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Romance, Revolution & Reform

Rivalry, Chess and Duality in Thomas Hardy's 'An Indiscretion in the Life of an Heiress' (1868) and *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873)

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WRITING ON THE subject of a 'Liberal Education' in *Macmillan's Magazine* in 1868, Thomas Henry Huxley stated:

> It is a very plain and elementary truth that the life the fortune and the happiness of every one of us depend upon our knowing something of the rules of a game infinitely more difficult and complicated than chess [...] The chess-board is the world, the pieces are the phenomena of the universe, the rules of the game are what we call the laws of Nature. The player on the other side is hidden from us.[1]

Referring to the painting known as *Checkmate* (1831) by Friedrich Moritz August Retzsch, which depicts a man playing Satan at chess, Huxley imagined replacing the man with an angel to be 'an image of human life'.[2] Education, he wrote, meant learning the rules of this game, including 'the instruction of the intellect in the laws of Nature [...] things and their forces [...] men and their ways.'[3] In *The Hand of Ethelberta* (1876), a story about a woman's hand in marriage, and the strategy that she employs to secure a future for herself, Hardy directly recalls Huxley's quote, adding to it a characteristic sense of indifference:

> That life itself could be imagined as a game which could only be concluded, or lost, through death. Life is a battle, they say; but it is only so in the sense that a game of chess is a battle—there is no seriousness in it; it may be put an end to

[1] Thomas H. Huxley, 'A Liberal Education and where to find it' in *The Major Prose of Thomas Henry Huxley*, ed. by Alan P. Barr (University of Georgia Press, 1997), p. 209.

[2] Ibid., p. 209.

[3] Ibid., p. 209.

> at any inconvenient moment by owning yourself beaten, with a careless "Ha-ha!" and sweeping your pieces into the box. [4]

While Hardy's debt to Huxley has long been recognised by critics and by Hardy himself, focused studies of the role of strategic play in the narrative development of Hardy's fiction are few in number.[5] Scenes of contest in Hardy's fiction elicit important questions concerning duality, rivalry, and gendered concepts of power and rule, typically flavoured by Hardy's ambivalence. As Christian articulates in *The Return of the Native* (1878), 'What curious creatures these dice be—powerful rulers of us all, and yet at my command!'[6] Yet the world in which Hardy's characters move is one that they have to learn how to negotiate. To those who play well, according to Huxley's theory, 'the highest stakes are paid', and those who play 'ill' are checkmated 'without remorse.'[7]

With the ultimate aim of chess being to checkmate the opponent's king, and metaphorically capture the enemy, the game has long borne military symbolism. According to tradition, when chess reached Persia from India in the sixth century, the game represented a battlefield with units including foot soldiers, elephants, and other army units, including chariots and horses, with the action using tactics which could be reproduced in war. In the late nineteenth century, the nature of warfare changed rapidly in response to the mass production of rifles and artillery, alongside machine guns, which anticipated the trench warfare of the First World War. Larger, better-equipped armies essentially displaced the role of mass infantry attacks, and the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871), for example, involved two armies of 400,000 and 1 million respectively. The Franco-Prussian War was contemporaneous with Hardy's writing of *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, serialised between 1872-3, and the conflict was given coverage in periodicals Hardy

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[4] Frank Pinion also notes the double meaning of the title of this novel, which could refer to a hand of cards that the heroine 'finds it incumbent on her to play'. As Mountclere's brother articulates in the novel, Ethelberta is 'a clever young woman' who has 'played her cards adroitly'. Frank B. Pinion, *Thomas Hardy: Art and Thought* (Palgrave Macmillan, 1977), p. 56. Thomas Hardy, *The Hand of Ethelberta*, ed. by Robert Gittings (Macmillan, 1986), p. 128.

[5] See, for example, Carl J. Weber, *Hardy of Wessex: His Life and Literary Career*, rev. ed. (Columbia University Press, 1940; rev. edn 1965), pp. 246-7.

[6] Thomas Hardy, *The Return of the Native*, Norton Critical Edition 2nd edn., ed. by Phillip Mallett (W.W. Norton, 2006), p. 262.

[7] Huxley, 'A Liberal Education', p. 209.

read and wrote for.[8] As perhaps suggested by the war themes of Hardy's poetry and his novel *The Trumpet-Major*, Michael Millgate posits that it was the Napoleonic period that predominantly stirred Hardy's imagination.[9] Yet as I suggest in this article, the subtle presence of the military imagination in Hardy's earlier works, detectable through his choice of imagery and language, is given enhanced visibility when considered through the lens of chess. In his characterisation of Elfride, in particular, who 'like the French soldiery […] was not brave when on the defensive', Hardy employs military allusions not only to sustain the attention of a reading public but to challenge gender expectations.[10]

Although the last pitched battle in Britain took place in 1746, the idea of fairly small rival armies meeting on a pre-arranged field of battle remained an enduring influence in the Victorian cultural imagination, thus reaffirming the long association between chess and battle.[11] In 1852, the professional chess player Howard Staunton invoked this tradition by observing that the main reason for the 'scientific beauty and intellectual interest' of chess lies in 'its representative influence, by which it reflects the real strategy of hostile armies'.[12] Military and associated tactical terminology had infiltrated Western literature, including works of fiction, through some of its most foundational works.[13] Next to the Bible, Hardy most frequently quoted from and alluded

[8] Although Britain remained neutral during the conflict, many organisations were formed to provide medical assistance both France and Germany, including £300,000 of donations from the British public for medical services. The conflict was covered by Chambers's Journal, in which Hardy published his first article in 1865. In the Crimean War, in the mid-1850s, when Hardy was a teenager, Russia was defeated by an alliance of Britain, France, the Ottoman Empire, and Sardinia.

[9] Michael Millgate, *A Biography Revisited* (Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 4.

[10] Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, ed. by Pamela Dalziel (Penguin, 1998), p. 184.

[11] A tradition in the Shahanam of Firdausi and Chatrang Namak records chess to have originated in India, from where it reached Persia during the reign of Khusrau Nushirwarn in the sixth century. See C. Panduranga Bhatta, 'Indian Origins of Chess: an Overview', *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, 84 (2003), pp. 23-32 (p. 26) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41694747> (accessed 28 April 2025).

[12] Howard Staunton, *The Chess Tournament: A Collection of the Games Playe*d (Henry G. Bohn, 1852), p. xiii.

[13] See, for example, military terminology in the works of Shakespeare, in Charles Edelman, *Shakespeare's Military Language: A Dictionary* (Bloomsbury, 2004), and Rebecca Welshman 'Rivers and Contested Territories in the Works of Shakespeare', in *Reading the River in Shakespeare's Britain*, ed. by Bill Angus and Lisa Hopkins (Edinburgh University Press, 2024), pp. 61-82.

to the works of Shakespeare, with *A Pair of Blue Eyes* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891) containing the most Shakespearean allusions.[14] With this association between the tactical and creative psyche in mind, this article explores the latent presence of military terminology in Hardy's 'An Indiscretion in the Life of an Heiress' (1868) and *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873) where characters must contend with the 'laws of Nature' and 'contrasting positions which could not be reconciled 'if they are to survive.[15] Although 'ILH' was not published until 1878, when it appeared in the *New Quarterly Magazine*, and remained uncollected in Hardy's lifetime, the text is known to have derived from his unpublished early novel *The Poor Man and the Lady*, written between 1867 and 1868. We might thus expect to find textual connections with *PBE*, first serialised in 1872, particularly in light of the works' shared focus on the turbulent course of romantic relationships and the restrictions imposed upon them by their gender and class.

The approach to these writings throughout this article reflects their autobiographical nature, with reference in particular to Hardy's four-year courtship of his first wife, Emma Gifford. In March 1870, while working as an architect's clerk, Hardy went to stay in St. Juliot, north Cornwall, to restore the parish church. While lodging at the vicarage, home of Reverend Caddell Holder, he met and befriended Caddell Holder's sister-in-law, Emma. Scholars generally agree that *PBE* incorporates a substantial amount of autobiographical detail and that the character of Elfride was largely modelled on Emma Gifford.[16] *PBE* was written during a formative time, when Hardy was deciding whether to fully commit to a career as a novelist, while also turning over the possibility of spending the rest of his life with Emma. While chess in *PBE* has been the subject of previous studies, notably those by Mary Rimmer and Glen R. Downey, little attention has been paid to the wider role of tactical game-play in the novel, consonant with the necessity of working with the 'hand' one is given.[17]

[14] Author unknown, 'The Shakespeare Association Bulletin', *13* (Shakespeare Association of America, 1938), pp. 87, 91

[15] Thomas Hardy, 'An Indiscretion in the Life of an Heiress', in *An Indiscretion in the Life of an Heiress and Other Stories*, ed. by Pamela Dalziel (Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 43-113 (p. 71).
Hereafter *A Pair of Blue Eyes* will be cited as PBE and 'An Indiscretion in the Life of an Heiress' as 'ILH'.

[16] See Michael Millgate, *A Biography Revisited*, p. 186.

[17] See Mary Rimmer, 'Club Laws: Chess and the Construction of Gender in A Pair of Blue Eyes', in *The Sense of Sex: Feminist Perspectives on Hardy*, ed. by Margaret R. Higonnet (University of Illinois Press,

Furthermore, neither study alludes to Thomas Huxley, whose ideas underpin the conceptual framework of the novel. In addition to considering Hardy's evocation of landscapes as theatres of conflict in domestic and urban spaces, this article explores his use of a black and white colour scheme in some of the best-known dramatic scenes in *PBE* – when the stakes for the characters are highest – to illustrate how his game world extends far beyond the chessboard or card table.

In 'ILH', the protagonist Egbert Mayne, in a quest to elevate himself from the position of village schoolmaster to acclaimed author, begins to consider art, literature and science as 'machinery' and 'factors in the game of sink or swim'.[18] When he falls in love with the daughter of a local squire, his actions in life become moves with 'life or death' consequences, reminiscent of the stakes involved in a game or military manoeuvre. As noted by Roger Ebbatson, Egbert's approach to the obstacle of class division between himself and Geraldine is 'combative', and their relationship is further 'complicated' by the contradiction between his 'male assertiveness' and her 'female receptivity'.[19] When walking along Piccadilly, 'absent-minded and unobservant', he sees his estranged lover, Geraldine, approaching and must decide what to do: 'Egbert felt almost as if he had been going into battle; and whether he should stand forth visibly before her or keep in the background seemed a question of life or death.'[20] Egbert's decision to remain inconspicuous at that moment is part of his strategy to postpone his meeting with Geraldine until a more opportune circumstance presents itself. When he secures a seat at a performance of the Messiah, near to where she sits, he is 'astonished that for once in his life he had made a lucky hit'.[21] Yet it is not until he is stirred by the music – '"Why do the nations so furiously rage together" [which] changed

1993), pp. 203-20, and Glen R. Downey, 'Chess and Social Game Playing in A Pair of Blue Eyes', *The Hardy Review*, 6 (Winter 2003), pp. 105-146.

[18] 'ILH', p. 80.

[19] Roger Ebbatson, 'An Indiscretion in the Life of an Heiress', in *Hardy: The Margin of the Unexpressed* (Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), pp. 111-127 (p. 113).

[20] 'ILH', p. 83. The phrase 'stand forth' had religious and military connotations, being found in the Bible and in poetry of war. In his discussion of the nature of courage required in the military, Samuel Johnson once commented: 'the character of a soldier is high. They who stand forth the foremost in danger, for the community, have the respect of mankind.' Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson*, ed. by George Birkbeck, 6 vols. No. 3 (Clarendon, 1887), p. 9.

[21] 'ILH', p. 85.

him to its spirit' – that he reveals his presence.[22] With this 'new impulse' of 'determination', he decides to speak to her immediately rather than wait until the following morning.[23] Geraldine is quick to read the situation, and upon seeing him 'with the peculiar quickness of grasp that she always showed under sudden circumstances, she realised the position at a glance'.[24] A red cord that separates Egbert's seats 'from stalls of a somewhat superior kind,' represents the class boundary between the couple which they attempt to subvert by holding hands beneath it.[25] Possibly recalling Hardy's own experience of rejection by Emma Gifford's father, Egbert reflects that 'should every member of her family be against him he would win her in spite of them'.[26]

After Geraldine writes to Egbert, however, to change her mind about meeting, and he discovers that she has become engaged to Lord Bretton, he is unsure how to feel. Alone in London, as if wandering in an unfamiliar landscape, detached from his former course, 'he knew not what point to take hold of and survey from'.[27] Unaccustomed to 'retreat' because his 'appetite for advance' had waned, Egbert returns to his 'native' land, where a chance encounter with Geraldine in the country church where she is to be married prompts further ruminations of his own hopes to marry her.[28] Here, the characters' memories themselves come under attack from the combination of circumstance and social difference that has previously thwarted their relationship – Geraldine's own 'stood their ground only half so obstinately as his own'.[29] That night, in a 'fitful sleep', plagued by images reminiscent of a wargame, Egbert 'dreamed of fighting, wading, diving, boring, through innumerable multitudes'.[30] Although Egbert and Geraldine marry just in time to avoid her entrapment in the loveless marriage planned for her, the strain of going against her father's wishes and the expectations of society proves too much and triggers a health complaint that ends in her demise.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid., p. 90.

[28] Ibid., pp. 93, 92.

[29] Ibid., p. 100.

[30] Ibid.

In *PBE*, published in serial form in *Tinsley's Magazine* from 1872-3, an early phrase offers an initial profile of the heroine that continues to resonate and becomes significant throughout the story: 'Elfride Swancourt was a girl whose emotions lay very near the surface.'[31] With no 'mask' and little capacity to conceal her emotions, we are thus immediately made aware of Elfride's disadvantage in the world of game-play, where it is prudent not to let your opponent read your face for signs of intention or allow them to notice any particular emotion concerning the outcome of a move or turn.[32] This absence of 'neutrality of countenance' – colloquially known in card-playing as a 'Poker face' – comes to the fore in the early scenes of the novel when Elfride challenges her two suitors, Stephen Smith and Henry Knight, to games of chess.[33] In contrast to the older, more experienced Knight, who is indifferent to the outcome, Elfride is 'bold' and shows every emotion as she feels it.[34] Unlike her 'placid' opponent, Elfride 'flushes', 'shades her face with her hand', then 'literally trembles now lest an artful surprise she has in store for him shall be anticipated by the artful surprise he evidently has in store for her.'[35] When Knight makes a surprising checkmate, 'the victory is won', and Elfride, unable to conceal her disappointment and indignation, retreats to her bedroom where she is found restlessly asleep 'full-dressed on the bed, her face hot and red, her arms thrown abroad', 'indistinctly moan[ing] words used in the game of chess.'[36]

As Mary Rimmer has noted in her study of chess in *PBE*, the Queen, as the powerful piece it is recognised as today, only became a feature of the chessboard during the medieval period when it transitioned from the Arab *firz* (meaning counsellor).[37] To chess players of the time, this 'mad queen' careering around the board

[31] *PBE*, p. 7.

[32] See Knight's 'mask' in *PBE*, p. 361.

[33] Ibid., p. 246.

[34] Ibid., p. 172.

[35] Ibid. The phrase 'artful surprise' was often used in histories of military campaigns. Notably, the famous English defeat of Robert the Bruce at the Battle of Methven in the Scottish borders by Aymer de Valence, Earl of Pembroke, was achieved by a cunning dusk ambush of Bruce and his army. See George Ridpath and Philip Ridpath, *The Border History of England and Scotland* (P. Wright, 1810), who write of the 'artful surprise at Methven' (p. 228).

[36] See Ibid., pp. 168-173.

[37] Mary Rimmer, 'Club Laws', p. 208.

brought chaos to an otherwise orderly arrangement.[38] Following Peter J. Casagrande, Rimmer aligns Elfride with the lawless and 'capricious Nature' depicted in the novel that displays a 'feline fun in her tricks'.[39] Rimmer develops this idea by drawing a parallel with the 'mobile, threatening queen' in the 'new chess' of the Middle Ages, who 'subtly threatens to rage through or madden everything around her,' bringing lawlessness into Knight's ordered celibate world.[40] While we might align the games of chess between Elfride and her suitors with the act of courtship, whereby the capture of the elusive, mobile queen could be seen as an alluring challenge, Hardy's depiction of Elfride as a Queen is complicated by the fact that Elfride cannot help being drawn to both men. Although society labels her fickle, each suitor engages different aspects of her personality and meets, or indeed fails to meet, her needs in different ways. As a Queen, Elfride represents the only piece on the board afforded dual movement, whereby both files – diagonal and horizontal – are open to her. Yet by the rules of chess, all pieces exist in duplicate except for the King and Queen, thus rendering Elfride's unintentional design to capture two Kings illogical and essentially impossible.

When Elfride impulsively runs around the narrow edge of the church tower and slips, Knight rushes to her rescue. Reprimanded and carried from the tower, she feels 'like a colt in a halter for the first time', whereby her new involvement with Knight symbolises her submission to her trainer or master and the end of her youthful freedom and wildness.[41] When Elfride promises Knight never to repeat the act, despite the imminent demolition of the Tower, she says, 'you are familiar of course, as everybody is, with those strange sensations we sometimes have, that our life for the moment exists in duplicate'.[42] The loss of the Tower is foreshadowed during the evening chess tournament when Knight's rook (or 'Castle') becomes the first piece he loses.[43] Yet despite being given an advantage, Elfride temporarily overlooks the duplicate nature of the chess pieces. When she gains Knight's rook, she then mistakenly places her queen on the file of his other rook, as if forgetting for a moment that there were two:

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid.

[41] *PBE*, p. 167.

[42] Ibid., p. 166.

[43] Ibid., p. 168.

> "There—how stupid! Upon my word, I did not see your rook. Of course nobody but a fool would have put a queen there knowingly!"
> She spoke excitedly, half expecting her antagonist to give her back the move.
> "Nobody, of course," said Knight serenely, and stretched out his hand towards his royal victim.[44]

Here, Knight becomes the 'antagonist', and 'enemy' for abiding by the 'Club Laws' that Elfride had previously insisted upon, despite her protest that she 'cannot endure those cold-blooded ways of clubs and professional players, like Staunton and Morphy.'[45] This duplicate courtship game echoes 'a similar performance with Stephen Smith the year before' where it was Elfride who had the upper hand over the amateurish architect.[46] When asked who taught him to play, Stephen replies that he 'learnt from a book lent me by my friend Mr. Knight, the noblest man in the world'. [47] The book Hardy refers to is most likely *The Chess Player's Handbook*, written by Howard Staunton and published in 1870, a copy of which Hardy owned and annotated.[48]

It is interesting to note, however, that Elfride readily adopts a playful and exuberant approach to the idea of the game as a 'contest' by first reminding Knight that vanity was a virtue for Nelson in battle, and then by quoting from *Richard II*:

> "Oh yes, in battle! Nelson's bravery lay in his vanity."
> "Indeed! Then so did his death."
> Oh no, no! For it is written in the book of the prophet Shakespeare—
> 'Fear and be slain? no worse can come to fight;
> And fight and die, is death destroying death!"[49]

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[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid., p.169.

[46] Ibid., p. 167

[47] Ibid., p. 51. See also Elfride and Knight's expedition to a cliff, which is 'a duplicate of her original arrangement with Stephen', *PBE*, p. 308.

[48] See Michael Millgate, 'Thomas Hardy's Library at Max Gate: Catalogue of an Attempted Reconstruction': www.library.utoronto.ca/fisher/hardy (accessed 28 April 2025).

[49] *PBE*, p. 171.

That Hardy intended the library where they sit to play as an arena or battlefield is suggested by his description of the bookcase as a 'summit', thus implying that the contest takes place on the lower slopes or flatter area beneath.[50] In her reading of Staunton, Rimmer concludes that by the late nineteenth century, chess was generally devoid of military symbolism due to its status as a recreational middle-class game, and that in his recommendation for chess to 'strengthen the mind of the professional man', Staunton promoted the rational element of the game.[51] From this perspective, Rimmer suggests, 'chess banished not only any vulnerability to chance but also any acknowledgement of its own military symbolism'.[52] With this reading in mind, we might assume Elfride's ready investment of the game with competitive and hostile energy to be misplaced; an incongruous display that has no place in the demure world of chess. Yet although Staunton was largely responsible for modernising chess, he continued to promote the military symbolism of the game, and it is unlikely that such a simple distinction between military symbolism and chess as an intellectual activity can be made.[53] While nineteenth-century society may have elevated chess to a 'scientific game' and intellectual pastime, the players' decisions were still shaped by their characters, feelings, and the nature of the situation, much as in any sporting or military activity.[54] Hardy makes this clear when Knight, despite his rational style of play, nevertheless blunders his rook. Furthermore, such a simplified reading overlooks the longstanding close association between the nobility and the military. Despite warfare becoming increasingly distant from daily life, the idea of 'blue blood' in the veins, which Parson Swancourt so admires, continued to be stirred by ideas of chivalry and the male inheritance of coats of arms.[55] In many respects, the charm and bravado of those former days continued its hold over the nineteenth-century mind, even if, as Hardy recognised, it was 'adrift on change'.[56] Battles were frequently overseas, far removed from the civil wars in English fields, which by proximity directly engaged the public. Yet the legacy of

[50] Ibid.

[51] Rimmer, 'Club Laws', p. 206.

[52] Ibid.

[53] See footnote 13.

[54] *PBE*, p. 167.

[55] Ibid., p. 20.

[56] *The Return of the Native*, p. 11.

power amongst landowners and associated snobbery towards non-landowners still prevailed.

While Stephen, not conversant with the etiquette of chess, has 'a very odd way of handling the pieces when castling or taking a man', his refashioning of the rural church tower under the direction of Mr Hewby, 'the London man of art,' represents the intervention of modern methods: the 'newest style of Gothic art'.[57] Knight sits on the site of the fallen tower, reflecting that 'the concatenation of circumstance originated by Stephen Smith [...] had brought about its overthrow.'[58] Thus in contrast to the folly raised in honour of the General by the 'hard featured' Squire Allenville in 'ILH', the demolition of the square Norman tower of Endelstow and its replacement by a more modern design in the Gothic style, represents the remodelling of traditional patriarchal values dating back to the Norman conquest, and the associated possibilities of new forms of masculinity.[59] Unlike the bearded Knight, 'docile' Stephen with his wispy facial hair and quiet manner symbolises a less oppressive type of masculinity that does not intimidate Elfride.[60]

The scene in which Elfride traverses the narrow parapet of the church tower again alludes to the gameplay involved in her courtship with Henry Knight. This 'giddy feat' that she had 'performed' before nearly ends in disaster when she trips on a tuft of grass and falls inwards onto the roof rather than outwards to her almost certain death.[61] Yet it is the 'slight perturbation' caused by Knight's criticism that unsteadies her, and following his denouncement of her as a 'fool', with an expression of 'stern anger', she is 'over-powered' by him and faints in his arms.[62] When she opens her eyes once more, she 'remembered the position instantly', as one might remember the arrangement of the pieces on a chessboard after a break from the game.[63] The crumbling square Norman tower and its association with oppressive patriarchal values are clearly

[57] *PBE*, pp. 51, 314.

[58] Ibid., p. 323.

[59] 'ILH', p. 70.

[60] *PBE*, p. 64.

[61] Ibid., p. 163.

[62] Ibid., pp. 163-5.

[63] Ibid., pp. 164-5.

dangerous to her.[64] Yet Elfride is so conditioned by the traditional values of her father and the pressure he puts upon her to choose a relationship that will elevate the social standing of the family, that she believes she must win the heart of a man who intimidates and criticises her and to reject Stephen who treats her more kindly, but is younger, more effeminate, and the son of a mason.[65]

Stephen's refashioning of the tower specifically echoes Hardy's intimate knowledge of the role of British architects in developing Indian architecture during the mid-nineteenth century. Hardy's London employer, Thomas Roger Smith, fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects and Professor of Architecture at University College London, designed the British hospital in Bombay, now Mumbai. The aspirational Stephen, the young clerk modelled on Hardy himself, is sent to India by his employer, Mr Hewby, during the course of the novel, to prepare drawings for work done by engineers. It was during what the narrator terms the 'exceptional heyday of prosperity which shone over Bombay some few years ago, that [Stephen] arrived on the scene.'[66] This diversion proves to be an essential plot point that affords the necessary time and space for the relationship between Knight and Elfride to develop. If characters themselves are to be considered symbolic pieces in the game-world of the novel, then Stephen, with his association with India as the cradle of chess, and his role in remodelling the church tower, most resembles the piece known as the castle or rook – the friendship that Knight accidentally sacrifices through his simultaneous courtship of Elfride.

For a profile of the Knight, we can turn to *The Chess-Player's Handbook*, where Staunton writes:

> The action of the Knight is peculiar, and not easy to describe. He is the only one of the pieces which has the privilege of leaping over another man. The

[64] Norman architecture is known for its massive pillars, with early Norman buildings resembling fortresses with impenetrable castle keeps. The Romanesque style of the eleventh and twelfth centuries tended to be dark and inaccessible, whereas the medieval Gothic featured stained-glass windows with lighter, airier interiors.

[65] The parapet scene may also recall 'King of the Castle', a well-known children's game in which the first person to get on the hill (symbolic of a castle) at the start of the game becomes the king. Other players then try to remove the king from the hill in order to take their position.

[66] *PBE*, p. 137.

> movements of the others are all dependent on their freedom from obstruction by their own and the enemy's men.[67]

While Knight jumps over Stephen to supplant his position as Elfride's suitor, nothing initially stands in his way except the 'hidden' player of nature herself, and his own 'neurosis' of needing to be Elfride's first love.[68] Although the character of Henry Knight is thought to have been modelled on Hardy's close friend Horace Moule, further insight into the characterisation of Knight can be found through a closer study of a particular book belonging to Parson Swancourt, titled *A Genealogical and Heraldic Dictionary of the Landed Gentry of Great Britain and Ireland*, issued by Sir John Bernard Burke. While some scholars have previously noted the title, little attention has been paid to the connections between the text of the book and Hardy's casting of his male characters.[69] While Downey draws a lengthy comparison between Parson Swancourt's reliance on books and Prospero in *The Tempest*, he overlooks passages in Burke's peerage that seem to directly relate to Hardy's characterisation.

Whether or not Hardy had Burke's peerage dictionary at his disposal in Caddell Holder's library in Cornwall, or read it elsewhere, its formative influence on the novel is notable. The opening pages tell the story of Gerald 'the White Knight', and the marriage of 'the Black Knight of Lorn', immediately connecting the history of the landed gentry with the game-world of chess.[70] Of further interest are the presence of the names Stephen Smith and Henry Knight, the names of Hardy's male protagonists and Elfride's suitors in *PBE*.[71] Burke's peerage accounts how Henry Knight was the cousin of Anthony Gregson and assumed the rather unusual position of being the sole inheritor of the

[67] Howard Staunton, *The Chess-Player's Handbook* (Bell and Daldy, 1866), p. 5.

[68] Geoffrey Harvey, *The Complete Critical Guide to Thomas Hardy* (Taylor and Francis, 2003), p. 96.

[69] See, for example, Andrew Radford, *Thomas Hardy and the Survivals of Time* (Routledge, 2016).

[70] Bernard Burke, *A Genealogical and Heraldic Dictionary of the Landed Gentry of Great Britain and Ireland* (Harrison, 1862), p. 3, p. xv.

[71] See Burke, *A Genealogical and Heraldic Dictionary*, p. 594 under 'Greaves', where Sophia marries Stephen Smith Esquire, and footnote 12. Henry Knight became Henry Knight Gregson.

Gregson estates after Anthony died unmarried, despite not being a Gregson by name.[72] We might note the similarities with the casting of Knight in *PBE* as Mrs Swancourt's cousin, who is brought into the story through a chance encounter in London: "Why, Henry Knight—of course it is! My—second—third—fourth cousin—what shall I say? At any rate, my kinsman."[73]

The real Henry Knight became High Sheriff of Northumberland in 1870, the year Hardy embarked on his journey to remote Cornwall that would shape the course of his life from that point on. Burke's book gives details of the Gregson arms, which includes a 'chequy' – a field or charge divided into squares of two colours, akin to a checkerboard – while the crest – the three-dimensional object placed on top of the helm – features an arm holding a battle-axe.[74] While the presence of a chequy and weaponry on a heraldic shield may not be unusual in itself, it is likely that this particular coat of arms and crest, which belonged to the Knight Gregsons, influenced Hardy's decision to cast cousin Henry Knight as a chess-playing man of letters whose lineage and London connections appease the socially-aspirant Parson Swancourt. Lastly, that 'Stephen Smith' only appears once in Burke's peerage – just a few pages from the noted Henry Knight, and features under the same section 'Gre', for the surnames Greaves and Gregson respectively – suggests that Hardy may have indeed glimpsed these names and associated stories while thumbing through the publication during one of his stays in Cornwall. Hardy's likely use of the book in this way lends further support to the idea that gameplay in the novel is closely aligned with social standing, as put forward by Glen R. Downey.

The role Elfride feels most naturally equipped to play in the novel is that of ruler, or Queen – an idea borne out by a flirtatious interaction when Stephen attempts to kiss her hand:

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[72] As a condition of the inheritance, Knight assumed the name Gregson. 'Anthony Gregson, Esq. of Lowlynn, high sheriff of Northumberland 1825, who dying unm. 23 NOV 1833, devised his estate to his cousin, HENRY KNIGHT, Esq., eldest son of the Rev. Henry Knight, rector of Ford, in Northumberland.' (Ibid., p. 603). Henry Knight's father the Reverend Thomas, died in the spring of 1872 after 53 years as the rector of Ford, at the time Hardy was writing *PBE*, and his death was widely reported in the periodical press.

[73] *PBE*, p. 146.

[74] Burke, *A Genealogical and Heraldic Dictionary*, p. 603.

> "You know I think more of you than I can tell; that you are my queen. I would die for you, Elfride!"
>
> A rapid red again filled her cheeks, and she looked at him meditatively. What a proud moment it was for Elfride then! She was ruling a heart with absolute despotism for the first time in her life.
>
> Stephen stealthily pounced upon her hand.
>
> "No; I won't, I won't!" she said intractably; "and you shouldn't take me by surprise."
>
> There ensued a mild form of tussle for absolute possession of the much-coveted hand, in which the boisterousness of boy and girl was far more prominent than the dignity of man and woman.[75]

Here the 'much-coveted hand' becomes the object under dispute, and the tactic used to take possession of it – a stealthy 'pounce', which 'takes [her] by surprise' leads to a 'mild tussle': a playful dispute characterised by 'boisterousness' between 'boy and girl' rather than the 'dignity' expected of 'man and woman'.[76] The sense of youth and the natural inclination to play is not yet ready to conform to the expectations of Victorian society, and their playfulness is brought to an abrupt end by entrenched notions of social convention in the form of Elfride's sharp reprimands of 'You shouldn't', 'and 'ought not to have allowed such a romp! We are too old now for that sort of thing.'[77]

A prototype for this scene can be found in 'ILH', when Egbert tells Geraldine: 'I think more of you than of anybody in the whole world', and asks, 'let me always keep you in my heart, and almost worship you?'[78] A few lines later, Egbert and Geraldine's relationship is described as 'a battle' and 'a truce':

> Up to this day of its existence their affection had been a battle, a species of antagonism wherein his heart and the girl's had faced each other, and been anxious to do honour to their respective parts. But now it was a truce and a

[75] *PBE*, pp. 58-9.

[76] Ibid., p. 59.

[77] Ibid., pp. 59.

[78] 'ILH', p. 68.

> settlement, in which each one took up the other's utmost weakness, and was careless of concealing his and her own.[79]

A further parallel can be found at the start of the following chapter when, in contrast to the demolition of the tower in *PBE*, Egbert and Geraldine play an active part in laying the foundation stone for a 'tower or beacon' to be raised in memory of Geraldine's uncle, a General.[80] However, unlike the aristocratic Geraldine, who flounders at the sight of a muddy trowel, Elfride's qualities, including her preference to ride her pony out alone and for spontaneous 'scamper[s]' along the cliffs, are deliberately inconsistent with the stereotype of a young lady of Victorian society, and have been noted by Thomas to 'violate the norms of conventional femininity'.[81] These qualities are detectable in Stephen's early observations of Elfride at the beginning of their courtship. From his window overlooking the garden – which becomes another form of arena or battleground – he catches sight of her, in a 'carefully timed' game of catch with her pet rabbit, who 'darted and dodged' her 'strategic' attempts to 'capture' it.[82] Hardy writes:

> Ah, there she was! On the lawn in a plain dress, without hat or bonnet, running with a boy's velocity, superadded to a girl's lightness, after a tame rabbit she was endeavouring to capture, her strategic intonations of coaxing words alternating with desperate rushes so much out of keeping with them, that the hollowness of such expressions was but too evident to her pet, who darted and dodged in carefully timed counterpart.[83]

Here, Elfride is characterised with a 'boy's velocity' combined with a 'girl's lightness', and without the head covering that would usually be considered a sign of modesty and adherence to social convention. Elsewhere, Elfride occupies the ambivalent position of being endowed with masculine qualities yet expected by those around her to live as a

[79] Ibid.

[80] A notable Dorset folly or tower is the Hardy monument on Black Down near Portesham, erected in 1844 in memory of Vice Admiral Sir Thomas Hardy, flag captain for Admiral Lord Nelson at the battle of Trafalgar.

[81] *PBE*, p. 58. Jane Thomas, *Thomas Hardy. Feminism and Dissent* (Macmillan, 1993), p. 72.

[82] Ibid., p. 25.

[83] Ibid.

woman of society. In his characterisation of Elfride, Hardy does not follow a conventional pattern of gendered character traits, but rather a curious and inconsistent mix whereby her presence is 'no more pervasive than that of a kitten', or a 'butterfly', yet at others is surprisingly imbued with tastes and actions befitting a competitive man.[84] She is, for example, aligned with the male perspective of a military commander – 'Oh yes, in battle. Nelson's bravery lay in his vanity' – as well as Rhadamanthus, the wise king of Greek mythology, while in her appetite for combat, she is criticised by her father for being a 'slave to the game' of chess.[85]

These incongruous aspects of Elfride's character chime with Linda M. Shires's observation that Hardy's novels 'award and deny power of differing kinds to both sexes unpredictably': a reflection of his belief in 'power as shifting, as attained and lost by multiple negotiations that cross gender, age, and class'.[86] Furthermore, the fluidity suggested by Stephen's appearance – his 'pretty' face and 'delicate' cheeks – so much in contrast to how Elfride expected him to look, reminds us of the instability of gender stereotypes and the fluidity of the Queen's historic transition from the advisor:

> His complexion was as fine as Elfride's own; the pink of his cheeks as delicate. His mouth as perfect as Cupid's bow in form, and as cherry-red in colour as hers. Bright curly hair; bright sparkling blue-gray eyes; a boy's blush and manner; neither whisker nor moustache, unless a little light-brown fur on his upper lip deserved the latter title.[87]

The correlation between the facial features of Stephen and Elfride echoes Shires's identification of Hardy's representation of gender in *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874) as 'subtle, mobile, and heterogeneous'.[88] That Hardy deliberately imbues Stephen with a mouth 'as perfect as Cupid's bow', offers an overtly feminine image designed to challenge the stereotypes inherent in his reading public, particularly as he

[84] Ibid., pp. 8, 28.

[85] Ibid., p. 170.

[86] Linda M. Shires, 'Narrative, Gender, and Power in Far from the Madding Crowd', in *The Sense of Sex: Feminist Perspectives on Hardy*, ed. by Margaret R. Higonnet (University of Illinois Press, 1993), pp. 49-65 (p. 51).

[87] *PBE*, p. 16.

[88] Ibid.

uses the image again later in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, where Tess has 'deep red lips like Cupid's bow'.[89] While Hardy may be invoking Freud's theory that masculine and feminine 'currents' exist within everyone, we might also note that at the time Hardy was writing, the standardisation of chess pieces was a fairly recent occurrence.[90] Modelled on designs by Nathaniel Cooke and endorsed by Howard Staunton in the mid-nineteenth century, the 'Staunton style' became the universally accepted set and is still in use today.[91] Although this standardisation precluded any further transitioning of the pieces, it could not reverse the entrenched rule that had already challenged strict gender stereotypes by allowing players to be both King and Queen.

With high stakes equivalent to a military manoeuvre or act of war, death is an ever-present possible outcome of the courting games in *PBE*: a wager perhaps best epitomised in the scene set in the Luxellian family vault. Nowhere in the novel are the high stakes of life and death so clearly depicted, further aligning the work with 'ILH', the earlier novella, where Egbert's actions are 'a question of life or death'. Downey highlights this scene as 'the episode that marks the transition to the novel's endgame and acutely foreshadows its grim denouement': one that holds 'a great deal of symbolic value because it represents the only meeting of all three central characters' before Elfride's untimely death.[92] When Elfride and Knight enter the tomb to find Stephen there, the moment echoes a similar scene in 'ILH' when Geraldine and Egbert attend the performance of the Messiah, and Stephen, like Geraldine, 'read the position at a glance', and tactically decides to take his lead from Elfride: 'he saw that her bearing towards him would be dictated by his own towards her; and if he acted as a stranger she would do likewise.'[93] In drawing attention to the 'blackened coffins', the 'whitened walls', and the positions of the people standing within, Hardy reminds us that the game involving these three players continues beyond the chessboard.[94] Conscious, however, of the inequalities between Elfride and her suitors in the game in which they are all

[89] Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, ed. by Sarah Maier (Broadview Press, 2007), p. 274.

[90] Tracy Hayes, 'Hardy's Unmen and Other Men', *Romance, Revolution and Reform*, 2 (2020), pp. 114-132 (p. 127).

[91] Hardy also owned a Howard Staunton Chess set.

[92] Glen R. Downey, 'Chess and Social Game Playing in A Pair of Blue Eyes', *The Hardy Review*, 6 (Winter 2003), pp. 105-146. (p. 137).

[93] *PBE*, p. 259.

[94] Ibid., pp. 260.

engaged, the narrator admits that 'It is difficult to frame rules which shall apply to both sexes'.[95]

That the situation in *PBE* of rival suitors may have been founded on Hardy's own experience is further suggested by the poems 'I was not He' (1922), and 'The Face at the Casement' (1871). Like the rival, or 'duplicate', suitors in 'ILH' and *PBE*, there is only room for one. 'The Face at the Casement' details a drive with Emma on an evening in May 1871, when the couple stops at a house to visit a man who once wished to marry her. The identity of the other man in the poem has been convincingly put forward by Andrew Norman as William Serjeant, son of the curate of Saint Clether, with the setting of the poem being the vicarage.[96] Knowledge of the younger man as a rival in the woman's affections drives the poem's narrator to play a decisive move against his opponent, one that he describes as 'a deed from hell [...] done before I knew it'.[97] The younger man, aware that his opportunity to marry and live a life with Emma has faded, watches from the casement window as she departs, pressing his face against the glass to set eyes upon his rival. Having seen the man at the window, the narrator places his arm firmly around the woman beside him in a symbolic gesture or 'deed', thus communicating to his rival his newly assumed position in the woman's affections.[98] Although his knowledge of the younger man's imminent demise is already apparent ('well did I divine / It to be the man's there dying'), the speaker of the poem does not hesitate to extinguish his opponent's hopes when the chance arises.[99] Through a single 'deed', one man takes the place of another, as swiftly as a piece in a game of chess.[100] The title of the poem singularly conjures the image of the 'white face' that is 'pressed against an upper lattice'. Upon this move –

> The pale face vanished quick,
> As if blasted, from the casement[101]

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[95] Ibid., p. 262.

[96] Andrew Norman, *Thomas Hardy: Behind the Mask* (The History Press, 2011), p. 164.

[97] Thomas Hardy, 'The Face at the Casement', in *Thomas Hardy: The Complete Poems*, ed. by James Gibson (Palgrave, 2001), pp. 317.

[98] Ibid.

[99] Ibid., p. 316.

[100] Ibid., p. 317.

[101] Ibid., p. 317.

With its connotations of detonated explosives or the fire of a gun, we might infer 'blasted' here to represent an act of aggression, or even war. Hardy tells us that it was an evening in May, and the sun, like a tally or financial reserve, has 'dropped' 'low and lower' in the north-west sky.[102] The time of day, coupled with the position of the Saint Clether vicarage in a dell, surrounded by steep hills and trees, would have created a low light, and possibly by the time the couple ride away, even twilight. One can imagine that under these conditions, a pale face at the window could have resembled a white disc on a dark background, not unlike a dice, domino, or draught on a board that will inevitably 'vanish' upon the player's next move. At the sight of the younger rival, like a vulnerable piece on a board, the narrator of the poem is quick to seize the advantage, with his reflection, 'What devil made me do it, I cannot tell!', enacting Huxley's recall of Retzsch's 'Checkmate'.[103]

Returning to *PBE*, in the well-known cliffhanger scene in which Knight slips and hangs suspended until Elfride comes to his rescue, Hardy employs a colour scheme that echoes the white and black of a chessboard with a 'narrow white border' at its edge:

> The sea would have been a deep neutral blue, had happier auspices attended the gazer it was now no otherwise than distinctly black to his vision. That narrow white border was foam, he knew well; but its boisterous tosses were so distant as to appear a pulsation only, and its plashing was barely audible. A white border to a black sea—his funeral pall and its edging.[104]

Recalling Huxley's words, 'the rules of the game are what we call the laws of Nature', Knight becomes nature's prey in this prolonged 'experiment in killing'.[105] Yet when the threat of his immediate peril is removed by Elfride's innovative fashioning of a rope from her undergarments, and while directing her to let down the rope, Knight is 'already resuming his position of ruling power.'[106] In contrast to the rook that is placed 'in the

[102] Ibid., p. 315.

[103] Ibid., p. 317.

[104] *PBE*, p. 216.

[105] Huxley, p. 209. *PBE*, p. 217.

[106] *PBE*, p. 219.

arms of one of her pawns', Elfride finds herself with the 'sufficiently complete result' of being 'encircled by his arms', with the fleeting sense that 'it was infinitely more to be even the slave of the greater than the queen of the less.'[107] Interestingly, due to its ability to jump diagonally, a knight is the only piece that can directly threaten a queen, without being threatened by the queen itself: symbolism borne out by Hardy casting Knight as the most destructive figure in Elfride's life. As Elfride hurries away back to West Endelstow, she is pictured as pursued game or quarry: 'like a hare; or more like a pheasant when, scampering away with a lowered tail, it has a mind to fly, but does not.'[108] Knight gathers up her garments – 'her knotted and twisted plumage of linen, lace, and embroidery work, and laid it across his arm' – conjuring the image of Elfride as a gamebird, reared and shot for the sport of the elite, her spoiled plumage over his arm recalling the way in which dead pheasants are carried in braces.[109]

While dozens of critics have paid close attention to the cliffhanger scene, and the presence of a directing agency working through the natural phenomena against Knight, the significance of the 'pair' of eyes Knight finds himself looking at – the eyes of a Trilobite 'dead and turned to stone' – has received less attention.[110] While it has been suggested before that due to the colour of the slate in that area of north Cornwall, the eyes of the trilobite could also have been blue, it is interesting to note that the hand Knight is dealt here – 'a pair' – is in card games a relatively low hand.[111] A 'pair of blue eyes' becomes Elfride's final wager in her gamble to persuade the indifferent Knight to pay her the admiration she so deeply craves from him. After her defeat in the chess games, followed by reading notes concerning her in his notebook, she challenges Knight to disclose his preference for female hair colour. When he replies 'Dark', knowing that her hair colour is pale brown, she 'hazarded her last and best treasure':

> She could not but be struck with the honesty of his opinions, and the worst of it was, that the more they went against her, the more she respected them. And

[107] Ibid., p. 220.

[108] Ibid., p. 221.

[109] Ibid., p. 221.

[110] Ibid., p. 213.

[111] Rebecca Welshman, 'Monuments, Memories, and Megaliths', paper presented at *Thomas Hardy: Literature and Context*, 3-6 April 2025, University of Oxford.

In Poker a pair is only more valuable than a High Card.

> now, like a reckless gambler, she hazarded her last and best treasure. Her eyes: they were her all now.
> "What coloured eyes do you like best, Mr. Knight?" she said slowly. […]
> "I prefer hazel," he said serenely.
> She had played and lost again.[112]

Although *PBE* has been judged as 'one of [Hardy's] slighter efforts, thanks chiefly […] to a suspicion of undue sentimentality in the title', a reading of the presence of pairs in the novel – human and non-human – suggests that this judgment might be unduly superficial.[113]

A sense of tragedy ultimately overhangs the narrative, even when the chance for Elfride and Knight's happiness still seems possible. As they walk 'between the sunset and the moonrise', their shadows cast by the setting sun, Knight becomes aware of 'a rival pair' of shadows cast by the rising moon, which threatens to eclipse them.[114] These 'antagonistic' shadows represent their better or alternate selves; those that may have thrived under different circumstances:

> Their shadows, as cast by the western glare, showed signs of becoming obliterated in the interest of a rival pair in the opposite direction which the moon was bringing to distinctness.
> "I consider my life to some extent a failure," said Knight again after a pause, during which he had noticed the antagonistic shadows.
> "You! How?"
> "I don't precisely know. But in some way I have missed the mark."[115]

Knight's awareness that somehow he has 'missed the mark' in life is made through the metaphor of a shooting target, imbuing his realisation with military and sporting

[112] *PBE*, p. 179.

[113] Harriet Waters Preston, 'Thomas Hardy', Century, XLVI. (1893), pp. 352-358 (p. 354). Michael Millgate notes a review by James Hutton for the Spectator who similarly criticised the novel's title for its sentimentality. See Michael Millgate, p. 138.

[114] *PBE*, p. 186.

[115] Ibid.

associations, and again when the narrator tells us that 'Knight, in his own opinion, was one who had missed his mark by excessive aiming.'[116] In his appraisal of Elfride's character and the possible reasons for her sudden demise, Knight speculates that 'circumstance has, as usual, overpowered her purposes—fragile and delicate as she—liable to be overthrown in a moment by the coarse elements of accident.'[117] The implied vulnerability of Elfride as a chess piece 'liable to be overthrown in a moment', and the youthful exchange between Elfride and Stephen for the 'much-coveted hand', are prefigured by Geraldine's lines to Egbert in 'ILH':

> You have by this time learnt what life is; what particular positions, accidental though they may be, ask, nay, imperatively exact from us […]
> To be woven and tied in with the world by blood, acquaintance, tradition, and external habit, is to a woman to be utterly at the beck of that world's customs. In youth we do not see this. You and I did not see it. We were but a girl and a boy at the times of our meetings at Tollamore.[118]

In 'ILH' and *PBE*, the high stakes of life and death are explained by the youthful exuberance and even rashness of 'boy and girl' so carefully detailed in both stories. When Stephen and Knight, both estranged from Elfride, are reunited under one roof, neither is willing, due to each harbouring a hope to marry her, to share their real feelings. When Knight asks Stephen, 'do you love her now?', Stephen replies, 'with all the strategy love suggested.'[119] It is only once behind a closed door that Knight can reflect on his position as a 'rival' to Stephen, and the effort it takes to 'mask' his true feelings:

> To wear a mask, to dissemble his feelings as he had in their late miserable conversation, was such torture that he could support it no longer. It was the first time in Knight's life that he had ever been so entirely the player of a part.[120]

[116] Ibid., p. 328.
[117] Ibid., p. 376.
[118] 'ILH', p. 89.
[119] *PBE*, p. 360.
[120] Ibid., p. 361.

Elfride, the 'reckless gambler', is the only character in *PBE* bold enough to gamble everything she has, with the high risk that entails.[121] Of the three main characters, Elfride was inevitably going to lose because the odds – her position in society as a young woman – are stacked against her.

Although further analysis of textual affinities between 'ILH' and *PBE* is required, the comparisons made in this article suggest that Hardy incorporated elements of the earlier *The Poor Man and the Lady* into *PBE*, while also employing the experience he gained in having written *PBE* in his revision of the unpublished work into novella form for publication in 1878. Perhaps due to an essential philosophical incompatibility and the ideological disjuncture between the public and the army in contemporary society, the influence of the military imagination on the nineteenth-century creative mind is often overlooked. The prominence of the Franco-Prussian War in European society may have influenced Hardy's decision to use language which he believed would have appealed to the reading public of the time. Further exploration of the presence of game terminology and imagery in Hardy's other works might offer new ways of thinking about the techniques he employed in the construction of his fictional worlds. Yet at the same time, the high stakes of *PBE*, which result in Elfride's untimely death, remind us of the emotional intensity, drawn from his own youthful experiences in Cornwall, that Hardy invested in this early novel. Hardy's chance meeting with Emma upon being dispatched to Cornwall on a business matter surely contributed to his fictional vision, wherein characters are moved by a directive presence or unseen hand. As in a game of chess, where moves cannot be reversed, the hand of fate was moving him into a new position, to which he would be unable to return.

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[121] Ibid., p. 178.

including a chapter in *Thomas Hardy in Context* (CUP, 2013). Her latest essay, which highlights military associations in the works of Shakespeare, appeared in *Reading the River in Shakespeare's Britain* (Edinburgh University Press, 2024).

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