

## **An Anxious Discourse: English Rural Life and Labour and the Periodical Press between the 1860s and the 1880s<sup>1</sup>**

It is a familiar paradox that, even as England was developing into the world's first industrial economy in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and as the majority of its population were becoming urban dwellers for the first time in history, English national identity remained inseparably associated with the countryside and with ideals of rural life. Indeed, the appeal of this supposed connection seems to have grown with the passage of time.

Less commonly observed, however, is the extent to which the reassuring retrospective representations of country life in the earlier nineteenth century written after 1850 were at odds with historical and economic realities. The tension between the contrasting views of the contemporary countryside as essentially trouble-free and stable, or as socially divided and depressed, is particularly visible in a largely unacknowledged source – periodical journalism. The discussion here draws extensively on articles that appeared in three major periodicals – *Fraser's Magazine of Town and Country Life*, *Cornhill Magazine*, and *Longman's Magazine* – in the twenty-odd years from the mid-1860s. These are used to examine the positions the writers take towards key questions about the rural labouring population and their lives. What *was* the truth about the domestic and working conditions of agricultural workers, including women and children? What sort of people were they? How much *actual* hardship was there in the countryside,

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to the peer reviewers for comments and suggestions which enabled me to reshape my argument in places.

and how should it be addressed? And, more generally, what was to be done about the education of labourers' children, or the representation of labourers' political interests in a time of expanding individual expectations, without undermining the rural social hierarchy? The terms and language employed in particular articles reveal the middle-class anxieties and prejudices these questions fuelled against rural workers and their way of life. They also shape a discourse that contrasts sharply with more celebratory, affirmative, or nostalgic representations of the English as an essentially rural people, which had been encouraged and reinforced by specific historical, cultural, and social factors in the period from the late eighteenth century.

While the Napoleonic wars posed the threat of invasion, they also promoted patriotism and determination to defend the country; and the successes of Nelson and Wellington, most notably at Waterloo, stimulated national pride in English manhood and character that had been formed on the land. Forty-odd years later, in 1857, Thomas Hughes reflects the afterglow of this feeling in the specific phrase he uses to describe the contribution of his 'fighting family', the Browns, to the history of the nation: 'Wherever the fleets and armies of England have won renown,' he declares, 'there stalwart sons of the Browns have done *yeomen's work*' (my emphasis).<sup>1</sup> The development of physical prowess and courage was not the only perceived benefit of a country background, however. The influence of Romanticism, and of William Wordsworth's early writings in particular, fostered new ways of thinking about and valuing rural landscapes and country life as crucial sources of moral and spiritual insight and formation: thus, for example, in his poem 'Tintern Abbey', the scene around the Abbey leads the poet from external observation to interior reflection and recognition of his deepest human values and his

relationship to the world around him; and in figures such as ‘The Solitary Reaper’, the leech-gatherer in ‘Resolution and Independence’, or the eponymous old shepherd in ‘Michael’, he finds individuals living unselfconsciously at one with their rural environments, unlike the crowds he encounters in the London streets whose endless motion and anonymity reduce them to ‘a second sight procession’, threatening to overwhelm his own sense of self.<sup>2</sup> It is, of course, also in London that Michael’s son, far removed from the fortifying environment of Green-head Ghyll, so loses his moral bearings that he is forced to flee abroad in disgrace. As towns and cities became home to increasing numbers of people, the countryside and rural life were often remembered, imagined, or longed for on account of their supposed moral and physical wholesomeness, stability, and freedom from urban pressures and what Matthew Arnold called ‘the infection of our mental strife’ that was felt to characterize modernity.<sup>3</sup> This predilection is anticipated in the way that, as John Barrell has argued, poetic and artistic representations of rural workers from the late eighteenth century onwards replace images of the bucolic exuberance and disorderliness of country life, and realistic details of agricultural labour, with more restrained scenes in which the human figures appear clean and respectable or are ‘almost reassuringly invisible.’<sup>4</sup> The political subtext of this adjusted perspective directs attention away from any human and material details that have potentially troubling implications for a vision of social order and stability. Elsewhere the desire to hold on to, or to recuperate, a benign vision of the rural past and the pre-industrial world is evident in novels such as George Borrow’s *Lavengro* (1851) and *The Romany Rye* (1857), George Eliot’s *Silas Marner* (1861), and the generic countryside of Anthony Trollope’s Barsetshire novels of the 1850s and 1860s that, in Roy Strong’s words, is

‘peopled with a veracity that still haunts our imagination.’<sup>5</sup> For the conservative journalist, T.E. Kebbel, writing on ‘Farmers’ in the *Cornhill Magazine* in 1863, that past is embodied in characters like Dandie Dinmont in Walter Scott’s *Guy Mannering* (1815), or Mr Poyser in Eliot’s *Adam Bede* (1859), whom he claims is ‘perhaps the most perfect representation of the old race of farmers that has ever been produced in fiction [and] altogether a sturdy, stationary, simple-hearted kind of man, who perplexed himself very little with politics, or, indeed, with anyone’s affairs except his own, and those of his parish.’<sup>6</sup> However, the emphasis on the simplicity, self-sufficiency, and steadiness of Poyser’s life contrasts with the evidence of more complex and less easygoing conditions in contemporary agriculture, and suggests how the countryside had not escaped change.

A parallel and more explicit literary counter-history to the characterization of the countryside as the site of continuity and harmony emphasizes the upheavals caused by change. It extends back to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and is variously exemplified by Oliver Goldsmith’s meditation on the desolation of ‘Sweet Auburn’ in ‘The Deserted Village’ (1770), by George Crabbe’s rejection of idealized images of country life in favour of truthful representations of the ‘poor laborious natives’ in ‘The Village’ (1783), and by John Clare’s distress at the violation of the land and disruption of life resulting from enclosure in ‘Helpstone’ (1820) and other poems. It also informs William Cobbett’s *Rural Rides* in the 1820s, which appeared on the eve of the Swing Riots (1830–31) against the introduction of mechanical threshing machines, and is present again in Alexander Somerville’s journalistic reports on rural life for the *Morning Chronicle* in 1842 at the height of the campaign for the repeal of the Corn Laws. These writings challenge the more consoling views of country life in the past favoured by the

novelists in the mid-century. They also foreground the countryside as a place of rival interests, class tensions, contested authority, and real hardship for the poor. In doing so, they anticipate factors that repeatedly appear in journal articles from the 1860s onwards. The oldest of the three periodicals considered here, *Fraser's Magazine*, had been a leading monthly miscellany since its foundation in 1830, but by the 1860s was beginning to face competition from other shilling monthlies, including *Cornhill Magazine*, which appealed to a broad middle-class audience from its launch in 1860. Whereas *Cornhill Magazine* survived until 1975, *Fraser's Magazine* folded in 1882 and was succeeded in the same year by *Longman's Magazine* (1882–1905). Priced at sixpence per month, it aimed to attract the new audience created by the 1870 Education Act, but, like its predecessor, it gained a strong middle-class base. Articles on rural affairs in these journals highlight the divisions between writers who reflect growing public concern about conditions in the countryside stirred by a series of government-commissioned reports in the 1860s, and those who argue in defence of the interests of landowners and farmers, and challenge the reality and extent of the alleged hardship. In so doing, they expose middle-class anxieties about the changing state of England itself, which they articulate with a directness and topicality designed to appeal to non-specialist readers among the growing potential audience in a highly competitive, largely urban market. The prejudiced language and judgemental moral tone commonly adopted towards contemporary agricultural workers rest awkwardly against popular valorizations of the countryman as the backbone of the nation and the idealization of the supposed immutability and moral wholesomeness of country life. Above all, these articles are eloquent testimonies to the inescapable realization that the countryside was a place of

increasing complexity and uncertainty, which confounded easy assumptions about the benign nature of rural life, and which could not simply be dismissed from urban consciousness.

## I

### The Rural Poor: Workers or Slaves?

‘I take it for granted that these people do not live, they exist, they vegetate, they don’t die, and that is all.’<sup>7</sup> With these sarcastic words in “‘Landowners, Land, and Those Who Till It’”, published in *Fraser’s Magazine* in 1868, Edward Girdlestone, vicar of Halberton in North Devon, expressed his dismay at the inability of members of the British Association for the Advancement of Science to explain how the farm labourers who were his parishioners could keep their families on seven or eight shillings per week. Rural pay remained an intractable and divisive issue for the rest of the century, but here Girdlestone grounds the problem in its inseparable connection with the attitudes of the educated and powerful towards the poor. He establishes this through the sequence of verbs that incrementally disconnect the impoverished condition of his parishioners from human life, until it can only be characterized as a state of not being dead – ‘and that is all.’ This is intentionally provocative, but Girdlestone was a bold campaigner on behalf of the rural poor, who withstood the hostility of local landowners and farmers after he challenged them in a sermon in 1866 to accept greater responsibility for their labourers. Subsequently he wrote to *The Times* to correct allegations that he had given false

information and invited anyone who dared to refute his claims about wages in his parish. His letter led to offers of work on much better terms of service for his parishioners elsewhere in the country, and of finance to support the migration of labourers and their families to their new places of employment. Girdlestone himself assisted with the relocation of a significant number of families, some of whom helped to extend the project by finding other opportunities for relatives and friends.<sup>8</sup>

“Landowners, Land, and Those Who Till It” may be an unusually vehement article, but it should be read in the context of the ongoing work of a number of government commissions established in the 1860s to investigate female and youth employment, which had already stimulated public concern about rural labour. This is reflected, for example, in ‘Slavery in England’, the emotively titled unsigned review of the *Sixth Report of the Commissioners of the Children’s Employment Commission* (1867) published in *All the Year Round, A Weekly Journal Conducted by Charles Dickens, With Which is Incorporated Household Words* in June of that year. The writer’s shock at the Commission’s revelations of brutal and degrading practices points to the more fundamental issue – the need for recognition and acceptance of the common humanity of the rural labouring class. Girdlestone also touches on this need when he denounces Mr Reade, a Norfolk farmer and conservative MP, for dismissing as ‘sentimental twaddle’ the claim that women and children should not be employed as field workers.<sup>9</sup> He quotes from Reade’s address to the Norfolk Chamber of Agriculture in October 1867 to show the speaker’s unrepentant attitude to the Commission’s exposure of the sufferings of children in agricultural labour gangs that were particularly prevalent in that county:

‘Some gentlemen said that when a poor girl went to field work she was contaminated and spoiled, but he [Reade] contended that in all probability she was contaminated and spoiled before she got there. He thought a girl of eleven or twelve years was as strong as a boy of about that age, and he contended that there was no good farming without this juvenile and female labour.’<sup>10</sup>

The same report prompted a reviewer in the *Quarterly Review* to comment that ‘the social evils which were long supposed to be peculiar to manufactures [*sic*] exist in a more aggravated form in connection with the cultivation of the soil’, and to claim that it ‘shocked the moral sense and wounded the humanity of the nation.’<sup>11</sup> The writer in *All the Year Round* adopted the language of religion to insist that the Commission’s concerns were ‘no distant grievance, no case for missionary effort’, but ‘a heinous sin crying at our very doors for relief’.<sup>12</sup> For both reviewers, the circumstances recorded in the report are a national disgrace and a betrayal of Britain’s exemplary status as a civilized, Christian society. However, Reade’s rhetoric reveals significantly different priorities. His repetition of the phrase ‘contaminated and spoiled’ makes a contemptuous, generalized assumption about ‘poor girls’ morality. It also represents them in terms of consumable goods rather than as human beings, and it is self-interested and utilitarian, as well as patriarchal, in its evaluation of the girls purely in terms of their labour potential. His implicit resentment at the Commission’s intrusion into the management of rural labour is signalled in the dismissiveness of its criticisms, while his reductive view of child labourers conveniently justifies his lack of obligation or responsibility towards them. Girdlestone’s judgement is characteristically uncompromising: Reade’s attitude represents the dereliction of ‘every religious, moral, and social consideration’ in pursuit of ‘the necessities of good farming’,



and typifies the failure of some landowners and farmers to treat their labourers as sentient fellow beings.<sup>13</sup>

As for the labourer, such sort of landowners call him Hodge. They think of him as Hodge. They treat him as Hodge. In their eyes the labourer is a serf, and ought to remain a serf.<sup>14</sup>

Girdlestone's recognition of the erasure of the individual labourer's identity in the generic label 'Hodge', and his specific use of the word 'serf' to indicate the social classification tacitly ascribed to labourers, imply a connection between the attitudes of farmers like Reade and their view of labourers as an inferior species far removed from Wordsworthian representations of the rural poor.<sup>15</sup> By extension, this points to potential tensions in acceptance of the need to improve the lives of agricultural labourers, whether for humanitarian, philanthropic, Christian, or merely self-interested motives on the one hand; and, on the other, to anxiety and uncertainty about the implications for social order should these people become economically empowered or educated to have aspirations of their own. A variation of this dilemma appears in the *Quarterly Review* article. Its comments are sympathetic towards the problems raised by the 1867 Children's Employment Commission, but they also contain a conservative, cautionary note. The rhetoric of slavery is again invoked as the gang leaders are likened to 'slave-driver[s]' keeping their charges in conditions like those of 'negro bondage'; but the writer expresses alarm at the 'precocious independence' of the child labourers that destroys their deference towards authority, and makes girls 'altogether unfitted for domestic service' or respectable family life.<sup>16</sup> Thus, however great the injustice is admitted to be, and however forcefully it is condemned, it co-exists with a concern to preserve social order and

compliance. As will be seen, similar tensions inform both the language and tenor of many subsequent articles on, for example, appropriate education for the children of agricultural workers, the ‘real’ level of labourers’ wages given the widespread inclusion of ‘perquisites’ in employment agreements, the changes to employer–employee relationships, particularly with the rise of agricultural unions, and arrangements for financing poor relief.<sup>17</sup>

## II

### Supporting the Rural Poor: The Poor Law, Charity, and Philanthropy

Girdlestone’s robust approach reflects the liberal editorial policy of *Fraser’s Magazine*, which promoted discussion of contemporary issues and concerns. However, *Cornhill Magazine* was also voicing anxieties about the changes to rural life. ‘The Life of a Farm Labourer’ (1864) begins by deploring the paradox of ‘unmistakeable signs of growing improvidence’ among labourers in a time of better wages when ‘greater care [is being] shown by the upper classes for the moral and social amelioration of the poor’.<sup>18</sup> The writer then asserts that, whether ‘the peasantry ought, or ought not to possess the privileges of independent electors’, they should certainly have the ‘privilege’ of paying ‘a fair share of the poor-rate’, and follows this by advocacy of self-help, which, he believes, is discouraged by poor relief.<sup>19</sup> This highlights two related issues that greatly exercised opinion on rural affairs – the alleged financial irresponsibility of many labourers and the consequent burden of support that fell on tenant farmers and landowners. Here, the

writer's defensive concern with the financial impact of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act, which abolished outdoor relief and led to the establishment of workhouses controlled by locally elected boards of guardians, is consonant with *Cornhill Magazine's* sensitivity to the interests of its middle-class readers. He advances his argument through a hypothetical case history of 'an *average specimen* of the *respectable* farm labourer' (my emphasis).<sup>20</sup> The language is revealing because the phrase is again reductive, like the label 'Hodge', while the adjective valorizes a particular social and moral perspective. There is also an inference that labourers who do not meet the writer's notion of respectability are beneath serious consideration and must simply be managed like farm animals. The 'specimen's' progress is summarily mapped from leaving school early, to a youthful marriage and growing family whose demands make him ready to seek poor relief. He joins a 'sick and benefit club', which meets in the local inn where he wastes money on beer, and the family's frugal existence continues until his children can contribute to their income. The labourer's disinclination to save spare money at this stage affronts middle-class belief in self-help and planning for the future, and the writer implies it is a failure of character; but, crucially, he also blames it on 'the education [that the] *Poor Law* has provided for him' and 'the retreat and maintenance secured to him as a *pauper*'.<sup>21</sup> By this reckoning, the state itself is complicit in the labourer's fecklessness by encouraging him to believe that he will be supported in times of hardship and weakening his motivation for self-improvement. Inevitably, when the man's earning power declines and he is expelled from his benefit club, he looks for parish relief and subsequent care in the workhouse. The writer therefore concludes that the Poor Law has 'disabused' this 'specimen' of 'the notion of independence he manfully struggled for', making him 'the

victim of legislation which was framed for the purpose of securing him against want and wretchedness'.<sup>22</sup> The mixture of suspicion of the emasculating effect of relief given without obligation, and resentment at its costs to 'respectable' citizens, is commonplace at this time. It is not, however, shared by Girdlestone. While agreeing that the Poor Law had suppressed wages and encouraged dependence and improvidence, he attacks its administration by farmers and functionaries accountable to them. These, he declares, 'are the very men who have all their life long oppressed the applicant, crippled him up with hard work and low wages, lessened his self-respect by abusive language, reduced him in short to the degraded position of a pauper, and are now ready enough and in a position, at his expense, to save their own pockets'.<sup>23</sup> This introduces another dimension to the analysis: viewed thus, charity is essentially a way to control the poor and maintain the social order, which, paradoxically, relies on keeping the recipients in a dependent position. Taken together, the emphases in these articles not only suggest a contrast between the differing degrees to which *Cornhill Magazine* and *Fraser's Magazine* were prepared to give space to controversial views; they also draw attention to a familiar Victorian dilemma – the tension between Christian social obligation to the poor and needy and the supposedly debilitating effects of indiscriminate and over-generous charity.

The political as well as moral dimensions of this question become more apparent as the plight of rural labourers acquired new urgency in the 1870s. This resulted from organized demonstrations and strikes, especially those promoted by Joseph Arch's newly formed National Agricultural Labourers' Union (NALU), a phenomenon reflected upon in a number of substantial articles in *Cornhill Magazine* and *Fraser's Magazine*, particularly in the years between 1873 and 1876.<sup>24</sup> Some writers questioned the true scale

of rural poverty. Thus, in 1873, following wage rises, T.E. Kebbel claims that it is ‘the relative rather than the absolute condition of the agricultural labourer which calls for consideration’, and that ‘a very large class of them at present are able to live in great comfort, and of the rest, the majority are much better off than is supposed’.<sup>25</sup> In the same year, in *Fraser’s Magazine*, the author of ‘Peasantry of the South of England’, George Jennings Davies, a Hampshire landowner and Poor Law Guardian who was also a clergyman, mockingly suggests that ‘[i]t does not occur to the illogical mind of Hodge that the facts’ he learns through *The Labourers’ Union Chronicle* ‘may probably be invented and the reasoning false, or that, if he could hear the other side of the questions argued, he would know how little trust is to be put in *ex parte* statements’.<sup>26</sup> Although *The Labourers’ Union Chronicle*, NALU’s official publication for its members, provided further evidence of the organizational capacity of the movement’s leaders, Davies’s lofty contempt for its alleged inaccuracies and provocative campaigning for improved conditions and wages is unhesitatingly dismissive. Nor is this all. When he scorns the gullibility of the *Chronicle*’s readers and flatters the education of his own audience with the casual inclusion of a Latin phrase, Davies himself shamelessly encourages both social division and a reductive view of agricultural labourers. His rhetoric is different to that of Reade, the Norfolk farmer, but its implications are the same.

Davies also reveals his prejudiced suspicion of the unsettling effects of education on the labouring population through a pejorative reference to ‘the stimulants’ provided by the press, from which, he claims, the reader

learns to hate England, and is only anxious to shake off the dust of his feet at the door of all the squires and parsons, and to set out for Australia or some other distant place [...] where he

imagines he has nothing to do but to eat colonial beef steaks, and dwell in a house with a spare bedroom for each of his children, forgetting that an industrious man can live in England and that a lazy one cannot live out of it.<sup>27</sup>

Not only is Hodge taken to be stupid; it is also implied that, if he believes he is the victim of injustice, he must be lazy, opportunistic, greedy, and unpatriotic. The sustained rhetorical discrediting of the labourer makes his situation seem less pressing, and thereby justifies the right of those with power to determine his treatment. It does not merely suggest that Hodge is a harmless rustic buffoon, but that his absurdity is potentially dangerous and must be contained and managed. In the final part of 'Peasantry of the South of England', Davies even suggests how generosity may serve this end when he recommends that a labourer should be rewarded for extra work that benefits his employer, because 'these sort of things are continually being done by a simple-minded and kind-hearted race', and 'our truest glory in having the poor is, that we may make them happy with a trifle'.<sup>28</sup> Such deliberate humouring of what is seen as an essentially harmless inferior species to encourage gratitude invites obvious comparison with both contemporary and longstanding colonial attitudes to native peoples.<sup>29</sup>

Not all writers, however, endorse such opportunistic kindness. In 'Agricultural Labourers', published in *Cornhill Magazine* in June 1874, C. Kegan Paul critiques 'private and parish charities' as 'simply palliatives to make men forget the insufficiency of wages' and encourage dependence.<sup>30</sup> He laments the depressing sight of 'a long string of weary women walking once a week nearly two miles to the great house, and two miles back, with a full pitcher of soup, excellent, no doubt, and kindly given, but with the strong feeling that if any of those privileged to apply did not apply they would be

considered ungrateful, defiant, and revolutionary'.<sup>31</sup> The contrast between Davies's and Kegan Paul's views is significant. It illustrates how, in a context where employment practices simultaneously reinforced the power of landlords and farmers, and bound their workers to them for basic survival, charity and kindness are not necessarily disinterested. In Victorian England, this was further complicated by the tendency to make negative moral judgements of individuals who failed to support themselves, rather than contextualizing their problems within the larger structures of society, and by the valorization of personal self-improvement and success without acknowledging the degree to which these entail curtailment of the opportunities and resources available to others.<sup>32</sup>

### III

#### Controlling Change

With the growth of acceptance that change to the conditions of life in the countryside was not only inevitable, but was already happening by the 1870s, attention turned to how this might best be managed. Concern with social control is particularly prominent in suggestions for improving the economic situation of labourers by increasing their opportunities to rent or own land. So, for example, T.E. Kebbel argues that, while it may be desirable for a labourer to have an allotment, its size should not interfere with his duties to his master, and it should be close to the village, not only for convenience, but to forestall 'an excuse for prowling and idling about, and, perhaps, [...] put[ting] into a lad's head the first thought of poaching'.<sup>33</sup> Although Kebbel accepts the value of giving

labourers the incentive of becoming small landholders, it is a distant prospect, dependent on their adopting the approved values of thrift, later marriage, and smaller families. 'Out of their present wages,' he claims, '[...] the better class' of agricultural labourer may save enough in twenty years to take a small farm; but then he adds sententiously: 'True, he has had to forego the luxury of marriage: but so have his betters'.<sup>34</sup> *Cornhill Magazine's* landowning readers would also have been reassured by Keibel's insistence that the landlord will not suffer any significant loss ('Half a dozen small farms out of every thousand acres would probably be sufficient'<sup>35</sup>), and that the property will be improved in the years before the labourer takes it over. As a result, 'even if when he [i.e. the labourer] got his farm, between fifty and sixty years of age, he didn't farm it to the very best possible advantage, the land nevertheless would have had five and thirty years far better work out of him before than it would have had without such a prospect'.<sup>36</sup> This proposal for land redistribution is therefore little more than a way of endlessly deferring change, while in the meantime the ostensible advantages to the labourer would benefit the landlord.

Ideas for redistribution of land were only one source of anxiety for farmers and landowners. The education of children was increasingly recognized as essential to both promote social improvement and equip the rising generation for modern life, and also in the light of the second Reform Act (1867), which had extended the franchise, especially in urban areas. The Education Act (1870) provided for the creation of a national system of locally elected boards to establish and manage state schools in England, funded from the rates, for children between 5 and 12 years of age. Yet such conservatives as George Jennings Davies feared that this might encourage a view of labour itself as degrading, or



make employees restless and desirous of alternative work because they had come to ‘despise the lowly offices of life’.<sup>37</sup> ‘Nothing is so injurious to a man as to fit him for a clerk without finding him a situation’, he continues. ‘He is not wanted in England – all the learned professions are full [...]. A poor woman in her own station of life becomes a good cook or dairywoman, but educate her out of her sphere, and she becomes – what? A second rate governess.’<sup>38</sup> This reveals a class-based anxiety about the potentially destabilizing consequences of empowering the ignorant with knowledge and encouraging their ambitions. In the same period, Richard Jefferies, whose background as the son of a small farmer informed his extensive writing on agricultural life and labour, suggests that education was unexpectedly exacerbating social divisions. Many farmers, he argued, were using their wealth to remove their children from village schools, which had acquired the stigma of ‘pauperism’ with the new presence of labourers’ families.<sup>39</sup>

Paradoxically, hope that stability would not be severely disrupted by agricultural unrest was placed on the union leaders themselves, a number of whom, including Joseph Arch, were deeply influenced by Methodist ideals of social responsibility, self-discipline, and self-improvement. Their example, it was thought, might encourage greater self-respect and self-reliance among union members, strengthening their sense of place within both a social class and the wider society, and help to detach labouring families from their supposed readiness to seek relief. In short, were this to be so, it might make them more respectable members of society and more compliant with middle-class values. However, there is also evidence of developments in the debate over alleged abuses of the relief system with the poor no longer viewed as the sole offenders. In ‘The Agricultural Strikes’, R.A. Arnold charges employers with exploiting the system by hiring labourers for very

short terms, thereby avoiding the costs of retaining surplus workers, and relying on poor relief to subsidize those they turned away.<sup>40</sup> Jefferies goes further in ‘The Farmer at Home’, describing how ‘the all-permeating influence of the parental system in the mind of the typical agriculturalist’ is reflected in farmers’ use of their intimate knowledge of applicants claiming assistance from the guardians of Poor Law unions.<sup>41</sup> While he argues that this often worked to the individual’s advantage, it cannot always have been so, and in another of his articles, ‘John Smith’s Shanty’, the eponymous labourer regrets the passing of the older system of parish relief that placed much greater onus on the farmers to employ labourers, thereby minimizing the numbers seeking assistance.<sup>42</sup> Arnold takes an even more progressive stance, asserting that labourers themselves must determine the adequacy of their wages to provide for their families, because the vested interests of the farmers and landlords in repressing costs are too great. ‘It must be to the disadvantage and discredit of any country’, he declares, ‘to have a large class within it in such a condition of ignorance and degradation as not to know when the wage which they receive is insufficient for their wants, and, knowing this, not to be able to devise a remedy’.<sup>43</sup> This is a notable recognition of the labourers’ right to understand and to participate in determining their terms of employment. It assumes their ability to do so, accepts the responsibility of educating them to that end, and, by implication, rejects the Hodge stereotype. Arnold’s insistence that farmers must realistically appraise the decline of labourers’ wages, and will have little public sympathy if enforced poverty is making them reliant on assistance, again advances the debate, although he still urges prudential recognition of the mutual advantage of a voluntary, rather than a legally enforced, approach to harmonize the interests of both parties.

Writing after the third Reform Act (1884), which aligned the franchise in the counties with the arrangements for householders and lodgers in the boroughs introduced in 1867, Jefferies also embraces the prospect of increased labouring-class involvement in society. He points out that men with the vote will demand the right to influence local affairs, and will question why those who represent property, and whose interests differ from theirs, should retain sole control: ‘Gradually the parish – that is, the village – must become the centre to men who feel at last that they are their own masters’.<sup>44</sup> The full implications of the collision with the vested interests of land and money anticipated here emerge in the radical assertion that, ‘in the direction of affairs, the owner of the largest property must not weigh any heavier in the village council than the wayside cottager’.<sup>45</sup> Jefferies does not underestimate how key institutions in the lives of the labouring population would be affected by such a recalibration of power: there would be new representatives on local school boards, and in the administration of poor relief that, as he notes, operates in defiance of ‘[a] favourite principle continually enunciated at the present day [...] that the persons chiefly concerned should have the management’.<sup>46</sup> His contention that the Poor Law, workhouses, and the social and moral attitudes underpinning them, are degrading and irreconcilable with ‘thoughts of independence’ instilled by formal education and supplemented by ‘the unconscious education of progressive times’, differs sharply from the views of men like Reade and Davies, and from the conservatism of some of his own earlier opinions.<sup>47</sup> ‘Nothing,’ he writes, ‘can be conceived more harshly antagonistic to the feelings of a naturally industrious race of men than the knowledge that as a mass they are looked upon as prospective “paupers”. I detest this word so much that it is painful to me to write it; I put it between inverted

commas as a sort of protest, so that it may appear a hated intruder and not native to the text.<sup>48</sup> By highlighting and stigmatizing this particularly emotive word, Jefferies compels his readers to consider its burden of meaning and its judgemental coloration: they are, in effect, required to confront the implications of a system ‘based upon the assumption that every labouring man will one day be a “pauper”, will one day come to the workhouse’, and to acknowledge that further changes must follow the enlarged franchise if the principle of representation is to develop properly.<sup>49</sup>

#### IV

Still a Contested Subject: ‘The Dorsetshire Labourer’ and ‘The Wiltshire Labourer’

In spite of political and educational changes facilitating his participation in society, and evidence of readiness in some quarters to refute the stereotypical view of Hodge, the modern agricultural labourer himself did not cease to be a contested subject. The newly established *Longman’s Magazine* took up this debate in 1883 by commissioning articles from Thomas Hardy and Richard Jefferies.<sup>50</sup> Although both were regarded as reliable authorities on agricultural communities, their professional success was largely dependent upon the urban middle-class audience for their books and articles, who also constituted the majority of readers of *Longman’s Magazine*. It is therefore instructive to see how Hardy and Jefferies appeal to the same readership while addressing the common subject of rural labourers with significantly different priorities.

Hardy's opening challenge to the reductiveness of stereotyping in general, and to 'the pitiable picture known as Hodge' in particular, seems committed to inaugurating a more considered view of the countryman.<sup>51</sup> However, his subsequent summary of Hodge's alleged characteristics – mental dullness, physical clumsiness, speech that is 'a chaotic corruption of regular language', lack of social skills, squalid living conditions, and so on – reads more like an invitation to indulge in the very stereotype he is rebutting. In particular, the allusion to Hodge's naivety in believing 'Lunnon a place paved with gold', and the mimicry here of his rural dialect, suggest a shared, superior understanding between writer and reader.<sup>52</sup> This in turn is destabilized with the fanciful suggestion that, if the 'thoughtful persons' who believe in the stereotype could undertake an anthropological visit to Dorset to spend six months with Hodge and his family in their cottage, they would discover that he is 'somehow not typical of anyone but himself'.<sup>53</sup> Hardy never enlarges on this beyond asserting that labourers' lives are more varied than the stereotype allows. More disconcertingly, his subsequent argument that modernity and urban influences are eroding the particularity of country labourers creates a view of their transformation into another equally reductive stereotype – that of the dislocated individual estranged from local custom and culture, yet not assimilated into the urban world. So, for example, Hardy complains that education is corrupting children's use of their native dialect, leaving them in a 'transitional state' with 'a composite language without rule or harmony'.<sup>54</sup> His objection harks back to Wordsworth's valorization a century earlier of the 'plainer and more emphatic language' and 'elementary feelings' characteristic of '[h]umble and rustic life'.<sup>55</sup> However, it contrasts with Jefferies's emphasis on education as the one sphere in which progress has continued after the

decline of investment in improvements to housing, land, and agricultural practices since the 1870s.<sup>56</sup> Hardy's reservations seem particularly ironic when education, both at school and after it, had facilitated his own literary career and social advancement, but they signal his general unease with the impact of change on rural culture and traditions.

Thus, in a similar vein, he regrets that the labourers' 'rage for cloth clothes' has replaced the colour and picturesqueness of the hiring fairs with the undifferentiated darkness of 'a London crowd', an idea that recalls Wordsworth's sense of lost individuality in the city; but he gives little time to the brutal conditions of those same labourers' work.<sup>57</sup> His passing reference to the wretchedness of an ageing man vainly seeking employment at a wet hiring fair, and to the conditions of women's field labour, lacks the anger of Girdlestone writing in 1867 against the degradation of hiring fairs, the attention Jefferies gives to the material realities of a fogger's life in winter in 'The Labourer's Daily Life', or even the detail of his own later and celebrated description of the hardships of female field work in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891). Whereas the novel gives graphic details of the shocking conditions the women face in the swede field, and when the mechanical thresher comes to Flintcomb Ash, here Hardy opts for a Romantic conception of rural work as healthier and preferable to urban employment, which relies upon a very selective view of its realities, especially for the poorest labourers. In this respect, Roger Lowman's contention that he presents 'a benevolent, nostalgic, conservative picture' of the countryside 'whose effect was to reassure the reader that there was less of a problem than was generally supposed' seems apt.<sup>58</sup> Hardy particularly connects the growth of annual tenancies, resulting in increased migration, with labourers 'losing their peculiarities as a class' and 'enter[ing] on the condition of inter-social

citizens whose city stretches the whole country over'.<sup>59</sup> But urban influences on the countryside are not only eroding regional specificity, causing moral and cultural, as well as social, educational, and political change; they also have implications at national level by weakening understanding of the relationship between the present and the past. The twentieth-century Irish poet Patrick Kavanagh drew a distinction between the provincial and the parochial mind, suggesting that the former defers to the example of the city, whereas the latter takes his local culture as his frame of reference.<sup>60</sup> On this basis, Hardy denotes the historical moment when parochialism succumbs to provincialism: he regards his 'inter-social citizens' as more intellectually stimulated than their predecessors, but also as preferring 'what they have heard to be the current ideas of smart chaps in the towns' to their own observations.<sup>61</sup> Perhaps predictably, he also ascribes gender implications to the process of urbanization that displaces nostalgic ideals of rural femininity, as women assume 'the rollicking air of factory hands', and, more generally, he associates mobility with looser moral standards and a declining sense of duty.<sup>62</sup>

Hardy's principal concern throughout is to articulate his own, and, by implication, his readers', unease at rural change. This overrides his interest in engaging with the Dorsetshire labourer's own perspective on his social and economic plight. The tone of his concession that 'progress and picturesqueness do not harmonise', and that it is 'too much to expect' labourers 'to remain stagnant and old-fashioned for the pleasure of romantic spectators' – such as his audience – is unmistakably regretful and reflects his dismay at the decline and devaluation of tradition.<sup>63</sup> The gains from progress, such as access to new ideas and aspirations, weigh light against the alleged loss of the labourer's individuality and the threat to his long-established 'personal association' with the land itself, which

previously made it ‘impossible for him [...] to sink altogether the character of natural guardian in that of hireling’.<sup>64</sup> The biblical allusion to the hireling shepherd as a symbol of unreliability and treachery highlights Hardy’s disdain for the ascendance of money over service and loyalty in determining the labourer’s relationship to his employer and to the land itself.<sup>65</sup> It may also suggest a deeply conservative longing for traditional order in the countryside where everyone had his or her place, and which is integral to a particular notion of Englishness.

By contrast, Jefferies’s ‘The Wiltshire Labourer’ is less ideologically driven and more pragmatic. Again, the focus is on ‘tenant–labourers’ whom Jefferies sees as victims of the economic decline that has created a crisis in employment; he also, however, protests at the relative lack of public awareness of rural hardship, pointing out how unemployment in the country remains largely unnoticed if compared with the impact of an urban factory closure. Jefferies accepts unflinchingly that, ‘what a man wants in our time is good wages, constant wages, and a chance of increasing wages’, not ‘kindness’, and he recognizes that, since ‘[a] man cannot drift up into a corner of some green lane, and stay in his cottage out of the tide of life, as was once the case’, he will inevitably take work wherever opportunities exist.<sup>66</sup> Where Hardy saw change largely in terms of loss, Jefferies associates it with empowerment and rising material aspirations, which he does not condemn. ‘Knowledge adds to a man’s stature’, he remarks. He rebuffs readers who may ‘laugh at the fancy’ of labourers wanting to enjoy urban fashions and amenities, and anticipates that more ploughmen’s sons will leave the land to access them.<sup>67</sup>

Jefferies pins the future of rural life and work to security of tenure based on law, not moral approval. ‘[E]ven for material profit in the independent nineteenth century men



do not care to be held on their good behaviour’, he declares; ‘[A] contract must be free and equal on both sides to be respected.’<sup>68</sup> His business-like, rational language dispenses with any notion of a pre-existing mystical bond between the labourer and the land. When he underscores the point by inviting his readers to imagine the reaction that would ensue if a bank compelled its employees to live in homes it owned and then evicted them in the event of a dispute, Jefferies adds a new dimension to the argument, recognizing that all workers must be treated equally and in accordance with modern conceptions of individual liberty and employment practices. Even more remarkably, perhaps, he equates the well-understood tenant farmers’ demand for compensation for improvements in order to remain solvent, and the predicament of the worker whose ‘labour is his capital’.<sup>69</sup> No longer taken to be a kind of bondman dependent on the arbitrary grace and favour of his employer, the labourer is perceived as a modern worker with legitimate rights, and his work itself is understood in Marxist terms of economic value and as a source of power that he will exercise in his own best interests. For Jefferies, this is the crux of the matter: without legal contracts for rented properties, which are independent of the tenant’s employment, there will be grave consequences both for the labouring population and the country as a whole if its agricultural population is allowed to remain ‘all unsettled and broken up’ and ‘forever trembling on the verge of the workhouse’.<sup>70</sup> Thus Hardy and Jefferies link the dangers they see in the contemporary situation to their particular views of the historical role of agricultural labourers. Hardy’s principal concern is with the erosion of the past implicit in the changing life of the countryside, while for Jefferies change is indispensable to the continued existence of a stable rural population that is both ‘fixed and independent’, ‘a race of men of the sturdiest order, the true and natural

countrymen; men standing upright in the face of all, without one particle of servility' who would exercise the vote 'first and foremost for the demolition of the infernal poor-law and workhouse system'.<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, he is pleased to believe that such people already exist, equipped by education to exercise the responsibilities of modern citizenship, and their full potential ready to be released when they have secure homes to which they are entitled 'as a matter of sound policy'.<sup>72</sup>

The differences between these two articles are striking. Jefferies's readiness to embrace change, to argue for its extension, and to see it as the key to wider social reforms stands opposite to Hardy's sense of loss, and of the depletion of a way of life that has been undermined by external forces. Jefferies expects a reinvigoration of rural life and of the qualities of character associated with it once labourers are included in modernized tenancy and employment practices, whereas Hardy foresees only further decline in the rural population and its increasing surrender to urban culture. Published four months apart in the same periodical, the articles are a sharp reminder of the extent to which rural affairs continued to attract interest and divide opinion almost twenty years after Edward Girdlestone's controversial appeal on behalf of his parishioners' welfare.

## V

### Conclusion

In conclusion, this selection of journalism provides evidence of persistent middle-class concern with the changes affecting rural life and labour throughout a period when the

urban population was continuing to expand and the problems and challenges associated with city life and industrialism often seemed to dominate public discourse: it shows how important country matters remained to serious-minded readers, many of whom had no direct involvement in them. In fact, a survey of the diverse contents of the three periodicals dealt with here indicates that contemporary rural issues feature more frequently than urban matters. Most of the articles are long forgotten, but they constitute substantial interventions testifying to a view of rural England that was experienced as increasingly complex, uncertain, and perplexing. Nostalgia for a lost or imagined version of pre-modern country life characterized by long-established landowners, strong tenant farmers, paternalistic care for labourers, and more benign treatment of the poor provides the backdrop for some critiques of the contemporary situation. Other, and often sharply contrasting, reactions, however, are more telling: moral outrage at details of living and working conditions, particularly in respect of children and women; dismay at unchristian treatment of the poor; resentment at the costs associated with the Poor Law and indignation at its alleged encouragement of ‘pauperism’; anxiety over increasingly irresistible pressures to give labourers more control over their lives and in the exercise of power; uncertainty about the deskilling of rural workers and migration to the towns; and alarm at the decline in agricultural production when the total population was growing. The proponents of change, whether in the sphere of voting rights, property ownership, welfare, education, or farming methods and management become more prominent, although it is notable that their advocacy often continues to juxtapose progressive thinking with arguments defending older forms of authority and control. The endemic prejudice shown against Hodge and his kind, to misquote Jefferies, inevitably collides

with arguments for his common humanity and reasonable expectation of access to the opportunities and widening freedoms available elsewhere in society by the 1880s; furthermore, that prejudice is never fully dispelled in the period under consideration.

The articles are, however, not only significant in the ways already defined. Their publication in some of the most prominent and widely read journals of the period is indicative of their part in informing and shaping public thinking about the countryside, particularly among the middle class. The gradual shift from the more defensively conservative tenor of some of the earlier articles in *Cornhill Magazine* and even *Fraser's Magazine* to the more contentious and progressive arguments found in the less editorially constrained columns of *Longman's Magazine* suggest how journalism itself was adapting to new conditions and an expanding and more diverse audience. The issues and anxieties that the writers articulate are also symptomatic of wider contemporary debates, and may be read within these broader contexts. Precisely because the countryside had once been regarded from outside as a site of stability and continuity, it became a particularly compelling focal point for contemplating change and its consequences. Changes in the economic and social structures of rural life linked with the growing material aspirations of labourers and their readiness to abandon the land for better-paid and less-supervised lives were specific examples of the weakening of traditional authority and decline of deference affecting society more generally. Likewise, the problems presented by rural poverty and poor relief are relevant to broader concerns about the proper limits to social responsibility and the obligations of individuals to provide for themselves and their dependents. The growing desire for independence among the working population also challenged the long-established country culture of paternalistic philanthropy. As the

image of Hodge became an increasingly incredible caricature of the agricultural worker, this journalism repeatedly reminded readers how even the part of society that had seemed most immune to fundamental change was altering, and throwing into doubt a long-cherished conception of England itself.

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<sup>1</sup> *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989; reissued 1999), p. 3 and p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *The Prelude* (1805; London: Oxford University Press, 1960; reprinted 1966), Book vii, l. 601, p. 121.

<sup>3</sup> 'The Scholar Gypsy', in *The Poems of Matthew Arnold 1840–1867* (London: Oxford University Press, 1913), l. 222, p. 236.

<sup>4</sup> 'Sportive Labour: the farmworker in eighteenth-century poetry and painting', in Brian Short (ed.), *The English Rural Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 105–32 (p. 130).

<sup>5</sup> *Visions of England* (London: Bodley Head, 2011), p. 153.

<sup>6</sup> 'Farmers', *Cornhill Magazine* 8, no. 44 (Aug. 1863), 164–71 (p. 164).

<sup>7</sup> Edward Girdlestone, "'Landowners, Land, and Those Who Till It'", *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country* 78, no. 468 (Dec. 1868), 728–47 (p. 728).

<sup>8</sup> Girdlestone summarizes this in "'Landowners, Land, and Those Who Till It'", 741–42.

<sup>9</sup> "'Landowners, Land, and Those Who Till It'", 732.

<sup>10</sup> "'Landowners, Land, and Those Who Till It'", 732.

<sup>11</sup> 'ART. VII. – 1. *Sixth Report of the Commissioners of the Children's Employment Commission*. 1867. – 2. *Seventh Report of the Medical Officer of the Privy Council, with Appendix*. 1864.', *Quarterly Review* 123, no. 245 (July 1867), 173–90 (p. 174).

<sup>12</sup> 'Slavery in England', *All the Year Round, A Weekly Journal Conducted by Charles Dickens, With Which is Incorporated Household Words*, 15 June 1867, 585–89 (p. 589).

<sup>13</sup> "'Landowners, Land, and Those Who Till It'", 732.

<sup>14</sup> "'Landowners, Land, and Those Who Till It'", 735. 'Hodge' is a by-form and abbreviation of 'Roger' and was used as a generic name for the English agricultural labourer from Chaucerian times.

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<sup>15</sup> Girdlestone further illustrates the dehumanizing treatment of labourers with two instances from Norfolk. In one, a tenant farmer allegedly refused his landlord a share of a particular flitch of bacon on the grounds that it “is not good enough for you or me”, but fed it to the labourers with “a lump of bread a week old, and that shuts them up”; in the second, a labourer earning sevenpence per day had a shilling arbitrarily deducted from his wages for missing a day’s work in order to go to a neighbouring town with his vicar and other young people to be confirmed. Girdlestone remarks: ‘On what principle he calculated this deduction, except on that of a farmer being at liberty to do what he pleases with his labourers, it is not easy to see.’ “Landowners, Land, and Those Who Till It”, 732.

<sup>16</sup> ‘ART. VII’, 178, 182, and 183. Similar language is found in the *First and Second Reports of the Commissioners on the Employment of Children, Young Persons and Women in Agriculture* presented to Parliament in 1868–69 that described the living conditions of the rural poor as an affront to a ‘Christian’ and ‘civilised community’, degrading ‘human nature [...] into something below the level of the swine’. See ‘The Agricultural Labourer’, a review article in *Fraser’s Magazine* 1, no. 4 (April 1870), 427–43 (p. 429).

<sup>17</sup> ‘Perquisites’ was the term used to cover benefits in kind such as an allotment or garden, fuel, livestock, and other entitlements by custom.

<sup>18</sup> J.Y. Stratton, ‘The Life of a Farm Labourer’, *Cornhill Magazine* 9, no. 50 (Feb. 1864), 178–86 (p. 178). Like many of the articles discussed here, this one appears unsigned, and attribution comes from Walter E. Houghton, *The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals, 1824–1900*, 3 vols (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1966–79).

<sup>19</sup> ‘The Life of a Farm Labourer’, 178.

<sup>20</sup> ‘The Life of a Farm Labourer’, 179.

<sup>21</sup> ‘The Life of a Farm Labourer’, 183.

<sup>22</sup> ‘The Life of a Farm Labourer’, 184.

<sup>23</sup> “Landowners, Land, and Those Who Till It”, 740.

<sup>24</sup> For example, *Cornhill Magazine* published an article, ‘The Agricultural Labourer’, in two parts totalling 34 pages in February and March, 1873; and in the same year *Fraser’s Magazine* ran a three-part article totalling 48 pages, ‘Peasantry of the South of England’, from May to July. Both periodicals published numerous other substantial single articles in the 1873–76 period.

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- <sup>25</sup> ‘The Agricultural Labourer’, *Cornhill Magazine* 27, no. 158 (Feb. 1873), 215–30 (p. 217).
- <sup>26</sup> ‘Peasantry of the South of England’, *Fraser’s Magazine* 7, no. 41 (May 1873), 542–58 (p. 544). Davies was the vicar of Timsbury.
- <sup>27</sup> ‘Peasantry of the South of England’, 545.
- <sup>28</sup> ‘Peasantry of the South of England’, *Fraser’s Magazine* 8, no. 43 (July 1873), 57–73 (p. 72).
- <sup>29</sup> This is discussed in, for example, Patrick Brantlinger, *Taming Cannibals: Race and the Victorians* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011) and *Rule of Darkness* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990); and is illustrated by items included in Elleke Boehmer (ed.), *Empire Writing: An Anthology of Colonial Literature 1870–1918*, Oxford World’s Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).
- <sup>30</sup> ‘Agricultural Labourers’, *Cornhill Magazine* 29, no. 174 (June 1874), 686–97 (p. 693).
- <sup>31</sup> ‘Agricultural Labourers’, 694.
- <sup>32</sup> The first issue is discussed at some length in Josephine Guy, *The Victorian Social Problem Novel* (London: Macmillan, 1996).
- <sup>33</sup> ‘The Agricultural Labourer’, *Cornhill Magazine* 25, no. 159 (March 1873), 307–23 (p. 317).
- <sup>34</sup> ‘The Agricultural Labourer’, 315.
- <sup>35</sup> ‘The Agricultural Labourer’, 315.
- <sup>36</sup> ‘The Agricultural Labourer’, 316.
- <sup>37</sup> ‘Peasantry of the South of England’, *Fraser’s Magazine* 7, no. 42 (June 1873), 679–92 (p. 689).
- <sup>38</sup> ‘Peasantry of the South of England’, 689.
- <sup>39</sup> See ‘The Farmer At Home’, *Fraser’s Magazine* 10, no. 56 (Aug. 1874), 135–52 (p. 144).
- <sup>40</sup> ‘The Agricultural Strikes’, *Fraser’s Magazine* 10, no. 60 (Dec. 1874), 767–76 (p. 772).
- <sup>41</sup> ‘The Farmer at Home’, 150. In making this argument, Jefferies comes close to a point made earlier by Girdlestone – see pp. 12 above.
- <sup>42</sup> See Richard Jefferies, ‘John Smith’s Shanty’, *Fraser’s Magazine* 9, no. 50 (Feb. 1874), 135–49 (p. 138).
- <sup>43</sup> ‘The Agricultural Strikes’, 767.
- <sup>44</sup> See Richard Jefferies, ‘After the County Franchise’, *Longman’s Magazine* 3, no. 16 (Feb. 1884), 362–75 (p. 364).
- <sup>45</sup> ‘After the Country Franchise’, 365.

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<sup>46</sup> ‘After the Country Franchise’, 365.

<sup>47</sup> ‘After the Country Franchise’, 370.

<sup>48</sup> ‘After the Country Franchise’, 370.

<sup>49</sup> ‘After the Country Franchise’, 370.

<sup>50</sup> Thomas Hardy, ‘The Dorsetshire Labourer’, *Longman’s Magazine* 2, no. 9 (July 1883), 252–69; Richard Jefferies, ‘The Wiltshire Labourer’, *Longman’s Magazine* 3, no. 13 (Nov. 1883), 52–65. Unlike most of the other articles discussed here, these are still familiar to modern readers. Hardy’s piece, in particular, has often been cited in discussion of his fiction, and is discussed at length in Roger Lowman, *Thomas Hardy’s ‘The Dorsetshire Labourer’ and Wessex* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 2005) and Roger Ebbatson, *Hardy: The Margin of the Unexpressed* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993).

<sup>51</sup> ‘The Dorsetshire Labourer’, 252.

<sup>52</sup> ‘The Dorsetshire Labourer’, 252.

<sup>53</sup> ‘The Dorsetshire Labourer’, 253.

<sup>54</sup> ‘The Dorsetshire Labourer’, 254.

<sup>55</sup> ‘Preface to the second edition of several of the foregoing poems published, with an additional volume, under the title of *Lyrical Ballads*’, in *Poetical Works of Wordsworth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1904; new edition, 1936; reset 1950; reprinted 1966), p. 735 and p. 734.

<sup>56</sup> See ‘The Wiltshire Labourer’, 52.

<sup>57</sup> ‘The Dorsetshire Labourer’, 258. The women, he comments, are ‘pictorially less interesting than they used to be’ (259) – a phrase that again places aesthetic disappointment ahead of social analysis.

<sup>58</sup> *Thomas Hardy’s ‘The Dorsetshire Labourer’ and Wessex*, p. 100.

<sup>59</sup> ‘The Dorsetshire Labourer’, 262.

<sup>60</sup> See ‘The Parish and the Universe’, in *Collected Pruse [sic]* (London: Macgibbon & Kee, 1967), p. 282.

<sup>61</sup> ‘The Dorsetshire Labourer’, 262.

<sup>62</sup> ‘The Dorsetshire Labourer’, 262.

<sup>63</sup> ‘The Dorsetshire Labourer’, 262–63.

<sup>64</sup> ‘The Dorsetshire Labourer’, 263.

<sup>65</sup> See John, 10. 13.



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<sup>66</sup> ‘The Wiltshire Labourer’, 55.

<sup>67</sup> ‘The Wiltshire Labourer’, 56.

<sup>68</sup> ‘The Wiltshire Labourer’, 59. On the disruption to rural life, Hardy speaks of rural life becoming increasingly like the ‘sojourning existence of the town masses’, while Jefferies claims that half the country population is ‘nomad’ and that ‘rootlessness permeates the ranks’. See Hardy, ‘The Dorsetshire Labourer’, 263 and Jefferies, ‘The Wiltshire Labourer’, 58 and 57.

<sup>69</sup> ‘The Wiltshire Labourer’, 60.

<sup>70</sup> ‘The Wiltshire Labourer’, 60.

<sup>71</sup> ‘The Wiltshire Labourer’, 63 and 64.

<sup>72</sup> ‘The Wiltshire Labourer’, 64 and 65.

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