



**Ambivalence in Hardy**  
A Study of his Attitude to Women  
Shanta Dutta

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### Description

**Hardy's complex attitude to women is explored through close textual analysis, feminist reading and a biographical approach.**

- Makes extensive use of Hardy's 7-volume published letters, disguised autobiography, literary notebooks, marginalia, manuscript material and the published letters of his two wives.
- Analyses the short stories and 'minor' novels often overlooked in current Hardy scholarship.

Was Thomas Hardy a misogynist or a subscriber to the feminist cause? *Ambivalence in Hardy* explores Hardy's complex and deeply ambivalent attitude to women, both in his fiction and in his life. While his sympathy for wronged and exploited women is forcefully expressed, his writings also reveal his fears, uncertainties, reservations and tensions - the natural inheritance of patriarchal ideology and a predominantly male literary tradition.

The author analyses one 'minor' and one 'major' text from each of the three decades of Hardy's career as a prose fiction writer. The 1870s are represented by *The Hand of Ethelberta* and *The Return of the Native*, the 1880s by *Two on a Tower* and *The Woodlanders*, and the 1890s by Hardy's short stories and *Jude the Obscure*. Generous references to Hardy's letters, disguised autobiography, literary notebooks, marginalia and the letters of his two wives seek to blend a biographical approach with a feminist reading. Parallelisms between Hardy's fiction and that of contemporary feminist writers are explored, suggesting mutual literary influence. His relations with women writers - particularly his protégées and 'scribbling' wives - are discussed in unprecedented detail. *Ambivalence in Hardy* significantly contributes to and challenges the field of Hardy studies.

**Readership:** This study will be useful to Hardy specialists and students of English literature at undergraduate, postgraduate and advanced research levels.

### Contents

Preface; Chapter 1: Introduction: The Critics' Debate; Chapter 2: 'The Hand of Ethelberta'; Chapter 3: 'The Return of the Native'; Chapter 4: 'Two on a Tower'; Chapter 5: 'The Woodlanders'; Chapter 6: The Short Stories of the 1890s; Chapter 7: 'Jude the Obscure'; Chapter 8: Hardy, his Wives and his Literary Protégées; Chapter 9: Hardy and Some Contemporary Female Writers; Chapter 10: Conclusion: 'A Confused Heap of Impressions'; Select Bibliography; Index

### About the Author

Shanta Dutta is Professor in the Department of English at Jadavpur University in Kolkata, India. She is Vice-President of the Thomas Hardy Association and a member of the Thomas Hardy Society.

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