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THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

THOMAS HARDY: HIS WINTER WORDS

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

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degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

ELIZABETH WEED VAN HAMERSVELD

Norman, Oklahoma

1972

THOMAS HARDY: HIS WINTER WORDS

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PREFACE

"Never retract. Never explain.
Get it done and let them howl."
(Life, p. 269)

This study of Hardy's Winter Words is not a criticism of the poet in the traditional sense; it does not presume to "assess" his poetic achievement--his position as a major figure in English letters has long been assured. Rather, my aim is to draw attention to the merit of the poet's last collection of verse, a collection which has been neglected yet which is no less representative of Hardy's poetic vision than his preceding volumes of verse.

I have relied heavily upon Florence Emily Hardy's The Life of Thomas Hardy, particularly those passages which are taken from Hardy's journal, his diary, and his personal correspondence. Weber's Hardy of Wessex has been a source of inspiration, and the studies of Hardy's poetry by Hynes, Marsden, Miller, and Southworth have been especially helpful.

My thanks are due to the Librarian at Queen's College, Oxford, for his keen interest and cooperation in my research; to Mrs. Joan Bosworth-Smith Cochrane, Milton Abbas, for her

gracious hospitality and patience during our interview on Hardy; and to Professor Jack L. Kendall, University of Oklahoma, for his most valuable guidance and assistance.

Finally, I must acknowledge the reassuring presence always of my dear companion along the road through Dorset and along the lanes and paths from Egdon Heath to Stinston Churchyard.

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THOMAS HARDY: HIS WINTER WORDS

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The earliest discoverable poem by Thomas Hardy is a description of his paternal home entitled "Domicilium," written when he was in his late teens.[1] "He Resolves to Say No More," considered to be one of the last poems Hardy ever wrote,[2] appears on the final page of the posthumous collection Winter Words (1928). Between the first verse and the last Hardy composed more than 900 poems.[3]

Although Winter Words stands as the poet's "last appearance on the literary stage,"[4] this does not mean that all the poetry in the collection was new in the sense of having been recently written. On the contrary, the volume contains poems which span sixty-one years of writing and revising. In The Life of Thomas Hardy, written by Florence Emily Hardy but recognized by critics to have been dictated by the poet,[5] Mrs. Hardy notes on Sunday, November 27, 1927, that "T. H. has been writing almost all the day, revising poems," poems which were to appear later in Winter Words.[6] Hardy, in his preface to Winter Words, acknowledges that "the pieces themselves have been prepared with

reasonable care, if not quite with the zest of a young man new to print."[7] Hardy was eighty-seven at the time: we can grant him some slight lack of relish.

According to Samuel Hynes in The Pattern of Hardy's Poetry, Hardy "was apparently a poem-saver as other men are string-savers" and, because he "probably wrote more--surely he preserved more--bad poems than any other important poet of our time," this hoard of leftovers was used "to flesh out" his last volumes.[8] In The Poetry of Thomas Hardy by James Southworth, the critic states flatly that "Winter Words adds little to Hardy's artistic stature; if anything, it detracts, and that in spite of additional touches it gives us of his character both as man and poet."[9] Kenneth Marsden, however, is less derogatory. In The Poems of Thomas Hardy: A Critical Introduction, Marsden states that the verse in Hardy's last three volumes "seems . . . to show a gradual decline" but that "the poems in Winter Words, for instance, are competent at the worst, and at best a great deal more."[10]

The question of whether the poems in Winter Words represent merely the fumbling fussing of an old man over a treasure not worth keeping or whether they constitute a vital and enriching contribution to Hardy's canon must, of

course, be faced up to and dealt with. Hopefully the answers will be forthcoming after a careful analysis of Winter Words. Before the examination can begin, however, it might be useful to arrange the 105 poems in Winter Words into some sort of categories or groupings. Hardy never attempted to classify his verse and thus the burden of organization falls upon the reader and the critic.

Carl Weber, whose contribution to Hardy scholarship has been the source of continuing inspiration to modern students of Hardy's work, states in Hardy of Wessex that the poet's verse falls into "eight general categories": war poems, songs, philosophical pieces, special occasion verses, nature poems, personal poems (some are reminiscences), love poetry (these include what Weber calls "poems of sorrow"), and narrative verse.[11] Weber's discussion of Hardy's poetry in Hardy of Wessex, however, is a fusion of biographical fact and critical commentary. There are chapters entitled "The First Book of Poems" and "The Dynasts," but others are entitled "Magic Lights," "Let Me Enjoy the Earth No Less," "Throbbings of Noontide," and "Afterwards," all of which are phrases from or titles of individual poems. Weber does not attempt to deal with all of the poetry, choosing instead to focus his attention on an analysis of Hardy's poetic skill and on the careful selection of a

few poems to augment the biography or to illustrate his criticism. He pays special attention and gives special praise to what he refers to as the Veteris Vestigia Flammae group, Hardy's love poems in memory of his first wife.[12] As for the eight categories he has so conscientiously compiled, Weber gives only two pages to their discussion. But he is a first-rate scholar engaged in the task of writing a definitive biography. Therefore, because Weber's Hardy of Wessex is so complete, his life of Hardy so entwined with his comments on the work of Hardy, it is not necessary for him to give more than scant attention to categories as such.

Albert Guerard's study of Hardy is less biographical and more critical. Guerard states in his preface that "the first and final task of the critic is to describe what, after proper and prolonged effort, he sees in the work of art . . . irrespective of the declared or supposed intention of the artist."[13] His emphasis is on an examination of the nature of Hardy's artistic expression and an evaluation of Hardy's "works of art," both prose and poetry. But Guerard does not ignore or omit biography entirely in his discussion of Hardy's poetry. He makes it very clear that Hardy's novels are "colored by temperament

as markedly as the poems," but that the poetry is much more subjective and autobiographical.[14]

Like Weber, Guerard finds that it might be useful "to establish a few categories" for Hardy's verse. He classifies as "minor" the poems of occasion and experience, the "ballad-tragedies" (these include traditional narratives), those lyrics having to do with ancient Wessex, and a group of poems which, according to Guerard, "systematize bad luck." He considers Hardy's best and major verse to be his love poems and his "poems of loneliness and deprivation and regret."[15] Guerard gives examples of each category, including in his commentary not only a brief description of the piece but a critical statement on the form, the diction, and the force of the poetic expression as well.

Evelyn Hardy, in his critical biography of Hardy, states that "the subjects first in importance in Hardy's poetry are love--generally frustrated or unhappy love--and death." The critic also recognizes Hardy's many narrative poems, his autobiographical verses, his nature poems, and finally "the philosophical, wherein Hardy questions and requestions the why of existence, or the problem of pain."[16]

J. I. M. Stewart, writing on Hardy's poetry in Eight Modern Writers: Vol. XII, Oxford History of English Literature, declares that "it is of only passing usefulness

to split into categories work that is finally so single." Stewart nevertheless refers to Hardy's kinds of verse--philosophic, narrative, dramatic, and lyrical--and observes that "of the kinds in so far as they be distinguished, the most immediately striking is the philosophic or cosmic."[17]

Weber, Guerard, Hardy, and Stewart have not devoted their full attention to Thomas Hardy as poet. The past decade, however, has seen the development of a more concentrated interest in Hardy's verse, as evidenced in the publication of the Hynes, Southworth, and Marsden studies. Because Hynes, Southworth, and Marsden attempt to deal with as many of the poems as possible, they are forced to put this bulk into some manageable order. Hynes, believing that Hardy's range of tone and ideas was severely limited, lists Hardy's "few obsessive ideas that determined both the substance and the style of his poems: infidelities of all possible kinds, the inevitable loss of love, the destructiveness of time, the implacable indifference of nature, the cruelty of men, the irreversible pastness of the past." Hynes concludes that "the combination of ironic tone and obsessive ideas in Hardy's poems determines what critics choose to call his 'philosophy.'"[18]

Southworth observes that to group Hardy's poems

"under the headings of love, woman, mutability, life, death, God, and so forth . . . does him an injustice." But Southworth continues, "It is merely a convenience which will help to evaluate the statements in the poems that are more general in nature, more abstract, and less capable of resolution."[19]

Marsden's categorizing, if one may call it that, is less explicit, but it is there nevertheless. He refers, for example, to "a number of poems which must be intended to put forth philosophical beliefs and concepts" and to "a number of anecdote poems which appear to be too simple to be taken at face value." He believes both types to be reflections of Hardy's philosophical musings.[20] Marsden also lists Hardy's poems on death, graveyards, and immortality, and he observes, "What usually surprises anyone who examines the whole body of the poems is the large proportion of love poems," poems which bear a close connection with his death and immortality verse.[21]

All of the critics cited have referred to Hardy's "philosophical" poems, either directly or indirectly, but the relative importance of this "group" varies considerably. Weber states that, although this is "the most distinctive group, . . . the persistence of this kind of poem throughout volume after volume has in some quarters

resulted in a misconception as to the bulk if not the importance of this sort of thing in Hardy's poetic work."[22] Guerard observes that "the abstract and even pedantic pessimism that occasionally mars Hardy's novels, the dogged schematizings of gloom, appears notoriously in a number of poems," and that "not even The Dynasts . . . could exhaust Hardy's impulse to systematize bad luck."[23]

Hynes, as has been pointed out, sees a direct relationship between what he believes to be Hardy's obsession with a few ideas and Hardy's limited tone of irony. He states that in some of Hardy's poems "a system of thought seems to operate as an extrinsic discipline, forcing the material in the direction of didacticism, or obscuring or replacing the particularity of detail which is one of Hardy's poetic strengths . . .: his abstractions sometimes get in the way of his things." These "philosophical" poems, according to Hynes, are startling failures.[24]

What is of interest here is that the general tendency has been to set Hardy's "philosophical" poems apart from his other verse as a separate group, whether in praise as did Stewart or in scorn as did Hynes. The difficulty arises, I believe, in the definition of the word philosophy. I choose to interpret the phrase "Hardy's philosophy" as

his world view, a view based on a long lifetime of close observations and the impressions gleaned from them, a view based on "the seeing of great things in little things, the whole in the part--even the infinitesimal part."[25]

Following this definition, then, how can one separate Hardy's so-called philosophical poems from his other writings? For example, Guerard refers to Hardy's "temperamental gloom," "his nostalgia for lost faith," and his "dullness of spirit," and yet he criticizes Hardy for his "abstract and even pedantic pessimism,"[26] as if the one were not a reflection of the other. The confusion is the result, I believe, of trying to separate the poetic expression from the thought of the man. Hynes observes, and rightly so, that critics have spent more time studying Hardy's philosophy than have concentrated on his poetry as poetry. Hynes's emphasis, as he informs us in his preface, is on "the pattern in [Hardy's] poetry, a pattern having both philosophical and poetic aspects."[27] But then Hynes places certain poems in a separate category, labels them "idea" poems, and states flatly that they are no good.

In fairness to Guerard and Hynes, and to their categorizings, it must be pointed out that both critics are referring to those poems which they consider to be

didactic, pedantic, and full of abstractions. I agree with Marsden, however, that in Hardy's case "'Character' and 'Philosophy' moulded each other and reacted upon each other and the poetry is a compound formed by the two. . . . The general and the local must be taken together and their point of meeting is the poetic persona which created the poems and is manifested in them."[28]

Hardy's abstract musings on the nature of the universe and man's relation to it cannot be so sharply divided from the poet's own experience in his world and from his concrete observations of the lives of his fellowman. Any attempts to separate Hardy's intellectual "ideas" or his "philosophy" from his reflections on God or nature or human experience is to indulge in pointless word-play. To place Hardy's "philosophical" verse in a class by itself is nonsense; <u>all</u> of Hardy's poetry is philosophical in one way or another. The succeeding chapters on the verse in <u>Winter Words</u>, therefore, will reflect categories which are all-encompassing.

Many readers of Hardy have proceeded on the assumption that the poet had a philosophy as such, that is to say, that he believed in a body of philosophical principles. In his journal notes for December 31, 1901, Hardy

commented on philosophy in general:

> After reading various philosophic systems, and being struck with their contradictions and futilities, I have come to this: Let every man make a philosophy for himself out of his own experience. He will not be able to escape using terms and phraseology from earlier philosophers, but let him avoid adopting their theories if he values his own mental life. Let him remember the fate of Coleridge, and save years of labour by working out his own views as given him by his surroundings.[29]

Hardy repeatedly denied that he had developed a systematized philosophy and yet critics persist in their efforts to bind him with one. At the same time, however, they charge him with an appalling lack of consistency. For example, Hoxie Fairchild, in Religious Trends in English Poetry, Volume Five, speaks of Hardy's "intellectual irresponsibility" and states, "It is distressing to find that this philosophical poet possesses no philosophy at all."[30] In his Language as Gesture, R. P. Blackmur writes that Hardy's poetry "is a thicket of ideas, formulas, obsessions, undisciplined compulsions, nonce insights, and specious particularities."[31] Irving Howe,

in his biography of Hardy, finally expresses the lament: ". . . if he had only been able to let his philosophic notions lie at rest, or let them go, or let them go hang. . . ."[32] It is distressing to me that critics like Fairchild, Blackmur, and Howe did not take Hardy's word for it. In a letter written in 1920 Hardy made his views on poetic thought versus scientific or philosophical thought plainly known:

> . . . I have no philosophy--merely what I have often explained to be only a confused heap of impressions, like those of a child at a conjuring show. . . . What we call the first Cause should be called First Causes. . . . Assume a thousand unconscious causes--lumped together in poetry as one Cause, or God--and bear in mind that a coloured liquid can be produced by the mixture of colourless ones, a noise by the juxtaposition of silences, etc., etc., and you see that the assumption that intelligent beings arise from the combined action of unintelligent forces is sufficiently probable for imaginative writing, and I have never attempted scientific.

Hardy concludes his letter with this statement: "It is my

misfortune that people will treat all my mood-dictated writing as a single scientific theory."[33]

Hardy's letter, written eight years before his death, is the statement of an eighty-year-old man, still alert and articulate, a mature novelist and poet. It is incomprehensible to deny him the poet's quest for the meaning of the universe, of man, and of reality itself while at the same time demanding of him a systematized philosophy. It is true that in the letter just quoted Hardy has used an example from science to describe the source of one of his favorite ideas, that of the possibility of intelligent life evolving "from the combined action of unintelligent forces," but he makes it clear that any such references are metaphors only. Therefore, if in Winter Words philosophical or metaphysical or scientific questions are raised and tentative answers are given, we must attempt to retain the poet's perspective, not the philosopher's.

But to grant Hardy his "perspective" was as difficult a task for the poet's contemporaries as it seems to be now. Hardy's journal is full of notes which reflect his impatience with his critics for their remarks about his work. When Tess was attacked by the press Hardy had concluded: "I must put up with it, and say as Parrhasius of Ephesus said

about his pictures: There is nothing that men will not find fault with."[34] Then, long after Hardy had ceased to write novels and had turned his full attention to poetry, he was still expressing his general frustration. On January 16, 1918, he observed: "Apart from a few brilliant exceptions, poetry is not at bottom criticized as such, that is, as a particular man's artistic interpretation of life, but with a secret eye on the theological and political propriety."[35]

These journal notes have led some modern scholars to accuse Hardy of being thin-skinned and overly sensitive to criticism. But it was not in Hardy's nature to be petulant. Rather, when the first feelings of frustration wore off, Hardy could reflect:

> No man's poetry can be truly judged till his last line is written. What is the last line? The death of the poet. And hence there is this quaint consolation to any writer of verse--that it may be imperishable for all that anybody can tell him to the contrary; and that if worthless he can never know it, unless he be a greater adept at self-criticism than poets usually are.[36]

Hynes has summed up Hardy's basic attitude neatly: "Hardy was to the end inflexibly himself: not a poet's poet, nor

a critic's poet, but simply his own poet."[37]

As "his own poet" Hardy attempted to express his own unique view of the world as truthfully as his poetic powers would allow him. By truthfully I do not mean to imply a striving on the part of the poet to express truth in an absolute sense of the word. On the contrary, Hardy as artist tried to remain true to his impression of the world as he saw it.

In his essay "The Serious Artist," Ezra Pound writes:

> If an artist falsifies his report as to the nature of man, as to his own nature, as to the nature of his ideal of the perfect, as to the nature of this, that or the other, of god, if god exist, of the life force, of the nature of good and evil, if good and evil exist, of the force with which he believes or disbelieves this, that or the other, of the degree in which he suffers or is made glad; if the artist falsifies his reports on these matters or on any other matter in order that he may conform to the taste of his time, to the proprieties of a sovereign, to the conveniences of a preconceived code of ethics, then that artist lies.[38]

Hardy tried very hard not to lie; he tried to bring to the world what he had referred to as "a particular man's

artistic interpretation of life." Hardy's report is not a pretty one. He had written upsetting novels and now he was writing disturbing poetry. As Jacques Barzun observes, "He thrusts a strange world in our faces. We run away, or pick and choose, abstract and reduce, until the various and strange resembles the few likelihoods that our narrow experience or tired minds can embrace."[39]

But Hardy's world view was of far greater scope than most of ours. He surveyed the processes of nature and the panorama of human history first with a telescopic vision which looked out into the infinite and then, with microscopic accuracy, was able to pinpoint the here and now. This blending of the whole process of worldly existence with the infinite or eternal resulted in what John Cowper Powys called "an intensification of our general consciousness of the Life-Drama as a whole."[40] For, whether we wish it or not, we are exposed in Hardy's poetry to ourselves, to the world we have made or which has been made for us, and we are forced to confront the inevitability of our position as one moment of time in the movement of the cosmos. It is as if Hardy has caught the brilliant Life-Drama in his hands and is turning it this way and that, showing first one facet and then another--youth and old age, hope and despair, life and death, eternity and

finiteness--all the apparent, bright and shining contradictions which go to make up the conundrum. These facets of the all-encompassing yet paradoxical drama which is Life itself become, therefore, valid groupings for Hardy's Winter Words.

NOTES

[1]Florence Emily Hardy, The Life of Thomas Hardy, 1840-1928 (London: Macmillan, 1962), p. 4. According to Carl J. Weber, this biography of Hardy published as "the work of his second wife [is] now known to be largely his own work. . . ." Quotations from Hardy's journal in my text are from this work--hereafter cited as Life.

[2]Thomas Hardy, Winter Words (London: Macmillan, 1928), p. 202. See Richard Little Purdy, Thomas Hardy: A Bibliographical Study (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), pp. 252-262.

[3]Carl J. Weber, Hardy of Wessex: His Life and Literary Career (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1965), pp. 229, 279.

[4]Winter Words, p. vi.

[5]Weber, p. viii.

[6]Life, p. 444.

[7]Winter Words, p. vi.

[8]Samuel Hynes, The Pattern of Hardy's Poetry (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1961), p. 4.

[9]James Granville Southworth, The Poetry of Thomas Hardy (New York: Russell, 1966), p. 195.

[10]Kenneth Marsden, The Poems of Thomas Hardy: A Critical Introduction (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969), p. 208.

[11]Weber, pp. 280-281.

[12]Ibid., p. 259.

[13]Albert J. Guerard, Thomas Hardy (Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions-Laughlin, 1964), p. xi.

[14]Ibid., p. 40.

[15]Ibid., pp. 170-175.

[16]Evelyn Hardy, Thomas Hardy (New York: Russell, 1970), p. 304.

[17]J. I. M. Stewart, Eight Modern Writers (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), pp. 51-52.

[18]Hynes, pp. 4-5.

[19]Southworth, pp. 22-23.

[20]Marsden, p. 13.

[21]Ibid., pp. 45, 63, 70.

[22]Weber, p. 280.

[23]Guerard, p. 174.

[24]Hynes, p. 5.

[25]Life, p. 248.

[26]Guerard, pp. 174-175.

[27]Hynes, p. vii.

[28]Marsden, pp. vii-viii.

[29]Life, p. 310. The italics are Hardy's.

[30]Hoxie Neale Fairchild, Religious Trends in English Poetry (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1963), V, 253.

[31]R. P. Blackmur, "The Shorter Poems of Thomas Hardy," in Language as Gesture: Essays in Poetry (New York: Harcourt, 1952), p. 52.

[32]Irving Howe, Thomas Hardy (New York: Macmillan, 1967), p. 159.

[33]Life, pp. 410-411.

[34]Ibid., p. 244.

[35]Ibid., p. 383.

[36]Ibid., p. 302.

[37]Hynes, p. 7.

[38]Ezra Pound, "The Serious Artist," in Literary Essays of Ezra Pound (New York: New Directions-Laughlin, 1968), pp. 43-44.

[39]Jacques Barzun, "Hardy's One World," in The Energies of Art (New York: Vintage-Knopf, 1962), p. 192.

[40]John Cowper Powys, Visions and Revisions (London: Macdonald, 1955), p. 164.

CHAPTER TWO

THE FACETED GEM: HARDY'S POETIC PRACTICE IN RELATION TO HIS WORLD-VIEW

> Grow old along with me!
> The best is yet to be,
> The last of life, for which the
> first was made.
> Our times are in his hand
> Who saith, "A whole I planned;
> Youth shows but half. Trust God;
> see all, nor be afraid!"[1]

The opening stanza of Browning's "Rabbi Ben Ezra" is a fitting beginning of our discussion of Hardy's Winter Words. The evening before he died Hardy had asked his wife to read the poem in its entirety to him and, Mrs. Hardy notes, he listened with a "look of wistful intentness" to all thirty-two stanzas.[2] Hardy had criticized Browning for his "dreamlessness" which "kept him comfortably unaware" of the cries of those millions who suffer from the apparent triumph of wrong over right,[3] but he had praised Browning's art for its "disturbing" quality of "intellectual subtlety."[4] It is this very quality of intellectual subtlety in Hardy's own verse which prompts

Guerard to refer to "the surface simplicity" of Hardy's poetry.[5]

Hardy's poetry as a whole, however, has been severely criticized by those who fail to find poetic merit in directness of sentiment and sincerity of statement. Blackmur's essay, "The Shorter Poems of Thomas Hardy," is a good example. Blackmur contends that Hardy used ideas, his own authoritarian, idiosyncratic views (these are Blackmur's adjectives, not mine), "to represent a pattern of behavior, judgment, or significance." Instead of being liberated by nineteenth-century advances in science, Hardy was "imprisoned" by them. The result was "the privation of his humanity. . . . His sensibility had lost, on the expressive level, all discrimination of human value, human dignity, and the inextricability in the trope of human life, of good and evil." Blackmur concludes: "Surely no serious writer ever heaped together so much sordid adultery, so much haphazard surrender of human value as did Hardy in these poems [those dealing with love themes particularly], and with never a pang or incentive but the pang of pattern and the incentive of inadequacy, and yet asked his readers to consider that haphazard sordor a full look at the worst--a tragic view of life--exacted with honesty and power."[6]

Contrast these remarks to those of Weber on the last pages of his Hardy of Wessex:

> . . . Hardy did not dwell far from mortals; he was not estranged from human wants; he was not indifferent to vice and virtue. His "comrades in the craft of letters" [some forty to fifty living poets, led by Sigfried Sassoon] who addressed him on his eighty-first birthday praised him for his "vision of life" and for his "knowledge of character"; they acknowledged the charity of his humour and testified to the healing benefit of his "sympathy with human suffering and endurance!" "We have learned from you," they wrote, "that the proud heart can subdue the hardest fate."[7]

Now, which critic is the student of Hardy to believe? Which assessment of Hardy's sensitivity is the more valid? The answers lie in that "surface simplicity" of which Guerard speaks and in that quality of "intellectual subtlety" which Hardy praised in Browning. Blackmur's emphasis is on what he believes to be Hardy's failure to wed content to form or form to content. According to Blackmur, Hardy crammed his unyielding set of ideas into a conscious poetic form. "What Hardy really lacked," Blackmur asserts, "was the craft of his profession--technique in the wide

sense; that craft which, as a constant, reliable possession, would have taught him the radical necessity as it furnished the means, of endowing every crucial statement with the virtual force of representation."[8]

There are three, or perhaps four, basic considerations in any criticism of poetry. First, the critic must decide for himself what he believes to be the proper relationship between content and form. Then he must consider the poet's observations on art in general and his own work in particular. Next, he must determine to what extent the poet wears a mask or assumes a persona. Finally, and this point might be taken as an appendage to the third, the critic must judge how far the poet has moved from the communication of his ideas to pure didacticism.

In his essay "Pure and Impure Poetry," Robert Penn Warren discusses the importance of meaning, of idea, of "the movement of the mind" in poetry. He states: "The attempt to read ideas out of the poetic party violates the unity of our being and the unity of our experience."[9] I agree with Warren. A poet, because he is a poet, cannot be asked to subjugate or expurgate or exclude his ideas, his world-view, from his art; to ask this of him is to ask him to negate his whole life experience and to concentrate instead on the manipulation of language to arouse emotion.

As Santayana observes, "Poetry is an attenuation, a rehandling, an echo of crude experience; it is itself a theoretic vision of things at arm's length."[10]

For Hardy, the medium of poetry enabled him to "express more fully" those ideas which he believed in most strongly and those emotions which he felt most fervently, ideas and emotions which ran "counter to the inert crystallized opinion" of his time. Hardy observed:

> To cry out in a passionate poem that (for instance) the Supreme Mover or Movers, the Prime Force or Forces, must be either limited in power, unknowing, or cruel . . . will cause them [the critics] merely a shake of the head; but to put it in argumentative prose will make them sneer, or foam, or set all the literary contortionists jumping upon me, a harmless agnostic, as if I were a clamorous atheist. . . . If Galileo had said in verse that the world moved, the Inquisition might have let him alone.[11]

This quotation from Hardy's journal is essential to our evaluation of the relationship between content and form in his poetry. Even as the gem "inert [and] crystallized" in its roughest, most natural state, contains within itself prospects of brilliant harmony and dazzling

juxtaposition of color waiting to be released by the lapidary, so too was poetry seen by Hardy to be the liberating medium for his deepest thoughts. We must be sympathetic to Hardy's reasons for choosing poetry as a valid means of expression; we must accept the sincerity of his approach.

It was Hardy's nature to brood and philosophize,[12] and to put ideas before form. His observations on pictorial art are indicative of his views on the relation of content and form in all the arts:

> My weakness has always been to prefer the large intention of an unskilful artist to the trivial intention of an accomplished one: in other words, I am more interested in the high ideas of a feeble executant than in the high execution of a feeble thinker.[13]

The critic may find fault with his method, as does Hynes;[14] he may "mistrust" it and wish instead for a more felicitous wedding of content and form in Hardy's poetic expression, but he must allow the poet his own approach to his art.

Hardy's approach to his art was deceptively simple. Like Pater, who had sought "not the fruit of experience, but experience itself," Hardy wanted "to intensify the

expression of things . . . so that the heart and inner meaning [could be] made vividly visible."[15] Pater had longed to "be present always at the focus where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their present energy"; for him, "to burn always with this hard, gemlike flame" would be "success in life."[16] Hardy and Pater both rejected the mere reproduction in art of the individual facets of their worlds, choosing instead to strive for a freeing of intellect from blind, selfish will so that the hard fact of inevitable death and the existence of potentially powerful human sympathies could be reconciled. Hardy wrote:

> . . . if Nature's defects must be looked in the face and transcribed, whence arises the <u>art</u> in poetry and novel-writing? . . . I think the art lies in making these defects the basis of a hitherto unperceived beauty, by irradiating them with "the light that never was" on their surface, but is seen to be latent in them by the spiritual eye.[17]

According to Hardy, art was a "disproportioning" of reality in order "to show more clearly the features that matter in those realities, which, if merely copied or reported inventorially, might possibly be observed, but

would more probably be overlooked." He concluded: "Hence, 'realism' is not Art."[18] Ernest Cassirer, the modern philosopher, echoes Hardy's view. In An Essay on Man, he observes that "the productive power of the artist is a disturbing rather than a constructive factor" because, instead of imitating nature, "it falsifies the aspect of things." The result, Cassirer concludes, is "not an imitation but a discovery of reality."[19]

This concept of aesthetic experience which transcends ordinary sense experience results in a blurring of the distinction between the objective and the subjective, between impersonal representation and personal expression. The poet selects certain aspects of his world, certain features of reality, and proceeds to "irradiate them" with his own special light. The objective world of phenomena, therefore, becomes the vehicle through which the poet reveals his vision of the "deeper realities underlying the scenic."[20]

Much has been written about the personal quality of Hardy's poetry. Weber states that, "pent up within Thomas Hardy's artistic soul there was still something crying for expression, something none of the fourteen novels had satisfied," and, Weber observes, "Love poem after love poem surged up from the depth of his being."[21] Guerard

refers to Hardy's "moving rendering of much intimate personal experience" in his best lyrics;[22] Hynes comments on "the consistently personal point of view" and "the distinctive personal voice" in Hardy's verse;[23] and, finally, Marsden states flatly that Hardy's poetry is "intensely personal."[24] These critics see Hardy's subjective expression as sincere, authentic, and uncomplicated, a genuine revelation based on perceptive observation and experience. Hillis Miller, on the other hand, believes that Hardy turned personal experience "into a spectacle viewed from the outside" and that this resulted in a conscious detachment which, in effect, separated him from active involvement in either the world outside himself or in any profound contemplation of his own soul.[25]

But this trick of turning emotions and experiences inside out is not a weakness in Hardy. Rather, it is evidence of the poet's "intellectual subtlety." Like the Bible narratives Hardy knew so well, the "so-called simplicity is, in fact, the simplicity of the highest cunning."[26] Hardy possessed that Janus-like quality of seeing objectivity and subjectivity at once; he could externalize his subject while at the same time expressing an inwardness. This almost metaphysical expression becomes, as Josephine Miles points out, in her comments on Hardy in Eras and

Modes in English Poetry, "inwardness related to macrocosm in its concepts of God, death, and time, and made dramatic and colloquial in the relationship."[27]

Thus, Hardy could confide that "He Never Expected Much" (WW,113-14), or he could write objectively of "A Poet's Thought" (WW,69); he could assume the persona of a woman in "A Practical Woman" (WW,104), and "He Did Not Know Me" (WW,78-79), or he could write about "The Whaler's Wife" (WW,45-47); he could recount a folk-ballad as if he were the soldier returning from France, as in "The War-Wife of Catknoll" (WW,50-52), or he could become the story-teller relating the tale of "Squire Hooper" (WW,105-7); and he could express all the personal sorrow of lost love in "We Say We Shall Not Meet" (WW,110), or he could write of the "unkind" Fate which united "The Destined Pair" (WW,160). But whatever the poetic voice--whether his own, the voice of another, or the voice of an impersonal, omniscient, and often ironic, observer--always with Hardy there is this inward-outward relationship, this microcosm-macrocosm expression. The surface simplicity of such a technique, to paraphrase Guerard, can be disarming indeed.

In his youth Hardy had been influenced by Leslie Stephen and, in his journal, had recorded the following Stephen quotation: "The ultimate aim of the poet should

be to touch our hearts by showing his own. . . ."[28] Often Hardy chose "to touch our hearts" by the complex method of revealing our "material realities," our world of phenomena, to be but "shadowy accessories" to "the true Realities of life."[29] For instance, in the poem "Lying Awake" (WW,62), although Hardy describes in concrete terms the view from his window as the sun rises, the poem is more than a somewhat romantic description of a landscape:

> You, Morning Star, now are steady-
> eyed over the east,
> I know it as if I saw you;
> You, Beeches, engrave on the sky your
> thin twigs, even the least;
> Had I paper and pencil I'd draw you.
>
> You, Meadow, are white with your
> counterpane cover of dew,
> I see it as if I were there;
> You, Churchyard, are lightening faint
> from the shadow of the yew,
> The names creeping out everywhere.

In two short stanzas Hardy has moved us subtly from the Morningtide Star of the cosmos to the Beeches and the Meadow of nature, and finally to the Churchyard where all

men eventually must end, as names barely readable on crumbling headstones.

In the poem "Silences" (WW,70-71), Hardy describes the copse when the wind is still, the pond after a drowning, and the family home which now stands empty:

There is the silence of a copse or croft
When the wind sinks dumb,
And of a belfry-loft
When the tenor after tolling stops its hum.

And there's the silence of a lonely pond
Where a man has drowned,
Nor nigh nor yond
A newt, frog, toad, to make the merest sound.

But the rapt silence of an empty house
Where oneself was born,
Dwelt, held carouse
With friends, is of all silences most forlorn!

Past are remembered songs and music-strains
Once audible there:
Roof, rafters, panes
Look absent-thoughted, tranced, or locked in prayer.

It seems no power on earth can waken it
Or rouse its rooms,
Or its past permit
The present to stir a torpor like a tomb's.

Hardy's emphasis in "Silences," however, is not on the quiet after sounds have been heard, but rather on that silence which still contains within itself the whole panoply of past sounds. For Hardy, "the rapt silence of an empty house/Where oneself was born/ . . . is of all silences most forlorn" because "no power on earth" can reincarnate those "remembered songs and music-strains"; the past lies dormant "like a tomb." The surface description in "Silences" is concrete but the deeper meaning, like the sounds that make up silence, hangs suspended behind or beyond these "material realities." "The true Realities of life" are revealed to us by the artist who sees "with the spiritual eye" this other vision.

"Lying Awake" and "Silences" are not only good examples of Hardy's objective-subjective expression, they are also representative of his lack of didacticism. In neither poem is he deliberately teaching us a lesson, nor does he get in our way by preaching to us. Instead, through the medium of ordinary experience, either of lying

awake at dawn or of returning to the place of his birth for one last look around, Hardy had gained a wider vision of Reality which, in turn, he shares with us. If we learn something from his insight, so much the better; if we have missed the point of the telling, it is our loss. Southworth observes that Hardy "had little use for didactic poetry" as such because "he was not a moralist at heart."[30] Hardy, as poet-artist, was more interested in extracting the essence from life than he was in abstracting a moral lesson from experience. This is not to say that he was not aware of the dimensions of good and evil in the Life-Drama, but he saw that these refractions were the most diffused and cloudy and difficult to define. Consequently, Hardy rejected the labels of the moralists and concentrated instead on the contrast between man's dreams, aspirations, and potentially powerful sympathies, and the often squalid and tragic life man actually leads.[31]

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Hardy's characteristic way of looking at life, as has been pointed out, was to see the many sides of experience almost simultaneously. In his journal he consistently records observations which reflect this either-or quality. Hardy, however, was more than a poet of contrasts; he was a poet of paradox. Not only does he show us opposing or

contrasting views of life at once, but often these contradictory ideas or observations actually corroborate and reinforce each other. The result is usually an ironic statement. If one were asked to specify the main characteristic of the poems in Winter Words, one would have to acknowledge the presence of an overwhelming ironic spirit.

Gilbert Highet's observations on irony and satire in The Anatomy of Satire are relevant to Hardy's expression in these poems, and his remarks also serve to bolster the paradoxical nature of Hardy's verse. Highet observes that the satirist may speak with a calm voice, earnest, sometimes even amused. Behind this voice, however, "the face may be dark with fury or writhing with contempt." The writer's statements, in other words, are sarcastic. The word sarcasm, explains Highet, "is often associated with irony," and "in general usage the word means irony whose true underlying meaning is both so obvious that it cannot be misunderstood and so wounding that it cannot be dismissed with a smile."[32] It is difficult to imagine Hardy's kindly face "dark with fury" or "writhing with contempt." On the contrary, his irony is quiet and is, therefore, perhaps the more "wounding."

The poems in Winter Words which use Christian

holidays for their setting are especially ironic. There are poems about Christmas, New Year's, Twelfth Night, Good Friday, and Easter. These verses are far from joyous celebrations or poignant commemorations. Rather, Hardy has written ironic commentaries on religion.

Hardy did not go as far as did some of the free-thinkers of his time and reject organized religion entirely. His close involvement with all of the activities of the church in his youth had left too deep an appreciation for the church's historical role and, during his adult life, his attendance at church services was fairly regular. He delighted in good church music, he made a list of favorite hymns, his knowledge of the Bible was exceptional, and he acknowledged the necessity of keeping "a church of some sort afoot--a thing indispensable."[33] Nevertheless he chaffed at the established liturgy:

> We enter church, and we have to say, "We have erred and strayed from Thy ways like lost sheep," when what we want to say is, "Why are we made to err and stray like lost sheep?" Then we have to sing, "My soul doth magnify the Lord," when what we want to sing is, "O that my soul could find some Lord that it could magnify!" Till it can, let us magnify good works, and develop all means of easing

> mortals' progress through a world not worthy of them.[34]

But this is not to say that Hardy rejected Christ. On the contrary, as he looked back over not only his own years upon the earth but over the years since "the neighbouring Pagan mound" as well, his deepest regret was that "today . . . men will no more heed/The Gospel news than when the mound was made" (WW,41). Hardy saw Christianity in his own time as a "religion of emotional morality and altruism," a religion not very different from "other moral religions within whose sphere the name of Christ [had] never been heard." As for the efficacy of formal worship, he deplored the "childish back-current towards a belief in magic rites."[35] His account of a service at St. Mary Abbotts, Kensington, is worth quoting, for it is a graphic reflection of his cynicism and provides valuable insights into his reasons for writing "Yuletide in a Younger World" (WW,57-58):

> July 8. A service at St. Mary Abbotts, Kensington. . . . The pale crucified figure rises up from a parterre of London bonnets and artificial hair-coils, as viewed from the back where I am. . . . When the congregation rises there is a rustling of silks like that of the Devils' wings in Paradise

> Lost. Every woman then, even if she had forgotten it before, has a single thought to the folds of her clothes. They pray in the litany as if under enchantment. Their real life is spinning on beneath this apparent one of calm . . . concerned with next week, last week. . . . That bald-headed man is surrounded by the interior of the Stock Exchange; that girl by the jeweller's shop in which she purchased yesterday. Through this bizarre world of thought circulates the recitative of the parson--a thin solitary note without cadence or change of intensity--and getting lost like a bee in the clerestory.[36]

The poem "Yuletide in a Younger World" looks back to a time of clear-eyed faith, to a time when mankind was not so "blinker-bound":

> We believed in highdays then,
> And could glimpse at night
> On Christmas Eve
> Imminent oncomings of radiant revel--
> Doings of delight:--
> Now we have no such sight.

We had eyes for phantoms then,
And at bridge or stile
On Christmas Eve
Clear beheld those countless ones who had crossed it
Cross again in file:--
Such has ceased longwhile!

We liked divination then,
And, as they homeward wound
On Christmas Eve,
We could read men's dreams within them spinning
Even as wheels spin round:--
Now we are blinker-bound.

We heard still small voices then,
And, in the dim serene
Of Christmas Eve,
Caught the fartime tones of fire-filled prophets
Long on earth unseen. . . .
--Can such have ever been?

There is no date on "Yuletide in a Younger World,"

but "The Oxen," which appeared in Hardy's Moments of Vision collection, bears the date 1915.[37] The sentiment expressed in the latter poem is like that of the former and yet it is different:

CHRISTMAS EVE, and twelve of the clock.
"Now they are all on their knees,"
An elder said as we sat in a flock
By the embers in hearthside ease.

We pictured the meek mild creatures where
They dwelt in their strawy pen,
Nor did it occur to one of us there
To doubt they were kneeling then.

So fair a fancy few would weave
In these years! Yet, I feel,
If someone said on Christmas Eve,
"Come; see the oxen kneel,

"In the lonely barton by yonder coomb
Our childhood used to know,"
I should go with him in the gloom
Hoping it might be so.

The two poems are linked by Duffin, Marsden, and Southworth in their studies of Hardy's poetry. Duffin sees

Hardy as a sceptic who would like to believe that all creatures fall on their knees in worship on Christmas but who cannot bring himself to join them.[38] Marsden also refers to "Yuletide" and "The Oxen" as expressions of Hardy's "desire for the legend [of Christmas and of Christian faith] to be true" while, at the same time, he stands "outside the flux."[39] Southworth observes that "Hardy found no comfort in his inability to accept the current ideas of God; or to rely on a simple faith. . . . When those of simple faith seemed to sense heaven he could hear only the dark and windswept pine."[40] Each critic, however, has failed to see the wider implications of Hardy's statement.

In both poems Hardy is expressing his own personal dilemma, yes, but he is also lamenting the loss of faith in his age. In "Yuletide" he speaks repeatedly of "we," and only the shallow reader could miss the intended universality of the pronoun. Hardy has included himself in the multitude of blind and deaf disbelievers. "The Oxen," a more colloquial verse, nevertheless expresses the same sentiment. Few would even entertain the notion that the oxen kneel on Christmas Eve "in these years," the seventy-five-year-old poet observes. But if he were asked to visit the oxen in "the lonely barton," he would go and, he adds,

with hope. "Yuletide" is a somewhat bitter statement of how things were compared to how things now stand, and it offers no promise for the future. Hardy had sat in St. Mary Abbott's, his attention focused on the congregation and not on the service, and now in "Yuletide in a Younger World" he acknowledges his lack of faith and the world's also. "The Oxen," on the other hand, ends on an optimistic, albeit tentative, note. Here again is evidence of Hardy's double-vision, and his contradictory statements of disbelief and tentative belief can provoke the reader who is seeking a consistency of statement. The irony lies in the contrast between the unyielding reader and the "mood-dictated" poet, between the "blinker-bound" and the seeker of truth, whatever and wherever it may be.

Other poems of particular ironic, religious commentary in Winter Words are "A Nightmare, and The Next Thing" (WW,73-74) and "Christmas: 1924" (WW,171). "A Nightmare, and The Next Thing" links inevitable death, the "next thing," with the birth of Jesus:

> On this decline of Christmas Day
> The empty street is fogged and
> blurred:
> The house-fronts all seem backwise turned
> As if the outer world were spurned:

Voices and songs within are heard,
Whence red rays gleam when fires are
stirred,
Upon this nightmare Christmas Day.

The lamps, just lit, begin to outloom
Like dandelion-globes in the gloom;
The stonework, shop-signs, doors, look
bald;
Curious crude details seem installed,
And show themselves in their degrees
As they were personalities
Never discerned when the street was
bustling
With vehicles, and farmers hustling.
Three clammy casuals wend their way
To the Union House. I hear one say:
"Jimmy, this is a treat! Hay-hay!"

Six laughing mouths, six rows of teeth,
Six radiant pairs of eyes, beneath
Six yellow hats, looking out at the back
Of a waggonette on its slowed-down track
Up the steep street to some gay dance,
Suddenly interrupt my glance.

They do not see a gray nightmare
Astride the day, or anywhere.

Some revelers, safe and warm inside their dwellings, have "spurned" the "outer world." That world outside their havens is revealed with a new clarity as the street lamps illuminate its "curious crude details." But the six young men on their way to "some gay dance" do not see the world through which they pass nor, as the poet observes, do they "see a gray nightmare/Astride the day, or anywhere." Like the multitude in "Yuletide," they too are blind. In "Nightmare," however, the blind are those who do not realize that Christmas points to Good Friday, that birth is the prelude to inevitable death.

Finally, in the quatrain "Christmas: 1924" (WW,171) Hardy makes what is perhaps his most openly cynical statement of the Christian holiday group:

"Peace upon earth!" was said. We
sing it,
And pay a million priests to bring it.
After two thousand years of mass
We've got as far as poison-gas.

Here the kindly face of Hardy can be seen "dark with fury" as he deplores man's lack of initiative in seeking a saner

solution than war and his reliance instead on what Hardy had referred to as "a belief in magic rites."

The Christian holiday group of poems in Winter Words makes one sort of ironic comment; the domestic poems make quite another. In Winter Words several poems employ homely, local settings, either indoors or out, as a framework for articulating the paradoxical nature of everyday experience. Many of these were based on what Hardy referred to as "village" stories.[41] In "After the Burial" (WW,91-92) the family has returned to the house after having buried the head of the household:

> The family had buried him,
> Their bread-bringer, their best:
> They had returned to the house, whose
> hush a dim
> Vague vacancy expressed.
>
> There sat his sons, mute, rigid-faced,
> His daughters, strained, red-eyed,
> His wife, whose wan, worn features vigil-
> traced,
> Bent over him when he died.
>
> At once a peal bursts from the bells
> Of a large tall tower hard by:

Along the street the jocund clangour
swells
And upward to the sky.

Probably it was a wedding-peal,
Or possibly for a birth,
Or townsman knighted for political zeal,
This resonant mark of mirth.

The mourners, heavy-browed, sat on
Motionless, Well they heard,
They could not help it; nevertheless
thereon
Spoke not a single word,

Nor window did they close, to numb
The bells' insistent calls
Of joy; but suffered the harassing din to
come
And penetrate their souls.

In "The Second Visit" (WW,125-26) the poet returns to a familiar place, the old mill, where "all there seems the same":

And so indeed it is: the apple-tree'd old
house,

And the deep mill pond, and the wet
wheel clacking,
And a woman on the bridge, and white
ducks quacking,
And the miller at the door, powdered pale
from boots to brows.

But it's not the same miller whom long
ago I knew,
Nor are they the same apples, nor the
same drops that dash
Over the wet wheel, nor the ducks below
that splash,
Nor the woman who to fond plaints replied,
"You know I do!"

These are well-known scenes and situations. Who has not sat with heavy heart in a mute circle, after the funeral of a loved one; who has not revisited a cherished place of long ago to find it the same, yet different? Perhaps the church bells did not resound in our ears in a "resonant mark of mirth" but there were other sounds to remind us that the world goes on, indifferent to our pain. And perhaps we did not leave behind on a bridge of our youth one whom we thought we loved, but nevertheless we

did move on, and the going back cannot take us back.

In each of these poems cited as instances of Hardy's irony, there is, to use Browning's phrase, a paradox which comforts as it mocks. In "The Second Visit" the irony of the contrast between the constancy of the scene and the inconstancy of the human relationship is balanced by the achievement of a rich equanimity based on a balance between detachment and sympathy--in other words, by a kind of tender but unsentimental humor. In "After the Burial" the dismalness of the ironic "jocund clamour" of the bells cannot be separated from the new-found dignity with which the mourners stoically suffer the din to "penetrate their souls." The honest, harsh self-appraisal in "Christmas: 1924" (for note that the poet uses the pronoun we, even as he does in "Yuletide") takes much of the sting out of the sarcastic contrast between preaching and practice. And in reading "A Nightmare, and The Next Thing," one cannot help feeling that the poet, as he observes the three casuals and the six radiant pairs of eyes, is carefully counting a gain to be set against the loss he sees and feels; although he deplores the willful blindness of those who spurn the outer world, his personal nightmare is somewhat alleviated by the insouciance of nine fellow men. Those who find only a single, unvarying theme and tone in such

poems as these are seeing only one facet of Hardy's gem-like art and of the microcosms of his poems; it is necessary to turn the gem a bit to see the flash from the complementary facet.

Edmund Blunden, in his critical biography of the poet, observes that Hardy often gives us "the unwelcome chance of knowing a long time ahead what he is going to say. . . . The reader is compelled to expect a melancholy close."[42] Blunden is right to some degree, for there are few happy endings in the Winter Words collection. But whether these last lines are melancholy or not, they serve a most useful function as an effective means for ironic expression. In The Art of Poetry, Paul Valéry states that, in his opinion, "the poem's only aim is to prepare its climax . . ., everything rises towards and is arranged to draw one's attention to the monstrance, to the last line!" Valéry believes that part of the artist's task is to "concentrate our attention upon several important points." These points, Valéry concludes, when "brought together and strengthened at the end, will powerfully contribute to the last, decisive flash."[43]

There is a difference, to be sure, between a pyrotechnical climax and Hardy's quiet understatement or matter-of-fact observation. Nevertheless, under Hardy's subtlety

there is a climax, a "last, decisive flash," however muted. "The Lodging-House Fuchsias" (WW,44) is an excellent example of Hardy's skill at climactic understatement:

Mrs. Masters's fuchsias hung
Higher and broader, and brightly swung,
    Bell-like, more and more
Over the narrow garden-path,
Giving the passer a sprinkle-bath
      In the morning.

She put up with their pushful ways,
And made us tenderly lift their sprays,
    Going to her door:
But when her funeral had to pass
They cut back all the flowery mass
      In the morning.

In "Throwing a Tree" (WW,48-49) two woodsmen (Hardy calls them "executioners") cut down a noble tree, and "two hundred years' steady growth has been ended in less than two hours." The parishioners who "Whispered at the Church-Opening" (WW,142-43) comment on the bishop whom they recalled as an eloquent speaker in their youth. But one remembered another preacher, "one in especial, sincerest of all," and asks, ". . . where is he now?" The reply is,

"Oh, he'd no touches of tactic skill:/His mind ran on charity and good will:/He's but as he was, a vicar still."

If the force of the poetic statement, whether it be a statement of contrast or paradox or ironic comment, is to reach its climax in the last lines, in Valéry's "last, decisive flash," then obviously the value of close attention to diction to convey these ideas cannot be underestimated. The poetry just cited is evidence of Hardy's ability to distill total meaning into a few words. The phrase "they cut back" in "The Lodging House Fuchsias" negates Mrs. Masters's polite request that visitors "tenderly lift their sprays" as they walk by. When the "executioners" are "Throwing a Tree" in the New Forest, "two hundred years' steady growth" are cancelled out "in less than two hours." In "Whispered at the Church-Opening," the bishop in the first line of the poem has "tactic skill," whereas the vicar, whose only virtues were complete sincerity, charity, and good will, is "a vicar still"--and, one may surmise, remembering Hardy's multi-sided view of life, is doing more good than he ever could have done if "tactic skill" had made him a bishop. We see the same climactic flash, as often as not accompanied by a sudden reverse of circumstances, in the last lines of some of the other poems discussed above: "Can such have ever been?"

in "Yuletide"; "Astride the day, or anywhere [italics mine]" in "A Nightmare"; "And penetrate their souls" in "After the Burial."

In order to arrange his "several important points" in such a way as to lead the reader to gain certain insights in the last, all-important lines, however, the poet must choose language which fits his subject. Most of the time, as evidenced by the poems quoted thus far, Hardy succeeds in this but, when he fails, he fails miserably. "Evening Shadows" (WW,41) is an outstanding example of Hardy's ability to choose the right words:

> The shadows of my chimneys stretch
> afar
> Across the plot, and on to the privet
> bower,
> And even the shadows of their smokings
> show,
> And nothing says just now that where they
> are
> They will in future stretch at this same
> hour,
> Though in my earthen cyst I shall not
> know.

And at this time the neighbouring Pagan
mound,
Whose myths the Gospel news now super-
sede,
Upon the greensward also throws its shade,
And nothing says such shade will spread
around
Even as to-day when men will no more
heed
The Gospel news than when the mound was
made.

First, Hardy speaks of the shadows of the chimneys at Max Gate. These are modern, substantial, strong, man-made structures. The pagan mount casts its shadow also, and it too was made by men to be strong, substantial, in ancient days. The shadows from the past and the shadows of the present are but ephemeral things, however, even as their sources are. This idea is in itself enough for a poem, but Hardy does not stop there. The contrast between the pagan myths and the Christian Gospel moves the poet (and the reader) out and away from the object-filled world of familiar surroundings into the realm of subjective speculation about the transitoriness of ideas. The myths of

ancient times were superseded by "the Gospel news," but "nothing" said that the new religion would be more lasting. Thus, the poet concludes, men today "no more heed/The Gospel news than when the mound was made." The original Christian message has been superseded too; by what, the poet does not say.

Hardy has deliberately chosen language which can best support his meaning. He uses nouns like shadow, smoke, and cyst to convey the idea of transitoriness, and yet he uses the words pagan and myth to connote the ancient past. He has linked the concept of a past which is irretrievable with the idea of a past which is still part of the present. The reader, as a matter of fact, could easily interpret the poem to be Hardy's statement of the relationship of the past to the present, and he could cite the phrases "at this same hour," "at this time," and the final "even as to-day" as proof of the poem's presentness. To come to this conclusion, however, is to ignore Hardy's careful choice of verb tenses. The first stanza moves from the present tense verbs stretch, show, says, and are to the future tense verbs will and shall. The second stanza begins by following the same pattern of present tense verb forms in the first four lines. The poem follows the prescribed pattern in the fifth line with the future tense

will. The last line, however, uses the past tense verb form was made. Surely Hardy did not resort so belatedly to the past tense to make the poem "read better" or merely because made rhymes with shade. On the contrary, the past tense not only supplies the missing link in the cycle of time of the present, as in the phrase "even as to-day," and the future, as in "when men will no more heed," it also serves to reinforce the contrast and the irony between the reality of an essentially transitory world and man's persistent belief in the permanence of works and ideas.

In sharp contrast to "Evening Shadows," "The Gap in the White" (WW,182-83) fails because the diction and the subject are not compatible:

> Something had cracked in her
> mouth as she slept,
> Having danced with the Prince long, and
> sipped his gold tass;
> And she woke in alarm, and quick, breath-
> lessly, leapt
> Out of bed to the glass.
>
> And there, in the blue dawn, her mouth
> now displayed
> To her woe, in the white

Level line of her teeth, a black gap she
had made
In a dream's nervous bite.

"O how can I meet him to-morrow!"
she said.
"I'd won him--yes, yes! Now, alas, he
is lost!"
(That age knew no remedy.) Duly her
dread
Proved the truth, to her cost.

And if you could go and examine her
grave
You'd find the gap there,
But not understand, now that science can
save,
Her unbounded despair.

Marsden states that Hardy's "eye for small details almost to the point of obsession" often prompted him to write trivial poems on trivial subjects.[44] But the subject of this poem is not the reason for its failure. Hardy was aware of and deeply sympathetic to the plights of young people in love, and to the often unforeseen circumstances

which prevented their marriages. In this poem he expresses compassion for a young girl, in the age before dentists, whose dreams of marriage to a prince are destroyed when she breaks a tooth in her sleep. The fault of the poem is not the subject but the diction. The first two lines are necessary to set up the situation, to be sure, but somehow they provoke a smile or even a laugh. "Having danced with the Prince long" follows too closely after "something cracked in her mouth as she slept." Then the reaction of the reader is almost one of disgust when he finds that the broken tooth has left "a black gap" because there is the suggestion of decay in the word black. Finally, the reader is invited to visit the unfortunate girl's grave to see the gap for himself. Cracked, gap, and black are all harsh words, and they contribute nothing to the sympathetic narration of the personal tragedy of a lovely young woman. The language and the subject in "The Gap in the White" simply do not fit one another.

Hardy's failures in Winter Words are few, however, considering his advanced age at the time of his preparation of the poems for publication. He had always been a careful, well-ordered writer, a reflection perhaps of his early architectural training. The manuscript of Winter Words offers important evidence as to Hardy's sensitive

craftsmanship.[45] "The Love-Letters" (WW,16) is a good example:

I met him quite by accident
In a bye-path that he'd frequent.
And, as he neared, the sunset glow
Warmed up the smile of pleasantry
Upon his too thin face, while he
Held a square packet up to me,
Of what, I did not know.

"Well," said he then; "they are my
old letters.
Perhaps she--rather felt them fetters. . . .
You see, I am in a slow decline,
And she's broken off with me, Quite right
To send them back, and true foresight;
I'd get too fond of her! To-night
I burn them--stuff of mine!"

He laughed in the sun--an ache in his
laughter--
And went. I heard of his death soon after.

In Hardy's original scribblings the first line of the poem reads: "I met him quite by accident. . . ." The

poet retains this first line in the final draft. What is significant, however, is that in the original manuscript this line is repeated in the final couplet:

> He smiled again in the sun, and went:
> I'd met him quite by accident.

But this repetition apparently did not suit Hardy. Perhaps he reasoned that repeating this line focused undue attention on the poet-narrator and this coincidental meeting, thereby weakening the tragic nature of his tale. Consequently, Hardy scratched out these last lines and revised them to read:

> He laughed in the sun--an ache in his
> laughter--
> And went. I heard of his death soon after.

The poet-narrator is still present, but the "I" is incidental to the tragedy of his friend's death. The poem now belongs wholly to the unhappy, unfortunate man, and not to the poet. Hardy's final draft of "The Love-Letters," therefore, succeeds in bringing together all the sorrow of lost love and all of the quiet desperation--in other words, all of the important points of which Valéry speaks--so that the poem culminates in one last ironic line: "I heard of his death soon after."

Hardy's either-or, this-and-that view of life cannot but result in irony, for every human experience has its "other" side. Youth points towards old age, and old age looks back to youth; behind hope is the fear of disappointment and despair; life leads inevitably to death; and eternity stands beyond finiteness. The irony is that these facets of our precious Life-Drama are irrevocably <u>there</u> but we only choose to see the most strikingly favorable reflections, reflections which blind us to the whole of reality and thus make us the more vulnerable when we are inevitably forced to view the dimming of them--so vulnerable that we are fixed in despair. But because Hardy usually chose to emphasize the dimming and the hard bounding edge first, too many of his readers have failed to see the flash of the complementary facet.

NOTES

[1]Robert Browning, "Rabbi Ben Ezra," in Poetry of the Victorian Period, ed. Jerome H. Buckley and George B. Woods (Chicago: Scott, Foresman, 1965), pp. 302-4.

[2]Florence Emily Hardy, The Life of Thomas Hardy, 1840-1928 (London: Macmillan, 1962), p. 445.

[3]Ibid., p. 383.

[4]Ibid., p. 223.

[5]Albert J. Guerard, Thomas Hardy (Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions-Laughlin, 1964), p. 161.

[6]R. P. Blackmur, "The Shorter Poems of Thomas Hardy," in Language as Gesture: Essays in Poetry (New York: Harcourt, 1952), pp. 52-55.

[7]Carl J. Weber, Hardy of Wessex: His Life and Literary Career (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1965), p. 295.

[8]Blackmur, pp. 59-60.

[9]Robert Penn Warren, "Pure and Impure Poetry," in Selected Essays (New York: Vintage-Knopf, 1966), p. 26.

[10]Ibid., p. 26.

[11]Life, pp. 284-85.

[12]Weber, p. 282.

[13]Life, p. 310.

[14]Samuel Hynes, The Pattern of Hardy's Poetry (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1961), p. 38.

[15]Life, p. 177.

[16]Walter Pater, The Renaissance (New York: Modern Library: Random House, n.d.), pp. 196-97.

[17]Life, p. 114.

[18]Ibid., p. 229.

[19]Ernst Cassirer, An Essay on Man (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1944), pp. 143-45.

[20]Life, p. 185.

[21]Weber, pp. 229, 257.

[22]Guerard, p. 163.

[23]Hynes, p. 66.

[24]Kenneth Marsden, The Poems of Thomas Hardy: A Critical Introduction (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969), p. 24.

[25]J. Hillis Miller, Distance and Desire (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 3-4.

[26]Life, p. 170.

[27]Josephine Miles, Eras and Modes in English Poetry (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1964), p. 152.

[28]Life, p. 128.

[29]Ibid., p. 177.

[30]James Granville Southworth, The Poetry of Thomas Hardy (New York: Russell, 1966), p. 15.

[31]Life, p. 272. In answer to Swinburne's favorable comments on Jude the Obscure, Hardy replied: "The 'grimy' features of the story go to show the contrast between the ideal life a man wished to lead, and the squalid real life he was fated to lead. . . . The idea was meant to run all through the novel. It is, in fact, to be discovered in everybody's life, though it lies less on the surface perhaps than it does in my poor puppet's."

[32]Gilbert Highet, The Anatomy of Satire (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1962), pp. 55-57. The italics are mine.

[33]Life, pp. 332-33.

[34]Ibid., p. 332.

[35]Ibid., p. 333.

[36]Ibid., pp. 210-11.

[37]Thomas Hardy, Collected Poems (New York: Macmillan, 1968), p. 439.

[38]H. C. Duffin, Thomas Hardy: A Study of the Wessex Novels, the Poems, and the Dynasts (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1962), pp. 346-47.

[39]Marsden, pp. 76-77.

[40]Southworth, p. 102.

[41]Life, p. 217.

[42]Edmund Blunden, Thomas Hardy (London: Macmillan, 1942), p. 248.

[43]Paul Valéry, The Art of Poetry, trans. Denise Folliot (New York: Pantheon, 1958), pp. 317-19.

[44]Marsden, pp. 40-41.

[45]Thomas Hardy, Winter Words MS. (Oxford: Queen's College Library), p. 16.

CHAPTER THREE

MAJOR FACETS

Youth and Old Age

Thomas Hardy was a fragile yet healthy child who liked to join his father and the other villagers in playing the violin for church services and village socials. On the other hand, the young Thomas was fond of his solitude. Already he was displaying the romantic temperament of involvement versus isolation. In later years, as he thought back over his boyhood in Higher Bockhampton, Dorset, he recalled his "adventures with the fiddle," yes, but his moments of solitary reflection left the more lasting impression.[1] One of the most vivid of these is the subject of "Childhood Among the Ferns" (WW,65-66):

> I sat one sprinkling day upon the lea,
> Where tall-stemmed ferns spread out
> luxuriantly,
> And nothing but those tall ferns sheltered
> me.
>
> The rain gained strength, and damped each
> lopping frond,
> Ran down their stalks beside me and
> beyond,

And shaped slow-creeping rivulets as I
conned,

With pride, my spray-roofed house. And
though anon
Some drops pierced its green rafters, I
sat on,
Making pretence I was not rained upon.

The sun then burst, and brought forth a
sweet breath
From the limp ferns as they dried under-
neath:
I said: "I could live on here thus till
death";

And queried in the green rays as I sate:
"Why should I have to grow to man's
estate,
And this afar-noised World perambulate?"

The conventional iambic pentameter form of "Childhood" and the repetition of the end rhyme within each stanza give the poem a certain classic dignity and smoothness. Furthermore, the diction used to describe the fern-covered lea and the nook in which the boy took

shelter--phrases like "sprinkling day," "tall-stemmed ferns," "slow-creeping rivulets," "sweet breath," and words like "luxuriantly" and "limp"--is sonorous and sensuous. The reader shares in the intimacy and the immediacy of the moment. The whole lush description, as a matter of fact, is that of a romantic Eden. The final question reinforces the paradisaical image by contrasting the secluded glen with the "afar-noised World." The child of nature longed to remain just that, living forever in his house of ferns, breathing until death the sweet scents of the lea. He had a passionate desire to stop time; he wanted to halt the relentless passing of youth into age.

Now, this poem was not written when Hardy was a young man. It is not dated, but most critics agree that it is one of the poet's later works. Therefore, because there is this looking back to a time of innocence, to a paradise, we can conclude that Hardy's purpose in writing "Childhood" was twofold: he wanted to express the idea that time and change are not necessarily to man's advantage; and he wanted to recapture the essence of a "felicitous moment."[2]

Considering Hardy's twofold purpose, the reader might well ask, as does Southworth, "Could, in fact, a

child have any conception of the nature of the universe?"[3] But to ask this is to forget Wordsworth's observation that "the Child is father of the Man." The child wishes to stop time because he realizes that with adulthood comes involvement, pain, and heartache. These he wishes to avoid by remaining forever under the "green rafters" of his "spray-roofed house." Hardy symbolically allows some raindrops to "pierce" the refuge, and the child tries to pretend that he "was not rained upon." His defiant question at the end of the poem is, in fact, an acknowledgment of the impossibility of keeping the rain out even when the sun bursts forth occasionally.

"A Wish for Unconsciousness" (WW,10) expresses the same longing to reverse the natural course of life, but here the point of view is that of the older man who has experienced "this afar-noised World":

> If I could but abide
> As a tablet on a wall,
> Or a hillock daisy-pied,
> Or a picture in a hall,
> And as nothing else at all,
> I should feel no doleful achings,
> I should hear no judgment-call,
> Have no evil dreams or wakings,

No uncouth or grisly care;
In a word, no cross to bear.

In an article written for the Fortnightly Review (August, 1887) Hardy stated: "I have very often felt . . . that one of the most beautiful of English lyrics is Shelley's Lament, 'O World, O Life, O Time'. . . ."[4] The poem is worth repeating here because of the remarkable similarity of its sentiment to Hardy's own verse:

O world! O life! O time!
On whose last steps I climb,
Trembling at that where I had stood before;
When will return the glory of your prime?
No more--Oh, never more!

Out of the day and night
A joy has taken flight;
Fresh spring, and summer, and winter hoar,
Move my faint heart with grief, but with delight
No more--Oh, never more![5]

Hardy's youth and old age poems are poems of remembrance of youth more than they are poems about youth. They are written from the perspective of age looking back to days of "fresh spring, and summer"; they are written in

the midst of "winter hoar"; their mood is bitter-sweet. In his discussion of Hardy's imagery Hynes observes that "there is scarcely one pure 'youth' poem in the whole of Hardy."[6] Hynes forgets the joy-filled lyrics written in Hardy's youth, poems like "When I Set Out for Lyonnesse," written in 1870:[7]

When I set out for Lyonnesse,
  A hundred miles away,
  The rime was on the spray,
And starlight lit my lonesomeness
When I set out for Lyonnesse
  A hundred miles away.

What would bechance at Lyonnesse
  While I should sojourn there
  No prophet durst declare,
Nor did the wisest wizard guess
What would bechance at Lyonnesse
  While I should sojourn there.

When I came back from Lyonnesse
  With magic in my eyes,
All marked with mute surmise
My radiance rare and fathomless,
When I came back from Lyonnesse
  With magic in my eyes!

The youth and old age poems in Winter Words, however, reflect a different point of view. Hynes asserts that the point of view in the majority of Hardy's poems is that of one in a "dark world" looking back on the "light world of youth" and, he states: "The contrast . . . is the old opposition of illusion and reality, and youth is the bright illusion." It is Hynes's belief that the dark world figures "far more prominently in the poems" than does the light world, and that it is the "world of Hardy's mature vision, stripped of illusion, pessimistic, 'neutral-tinted.'"[8] I believe, however, that Hardy's youth and old age poems are neither pessimistic nor optimistic, but realistic. What Hynes does not recognize is that, along with Hardy's "mature vision, stripped of illusion," there is the quality of childlike candor, as expressed in "Childhood Among the Ferns." It was this quality which prompted H. M. Tomlinson to observe: "Sometimes when talking to him you felt this child was as old as humanity and knew all about us, but that he did not attach importance to his knowledge because he did not know that he had it. Just by chance, in the drift of the talk, there would be a word by Hardy, not only wide of the mark, but apparently not directed to it. Why did he say it? On the way home, or some weeks later, his comment would be

recalled, and with the revealing light on it."[9]

Hardy's "mature vision, stripped of illusion" combined with the unencumbered perception of childhood allows the poet to recognize some important facts about the aging process. The Winter Words collection reflects these observations. First, Hardy acknowledges that the loss of youthful vigor results in a slackening of zest. Second, there is the obvious loss of physical beauty. Third, as one ages and circumstances change, one often experiences the loss of ardor or passion. Fourth, there is the loss of loved ones who have died while one still lives on and on. But Hardy also recognizes that the experience gained from the loss of innocence may lead to new insights. In themselves, these observations are not particularly unusual. Other poets and novelists have come to the same conclusions. But because Hardy's mental faculties were not impaired despite his advanced age, and because he had the courage to face squarely these truths in the midst of predominantly self-deluded society, his comments have a special value.

As has been pointed out, in the preface to Winter Words Hardy had confessed a certain lack of enthusiasm about the publication of his own work. He had expressed long before this his opinion of birthdays. In a letter

to Lord Curzon thanking him for his greetings on the poet's seventieth birthday, Hardy observed: ". . . to be candid I think I felt rather more exhilarated by the birthday that was expressed by the 7 without the 0 than by that expressed with it; for I never can forget that 'Time is as wind, and as waves are we,'--as my friend Swinburne wrote so aptly and beautifully."[10]

The poem "Seeing the Moon Rise" (WW,111), written in August, 1927, when he was eighty-seven, is a touching admission of physical frailty:

We used to go to Froom-hill Barrow
To see the round moon rise
Into the heath-rimmed skies,
Trudging thither by plough and harrow
Up the pathway, steep and narrow,
Singing a song.
Now we do not go there. Why?
Zest burns not so high!

Latterly we've only conned her
With a passing glance
From window or door by chance,
Hoping to go again, high yonder,
As we used, and gaze, and ponder,

Singing a song.

Thitherward we do not go:

Feet once quick are slow!

But "Seeing the Moon Rise" is more than a poem about the poet's physical inability to climb a hill. A new theme is introduced with the line "Hoping to go again, high yonder"; its significance is underscored when the reader contrasts it to its counterpart in the first stanza. In the first stanza the lines

Trudging thither by plough and harrow

Up the pathway, steep and narrow,

Singing a song. . . .

emphasize physical effort and animal spirits. In the second stanza, however, the lines

Hoping to go again, high yonder,

As we used, and gaze, and ponder,

Singing a song. . . .

imply more of a spiritual elevation and a mental serenity. The poet does not force the contrast or even make it quite distinct, yet the hint of contrast is just strong enough to make the last line, which reverts to the theme of physical disability, slightly ambiguous.

Jacques Maritain, in his Creative Intuition in Art

and Poetry, observes that the poet's "creative insight miserably depends on the external world, and on the infinite heap of forms and beauties already made by men, and on the mass of things that generations have learned, and on the code of signs which is used by his fellow men and which he receives from a language he has not made." Furthermore, Maritain states: "It is hard for any man, especially for a poet, to struggle against the streams of his world. Nevertheless the poet, though not in the manner of the saint, is also in this world without being of this world. If he wants to save his poetry, he must resist the world, at least to preserve or reconquer the basic presences or existential certitudes. . . ."[11]

Hardy had resisted for more than fifty years "the streams of his world"; he had spent a lifetime trying to "preserve or reconquer the basic presences or existential certitudes." Now he was admittedly tired; his physical infirmities were catching up with him. "Feet once quick" were slow, but not as slow as those of his readers who think that he was old and stiff long before his time.

"The Woman Who Went East" (WW,177-78) deals with the loss of physical beauty. The poem is, in effect, a conversation between an "old native" and a "stranger Dame." The woman asks about the fate of a young girl who, "in

rays of her own rareness drest,/And fired by sunset from the sea," ran off with a new lover. The native answers that, because "her own west land she reckoned least/Of all lands, with its weird old way," she went east where her beauty would be properly appreciated. Then the old woman confesses:

> . . . That woman, I am she:
> This skeleton that Time so tries
> Your rose of rareness used to be;
> Yes, sweetheart, I am she.

Once again there is the final flash in the last line, this time a bright flash of irony with just a tinge of the color of ambiguity. "Yes, sweetheart, I am she," she says. Does the faded woman, once so much in love with her own beauty, now have some inkling of what the word sweetheart might mean? In any case, she is a sadder but wiser person.

"A Countenance" (WW,67-68), described by Duffin as a "bizarre, modern bit of portraiture,"[12] relates the loss of ardor due to time and physical separation:

> Her laugh was not in the middle of
> her face quite,
> As a gay laugh springs,

It was plain she was anxious about
some things
I could not trace quite.
Her curls were like fir-cones--piled
up, brown--
Or rather like tight-tied sheaves:
It seemed they could never be taken
down. . . .

And her lips were too full, some might
say:
I did not think so. Anyway,
The shadow her lower one would cast
Was green in hue whenever she passed
Bright sun on midsummer leaves.
Alas, I knew not much of her,
And lost all sight and touch of her!
If otherwise, should I have minded
The shy laugh not in the middle of
her mouth quite,
And would my kisses have died of
drouth quite
As love became unblinded?

"Concerning Agnes" (WW,95-96) recalls a more pleasant

yet sadder memory. The poet confides: "I am stopped from hoping what I have hoped before. . . . To dance with that fair woman yet once more/As in the prime/Of August. . . ." He can never "have over again/That old romance" because his loved one is dead. The loss of love in "Concerning Agnes" is due to the death of his young sweetheart and not to the disenchantment which may come from absence or a more objective view, as in "The Countenance." The focus in "Concerning Agnes" is first on the old lover looking back to "the prime of August," when he and his loved one sat "apart in the shade" and held hands while others danced and "feet still pulsed from the distant rooms," and second, and more important, on his being still alive whereas she now "lies white, straight, features marble-keen,/Unapproachable, mute. . . ."

With aging comes the fading of physical beauty, the waning of love, and the death of loved ones. Guerard states that "by all odds [Hardy's] most authentic note is that of mourning: mourning over the dead, over the death of love, over the death of the heart."[13] But these are not poems of lamentation; they are poems of poignant remembrance. Furthermore, as in "The Countenance," the youth and old age poems often contain the quality of confession when "love became unblinded." This unblinding is

in fact the recognition of enlightenment. Yet the enlightenment in "Concerning Agnes" does not disfigure what was once beautiful, as time does for those who cannot see life whole. Rather, it preserves, even enhances it. Agnes, who is rigid in her grave, will remain in the speaker's mind "some vague goddess, shaped/As out of snow";

> Say Aphrodite sleeping; or bedraped
> Like Kalupso;
> Or Amphitrite stretched on the Mid-sea
> swell,
> Or one of the Nine grown stiff from
> thought. I cannot tell!

"The Mound" (WW,21-22) is an admission of the value of experience:

> For a moment pause:--
> Just here it was;
> And through the thin thorn hedge, by the
> rays of the moon,
> I can see the tree in the field, and
> beside it the mound--
> Now sheeted with snow--whereon we sat
> that June
> When it was green and round,

And she crazed my mind by what she
coolly told--
The history of her undoing,
(As I saw it), but she called
"comradeship,"
That bred in her no rueing:
And saying she'd not be bound
For life to one man, young, ripe-
yeared, or old,
Left me--an innocent simpleton to her
viewing;
For, though my accompt of years out-
scored her own,
Hers had more hotly flown. . . .
We never met again by this green mound,
To press as once so often lip on lip,
And palter, and pause:--
Yes; here it was!

The poet admits that once he had been "an innocent simpleton" but he is wiser now. The last line of "The Mound" contains all the remembrance of his youthful heart-break, but it also carries hints of a hard lesson well-learned: "Yes, here it was that I began to learn about women."

In "Song to Aurore" (WW,112) the poet's statement is a mature, positive assertion of the triumph of enlightened reason over youthful passion:

We'll not begin again to love,
    It only leads to pain;
The fire we now are master of
  Has seared us not in vain.
Any new step of yours I'm fain
    To hear of from afar,
And even in such may find a gain
  While lodged not where you are.

No: that must not be done anew
  Which has been done before;
I scarce could bear to seek, or view,
    Or clasp you any more!
Life is a labour, death is sore,
  And lonely living wrings;
But go your courses, sweet Aurore,
    Kisses are caresome things!

Here, as in "Childhood Among the Ferns" and "Seeing the Moon Rise," there is more to Hardy's Aurore than the realization that "kisses are caresome things." Aurore, or Dawn, symbolizes the beginning of a new day, the beginning of

life, and, in turn, may symbolize childhood and youth. The mature poet, as he approaches the end of his days, looks back to Aurore and the lessons she taught him. He admits that he once loved her passionately, but he emphatically states that he does not wish to relive his youth again. Again Hardy's 'mature vision, stripped of illusion," asserts itself. He has grown "to man's estate," and he accepts the labor and the loneliness of life, and the soreness of death.

Hope and Despair

The hope and despair poems in Winter Words are closely associated with the youth and old age poems. As "A Wish for Unconsciousness" points out, the "doleful achings," the "judgment-call," the "evil dreams or wakings," and the "grisly care" would not exist if one could but detach oneself from the conscious world of experience. In "Proud Songsters" (WW,3) Hardy expresses his envy of the birds who can sing on and on, oblivious to their fate:

> The thrushes sing as the sun is going,
> And the finches whistle in ones and
> pairs,
> And as it gets dark loud nightingales
> In bushes

Pipe, as they can when April wears,
As if all Time were theirs.
These are brand new birds of twelve-
months' growing,
Which a year ago, or less than twain,
No finches were, nor nightingales,
Nor thrushes,
But particles of grain,
And earth, and air, and rain.

"I Watched a Blackbird" (WW,72) conveys the same sentiment:

I watched a blackbird on a budding
sycamore
One Easter Day, when sap was stirring
twigs to the core;
I saw his tongue, and crocus-coloured
bill
Parting and closing as he turned his trill;
Then he flew down, seized on a stem of
hay,
And upped to where his building scheme
was under way,
As if so sure a nest were never shaped
on spray.

These two poems are, in a very real sense, sequels to "The Darkling Thrush," which appeared in Hardy's Poems of the Past and the Present.[14] In "The Darkling Thrush" the poet leans despondently on his gate one bleak winter evening, reflecting on the deadness of the world, when

> At once a voice arose among
> The bleak twigs overhead
> In a full-hearted evensong
> Of joy illimited;
> An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,
> In blast-beruffled plume,
> Had chosen thus to fling his soul
> Upon the growing gloom.
>
> So little cause for carolings
> Of such ecstatic sound
> Was written on terrestrial things
> Afar or nigh around,
> That I could think there trembled through
> His happy good-night air
> Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew
> And I was unaware.

The old thrush, in the twilight of his life, is still expressing the same "blessed Hope" as the younger birds

which sing so blithely and build their nests so confidently in "Proud Songsters" and "I Watched a Blackbird."

In the three poems just quoted the birds are ignorant of their beginnings or their endings. But man is not unconscious of the promises of the past, nor is he unaware of the fragility of his future. It is this very awareness which can turn a hope-filled man to despair. In a letter to Sir Sidney Cockerell shortly after the outbreak of World War I, Hardy observed:

> As for myself, the recognition that we are living in a more brutal age than that, say, of Elizabeth, or of the chivalry which could cry: "Gentlemen of the Guard, fire first!" (far more brutal, indeed: no chivalry now!) does not inspire one to write hopeful poetry, or even conjectural prose, but simply makes one sit still in an apathy, and watch the clock spinning backwards, with a mild wonder if, when it gets back to the Dark Ages, and the sack of Rome, it will ever move forward again to a new Renascence, and a new literature.[15]

Perhaps the poet in "Christmastide" (WW,26) is preoccupied with thoughts like these as he walks through the rain one Christmas evening:

The rain-shafts splintered on me
    As despondently I strode;
The twilight gloomed upon me
    And bleared the blank high-road.
Each bush gave forth, when blown on
    By gusts in shower and shower,
A sigh, as it were sown on
    In handfuls by a sower.

A cheerful voice called, nigh me,
    "A merry Christmas, friend!"--
There rose a figure by me,
    Walking with townward trend,
A sodden tramp's, who, breaking
    Into thin song, bore straight
Ahead, direction taking
    Toward the Casuals' gate.

"In Tenebris II," composed in 1895-96 and published in Poems of the Past and Present,[16] expresses the opinion that perhaps the poet is the only one who is out of step, who views his world with misgivings. The others, stout and strong, say, "All's well with us," and go "breezily" on their way. The poet muses, "Then what is the matter is

I, I say. Why should such a one be here? . . ." He concludes:

> Let him in whose ears the low-voiced Best is
> killed by the clash of the First,
> Who holds that if way to the Better there
> be, it exacts a full look at the Worst,
> Who feels that delight is a delicate growth
> cramped by crookedness, custom, and fear,
> Get him up and be gone as one shaped awry;
> he disturbs the order here.

Compared to "In Tenebris II," "Christmastide" is a more colloquial statement of the poet's overwhelming sense of isolation. The artist <u>is</u> a disturbing factor in his society, as Cassirer has suggested, particularly when he uses the technique of irony and satire to point up the fact that all is <u>not</u> well. Whether Hardy meant the tramp to signify man's hope for better things, or at least a cheery acceptance of the way things are, or whether he saw the tramp as the personification of those ills of society which the "stout upstanders" in "In Tenebris II" refuse to recognize and remedy, nevertheless the poet, despondent in the twilight, trudges down the "high-road," his future "blank" and full of despair.

We have no positive way of determining whether Hardy has assumed a persona in "Christmastide" or not. Paul Zietlow, in his essay "Thomas Hardy and William Barnes," supplies us with some valuable clues to the meaning of the dichotomy between hope and despair which is so obvious in the confrontation of the tramp and the poet. Zietlow states that Hardy's poetry emphasizes "the contrasts between past and present because those contrasts usually signal a sense of radical discontinuity experienced by the speaker, discontinuity much greater than the inevitable changes wrought by time in normal human life." Zietlow concludes: "Hardy's theme is more often the abrupt break between past and present, a psychological, social, and intellectual discontinuity which the speaker himself has experienced."[17] But what Zietlow overlooks is that it is this very awareness of discontinuity that enables Hardy to bring the experience of the past into such sharp focus. We ought to recall that Wordsworth, in the midst of remembrances of things past, says that

> . . . so wide appears
> The vacancy between me and those days
> Which yet have such self-presence in my mind,
> That musing on them, often do I seem

Two consciousnesses. . . .

(The Prelude, II, 28-32.)[18]

And it is precisely this experience of heightened self-consciousness that gives Hardy the hope that the Immanent Will may someday cease to be blind. In the meantime he accepts, though often despondently and filled with self-doubt, his alienation from the cheerful, carefree world of the tramp--and from his own former self. And so he walks alone, head-down, a "blank high-road" of his own making.

Life and Death

The despondent poet in "Christmastide" represents only one side of Hardy, then. The despair he sometimes feels over the anomalous condition of Homo sapiens does not negate his hope for the fulfillment of man's potential. The two emotions exist side by side, the one gaining ascendency over the other according to the poet's humor. But this paradoxical alliance is due not only to his reflections upon the loss and gain that go with the changes brought by despair, joy and sorrow, fulfillment and failure--all are transitory. For the individual, death closes all. Of the 105 poems in Winter Words, at least thirty-five deal either directly or indirectly with death and its symbols.

The manner in which Hardy deals with this theme further illustrates his almost unique power to face and make the most of the contradictions inherent in the human condition, the inherent perversities of human nature. Obviously, he felt that it is well to live always with the consciousness of the inevitability and possible imminence of death. Such consciousness does not necessarily dampen the random joys of life or deepen the despair occasioned by its failures and disappointments. On the contrary, living on intimate terms with the fact of death may make one more receptive to the beauty of life. "Afterwards," the last poem in Hardy's Moments of Vision, well expresses such awareness:

> When the Present has latched its postern
> behind my tremulous stay,
> And the May month flaps its glad green leaves
> like wings,
> Delicate-filmed as new-spun silk, will the
> neighbours say,
> "He was a man who used to notice such things"?
>
> If it be in the dusk when, like an eyelid's
> soundless blink,
> The dewfall-hawk comes crossing the shades
> to alight

Upon the wind-warped upland thorn, a gazer may
think,
"To him this must have been a familiar sight."

If I pass during some nocturnal blackness,
mothy and warm,
When the hedgehog travels furtively over the
lawn,
One may say, "He strove that such innocent
creatures should come to no harm,
But he could do little for them; and now he
is gone."

If, when hearing that I have been stilled
at last, they stand at the door,
Watching the full-starred heavens that winter
sees,
Will this thought rise on those who will meet
my face no more,
"He was one who had an eye for such mysteries"?

And will any say when my bell of quittance is
heard in the gloom,
And a crossing breeze cuts a pause in its
outrollings,

> Till they rise again, as they were a new bell's boom,
> "He hears it not now, but used to notice such things"?

Once again, one is reminded of Pater:

> . . . we are all condamnés as Victor Hugo says: we are all under sentence of death but with a sort of indefinite reprieve. . . . We have an interval, and then our place knows us no more. . . . our one chance lies in expanding that interval, in getting as many pulsations as possible into the given time.[19]

"Afterwards" also suggests a wistful desire for existence after death in the memory of others. Hardy did not count much on that hope; indeed, he frequently warns against it. Yet, faint as it was, it was an added inducement to use the thought of death as a means of getting the most out of life.

It is true that Hardy, in view of death, sometimes feels and expresses an indifference to life, as in "The New Dawn's Business" (WW,1) and "A Placid Man's Epitaph" (WW,146). Yet one must be aware that such indifference was willed. In any case, "I Am the One" (WW,6-7) suggests

that it is tantamount to a "wise passiveness" which can make one forget one's self and feel accepted as an integral part of the universe:

I am the one whom ringdoves see
Through chinks in boughs
When they do not rouse
In sudden dread,
But stay on cooing, as if they said:
"Oh; it's only he."

I am the passer when up-eared hares,
Stirred as they eat
The new-sprung wheat,
Their munch resume
As if they thought: "He is one for whom
Nobody cares."

Wet-eyed mourners glance at me
As in train they pass
Along the grass
To a hallowed spot,
And think: "No matter; he quizzes not
Our misery."

I hear above: "We stars must lend
No fierce regard
To his gaze, so hard
Bent on us thus,--
Must scathe him not. He is one with us
Beginning and end."

A constant awareness, then, that les hommes sont tous condamnés à mort avec des sursis indéfinis can yield, as Pater puts it, a "quickened, multiplied consciousness"[20] when such quickening is desirable. On the other hand, however, it can keep one from nursing extravagant hopes for a place in history. "Drinking Song" (WW,155-58) is a robust, lively account of the history of science and philosophy. Each thinker from Thales to Einstein has been convinced that he had discovered the truth, only to have his successor refute his theories. The jolly chorus serves to remind us of the transitoriness even of great learning: "Fill full your cups: feel no distress;/ That thoughts so great should now be less."

In his introduction to Hardy's Selected Poems, John Crowe Ransom points out that Hardy thought "of death as an abiding rest from the troubles of life; that was according to his years and his taste."[21] Thus the aged

poet could choose to begin Winter Words with a poem in which he converses with Time (or death) with a certain stoic fortitude, with a certain intimacy, and with a certain longing for release:

What are you doing outside my walls,
O Dawn of another day?
I have not called you over the edge
Of the heathy ledge,
So why do you come this way,
With your furtive footstep without
sound here,
And your face so deedily gray?

"I show a light for killing the man
Who lives not far from you,
And for bringing to birth the lady's child,
Nigh domiciled,
And for earthing a corpse or two,
And for several other such odd jobs
around here
That Time to-day must do.

"But you he leaves alone (although,
As you have often said,

You are always ready to pay the debt
You don't forget
You owe for board and bed:)
The truth is, when men willing are
found here
He takes those loth instead."

(WW, 1-2)

In the same Fortnightly Review article in which he had praised Shelley's Lament, Hardy also cited Byron's Childe Harold, Canto III, Stanzas 85 to 87 as representative of the "most descriptive poetry" in the English language.[22] In these stanzas Byron relates the fall of that "immortal rebel," Cromwell, from his "throne of force." According to Byron, it was Cromwell's destiny to die on the anniversary of two great victories. Fortune cares nothing for "fame and sway,/And all we deem delightful . . . ." Cromwell, therefore, was "disposed . . . gently" and "laid with the earth's preceding clay." So too were Pompey and Caesar brought down, and Byron asks, ". . . have ye been/ Victors of countless kings, or puppets of a scene?"

Like Byron, Hardy acknowledges death as a kind of defeat for man while, at the same time, he sees man in his "dying dignity" as achieving a sort of triumph over

life. This peculiar combination of acceptance of the inevitable, on the one hand, and subtle defiance on the other is the theme of "After the Death of a Friend" (WW,59):

> You died, and made but little of it!--
> Why then should I, when called to doff it,
> Drop, and renounce this worm-holed
> raiment,
> Shrink edgewise off from its grey
> claimant?
> Rather say, when I am Time-outrun,
> As you did: Take me, and have done,
> Inexorable, insatiate one!

The same dignity counteracts the irony in the poem "The Three Tall Men" (WW,42-43). This is a conversation about a very tall man who, "when he has leisure,/Is making himself a coffin to measure" because he remembers that his father's coffin was "shockingly short." Then, a year later, he is heard tapping again, hard at work to replace the first coffin which he had to use for his only brother. But, years later, he is still tapping away because, as the narrator explains, ". . . his son,/As tall as he, died; aye, and as trim,/And his sorrowful father bestowed it on him." The narrator adds, "And now the man is making a

third,/To be used for himself when he is interred." But Hardy, with his customary irony, concludes the poem with these lines:

> Many years later was brought to me
> News that the man had died at sea.

Yet, firm as his conviction was about the value--or, for some, the necessity--of living with death, Hardy was realistic enough to recognize that forgetfulness of mortality, especially one's own, could be a blessing. He admits as much in "The New Boots" (WW,147). Would the man have gained anything by refusing the cherished gear on the chance that he might die suddenly? We have seen the same candor concerning youth's bright hopes in "When I Set Out for Lyonnesse," and we see it again in "A Self-Glamourer" (WW,83). Here the poet is more sardonic, to be sure, yet he does not fail to count the gain against the inevitable loss.

Marsden observes that "if Hardy seems to spend too much time in the graveyard and sometimes to be a little too much at his ease there," we might recall that many of his literary ancestors shared this taste.[23] Southworth adds that Hardy's "frequent references" to graveyards "never suggest morbid connotations. Their proximity to

the church and the frequency with which any village inhabitant must necessarily pass by or through them tends to remove the oppressive quality that is sometimes associated with those in America."[24] In Hardy's Wessex country--indeed, in all of England--there is not a hamlet, village, or town which does not have within its midst a church surrounded by a graveyard. One walks out of the pub, a merry place, and looks across the green at moss-covered tombstones, the names obliterated by weathering, their narrow plots overgrown with weeds, or at glimmering headstones, the names freshly chiseled, the fresh-turned earth strewn with fading flowers.

But this juxtaposition of pub and grave is like that of life and death, and those who think that Hardy "spent too much time" writing poems about death forget that he was actually reflecting on the most profound aspect of life. Virginia Woolf, in her tribute to Hardy after his death, writes that through Hardy's writings

> our imaginations have been stretched and heightened; our humour has been made to laugh out; we have drunk deep of the beauty of the earth. Also we have been made to enter the shade of a sorrowful and brooding spirit. . . . Thus it is no mere transcript of life at a certain time and place

> that Hardy has given us. It is a vision of the world and of man's lot as they revealed themselves to a powerful imagination, a profound and poetic genius, a gentle and humane soul.[25]

Eternity and Finiteness

To have a "vision of the world" at the same time one has a "vision . . . of man's lot," a vision which "is no mere transcript of life at a certain time and place," is to transcend the temporal and spatial limits of finiteness. Such "moments of vision" form the essence of the poetic spirit. But as Virginia Woolf points out, such visions do not "run together easily in harness." Hardy, "who was at once poet and realist," moved back and forth, from one plane of consciousness to the other, always attempting to reconcile the two. Sometimes he succeeded; sometimes he did not.[26] Nevertheless, the life-long effort to fuse the two visions constitutes what Barzun refers to as "Hardy's one world."[27]

In a journal entry for June 10, 1923, Hardy reflects: "Relativity. That things and events always were, are, and will be (e.g. Emma, Mother and Father are living still in the past)."[28] Two years later, in Hardy's Human Shows collection of verse, was to appear the poem "The Absolute

Explains" in which "It" states:[29]

Your "Now" is just a gleam, a glide
Across your gazing sense:
With me, "Past," "Future," ever abide:
They come not, go not, whence
They are never hence.

In Winter Words "The Clasped Skeletons" (86-88) describes the finding of a pair of skeletons "in an Ancient British barrow near the writer's house." Long before "Paris lay with Helena" or "Cleopatra with Antony," or "Ages before Monk Abélard/Gained tender Héloise' ear," the "lovers in death" had lain "in placid dignity." "Yet," asks the poet, addressing the dead,

. . . what is length of time? But dream!
Once breathed this atmosphere
Those fossils near you, met the gleam
Of day as you did here:

But so far earlier theirs beside
Your life-span and career,
That they might style of yestertide
Your coming here!

In the discussion of "Evening Shadows" in Chapter Two

it was pointed out that Hardy had used the tenses of his verbs to convey the relativity of temporal concepts, a technique which also serves to move the reader from the world of conscious experience into the realm of visionary experience. The movement of "Evening Shadows" is from present to future to past. This is different from that of "The Clasped Skeletons," which moves from the present directly into the past. But whatever the time relationships, this ability to see behind the present to the past and beyond the present to the future is characteristic of the historian. Cassirer states that the competent historian is required to sort out and interpret the facts "not only as dead remnants of the past but as living messages from it, messages addressing us in a language of their own."[30] This interpretation of the past in terms of the present becomes by its very nature a prophecy. Historical knowledge brings to man an awareness of his present condition and of the limitations of his past, which in turn provides a basis for assumptions about his future. Hardy lived and died amongst the relics of England's most ancient past. The wild and untameable heath was his neighbor, and he was, to use his own homely phrase, "within a bicycle ride" of Stonehenge.[31] He had his own Druid stone at Max Gate, around the base of which were found

"a quantity of ashes and half charred bones."[32] These were tangible ties with the past, and through them Hardy could see visions of what was, is now, might have been, and might yet be.

This insight is present even in his so-called "nature" poems. As Blunden observes, Hardy's "vision did not stop at the human scene, but traversed the far wider universe about us with the feeling that our particular lot is not the only thing that counts. . . ."[33] In "June Leaves and Autumn" (WW,163-64), for example, Hardy writes of the "melancholy fate" which awaits the lush green leaves of summer:

> Lush summer lit the trees to green;
> But in the ditch hard by
> Lay dying boughs some hand unseen
> Had lopped when first with festal mien
> They matched their mates on high.
> It seemed a melancholy fate
> That leaves but brought to birth so late
> Should rust there, red and numb,
> In quickened fall, while all their race
> Still joyed aloft in pride of place
> With store of days to come.
> At autumn-end I fared that way,

And traced those boughs fore-hewn
Whose leaves, awaiting their decay
In slowly browning shades, still lay
Where they had lain in June
And now, no less embrowned and curst
Than if they had fallen with the first,
Nor known a morning more,
Lay there alongside, dun and sere,
Those that at my last wandering here
Had length of days in store.

"An Unkindly May" (WW,17-18) describes a shepherd whose whole attention is concentrated on counting his flock; he is oblivious to the inclement weather. But the poem belongs to nature:

The sour spring wind is blurting boisterous-
wise,
And bears on it dirty clouds across the
skies;
Plantation timbers creak like rusty cranes,
And pigeons and rooks, dishevelled by late
rains,
Are like gaunt vultures, sodden and unkempt,
And song-birds do not end what they attempt:

The buds have tried to open, but quite
failing
Have pinched themselves together in their
quailing.

The sun frowns whitely in eye-trying flaps
Through passing cloud-holes, mimicking
audible taps.
"Nature, you're not commendable to-day!"
I think, "Better to-morrow!" she seems to
say.

By ignoring the unnatural May day, the shepherd has, in effect, separated himself from nature. But nature, in its turn, is indifferent to man's predicaments. In "Suspense" (WW,124) two lovers are separated by distance, by a "foe" who, from his hidden retreat, "is watching" to destroy them if they meet. They are also separated by nature, however, which will keep on going whether they are ever united:

. . . it matters little, however we fare--
Whether we meet, or I get not there;
The sky will look the same thereupon,
And the wind and the sea go groaning on.

Despite nature's obvious indifference, Hardy believed that it was possible for mankind to achieve some sort of reconciliation with history, with nature, and, by extension, with the universe. In his journal he notes: "Coming back from Talbothays by West Stafford Cross I saw Orion upside-down in a pool of water under an oak."[34] Had he written that he saw Orion reflected in the pool, Orion would have remained a constellation out there, as separated from him as was the "unkindly" May day from the shepherd. But to see Orion "upside-down" in the water brings the mythical hunter, complete with belt and sword, down to earth and home to us, even though we have to cock our heads to look at him properly. By a mere twist of the head Hardy erased the bounds between the finite world and infinity. Through his poetic vision he was able to savor the essence of eternity in one finite moment.

Historical prophecy and cosmic insight, as has been pointed out, are essential to the poetic spirit. But Hardy was also a "realist" in the sense that he recognized the limitations of finiteness. Furthermore, he had the courage to question the riddle of the universe. In "A Necessitarian's Epitaph" (WW,119) he writes:

A world I did not wish to enter
Took me and poised me on my centre,

Made me grimace, and foot, and prance,
As cats on hot bricks have to dance
Strange jigs to keep them from the floor,
Till they sink down and feel no more.

Again, this is the man standing apart, separated from eternity by his own willful questionings. In Winter Words, however, Hardy the visionary poet has the last say. They "know not me," he writes in "Not Known" (WW,179),

They know a phasm they name as me,
In whom I should not find
A single self-held quality
of body or mind.

Behind the "phasm" the real Hardy could acknowledge and attempt to reconcile what actually appeared in the objective world of phenomena with what was and ought to be as revealed by his poetic genius. "They" and we, on the other hand, insist on trying to separate youth from old age, hope from despair, life from death, and eternity from finiteness.

NOTES

[1]Florence Emily Hardy, The Life of Thomas Hardy, 1840-1928 (London: Macmillan, 1962), pp. 15-16.

[2]Ibid., p. 202.

[3]James Granville Southworth, The Poetry of Thomas Hardy (New York: Russell, 1966), p. 100.

[4]Edmund Blunden, Thomas Hardy (London: Macmillan, 1942), p. 184.

[5]Percy Bysshe Shelley, Selected Poems, Essays, and Letters, ed. Ellsworth Barnard (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1944), p. 467.

[6]Samuel Hynes, The Pattern of Hardy's Poetry (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1961), p. 120.

[7]Thomas Hardy, Collected Poems (New York: Macmillan, 1968), pp. 293-94.

[8]Hynes, pp. 120, 111. Harvey C. Webster, in On A Darkling Plain (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1947), agrees with Hynes, stating: "It is difficult to realize that Thomas Hardy, the discouraged and pessimistic old

man, was ever young." Webster, like Hynes, is ignoring the facts.

[9]Blunden, p. 173.

[10]The Letters of Thomas Hardy, ed. Carl J. Weber (Waterville, Maine: Colby College Press, 1954), p. 84.

[11]Jacques Maritain, Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry (New York: Meridian, 1955), pp. 81, 285.

[12]H. C. Duffin, Thomas Hardy: A Study of the Wessex Novels, the Poems, and The Dynasts (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1962), p. 309.

[13]Albert J. Guerard, Thomas Hardy (Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions-Laughlin, 1964), p. 175.

[14]Collected Poems, p. 137.

[15]The Letters, p. 100.

[16]Collected Poems, p. 154.

[17]Paul Zietlow, "Thomas Hardy and William Barnes: Two Dorset Poets," PMLA, LXXXIV (March, 1969), 281-303.

[18]William Wordsworth, Poetical Works, ed. Ernest De Selincourt (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967), p. 503.

[19]Walter Pater, The Renaissance (New York: Modern Library-Random House, n.d.), p. 198.

[20]Ibid., p. 198.

[21]Thomas Hardy, Selected Poems, ed. John Crowe Ransom (New York: Macmillan, 1961), p. xxiv.

[22]Blunden, p. 184. See Lord Byron, Childe Harold's Pilgrimage and Other Romantic Poems, ed. Samuel Chew (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1936), pp. 166-67.

[23]Kenneth Marsden, The Poems of Thomas Hardy: A Critical Introduction (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969), p. 63.

[24]Southworth, p. 84.

[25]Virginia Woolf, "The Novels of Thomas Hardy," in The Second Reader (New York: Harvest-Harcourt, 1932), p. 233.

[26]Ibid., p. 224.

[27]Jacques Barzun, "Hardy's One World," in The Energies of Art (New York: Vintage-Knopf, 1962), pp. 181-198.

[28]*Life*, p. 419.

[29]*Collected Poems*, pp. 720-23.

[30]Ernst Cassirer, *An Essay on Man* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1944), p. 177.

[31]Thomas Hardy, *Personal Writings*, ed. Harold Orel (Lawrence, Kansas: Univ. of Kansas Press, 1966), p. 196.

[32]*Life*, pp. 233-34.

[33]Blunden, p. 277.

[34]*Life*, p. 397.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

The facets of the brilliant Life-Drama--youth and old age, hope and despair, life and death, eternity and finiteness--which Hardy exposes, whether subjectively or objectively, concretely or abstractly, with microscopic minuteness or with astronomical amplitude, are all of the same stone; their edges touch and each reflects the light of the other. Without the supporting edges and the refracted light there would be no brilliant, no Life-Drama. But the edges are sharp and hard, and the image is too dazzling. In truth, Hardy's poetry is not for tender souls.

To read Winter Words straight through or even merely to browse idly through the poems is a sobering experience and, for most of us, an unsettling one. It is disturbing poetry because, although the questions Hardy raises are familiar, his answers are not the reassuring, conventional ones which, in our complacency, we have come to expect and accept. As Barzun observes, "The lesson of Hardy is that we must revise our notions of fate and tragedy and probability in art and life. . . . In the name of art we cling to the skirts of Providence and resist the testimony of a

seer at odds with ancient thought."[1]

Thomas Hardy sat in his garden at Max Gate and contemplated the heavens and the earth, his eyes and his mind searching for the "deeper reality underlying the scenic, the expression of what are sometimes called abstract imaginings."[2] His contemplation led to four positive conclusions: first, Hardy saw the cosmos as unconscious and indifferent, knowing neither reward nor punishment, good or evil; second, he observed that man's destiny often hinges on "crass casualty"; third, he realized that individual destiny is also partly of man's own making by the assertion of his own will; and finally, Hardy concluded that, although man can never be free of the limitations put upon him by the cosmos, he has the capacity to improve his lot through the development of his reason and intellect, "by the exploration of reality, and its frank recognition stage by stage along the survey, with an eye to the best consummation possible. . . ."[3]

The first two conclusions are so evident in Hardy's work that many critics have gone no further in their analyses. If this discussion of Winter Words is to achieve any sort of completeness, all four points must be considered. Hardy's last conclusion, however, is the most important, for it is at once the foundation of his fondest hopes and

his deepest despair for mankind.

In the preface to Winter Words Hardy comments that his last volume of poems (Human Shows, 1925) "was pronounced wholly gloomy and pessimistic by reviewers . . .," and "as labels stick," he assumes that "the same perennial inscription" will be affixed to Winter Words also.[4] In his preface to Late Lyrics and Earlier (1922), Hardy had stated that what is alleged to be pessimism in his writing is "in truth, only such 'questionings' in the exploration of reality, and is the first step toward the soul's betterment, and the body's also. . . . If way to the Better there be, it exacts a full look at the Worst."[5] Hardy insisted that the starting point in man's search for enlightened self-knowledge must be the peeling-off of the layers of self-delusion. Obviously, then, man must consider his relationship to the indifferent cosmos first, for this is "the Worst" aspect of reality, the one over which man has no control.

In "A Philosophical Fantasy" (WW,130-35) the Causer states:

> Call me "It" . . .,
> Call me "but dream-projected," . . .
> Call me "blind force persisting,"
> I shall remain unlisting; . . .

--Another such a vanity
In witless weak humanity
Is thinking that of those all
Through space at my disposal,
Man's shape must needs resemble
Mine, that makes zodiacs tremble!

One of the toughest layers of self-delusion which mankind has to discard, Hardy believed, is the whole concept of a personalized God who is called He. "I have been looking for God 50 years," Hardy noted in his journal, "and I think that if he had existed I should have discovered him. As an external personality, of course--the only true meaning of the word." Another journal entry reads: "Fifty meanings attach to the word 'God' nowadays, the only reasonable meaning being the Cause of Things, whatever that cause may be."[6] In giving us his definition of the word god the poet also gives us a valuable clue to his convictions.

Having rejected the traditional, Judeo-Christian concept of God, Hardy searched instead for intellectual answers as to the nature of his Causer. But at the same time, he admitted that "true conclusions" cannot be reached, "notwithstanding everlasting palaver."[7] He chided the

scientists for criticizing Herbert Spencer's doctrine of the Unknowable and for "discarding it in favor of Realism and Pragmatism." Hardy wrote: "I am utterly bewildered to understand how the doctrine that, beyond the knowable, there must always be an unknown, can be displaced."[8] Yet, paradoxically, the poet himself indulged in "everlasting palaver" in his search for empirical explanations of the unknowable. In a letter to Alfred Noyes Hardy stated that, in his "sober opinion, . . . the said Cause is neither moral nor immoral, but unmoral: 'loveless and hateless,' . . . which neither good nor evil knows. . . ."[9] Hardy's conclusion is based on his interpretation of history and his observation of current events. In answer to a critic's comments on his writings, he wrote: ". . . if I wished to make a smart retort, . . . I might say that the Good-God theory having, after some thousands of years of trial, produced the present infamous and disgraceful state of Europe--that most Christian continent!--a theory of a Goodless-and-Badless God (as in The Dynasts) might perhaps be given a trial with advantage."[10]

Thus Hardy's pursuit led him finally to reaffirm his concept of a "sense-sealed" god[11] which could say in "A Philosophical Fantasy":

. . . no dramatic stories
Like ancient ones whose core is
A mass of superstition
And monkish imposition
Will mark my explanation
Of the world's sore situation
(As thou tell'st), with woes that shatter;
Though from former eons to latter
To me 'tis malleable matter
For treatment scientific
More than sensitive and specific--
Stuff without moral features,
Which I've no sense of ever,
Or of ethical endeavor,
Or of justice to Earth's creatures,
Or how right from wrong to sever: . . .
Let these be as men learn such,
For me, I don't discern such, . . .

"The said Cause," Hardy reasoned, does not work according to man's "mode/As 'unfulfilled intention'" but rather it is compelled by "purposeless propension/ . . . Along lines of least resistance,/Or, in brief, unsensed persistence" (WW,135). This is the cosmos which stands apart from man,

the "Scheme of Things" which, according to Hardy, "is, indeed incomprehensible." It represents the vast unknown and it guards its secrets well. ". . . and there I suppose we must leave it," concluded Hardy, "perhaps for the best. Knowledge might be terrible."[12]

This aspect of reality, which will ever remain a mystery, presents man with a concept he is unwilling to accept. Barzun, in his essay on Hardy, says that "we take an absurd pride in making our lives seem rational. Yet to the thoughtful observer chance is the chief symbol of our powerlessness."[13] However, man keeps trying to make something intelligible and comprehensible out of the unintelligible. He tries to separate himself from the unconscious cosmos by constructing a safe, sane, rational world. Thus, Hardy's "Self-Glamourer" (WW,83-84) uses "trustful daring" and endows "events all human-wrought" with the "look of divinity," until he comes to think

> His years in trusting spent
>
> Make to shape towardly,
>
> And fate and accident
>
> Behave not perversely or frowardly. . . .

But as Barzun points out, because "the world of matter is not consciously organized, . . . events are thus bound to

remain chance collidings."[14] Barzun concludes that the lesson Hardy is trying to teach is that man can never reconcile himself to the discrepancy between an unconscious world in which chance is the cause of suffering, and his conscious, human world in which he is the recipient of pain or the afflicter of it. Yet, writes Barzun, "we must see that it is so and not otherwise."[15] For Hardy, this is what makes life tragic, "the highest tragedy . . . that of the WORTHY encompassed by the INEVITABLE."[16]

If man is to accept the inevitability of his position in the cosmos, however, he must acknowledge the limitations of his freedom. "The will of man is . . . neither wholly free nor wholly unfree," Hardy observed; he is but a part of a greater whole.[17] In a letter to Dr. Caleb Saleeby, Hardy explained his "theory of the Prime Force":

> The nature of the determination embraced in the theory is that of a collective will; so that there is a proportion of the total will in each part of the whole, and each part has therefore, in strictness, <u>some</u> freedom, which would, in fact, be operative as such whenever the remaining great mass of will in the universe should happen to be in equilibrium.[18]

Hardy believed that the recognition of the Prime Force as the unifying element in human existence was an essential step in the "way to the Better." "London appears not to see itself," he complained. "Each individual is conscious of himself, but nobody conscious of themselves collectively."[19] The attainment of the goal of "Altruism, or The Golden Rule, or whatever 'Love your Neighbour as Yourself' may be called, will ultimately be brought about," observed Hardy, "by the pain we see in others reacting on ourselves, as if we and they were a part of one body. Mankind, in fact, may be and possibly will be viewed as members of one corporeal frame."[20]

To be part of a greater whole, however, means that man's destiny is to a large extent beyond his control, for he is at the mercy not only of an indifferent cosmos but of the assertion of the wills of other men as well. Commenting on Hardy's "assumption of an ambiguous interpenetration" of man and his environment as depicted in his novels, Miller writes: "Each action a man performs enters into a complex stream of natural and social events."[21] The destiny of an individual is often determined, therefore, by either natural forces or social ones or both. Hardy called both kinds of force "crass casualty."[22] Many of the poems in Winter Words center on this sort of "fate"

or destiny. In "The Single Witness" (WW,172-73), for example, the faithful servant relates to his lord that he has seen the tutor and the lady lying together. The master, having determined that no one else saw them "commit this shameless sin," plunges his sword deep into the innocent witness's breast "ere he could plead or cry," and declares, "It is a dire necessity,/But--since no one was nigh/Save you and they, my historied name/Must not be smirched thereby."

Hardy's third conclusion, that of the part man's assertion of his own will plays in determining his life's course, is closely allied to the workings of "crass casualty." Hardy gave his characters choices even though the results of their actions were sometimes not at all what they intended. As Miller points out, "A willed intention, aimed at some specific outcome, becomes as soon as it is launched into the outer world no more than one force or event in the tangled web of events caused by the actions of others and by the movements of nature."[23]

Nevertheless, the destiny of man is not wholly outside of his control. On the contrary, the assertion of individual and conscious will can be decisive. This conscious act of will, however, can involve the right use of reason, or it can be simply another delusion based on

rationalization. If it is the latter, man is in effect the victim of his own sophistry. "Faithful Wilson" (WW,128) is such a victim:

> "I say she's handsome, by all laws
> Of beauty, if wife ever was!"
> Wilson insists thus, though each day
> The years fret Fanny towards decay.
> "She was once beauteous as a jewel,"
> Hint friends; "but Time, of course,
> is cruel."
> Still Wilson does not quite feel how,
> Once fair, she can be different now.

To admit that his wife's beauty has faded is to admit somehow that he too has aged--a dreadful thought.

In "Aristodemus the Messenian" (WW,30-40)[24] the delusion results in needless violence. The lover of Aristodemus's daughter tells the would-be king that his beloved child is pregnant by him, thereby hoping to nullify the edict of the gods that she be the virgin sacrifice. Aristodemus declares that it cannot be true and yet he rushes into the castle where he rips his daughter's body apart to "[prove] her even/Until death very virgin pure and spotless!" His right reason, based on intuition and

experience of his daughter's character, had been overcome by passion. He is driven to prove her virginity for his own satisfaction, to save his reputation, and to insure his right to kingship. The tragedy of Aristodemus is that not only has he been duped by an obvious lie but, and more important, he has made his daughter the victim of his own will-to-power. In other words, his act of will is turned inward to his own selfish interests.

This turning inward often marks the difference between the wrong use of reason and the right, because it denies man's responsibility to his fellowman and to the world. The right use of reason recognizes this responsibility and is manifested therefore in a turning outward from self. Thus, if the "deeper reality underlying the scenic" includes this triad of evils--an indifferent cosmos, the assertion of the wills of others, and the danger of self-delusion--it also includes the acknowledgment that the turning outward from self is a necessary step toward an enlightened self-knowledge, part of that "first step toward the soul's betterment, and the body's also."

When Hardy urges, therefore, "the exploration of reality . . . with an eye to the best consummation possible," he is describing a cyclic movement in which man,

accepting the inevitability of his cosmic position, is conscious of his potential ability to make a meaningful contribution to the whole, and becomes aware of the necessity of doing so. "Persons are successively various persons," Hardy observed in his journal, "according as each special strand in their characters is brought uppermost by circumstances."[25] "So Various" (WW,80-82) is, in fact, a list of the different persons Hardy himself had been:

> You may have met a man--quite young--
> A brisk-eyed youth, and highly strung:
> One whose desires
> And inner fires
> Moved him as wires.
>
> And you may have met one stiff and old,
> If not in years; of manner cold;
> Who seemed as stone,
> And never had known
> Of mirth or moan.
>
> And there may have crossed your path a lover,
> In whose clear depths you could discover
> A staunch, robust,

And tender trust,
Through storm and gust.

And you may have also known one fickle,
Whose fancies changed as the silver sickle
Of yonder moon,
Which shapes so soon
To demilune!

You entertained a person once
Whom you internally deemed a dunce:--
As he sat in view
Just facing you
You saw him through.

You came to know a learned seer
Of whom you read the surface mere:
Your soul quite shrank;
Brain of such rank
Dubbed yours a blank.

Anon you quizzed a man of sadness,
Who never could have known true gladness
Just for a whim
You pitied him
In his sore trim.

You journeyed with a man so glad
You never could conceive him sad:
    He proved to be
    Indubitably
    Good company.

You lit on an unadventurous slow man,
Who, said you, need be feared by no man;
    That his slack deeds
    And sloth must needs
    Produce but weeds.

A man of enterprise, shrewd and swift,
Who never suffered affairs to drift,
    You eyed for a time
    Just in his prime
    And judged he might climb.

You smoked beside one who forgot
All that you said, or grasped it not.
    Quite a poor thing
    Not worth a sting
    By satirizing!

Next year you nearly lost for ever
Goodwill from one who forgot slights never;

And, with unease,
Felt you must seize
Occasion to please . . .

Now. . . . All these specimens of man,
So various in their pith and plan,
Curious to say
Were <u>one</u> man. Yea,
I was all they.

Southworth points out that "to understand [this] catalogue" of the many sides of Hardy's character "is better to understand him."[26] But in a wider context, Hardy also recognized that everyone has within him similar diversities of character and that consequently he is involved in an incessant struggle between wrong reason and right reason, between his own selfish interests and the well-being of society as a whole. Hardy believed, however, that man has the ability to overcome these evils if only he will allow himself to profit from the obvious discrepancies between man's potential and his performance.

Hardy's emphasis, it must be noted, is on man's intellectual capacity to improve his situation and to attain the fulfillment of enlightenment. For example, in a conversation with William Archer about war, Hardy

insisted that war was doomed:

> It is doomed by the gradual growth of the introspective faculty in mankind--of their power of putting themselves in another's place, and taking a point of view that is not their own. . . . Not today, nor tomorrow, but in the fulness of time, war will come to an end, not for moral reasons, but because of its absurdity.[27]

Man will begin to exchange his hostile attitudes for more peaceful ones simply because it makes more sense. This is not to say, however, that life can be formed along purely intellectual lines. Hardy's "moments of vision" would not allow for such a coldly scientific view. The poet hoped instead for the union of science and art, the one bolstering the other, for he perceived "the elementary Pascalian truth that without mind there is no science, no Time, no hot desire or cold Necessity."[28] The result of this union would be, according to Barzun, "consciousness seeing into the heart of things. . . ."[29]

Again, though, we must go back to Hardy's conclusions, that is, to the reality of the eternally unknowable and to man's recognition of his limitations in the cosmos. Hardy did not seek nor did he think it possible for man to be released from these strictures. He dreamed instead of

the awakening of those powers within man himself which could lead to "better whiles." J. O. Bailey, in Thomas Hardy and the Cosmic Mind: A New Reading of THE DYNASTS, explains that to Hardy "freedom of the will is therefore freedom from the Will--from instincts and selfish desires. It is freedom to choose the objects suggested by the rational mind and compassion."[30] This is a restricted freedom, to be sure. However, within this limited framework, Hardy said that man must work "to conserve the existing good, [and] to supplant the existing bad by good. . . ."[31] When individual man applies his right reason and asserts his will in acts of compassion, therefore, the wills and hearts of other men are affected. A compassionate concern for one's fellowman is not enough; it must be acted upon. Standing in the window of his London residence and watching the people go by to their offices, Hardy mused: "How strange it is that we should talk so glibly of 'this cold world which shows no sympathy,' when this is the feeling of so many components of the same world--probably a majority--and nearly everyone's neighbour is waiting to give and receive sympathy."[32]

Hardy was convinced that man could find his "way to the Better" because of the striving spirit in all of

life. Writing in his journal about man's "determination to enjoy," Hardy observed:

> We see it in all nature, from the leaf on the tree to the titled lady at the ball. . . . It is achieved, of a sort, under superhuman difficulties. Like pent up water it will find a chink of possibility somewhere. Even the most oppressed of men and animals find it, so that out of a thousand there is hardly one who has not a sun of some sort for his soul.[33]

The birds in "The Darkling Thrush," "Proud Songsters," and "I Watched a Blackbird" and the tramp in "Christmastide" are all examples of the striving spirit. It is this belief in an unconscious urge to "find a chink of possibility" and the conscious effort to realize "a sun of some sort for [one's] soul" which prompts Weber to refer to Hardy as a "hopeful theologian."[34]

But Hardy is no more a theologian than he is a philosopher; he is a poet and, at the end of his long life, it would seem not a very hopeful one. In his preface to Late Lyrics and Earlier Hardy had expressed his fading hope for

> an alliance between religion, which must be retained unless the world is to perish, and

> complete rationality, which must come, unless also the world is to perish, by means of the interfusing effect of poetry--"the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; the impassioned expression of science." . . .[35]

Hardy's poetic method of achieving this alliance had been "to show the sorriness underlying the grandest things, and the grandeur underlying the sorriest things," by his intensification of "the expression of things . . . so that the heart and inner meaning is made vividly visible."[36] Hardy's relentless honesty, according to Joyce Cary, compelled him to reveal in all its starkness "the injustice of life, the cruelty of blind fate destroying innocent and guilty alike." Cary concludes: ". . . even when we do not agree with Hardy's idea of life, we are struck by the fearful truth of his tale."[37]

In his journal Hardy recorded a visit to Salisbury Cathedral, and he made special note of the first scripture lesson, taken from Jeremiah VI:

> "The day goeth away . . . the shadows of the evening are stretched out . . . I set watchmen over you, saying Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken. . . ."[38]

In the end Hardy felt that he had said all that it was possible to say but that the sound of his trumpet had fallen on deaf ears. In Winter Words the poem "We Are Getting to the End" (200-201) expresses his disappointment:

> We are getting to the end of visioning
> The impossible within this universe,
> Such as that better whiles may follow worse,
> And that our race may mend by reasoning.
>
> We know that even as larks in cages sing
> Unthoughtful of deliverance from the curse
> That holds them lifelong in a latticed hearse,
> We ply spasmodically our pleasuring.
>
> And that when nations set them to lay waste
> Their neighbours' heritage by foot and horse,
> And hack their pleasant plains in festering
> seams,
> They may be again,--not warely, or from taste,
> But tickled mad by some demonic force.--
> Yes. We are getting to the end of dreams!

"He Resolves to Say No More" (202), the last poem in the Winter Words collection, expresses his resignation:

O my soul, keep the rest unknown!
It is too like the sound of moan
   When the charnel-eyed
   Pale Horse has nighed:
Yea, none shall gather what I hide!

Why load men's minds with more to bear
That bear already ails to spare?
   From now alway
   Till my last day
What I discern I will not say.

Let Time roll backward if it will;
(Magians who drive the midnight quill
   With brain aglow
   Can see it so,)
What I have learnt no man shall know.

And if my vision range beyond
The blinkered sight of souls in bond,
   --By truth made free--
   I'll let all be,
And show to no man what I see.

Whether Hardy wrote from a deep sense of weariness, the weariness which comes from striving a very long time

to realize an ideal for his world only to despair of man ever fulfilling his potential, or whether he wrote merely from the weariness of old age, we have no positive way of knowing. In an interview with Joan Bosworth-Smith, whose father had been Hardy's close friend for many years, she observed that Hardy had always been "very sad."[39] Perhaps this supplies a meager clue. Hardy's last lines in Winter Words are indeed like those of the Old Testament prophet vainly crying out in the wilderness.

But if we read his poetry closely enough and if we take his journal notes seriously enough, it is impossible to conclude that Hardy died a bitter, disillusioned old man. On the contrary, Hardy the man, the novelist, the poet was truly capable of accepting life as it came to him. "He Never Expected Much" (WW, 113-14) is an expression of this acceptance. It was written on his eighty-sixth birthday:

> Well, World, you have kept faith
> with me,
> Kept faith with me;
> Upon the whole you have proved to be
> Much as you said you were.
> Since as a child I used to lie
> Upon the leaze and watch the sky,

Never, I own, expected I
That life would be all fair.

'Twas then you said, and since have said,
Times since have said,
In that mysterious voice you shed
From clouds and hills around:
"Many have loved me desperately,
Many with smooth serenity,
While some have shown contempt of me
Till they dropped underground.

"I do not promise overmuch,
Child; overmuch;
Just neutral-tinted haps and such,"
You said to minds like mine.
Wise warning for your credit's sake!
Which I for one failed not to take,
And hence could stem such strain and ache
As each year might assign.

Hardy was not shaken when life failed to be "all fair"; he was able to reconcile himself to the strains and aches which each year brought and finally to die in peace with "a look of radiant triumph."[40] We can only conclude that

the vision which Hardy resolved not to reveal in "He Resolves to Say No More" was dispelled when he finally became "one with [the stars]/Beginning and end" (WW,7).

In the introduction to this study of Winter Words the question as to the artistic or poetic value of this collection of verse was raised. Winter Words cannot be dismissed as warmed-over left-overs or even as the feeble efforts of a once vigorous poet. Whether the poems had been written in his youth or in his old age, it is an insult to a poet of Hardy's integrity to accuse him of wanting to publish merely for the sake of appearing in print for one last time; Hardy was no exhibitionist. "A Private Man on Public Men" (WW,196) is poetic proof of this:

> When my contemporaries were driving
> Their coach through Life with strain
> and striving,
> And raking riches into heaps,
> And ably pleading in the Courts
> With smart rejoiners and retorts,
> Or where the Senate nightly keeps
> Its vigils, till their fames were fanned
> By rumour's tongue throughout the land,
> I lived in quiet, screened, unknown,

Pondering upon some stick or stone,
Or news of some rare book or bird
Latterly bought, or seen, or heard,
Not wishing ever to set eyes on
The surging crowd beyond the horizon,
Tasting years on moderate gladness
Mellowed by sundry days of sadness,
Shut from the noise of the world without,
Hearing but dimly its rush and rout,
Unenvying those amid its roar,
Little endowed, not wanting more.

Hardy had observed that "no man's poetry can be truly judged till his last line is written." Winter Words includes Hardy's last lines, to be sure, but they do not reveal a sharp decline in poetic power. Rather, the collection reflects a lifetime of questioning, of searching for answers, and asserts only what he had always known, that the paradox of the Life-Drama cannot be resolved but can be accepted with dignity and grace, and with the consolation even--for the generous-minded--of what Tennyson called "the larger hope."

NOTES

[1]Jacques Barzun, "Hardy's One World," in The Energies of Art (New York: Vintage-Knopf, 1962), p. 189.

[2]Florence Emily Hardy, The Life of Thomas Hardy, 1840-1928 (London: Macmillan, 1962), p. 185.

[3]Thomas Hardy, Collected Poems (New York: Macmillan, 1925), pp. 526-27. Philo M. Buck, in The World's Great Age (New York: Macmillan, 1936), p. 338, states that Hardy sought the answers to three problems: the ultimate nature of the power behind life and nature; the inner conflict of the perplexed human soul; and the compensation within the scope of man in an ironically unfriendly universe.

[4]Thomas Hardy, Winter Words (London: Macmillan, 1928), pp. v-vi.

[5]Collected Poems, p. 526.

[6]Life, pp. 224, 376.

[7]Ibid., p. 282.

[8]Ibid., p. 370.

[9]Ibid., p. 409.

[10]Ibid., pp. 375-76.

[11]"New Year's Eve," in Collected Poems, pp. 260-61.

[12]Life, p. 410.

[13]Barzun, p. 189.

[14]Ibid., p. 189.

[15]Ibid., p. 189.

[16]Life, p. 251.

[17]Ibid., p. 335.

[18]Ibid., p. 449. Prime Force is but one of the many synonyms Hardy uses to denote First or Fundamental Energy. Others are Will, Immanent Will, First Cause, Causer, It, Law, Prime Mover, Brain, Absolute, One, Mind, Might, The Alone, and Great Heart.

[19]Ibid., pp. 206-7.

[20]Ibid., p. 224. It is of interest to note that Hardy's observation reflects John Donne's "No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the Continent, a part of the main; . . . any man's death diminishes me," while at the same time it points towards

Yeats' belief that "all things are made of the conflict of two states of consciousness, beings or persons which die each others life live each others death."

[21]J. Hillis Miller, Distance and Desire (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1970), p. 77. The italics are mine.

[22]"Hap," in Collected Poems, p. 7.

[23]Miller, p. 77.

[24]Kenneth Marsden, in The Poems of Thomas Hardy (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969), p. 96, commenting on "Aristodemus the Messenian," observes, "I sometimes find it difficult to believe that it is not a parody." Perhaps it is. If this was Hardy's intent, his satire only serves to reinforce the absurdity of self-delusion.

[25]Life, p. 230.

[26]James Granville Southworth, The Poetry of Thomas Hardy (New York: Russell, 1966), p. 96.

[27]William Archer, Real Conversations (London: Heinemann, 1904), p. 47.

[28]Barzun, p. 197.

[29]Ibid., p. 197.

[30]James Osler Bailey, Thomas Hardy and The Cosmic Mind: A New Reading of THE DYNASTS (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1956), p. 163.

[31]Life, p. 148.

[32]Ibid., p. 253.

[33]Ibid., p. 213.

[34]Carl J. Weber, Hardy of Wessex: His Life and Literary Career (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1965), p. 247.

[35]Collected Poems, p. 531.

[36]Life, pp. 171, 177.

[37]Joyce Cary, Art and Reality: Ways of the Creative Process (New York: Harper, 1958), pp. 107-8.

[38]Life, p. 296.

[39]Mrs. Joan Bosworth-Smith Cochrane. Personal interview on Thomas Hardy. Milton-Abbas, Dorset, July 16, 1971.

[40]Life, p. 446.

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