hardy constructs an image of the city as a malevolent character that has entrapped a war widow:

She sits in the tawny vapour
 That the Thames-side lanes have uprolled,
 Behind whose webby fold on fold
 Like a waning taper
 The street-lamp glimmers cold. (Hardy, *Complete Poetical Works: I* 123, 1-5)

This is partly drawn from Hardy's own experience of London, as from 1878-79 he lived in Arundel Terrace, Tooting with Emma (Florence Hardy, *Early Life* 157-70), and their abode overlooked a corner street lamp. This may possibly have been the subject of the poem "Beyond the Last Lamp (Near Tooting Common)," published in *Satires of Circumstance* (1914). Here Hardy's narrator describes a wet and bitter evening in London, "While rain, with eve in partnership, / Descended darkly, drip, drip, drip" (Hardy, *Complete Poetical Works: II* 20, 1-2) and ruminates upon the purpose of two vaguely glimpsed shapes. Hardy's narrator passes a dimly lit couple loitering "Beyond the last lone lamp" (3), and the lamp is more briefly referenced in "A Wife in London." The descriptions of the street lamp "Like a waning taper" (4), reflect his poetry notebook entries from this time, as he describes "Going downstairs with taper" and spotting "a lamp" (Dalziel and Millgate 8) through his partly-opened curtains. But through personification the city is also described as surrounded by a "tawny vapour" (123, 1) which has been actively "uprolled" by the "Thames-side lanes" (2), becoming an animated extension of London's malevolence, and bearing comparison with Dickens' descriptions of an antagonistic fog in *Bleak House*.

IV

Dickens city is often represented as an unsustainable, entropic environment, the seemingly illimitable chimneys of London producing smoke and soot which cause environmental contamination. Just as the lives of Dickens’ characters are often stunted by their toxic environment, the city’s trees become entrapped and poisoned by the systemic pollution emanated by the metropolis. Similarly, one of Hardy’s more pessimistic poems, “To A Tree in London”, concerns the contamination of London’s natural organisms by the city’s smoke fumes. This may be partly attributable to the emergence of the theory of entropy; William Thomson’s 1862 paper “The Age of the Sun’s Heat,” (Smith and Wise 524) perpetuated the belief that “the sun is one huge glowing coal, a mere incandescent liquid mass cooling” (Morton 26). Yet while some of Hardy’s more pessimistic works can be connected to the theory of entropy, his literary focus on London as a decaying, polluted city can also be partly attributed to the earlier influence of Dickens.

Thomson’s seminal 1862 paper affirmed that while the total amount of energy in a system would stay the same, heat would inevitably get lost, leading in the case of the sun to a gradual wearing out. This new belief in ultimate entropy and solar termination led to a series of concerns during the Victorian era regarding the dissipation of energy (Dale 229), and contributed “considerably to widespread anxieties of *fin de siècle*, *fin du globe*” (Gold 290). Certainly, by the time that Hardy was engaged upon his later works, the idea of biological degeneration, a by-product of Neo-Darwinian thought and entropic theory, was a prevalent literary theme, and several scholars have identified Hardy’s treatment of biological atrophy in his novels and poetry (Ebbatson 1; Morton 86). Further, Angelique Richardson specifically connects this to Hardy’s representations of the metropolis:

For Hardy, London is a hotbed of environmental gloom ... Through this emphasis on the environment Hardy embraces the central tenet of Darwinism,

the interrelation of individual and environment, and, ultimately, the subordination of species to their surroundings. (167)

Dickens' descriptions of decay, which precede the emergence of Hardy's scientific and biological influences, interestingly appear to resemble the latter writer's own descriptions. In Dickens' *Bleak House*, London can be seen as an entropic city, slowly suffocating itself and gradually dying. In tracing the relationship between scientific entropy and nineteenth century-literature, Barri J. Gold has recently argued that Dickens' novel "describes a landscape dominated by entropic decay at every scale" (292). Yet it was published before the process of entropy was named in 1859 or Thomson's paper in 1862 (Smith and Wise 524). Further, it preceded Darwin's *On The Origin of Species* (1859), which raised the troubling prospect of species extinction, but Dickens' darkly imaginative descriptions in *Bleak House*, such as the "death of the sun" and the apocalyptic image of the "megalosaurus, forty feet long or so, waddling like an elephantine lizard up Holborn Hill" (13) seem to remarkably anticipate the more public articulation of entropy that was to follow during the second half of the nineteenth century.

In particular, Dickens employed descriptions of sick or dying organisms to emphasize the city-borne decay in his novels. In *Our Mutual Friend* (1865) the narration described "A grey, dusty withered evening in London city" where "the City grit gets into the hair and eyes and skin and when the fallen leaves of the few unhappy trees grind down in corners under wheels of wind" (393). Both flora and humans are at the mercy of the same pollution here; the dying leaves are synonymous with the dirty condition of the London inhabitants, as both are afflicted by the grit in the city air. In the earlier *Dombey and Son* Dickens focused on the source of this atrophy, describing Mr Dombey's house, which looks upon "a graveled yard, where two gaunt trees, with blackened trunks and branches, rattled rather than rustled, their leaves were so smoke dried" (21). Much later, although the actual composition date is unclear, Hardy published the poem "To A Tree in London" in *Winter Words* (1928), which used

strikingly similar imagery. The piece depicts a tree trapped and polluted by the dirt of the city, and Hardy’s poetic narrator describes:

Smoke like earth whereon to feed. . . .
 Thus, black, blind,
 You have opined
 Nothing of your brightest kind; (Hardy, *Complete Poetical Works: III* 203-4, 18-21)

The source of this “smoke-like earth” and indeed most of the city’s pollution was caused by the many coal fires burning in the kitchens and living rooms of the city’s dwellers (Taylor 51), which, in *Bleak House*, produces “smoke lowering down from chimney pots, making a soft black drizzle” (13). Rather like Thomson’s entropic theory of the sun, while coal provided London’s energy it would ultimately prove unsustainable and burn out. The city’s chimneys and factories would need constant replenishment to avoid running out of fuel. In doing so, as shown in *Bleak House*, the vast amount of smoke produced would directly pollute the surrounding environs, contaminating its denizens.

Similarly, Hardy’s first published work, the 1865 short comic vignette “How I Built Myself a House,” published in the Edinburgh-based *Chambers Journal*, can be described as rather Dickensian in its depictions of coal fumes and smoke. Like his “Dream of the City Shopwoman,” this early work was written when Hardy was living at Westbourne Park Villas, and in the story he describes a similarly appointed dwelling, his narrator relaying details of “the sort of house called a Highly-Desirable Semi-detached Villa” (16). Hardy’s narrator visits Mr. Penny, a London merchant who faintly reminds the reader of a Dickensian tradesman on the make, and orders a house that is then built with a dysfunctional “study fire” (22) producing smoke that fails to ascend. In personified style the polluting smoke particles are sent “curling into the room” (22) to assail the homeowners, and are reminiscent of the passage from *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1844) where the city smoke is described as akin to the ghostly air

of Tom Pinch's Temple quarters, having "thickened round and round him" (582). The story also appears metaphorical; through its dependence on coal Hardy's home, like Dickens' London in *Bleak House*, proves to be an entropic environment, self-polluting its own inhabitants.

V

While Hardy's descriptions of the city's fog and smoke may well owe a debt to Dickens' style, they were also influenced by his experiences of the dramatic changes that London underwent during the 1860s. Such changes were partly initiated by governmental select committees in order to combat the troubling urban pollution and sickness (Inwood 526), and one of the most dramatic developments was the construction of the city's railway system. This was initiated in 1836, but during the 1860s when Hardy was living in London it was greatly extended (547). Dickens had previously addressed the coming of the railway system in *Dombey and Son* (1848) and showed the effect that witnessing these mighty vehicles would have had upon the public. In the novel he represents trains as akin to fiery monsters in descriptions reminiscent of J. M. W. Turner's *Rain, Steam and Speed: The Great Western Railway* (1844). In the following passage an onrushing locomotive takes on the form of an industrial sublime, and is shown through the eyes of the terrified Mr. Carker, who describes:

a trembling of the ground, and quick vibration in his ears; a distant shriek; a dull light advancing, quickly changed to two red eyes, and a fierce fire, dropping glowing coals; an irresistible bearing on of a great roaring and dilating mass; a high wind, and a rattle. (776)

By Hardy's time the British public had become more accustomed to such scenes, and this growing familiarity is reflected in his narrative focus which centers less upon the train as phenomena and more upon its role as social

nexus. The exact London station which the young Hardy disembarked from in 1862, nervously clutching a return rail ticket, is not mentioned in *The Life* (Florence Hardy, *Early Life* 46), although in Hardy's *The Well-Beloved* Jocelyn Pierson and Marcia Bencomb are shown embarking upon a similar train journey to the city. The railway line is described as having “only recently been opened” and Jocelyn, fearing that the intimacy of the trip should end, dreads reaching its destination, “the great London station” (25). Dickens' descriptions of an industrial sublime are absent in *The Well-Beloved*, and the image of devilish, fiery machinery is replaced by the quiet privacy of a railway carriage, with Hardy's narrative focusing on the interplay between its inhabitants.

The construction of the London railway system involved the demolition of around 800 acres of residential property, leading to enormous changes across the city (Inwood 526). The densely populated London of Dickens' novels, with its slums and rookeries, was transformed into a more commercially organized world of offices, warehouses and banks (527). The development of Hardy's own literary voice can be traced to the changing London of this period, and especially connected to the construction of St Pancras station which took place between the years 1863-66 (Barker and Jackson 322-23). Prior to the establishment of its station, St Pancras had been chiefly notable for its large cemetery, and in Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) it serves as the location for the funeral of Roger Cly. The cemetery also features in the novel as the sinister location of a grave robbing, as the watching Mr. Jeremiah Cruncher prepares to go “a fishing” (151). Later, under the cover of darkness, Cruncher is followed to the cemetery entrance by his curious and naive son, who, gazing inside, “made out the three fishermen creeping through some rank grass! and all the gravestones in the churchyard” (153-54). The graverobbers draw the coffin up, Dickens describing how “their bent figures were strained, as if by a weight. By slow degrees the weight broke away the earth upon it, and came to the surface” (154). Six years later during the construction of the new St Pancras station, Hardy was personally responsible for the removal of tombs from the site, yet unlike Mr. Cruncher he was no grave robber. Hardy

was employed by Sir Arthur Blomfield in the winter of 1865 to disinter old graves from St Pancras churchyard. The space was needed to make way for one of the new railway lines, and while removing a number of corpses he encircled an ash tree with the excess gravestones (Florence Hardy, *Early Life* 58-59). The same tree quite possibly features in "Neutral Tones," a poem not published until 1898 in *Wessex Poems* but composed in 1867. The piece likely concerns Hardy's relationship with a lady's maid called Eliza Nichols that occurred in London around 1863-67 (Millgate, *Thomas Hardy: A Biography* 81). The tree is used to symbolize the end of the affair, and Hardy's narrator tells us that "a few leaves lay on the starving sod; / – They had fallen from an ash, and were gray" (Hardy, *Complete Poetical Works: I* 13, 3-4). Ash relates to the Christian festival of repentance and the remembrance of corporeal death, but the St Pancras tree and its associations with the gravestone circle would have been fresh and resonant in Hardy's mind when he was searching for a bleak metaphor to emphasize the death of a relationship.

Hardy's experience in removing corpses is very likely to have influenced the later poem "The Levelled Churchyard," published in *Poems of the Past and the Present* (1901) but composed in 1882. In the poem the voices of the dead call out to those that pass by:

"O passenger, pray list and catch
 Our sighs and piteous groans,
 Half stifled in this jumbled patch
 Of wrenched memorial stones!

"We late-lamented, resting here,
 Are mixed to human jam,
 And each to each exclaims in fear,
 'I know not which I am!'

"The wicked people have annexed
 The verses on the good;
 A roaring drunkard sports the text

Teetotal Tommy should!

“Where we are huddled none can trace,
And if our names remain,
They pave some path or porch or place
Where we have never lain!

“Here’s not a modest maiden elf
But dreads the final Trumpet,
Lest half of her should rise herself,
And half some sturdy strumpet!

“From restorations of Thy fane,
From smoothings of Thy sward,
From zealous Churchmen’s pick and plane,
Deliver us O Lord! Amen!” (Hardy, *Complete Poetical Works: I* 196-97, 1-24)

In this poem there is no mention of the St Pancras ash tree, but Hardy’s ring of gravestones that encircled it appear to be referenced in the lines “this jumbled patch / Of wrenched memorial stones” (3-4). The poem also addresses other events that took place while Hardy was working at the cemetery. The experience often saw Hardy working late into the night with a team of navies to exhume skeletons and *The Life* describes how “Hardy supervised these mournful processions when present, with what thoughts may be imagined” (Florence Hardy, *Early Life* 59). During these nocturnal shifts bodies lifted from the graves were occasionally mixed up and in some cases went astray (58-59), and the effect of these events may have helped influence the more ironical and macabre aspects of Hardy’s literary voice.

This sense of the macabre is in particular evidenced in the blackly comic “The Levelled Churchyard,” where the good and pious are intermixed with the bodies of the profane. A “modest maiden elf” (Hardy, *Complete Poetical Works: I* 196-97, 17) is corporeally fused with a “strumpet” (20), while a “roaring drunkard” usurps the plot of “Teetotal Tommy” (11-12), ironically placing

the ascension of the worthy in jeopardy while at the same time enhancing the chances of the heathen entering heaven. The narrator's tone, however, with its facetious descriptions of "human jam" (6), appears less appalled than darkly amused. This tone bears some similarity to Dickens' grotesque descriptions of Mr. Cruncher's "fishing," but Hardy's mood of black humor is further accentuated by the way in which the poem takes the form of a mock church hymn. This distinguishes his work from the more piously moral novels of Dickens, Hardy's poem culminating with the final lines "From zealous Churchmen's pick and plane / Deliver us O Lord! Amen!" (24) Thus we can here see Hardy's macabre experiences of London underpinning the development of a dark and ironic style very much his own.

VI

Hardy's treatment of the city's pollution is ultimately particular to his own age; and this appears singularly so in his representation of the Thames, which through the establishment of medical epidemiological practice came to be seen as the cause of cholera (Bingham et al. 387-393). Dickens had earlier connected the noxious and sickly river metaphorically to the fallen women of the city in *David Copperfield* (1850), Martha the prostitute described as "part of the refuse that it had cast out, and left to corruption and decay" (687). Later, the "Fog up the river . . . fog down the river" in *Bleak House* was used as a vehicle for the widespread transference of riverside pollution. This was then further developed in *Our Mutual Friend*, where the great river, the mutual lifeblood of all Londoners, both connects and separates the worlds of the rich and the poor through its tidal flows. Gaffer Hexam, the boatman, is grotesquely symbolic of these connections; like the tides he floats between these worlds, making his living by scavenging coins from the corpses of those that have fallen into the river:

The tide, which had turned an hour before, was running down, and his eyes

watched every little race and eddy in its broad sweep, as the boat made slight head-way against it, or drove stern foremost before it, according as he directed his daughter by a movement of his head. She watched his face as earnestly as he watched the river. But, in the intensity of her look there was a touch of dread or horror. (13)

Such tidal interconnections thus function in a similar fashion to Dickens’ airborne fog in *Bleak House*, and, like the earlier novel, are achieved to illustrate a moral point which, as Michelle Allen notes, illustrates how “filthy material conditions reflect a perilous social condition” (501). Yet, while *Our Mutual Friend* was written during the early 1860s, it rather surprisingly fails to mention the two major riverside projects that dominated the capital during this period: the construction of the Thames Embankment, which ran from 1864-70 (Inwood 553), and the London sewers, which were completed in 1868 (434). This may well reflect the fact that by the time Dickens came to write *Our Mutual Friend* he was no longer resident in London, although he would almost certainly have been aware of both projects, and likely seen actual evidence of their construction when commuting into the city to perform readings or organize the publication of his works.

By this time Hardy was a working Londoner, and during his early days while employed at Adelphi Terrace the construction of Joseph Bazalgette’s sewers were already well under way (Inwood 434). The planning scheme had been in effect forced into action by the noxious fumes emanating from the Thames in 1858 known as the Great Stink (Taylor 59). Hardy specifically mentions this project and the great need for it in his notes from this time, describing how, “the stench from the mud at low water increased, the Metropolitan main-drainage system not having been yet constructed” (Florence Hardy, *Early Life* 70). Prior to this Dickens’ putrid river was chiefly used as a moral analogy for London’s social ills, but by 1866 William Farr, following the earlier work of Dr. John Snow, realized that it presented a problem for citizens that far exceeded its noxious odors; it was the chief cause of the city’s

cholera outbreaks (Bingham et al. 387-393). Londoners began to fear exposure to the river's waters in untreated form, their worries about its unedifying stink replaced by a much greater concern over its role in producing the deadly water-borne disease. Hardy clearly shows this public awareness of the dangers of the Thames in a passage from *The Hand of Ethelberta*, in a description that juxtaposes the charm of the London riverside at night with its more sinister risks. These contrasts are seen through the eyes of the newcomer Picotee, who arrives in London at dusk, crosses Westminster Bridge, and notices the behavior of the pedestrians:

The lights along the riverside towards Charing Cross sent an inverted palisade of gleaming swords down into the shaking water, and the pavement ticked to the touch of pedestrians' feet, most of whom tripped along as if walking only to practice a favourite quick step, and held handkerchiefs to their mouths to strain off the river mist from their lungs. (139)

This public fear over the safety of the river also reflects Hardy's own personal experience; working next to the Thames near Charing Cross, in almost exactly the same location described in his novel, his health drastically deteriorated. *The Life* tells how the seriousness of his illness caused his employer Blomfield to urge him to quit the capital, which he finally did in 1867, returning to his native Dorset to convalesce (Florence Hardy, *Early Life* 70-71). Just as the Thames had weakened him, it was the waters at Weymouth that fully revived him. In 1869 he became a resident of the town, bathing in the ocean every morning, so that "after the enervation of London, this tonic existence by the sea seemed ideal, and that physically he went back ten years in his age" (84).

VII

If London had been the cause of Thomas Hardy's sickness it was ultimately the source of his success, just as it was the lifeblood of Charles Dickens' fame.

Once recovered, Hardy returned to the city in the 1870s and, following his chance encounter with Tinsley on the Strand, finally mustered the resolve to confront the wily publisher at his offices and renegotiate terms more shrewdly so that he would retain the rights to his next composition (Florence Hardy, *Early Life* 118). Interestingly, as *The Life* relays how negotiations turned to Hardy’s advantage, the defeated Tinsley’s characterization in these passages becomes less Dickensian. Hardy’s descriptions of his nemesis’ voice and register begin to convey a more gentlemanly tone (118). Hardy’s next publication with Tinsley’s company was *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872), and this came to the attention of Leslie Stephen, the editor of the London *Cornhill Magazine* (125). Within two years the success of the *Cornhill*’s serialized *Far from the Maddening Crowd* (1874) had all-but secured Hardy’s literary reputation, thanks chiefly to his chance Strand encounter with Tinsley. In this sense, Hardy’s success can be seen as resembling the kind of Dickensian plot device in which unforeseen good fortune and happenstance plays a key role in the ascent of the London hero. Further, although his fiction was to chiefly shift its focus towards Dorset, Hardy enjoyed a close relationship with the city of London for the rest of his life. He enjoyed the membership of several London clubs, regularly attending the Saville, the Rabelais and the Athenaeum, and was generally keen to cultivate the image of himself as an urban, urbane Londoner well into old age. In an unsigned article in the *London Standard*, 2 June 1910, published in honor of his seventieth birthday, and most likely dictated by Hardy himself, he is described as:

an interesting and interested figure, passing through the London streets on his way to the Athenaeum club, ‘doing’ picture galleries with conscientious care, and attending service at St Paul’s Cathedral, or some of the city churches. (Millgate, *Thomas Hardy’s Public Voice* 313)

It seems appropriate, therefore, that while the heart of Thomas Hardy was buried at St Michael’s Churchyard, Dorset, his body was laid at Poets Corner,

Westminster Abbey (Florence Hardy, *Early Life* 267). Directly next to Hardy's grave is the tomb of Charles Dickens, and the two great Victorian novelists now lie side-by-side. This is symbolically appropriate, as in reading examples of Hardy's London writings we can find discernable traces of Dickens' influence. Dickens' specific narrative representations of London, including his 'London Particular', made an impression upon Hardy. Yet these literary influences were also merged with Hardy's own experiences, as a number of great changes occurred during his time in London. During the 1860s Hardy witnessed the extension of the city railway system and the construction of the sewers and the Embankment, while, through the identification of cholera as a water-borne disease, he would also have been aware of the establishment of medical epidemiology. While the works of Dickens and Hardy are quite different, their literature is also connected by some similar aspects which are specific to the Victorian London of their time. Discovering these London connections helps aid a study of Hardy's early development as a writer while further illustrating the intense power of Dickens' particular narrative legacy.

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