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THOMAS HARDY'S LYRIC POETRY: THEMES AND GENRES.

The City University of New York, Ph.D., 1973
Language and Literature, modern

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THOMAS HARDY'S LYRIC POETRY: THEMES AND GENRES

by

Carley Rees Bogarad

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate
Faculty in English in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1972

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in English in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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I

INTRODUCTION

Thomas Hardy's poetry is the sound of sadness, an elegaic voice mourning a world without love or meaning; it is nostagic for a systematized belief in God and harsh in its denial of such belief; it is an honest cry against the vagaries of time and chance; yet Hardy's poetry is neither outraged nor desperate. His lyrics are dry and sincere--beyond agony; they recognize and accept the meaninglessness of life and death, and in the process transcend both. Yet the transcendence provides no sustained happiness. In spite of this, man struggles; and from his struggle come small moments of love, of meaning, and of joy.

Hardy's poetry is painful, but it has greatness. Yet, even though he was a great novelist and a great poet, Hardy's achievement in both genres is uneven. In many novels and poems, there are brilliant images, characters, scenes, or themes juxtaposed with bad diction, ponderous generalities, and superficial stories. Even worse, some of the poems are totally bad or mediocre. Hardy produced more than nine hundred short lyrics; and among them are, perhaps, several dozen really great poems. That is, of course, a substantial number for any poet. What the reader is finally

forced to face is that Hardy was incapable of knowing which of his poems were good and which were bad. In a recent lecture, W. H. Auden, who admires Hardy enormously, explained it this way: "Hardy was the least self-critical poet who ever lived."¹

When final judgment is made, however, Hardy must be considered a major poet. The difficulty comes when the critic tries to categorize his greatness; for, though in many respects Hardy can be considered a late Victorian, in the last analysis, he is neither Victorian nor modern. He is what the Germans call a Zwischenfigur (between figure). For Hardy, this position is a strength because he was a solitary man and poet. He belongs to no age and to no movement. Other poets admired his lyrics, but his influence on their work is hard to trace. "What can easily be learned from Hardy is not worth the trouble, and what is very much worth the trouble can hardly be learned at all."² Yet Robert Graves has declared that of the twentieth century poets, Hardy is the best influence because he is the one poet who successfully bridges the Victorian era and the modern one.³ W. H. Auden, in a superb statement, once said:

¹W. H. Auden, Lecture, March 15, 1972, State University College, New Paltz, New York.

²Irving Howe, Thomas Hardy (New York, 1967), p. 163.

³C. Day Lewis, "The Lyrical Poetry of Thomas Hardy," Proceedings of the British Academy (London, 1966).

"The England in which I grew up was the England of Tennyson; and when I went up to Oxford, it had become the England of Eliot. No one but Thomas Hardy could have got me from one to the other."⁴ (Hardy wrote his first poems ten years after Tennyson's In Memorium was published; Hardy and Tennyson inhabited the same world for about thirty years of the adult life of each.) Surely Hardy combines the traditional and the modern in a way that no other poet has managed. In his poetry the nineteenth century is joined with the twentieth in a strange, but productive union--entwined but neither in conflict nor in concert. The doubts and cynicism of the modern age are filtered through Hardy's country mind--as Howe writes "Modern nerves' . . . against 'primitive feelings'; skepticism against superstition Hardy achieves a rare sense of inclusiveness: the natural together with the historical, the timeless with the time-bound, the inescapable limitations of all existence with the particular troubles of the moment."⁵

Even though Hardy's reputation does not (and should not) rest on his moment in history, we should remember that at least two generations of English poets consider Hardy their master. We tend to forget that school children in England and America learned Hardy's poems by heart during the first thirty years of this century. Auden admits that

⁴Auden, "Thomas Hardy," Southern Review (Summer, 1948).

⁵Howe, p. 31.

he "cut his teeth" on Hardy's poetry, and he can still quote from memory long passages of The Dynasts and the lyrics.⁶ Dylan Thomas often said that "Hardy was his favorite poet of the century."⁷ He too would spend long hours discussing Hardy and reading his poems aloud. Ezra Pound once said in tribute to Hardy: "No one has taught me anything about writing since Thomas Hardy died."

These poets praise Hardy's lyrics, but others have criticized them. T. S. Eliot disliked both his ideas and his poetry: "I am willing to pay due respect, for instance, to the poetry of George Meredith, of Thomas Hardy, of D. H. Lawrence as part of their oeuvre, without conceding that it is as good as it might have been had they chosen to dedicate their whole lives to that form of art."⁸ Since Hardy began publication of his lyrics in the 1890's when he was more than fifty years old and had already established a reputation as a major novelist, his poetry has often been treated as secondary to the novels. Rutland has said, "the poetry is in the nature of a commentary on the novels."⁹ Recent critics--Marsden, Hynes, Lewis, Howe, Brown, Miller, Stewart, and Guerard--have taken the poetry more

⁶Auden, Lecture.

⁷Vernon Watkins in Dylan Thomas, Letters to Vernon Watkins (London, 1957), p. 17.

⁸T. S. Eliot, A Choice of Kipling's Verse (London, 1941), p. 5.

⁹W. R. Rutland, Thomas Hardy: A Study of his Writings and their Background (Oxford, 1938), p. 264.

seriously.¹⁰ Hardy had begun as a poet in the 1860's and had continued to compose lyrics while he wrote novels until he was able to devote himself entirely to poetry. In this sense, the lyrics are Hardy's life's work, and critics have now recognized this. In fact all of Hardy's work--novels, stories, poems, epic--are of a piece and Hardy's reputation as a major poet has been firmly established.

What remains to be settled is exactly how and why Hardy is great. At this point, critical opinions differ on Hardy's reputation and the only full-length studies of the lyrics are formalistic.¹¹ The substance of Hardy's lyrics has been explored in many fine short articles; but critics are far from agreement. Leavis insists that Hardy's excellence is limited to a dozen poems, and Blunden cites two hundred fine lyrics. Eliot, Blackman, and Southworth quarrel with Hardy's use of philosophy; but I. A. Richards, Middleton Murry, Howe, Guerard, and others show more sympathy. Almost all of these critics disagree on the interpretation and value of individual poems.

¹⁰See Kenneth Marsden, The Poems of Thomas Hardy: A Critical Introduction (New York, 1969); Samuel Hynes, The Pattern of Hardy's Poetry (Chapel Hill, 1963); Lewis, op. cit.; Howe, op. cit.; Douglas Brown, Thomas Hardy (London, 1954); Miller, Thomas Hardy: Distance and Desire (Cambridge, 1971); J. E. B. Stewart (London, 1972); Albert Guerard, Thomas Hardy (New York, 1964).

¹¹The studies by Southworth and Miller are thematic, but they use the poetry only to classify ideas and/or to give evidence for the exposition of Hardy's philosophy. See Miller in particular.

Yet most agree on the strengths and failures of Hardy's form. In fact, the one aspect of Hardy's lyrics which has been thoroughly examined is structure. When the recent books by Marsden and Hynes are considered as well as Hickson's early study of Hardy's versification, the weaknesses and the achievement of Hardy's diction, vocabulary, imagery, verse forms, meter, and rhymes become clear.

The other questions still have too many answers--both negative and positive. In many recent short studies--notably those by C. Day Lewis, Irving Howe, Douglas Brown, and Albert Guerard--the lyrics have received new appreciation and understanding. As a result, the critic no longer feels the need to apologize for praising Hardy's poetry. What is left to be done is a lengthy interpretation and evaluation of genre and theme in the lyrics in order that the major questions on Hardy's greatness, on his philosophy and pessimism might finally be answered conclusively.

In any study of Hardy's themes, the formative influences on his poetry must be defined and discussed: fortunately, those events and people who affected Hardy's attitudes are as easy to name as are his themes. To know exactly what happened to Hardy is much more difficult because he was a shy and private man. He recorded very little in his autobiography, and he destroyed most of his personal records before he died. We have, then, only the literature, the official autobiography, and the accounts of friends and critics. Beyond that, we have the historical

and cultural background from which he came. All of this gives us enough information to make some intelligent inference about the major influences on Hardy's life and poetry.

First, the rural world of Dorset (Wessex in the fiction), into which Hardy was born, held him a life-long captive. For the most part, his identification with place was good for his work. It gave him a sense of authenticity and rootedness, a closeness to the natural world--the heath in particular, to music, to church, and to country tradition. His piety before his culture gives strength to his poetry, and the slow incursion of industrialization and modernity into that world provides much of the conflict in his writing. Such a culture was necessarily limited, however. For Hardy the greatest failure of his youth in Dorset was its lack of connection with the fine arts and literature. Though he attended school, learned the classics, and became an architect, his lack of a university education plagued him all of his life. His anguish is most poignantly expressed in the Christminster sections of Jude the Obscure.

In Dorchester Hardy had two friends who changed his life radically. The first, William Barnes, was a dialect poet whose work encouraged Hardy "in the direction of realism." Actually Hardy learned from Barnes that he could write about life in Dorset with appreciation. In the end, Hardy wrote about Wessex in such a way that he broke past the bonds of his regionalism. Barnes, however, was never able to press beyond his provincialism. The second friend

was Horace Moule who introduced Hardy to the classics and to the new skeptical scientific writing. Through Moule, Hardy was led to the important thinkers of his times.

During this period, Hardy lived and studied in London. As he read and listened to the ideas of Mill, Spencer, Darwin, Huxley and others, he slowly and reluctantly rejected Christianity. This crisis in belief left him with a life-long desire for the comfort of the Christian religion and a pessimistic view of man's position in an indifferent universe. Slowly Hardy evolved a philosophy in which man's life is determined by time and chance, agents of an Immanent Will which has no consciousness, but in which consciousness may finally emerge. This bleak view, formed in his twenties, was Hardy's to the end. Although this philosophy is dated, awkward, and ponderous, it is at least free of the rather superficial 19th century optimism of other poets.

When Hardy returned to Dorchester, he began to realize that he no longer really wanted to be an architect. Instead, he was determined to be a poet. After he had searched in vain for a publisher for his lyrics, he at last decided to try to earn a living writing novels. For the next twenty-five years he was a successful writer and published fourteen novels and a collection of stories. He did not, however, give up his interest in poetry.

At the same time that he began his career as a novelist, Hardy met Emma Lavinia Gifford on a trip to

Cornwall. His happy courtship and tragic marriage to Emma are the most important events of his life. They form his attitudes toward love and death; and they provide the dominant imagery in his poetry. Hardy's experience with Emma taught him that love--beautiful in the beginning--is doomed to failure. As a result, he detached himself from emotional involvements.

In the 1890's the negative reviews of Jude the Obscure and Tess of the D'Urbervilles discouraged Hardy who was particularly sensitive to criticisms of his work. Since his reputation was firmly established and he was financially secure, he decided to return to his poetry. Even though he was past fifty, he began a second career which lasted for almost forty years. During that time, he published eight volumes of poetry and a long epic, The Dynasts.

One final event influenced Hardy's poetry. In 1912 Emma Hardy died unexpectedly. Since they had been estranged for many years and Hardy was convinced that he had no feeling left for her, he was overwhelmed to discover the grief that flooded him when she died. From her death came his best poems Veteris Vestigia Flammae--twenty-one elegies in which Hardy confronts the failure of his relationship with Emma, her death, and his own mortality.

Out of Hardy's country background came his fascination with ballads and country songs and his life-long preoccupation with soldiers and war. William Barnes also encouraged his imitation and adaptation of the ballad

tradition in literary form. As he grew older, Hardy turned his childhood fantasies about war into hard facts; for he spent much time talking to soldiers in hospitals and doing research in libraries--especially on the wars with Napoeleon. The Dynasts and more than a hundred lyrics on the theme of war are the result of his interest.

His relationship with Horace Moule and his years in London were especially important in the formation of Hardy's philosophy. Even though only about five per cent of his poetry is philosophical in nature, these lyrics have received more criticism than any other kind of poem Hardy wrote. The philosophical poems have two basic themes: the first is the loss of belief in a Christian God, and the second is the existence of man in an indifferent universe controlled by the Immanent Will through time and chance.

Hardy's marriage to Emma Lavinia Gifford and her death some forty years later were the most important influences in his poetry. Since more than half of his lyrics are love poems, his experience with Emma--beautiful at first, but painful at the end--provides the dominant attitude in most of his poetry. Love not only dies; it gets tedious; lovers are not only faithless; they are destructive; in the end man has only himself, for love which seems to offer him some individual meaning gives only temporary joy at best. Emma's death in 1912 made Hardy face man's mortality in a way in which only an old man--past vanity and the need for defense--could do it. The elegy, always

Hardy's natural form, became his highest achievement--the Poems of 1912-1913. Thus, a study of the ballads, philosophical poems, love poems, elegies, and war poems should lead to conclusive answers about the strengths and weaknesses of Hardy's lyrics.

The failures in Hardy's poetry are easy to identify, for they are neither subtle nor complex; they are obvious. Hardy's diction is often archaic, eccentric, and strangely mixed; his language is sometimes inflated with pompous poetic vocabulary and sometimes deflated with the banal and the colloquial. Either extreme is disastrous. Like his diction, his rhythms are also erratic. At times his meters break and stumble for no clear reason at all. The reader is forced to conclude that although Hardy loved music, he had a difficult time hearing his own. This is surprising because Hardy consciously attempted to use complicated rhythms and was known to have worked long hours with empty verse forms. Perhaps, his concern with structure was a mechanical exercise; for, in the end, he simply made "a style out of stylelessness."¹²

Too often Hardy wrote lyrics out of fixed ideas with which he had no involvement. Their lack of concrete detail, integrity, and earned emotion suggest that Hardy at times was too comfortable with his sad vision of existence. I suppose this is to be expected when he lived with those

¹²H. R. Leavis, New Bearings in English Poetry (London, 1950), p. 59.

views for more than sixty years. His crisis in belief had shaken him deeply, but once he had settled on his new views he held to them tenaciously; he simply fixed himself in his pessimistic stance and refused to move again. There is a stubbornness and a doggedness in his fixity which at his best give him strength to endure and at his worst limit him tremendously. He refuses to question his doubt and to test his convictions. Instead he clings with all the naive faith of his country childhood to the inevitability of human loss through the power of Immanent Will. The lyrics which result from this accommodation are hollow in form and substance.

Hardy's strengths, on the other hand, are more difficult to define. Almost every critic finds himself talking about certain fine lyrics and using such words as sincerity, honesty, innocence, and human wisdom to describe them. The difficulty arises not because of the choice of terms, for they are rightly applied to Hardy's poetry, but because of the inadequacy of such terms (or of any words) in defining the essential qualities of Hardy's lyrics. What is certain is that Hardy's greatness lies in the quiet persistence of his clear-eyed view of human loss through destruction and waste and of human acceptance through the small, but meaningful activities which give shape to life. In the large sense, man is hopeless and helpless; but in the small sense, he is everything--good and bad. This double view of man is presented without pretense and without defense. It is Hardy's honesty about his limited vision which makes his

poetry remarkable. He does not range far, but within his limits, the depth of his vision disquiets and touches the reader. Slowly in a quiet, clumsy, and patient way, Hardy explores small portions of human experience. Yet he does so not in order to perform a microscopic examination or to judge and moralize; he does so because he notices human events with sympathy.

Through it all, Hardy has detachment; such is his solution for survival both in his life and in his poetry. This detachment, however, does not imply non-involvement; for emanating from the core of Hardy's work is a rare feeling of humaneness and a recognition of human dignity. "The best of his poems embody a vision both hard and fraternal; which derives from brooding upon the most terrible facts of existence while refusing the sentimentalism of despair."¹³

Hardy's sympathy with man comes not only out of his solitary experience, but also out of his appreciation for the common values he shares with all human beings. He sees himself as related to every other person; and this perception saves him from the stance of poet as priest taken by so many twentieth century writers. There is in Hardy's poetry no elitism or superiority, for Hardy sees all experience as ordinary. "He assumes the connection between poetry and ordinary life, and writes about those areas of experience

¹³Howe, p. 167.

Wordsworth proposed to enter but in which he could never claim Hardy's knowledge or ease."¹⁴

Hardy's innocence emerges from the same core of emotional strength which binds him in sympathy to his fellow human being. His country mind worked upon complicated and subtle ideas and situations; and in the process the purity of his mind brought to those thoughts and events a freshness which can only be described as innocent. Hardy was simply not sophisticated or urbane; if he were, his poems would have been silly or clever, not wise. As Middleton Murry said, "The contagion of the world's slow stain had not touched him."¹⁵

Essentially, however, it is neither charm nor warmth which characterizes Hardy's greatness. It is the sincerity of age; it is the commitment to honesty above all else; it is the complete destruction of protections and defense; it is the willingness to speak the unspeakable if the unspeakable need be spoken. The sincerity of age rarely finds the man who can bear its burden; for its cost is high even if the comfort is great. Hardy was such a man.

In one of his early poems he considers the problems of age:

I look into my glass,
And view my wasting skin

¹⁴Ibid., p. 166.

¹⁵J. Middleton Murry, Katherine Mansfield and Other Literary Portraits (London, 1949), pp. 215-29.

And say, Would God it came to pass
My heart had shrunk as thin!

For then, I, undistrest
By hearts grown cold to me,
Could lonely wait my endless rest
With equanimity.

But Time, to make me grieve,
Part steals, lets part abide
And shakes this fragile frame at eve
With throbbings of noontide.¹⁶

Hardy's voice here is strongly personal: this voice is his best and most characteristic. The diction and imagery are uncomplicated, but Hardyan. The choice of "glass" instead of "mirror" is frequent with Hardy; such usage is fruitful. Words like "throbbings" and "noontide" are typical of Hardy; yet they are not strained or awkward. The mind-body dichotomy is presented through elements of contrast; the imagery in the first two stanzas is forthright and simple. Even the personification of time in the last stanza is uncomplicated; the language is strong, however: "grieve," "steals," "shakes," and "throbbings." The stanza and meter are also simple and clear. Written in the "short-metre doxology" of Hardy's copy of Hymns Ancient and Modern, the poem appears deceptively easy.¹⁷

The poem is in the old-fashioned sense of the word a protest. The poet laments his loss of a youthful body and a partial loss of feeling. Unfortunately, the residue of

¹⁶Thomas Hardy, Collected Poems (New York, 1929), p. 72.

¹⁷J. O. Bailey, The Poetry of Thomas Hardy: A Handbook and Commentary (Chapel Hill, 1970), p. 112.

feeling is just enough to let him know how lonely he is; for then he feels the loss of love ("hearts grown cold to me"). Even worse, he is unable to face death with equanimity because his mind and body refuse to age simultaneously. Hardy himself expressed it perfectly: "Time changes everything except something within us which is always surprised by change."¹⁸

All of these feelings are obviously deeply experienced by the poet. This is what I mean by the sincerity of age. The poet need not experience feelings to write about them successfully. But in Hardy's case the poem indicates the emotional involvement of the artist, and this brings the term sincerity into my description. Obviously his "wasting skin" and "fragile frame" are not a fair reflection of the man inside who is sensitive to the pangs of loneliness and to the joys of youth. Hardy also did a pen-portrait which reveals the same attitude: "I look in the glass. I'm conscious of the humiliating sorriness of my earthly tabernacle, and of the sad fact that the best of parents could do no better for me. . . . Why should a man's mind have been thrown into such close, sad, sensational, inexplicable relations with such a precarious object as his own body!"¹⁹ Notice that the poetic version, though

¹⁸Newman Flower, Just as It Happened (New York, 1950), pp. 807-8.

¹⁹F. E. Hardy, The Later Years of Thomas Hardy (New York, 1930), pp. 13-14.

intensely personal, is much less self-centered and negative. It reaches beyond self-concern to the loss of relationships "grown cold" and to the impossibility of accommodation with death.

The experience is not a unique one; it is common--the inability to accept age, decay, and death with equanimity. Seeping through his protestations of failure, however, is some honest pride in the honorable survival of emotion.

So the sources of Hardy's greatness come from the strength of his integrity and his sympathy with human beings. From the vantage point of age, Hardy is able to lay bare what is most terrible and terrifying in human existence with a quiet dryness that brings sadness, but at the same time the comfort of realizing the sameness of all experience.

II

BALLADS

Ben Jonson once said, "A poet should detest a ballad-maker."¹ This attitude has been shared by many poets and critics, and ballad imitation and adaptation have been considered both unimportant and difficult.² Consequently, since Thomas Hardy is best-known for his ballads, philosophical poems, and the elegies of 1912-1913, his reputation has suffered from the critical view that the ballad is a minor, limited, and, perhaps even inferior form, as well as from the lack of appreciation for his mastery of ballad technique.

Yet the ballad has a firm place in literary tradition. The popular interest in ballads and broadsides during the sixteenth century in England is well-known. Jonson's attitude, on the other hand, represents the general opinion of scholars that folk lyrics and their imitations were not poetry in the strict and literary sense.³ Later,

¹Herford and Simpson, eds., The Works of Ben Jonson, I (New York, 1947), 145.

²E. K. Wells, The Ballad Tree (New York, 1950), p. 310.

³A. B. Friedman, The Ballad Revival (Chicago, 1961), pp. 1-67, et passim. This attitude was particularly strong in the Augustan Age when form and classical models were highly valued.

after the revival of interest which followed the publication of Percy's Reliques, the ballad became the subject of serious literary adaptation. Wordsworth said, "There is not an able writer of verse today who would not be proud to acknowledge his obligation to the Reliques. I know that this is true of me and my friends."⁴ Indeed, the Romantic poets, especially Wordsworth, saw the ballad as a way to relate poetry to the common man, and Wordsworth's theory that poetry should have simple language for simple themes comes in part from his study of broadsides and ballads.⁵ Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, and others adapted the ballad techniques to their poetry and introduced into lyrics both personal and subjective elements alien to the traditional form.

A ballad is a narrative folk lyric that has been (or is) (transmitted) by an oral tradition; and it is characterized by the simplicity of its images and by the objectivity of its point-of-view. The traditional ballad concentrates on action (usually in medias res), and it has "a strong propensity to absorb and preserve the supernatural."⁶ The meter is iambic and is uniformly rhythmical (only in literature do we separate the

⁴William Wordsworth, The Poetry of Wordsworth (New York, 1953), p. 121, "Essay Supplementary to the Preface of 1815."

⁵Wells, p. 312.

⁶Ibid., p. 18.

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A ballad, by strict definition, is a narrative folk lyric that has been formed (or transformed) by an oral tradition; and it is generally characterized by the simplicity of its images and by the objectivity of its point-of-view. The traditional ballad concentrates on action (usually in medias res), and it has "a strong propensity to absorb and preserve the supernatural."⁶ The meter is iambic and is uniformly rhythmical (only in literature do we separate the

⁴William Wordsworth, The Poetry of Wordsworth (New York, 1953), p. 121, "Essay Supplementary to the Preface of 1815."

⁵Wells, p. 312.

⁶Ibid., p. 18.

lyric from the tune). The rhyme scheme is simple and unstressed (for example, abab); and the stanza form is almost always a quatrain; but sometimes it stretches to five or six lines if there is a refrain. Incremental repetition, which is the repetition of lines within a stanza, is frequent. Details are homely, specific, and natural. Certain elements of the ballad--simplicity, allusiveness, refrain, incremental repetition, paucity of detail, and emphasis on both the commonplace and on the supernatural--can be adapted to more personal lyrics with great success. For example, Coleridge used the method of the supernatural ballad in "The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner"; here the qualities of the ballad combine beautifully with the complexity of the images and with the overt moral and spiritual statement of theme.⁷ Keats' "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" is also dependent on the ballad even though it departs radically from the tradition.

The Pre-Raphaelites were also fascinated with the ballad. However, they were more influenced by the medieval ballads which trace their roots to the French ballade than by the English folk ballad.⁸ In this century Hardy and

⁷See Raysor, Coleridge's Miscellaneous Criticism, p. 405. Coleridge himself said of the poem, "As to want of a moral, I told her that in my judgment it had too much; and that the only or chief fault, if I might say so, was the intrusion of the moral sentiment so openly on the reader as a principle or cause of action in a work of such pure imagination."

⁸Friedman, pp. 306-309. Friedman's study gives detailed information on the literary history of the ballad form.

Housman have treated the literary ballad with much more objectivity than earlier poets. They have been more interested in imitation than in adaptation.

Clearly, then, the literary ballad, an accepted form by the time Hardy came to it, falls into two major categories: adaptation and imitation. In the former, elements of the ballad fuse with non-ballad characteristics in such a way that the reader brings ballad expectations to the poem, but does not require it to conform to the folk tradition. In this manner, the poet uses the ballad to advantage, yet is not bound by the limitations of the form. An adaptation of an oral tradition which cannot be judged by the criterion of how well it imitates the traditional folk ballad, the poem becomes, without disguise, the work of an individual artist. The critic must decide how well the poet has adapted the ballad to his particular purpose. Ballad imitation, on the other hand, is an effort to approximate the folk tradition; and, therefore, ballad imitations should be judged on how well they fit the oral form. All of this is to say that Hardy's ballads must be judged by two different sets of criteria, for he wrote both adaptations and imitations.

As a country man, Hardy had a natural affinity for folk music and lyrics. The influence of both is strong in the stories and the novels as well as in the poetry. It is not surprising at all that Hardy wrote ballad imitations and adaptations, for he lived most of his life in an atmosphere

where country customs thrived. In this simple and limited, yet powerful form, he saw a microcosm for all of life. Hardy obviously saw himself in the world of the ballad, in what Hynes calls, the "world of minimal meaning."⁹

At the same time, Hardy was familiar with the literary development of the ballad. He did some early (rather weak) imitations of Wordsworth's ballads. "Mad Judy," "Retty's Phases," and "The Carrier" all present their characters as eccentrics; and their stories become simply recountings of their peculiar foibles. Ballads like these seldom rise above the telling of limited particulars. Hardy also carried a battered copy of Swinburne's poetry around with him, and he preferred it to all others.¹⁰ Consequently many of his ballads show the influence of Swinburne's rhythm and reflect his penchant for alliteration.¹¹ Often Hardy chose to combine particular literary techniques with the oral form as for example, in "A Sunday Morning Tragedy," where he adapted the dramatic monologue (he had studied Browning thoroughly) to the ballad. As in "My Last Dutchess," the speaker in Hardy's poem gradually characterizes and eventually incriminates herself.

⁹Samuel Hynes, The Pattern of Hardy's Poetry (Chapel Hill, 1961), p. 83.

¹⁰See F. E. Hardy's The Early Years of Thomas Hardy (London, 1928).

¹¹John Marsden, The Poems of Thomas Hardy (London, 1970), p. 232.

Because Hardy's spirit was bound to the country and because he preferred to view the ballad's history as oral rather than literary, he was not long satisfied with imitating other poets. In a final accounting, Hardy owed hardly a debt to another writer for his use of the ballad form--except for the few dialectal and purely regional poems like "The Bride Night Fire" which may relate to the method and theories of his mentor William Barnes who shared Hardy's love for Dorset, but not his world view.

Rev. William Barnes, whose school was situated next to Hick's office where Hardy was an apprentice architect, had written several volumes of poetry in Dorset dialect which aroused Hardy's interest in poetics and in the Dorset area as a subject for lyrics. Hardy carried with him copies of Barnes' poetry; he memorized many of Barnes' pieces to quote to his friends; he incorporated favorite lyrics of Barnes into his novels. In 1908 Hardy was responsible for the publication of a collection of selected poetry by Barnes for which he wrote a preface. Samuel Hynes has suggested that "the Dorset poet, with the obvious exception of Shakespeare, was the only poet whose influence [on Hardy] is demonstrable."¹² Hynes concludes that Barnes' primary influence on Hardy was stylistic, because Hardy's philosophy was so different from Barnes' views. In a more recent study of the relationship of Hardy and Barnes, Paul Zeitlow

¹²Hynes, pp. 23-32.

declares that there was "a very broad area of affinity between the two men. What Barnes and Hardy share is a reverence for places and things; places and things are sanctified by the association with them of experiences, sometimes of a single human being, sometimes of countless generations."¹³

Hardy adapted Barnes' use of dialect to his ballads and country songs, and he shared Barnes' love of tradition. In the end, however, Hardy's view of life was much more melancholy than that of Barnes; and unlike Barnes, his language broke the bounds of regionalism to take on broader meaning. The poems which are most directly the result of Barnes' influence are not Hardy's best adaptations because their regional materials and diction limit general appreciation. Since they belong so very much to a narrow setting, the historical and cultural leaps required of the reader seem hardly worth the effort. Yet, they are not without merit as regional poetry; and quite often they rise above their limited nature and explore some shared and common human experience. For example, "The Dead Quire" is a seemingly naive story of the old church singers who had been buried for many long years, but are suddenly heard singing a hymn on the evening before Christmas. With Biblical allusion Hardy succeeds in making the supernatural believable. Since we do not share either the time or the

¹³Paul Zeitlow, "Hardy and William Barnes," Victorian Poetry, XX (Morgantown, 1970), p. 171.

culture, and since the diction is archaic and dialectal, it is difficult to find much pleasure in its specificity:

Then did the Quick pursue the dead
By crystal Froom that crinkles there
And still the viewless Quire ahead
Voiced the holy air.¹⁴

Yet "The Dead Quire" has many strengths. In this poem, Hardy has controlled the feeling for what Douglas Brown has termed "lost stabilities"¹⁵ through the filtering device of memory. As the young men, drunk and singing "songs on subjects not divine," follow the Christmas music of the choir to the graveyard, the sad contrast of generations becomes clear. The young are gay and irresponsible, and they reject the seriousness and the faith of their fathers. Clearly, the young will always reject the old. Yet they are "sobered" by their confrontation with the ghostly music. Here Hardy has succeeded with sardonic humor in showing the claims which the past can make on the present.

"The Dead Quire" does not accomplish what the best of Hardy's ballads do--that is, it does not fill the ballad form with universal implications; its subject is too provincial for that. However, it does stand as an excellent example of a kind of regional poetry that we can, with some historical imagination, appreciate.

¹⁴Thomas Hardy, Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy (New York, 1948), p. 240.

¹⁵Douglas Brown, Thomas Hardy (London, 1961), p. 157.

There are many lyrics like "The Dead Quire" which seem to be inspired by Hardy's admiration for William Barnes, but generally Hardy came to the ballad from the oral tradition. From boyhood he had often heard ballads sung. He recalls one such experience in the first lyric of a series called "Casterbridge Fair," and he transforms the occasion into a poignant love song:

Sing, ballad singer; raise a hearty tune.
 Make me forget that there was ever a one
 I walked with in the meek light of the moon
 When the day's work was done.

Rhyme, ballad-rhymer, start a country song.
 Make me forget that she whom I loved well
 Swore she would love me dearly, love me long.
 Then, what I cannot tell.

Sing, ballad singer, from your little book.
 Make me forget those heartbreaks, achings, fears;
 Make me forget her name, the sweet, sweet look;
 Make me forget her tears.¹⁶

The idea that music and sooth sorrow comes through this simple poem with clarity and some force. Not a distinguished poem, it is marred by sentimentality. Yet Hardy has insight into the reasons why men have always responded to the ballad. Perhaps, the objectivity and fatalism of the form can take men out of their small world of trouble and thrust them into a larger, tragic macrocosm.

We might even say that the ballad is the genesis of all Hardy's poetry. As Douglas Brown writes, "This that I have designated folk verse and ironic balladry is not a

¹⁶Hardy, Collected Poems, p. 223.

strict category but a style that permeates all his verse."¹⁷ A problem arises, however, when the critic tries to discover why a poet "so obviously aware of the complexities and hardships of the modern experience would choose to align himself with a mode which is, as Hardy says, both instinctive and primitive."¹⁸ One reading of the body of Hardy's poetry solves the problem: the dominant characteristics of the ballad are close to those which characterize Hardy's poetry.

First, he preferred to mask emotion. Hardy was a shy man; he did not like to be touched or to touch others. Even his autobiography, dictated to his second wife, is written in the third person. This desire for detachment and privacy naturally affected Hardy's poetry. He constantly searched for techniques which would filter and control the expression of personal feeling. One of those techniques was the adaptation of certain ballad characteristics to his poetry. Sometimes, even when writing what may seem to be personal lyrics, Hardy approached setting and action in the same manner in which they appear in the oral tradition. Hardy himself described the ballad in relation to setting and action in his notebooks:

...this play shape is essentially if not quite literally at one with the instinctive, primitive narrative shape. In legends and old ballads, in the telling of "an owre true tale" by country folk on winter nights over a dying fire, the place and time are briefly indicated at the beginning in almost all cases; and then the body of the

¹⁷Brown, p. 159.

¹⁸Hynes, p. 82.

story follows as what he said and what she said, the action being often suggested by the speeches alone. This likeness between the order of natural recital and the order of theatrical utility may be accidental; but there it is; and to write Scene so-and-so, time so-and-so instead of Once upon a time, At such a place, is a trifling variation that makes no difference to the mental images raised.¹⁹

Ballads focus on actions and not on their meanings. In them life is unexplained and, perhaps, unexplainable; it is a spectacle to be wondered at; and a presentation of reality does not depend on a full-blown metaphysics for its justification. Hardy found this method comfortable.

Second, in the ballads the point-of-view is objective. Actions are recorded without overt judgment. The poet avoids moralizing and interpretation. This method of narration seemed attractive to Hardy, as a way of expressing emotion honestly and without sentimentality. In his search for technical methods that might subdue strong feeling and at the same time preserve its meaning for the listener, he found the ballad a natural method of narrative control. In many of his ballad-tragedies, Hardy shows that his choice of the mode is justified.

Third, "the ballad world is clearly the same world that Hardy found himself caught in."²⁰ Hardy shared the view of life he found expressed in the ballads. In both worlds chance is far more important than motivation. And in both worlds there is violence, an indifference to man's

¹⁹Letter to Times Literary Supplement, 108 (Feb. 5, 1904), 36-7.

²⁰Hynes, p. 159.

desires, and a certain fatality. These qualities which critics have disliked in the novels and stories of Thomas Hardy are the very elements which make the ballad a perfect form for the expression of Hardy's Weltanschauung; for not only the technique, but also the content of the folk ballad attracted Hardy.

Many of Hardy's adaptations of the ballad should be called ballad-tragedies, a name Hardy himself appended to "The Sacrilege."²¹ In these poems the subject and narrative are much like the traditional ballad, but the forms varies. Stanza and meter are different, and the lyrics contain much more circumstantial detail than folk ballads do.²² Perhaps the best of these is "A Trampwoman's Tragedy"--a lyric which Hardy considered one of his highest achievements.²³ Combining the dramatic monologue with regular ballad narrative, the poem quite simply unfolds the experience of a young woman who forces the destruction of love and life on herself and those around her. Reflecting about what has happened, she sees the facts clearly and relates them; but she passes no judgment and does no moralizing. The bitter human truths of the situation emerge from her character and her experience.

Bored and weary like her companions, the trampwoman precipitates violence with her teasing. Yet she is not

²¹Hardy, Collected Poems, p. 375.

²²Friedman, p. 334.

²³Cf. A. Guerard, "The Illusion of Simplicity: The Shorter Poems of Thomas Hardy," The Sewanee Review, LXXII (Summer, 1964), 373.

insensitive: she sees the landscape through romantic eyes ("I doubt if finer sight there be within this royal realm"); she loves her fancy man--he is always referred to as "my lover," "my favoured mate," or "my only love." And she is capable of accepting the consequences of her actions, however horrible. At the end, with a stroke of resignation--"Tis past."--she faces her despair. Hardy's characterization is subtle and complete.

The action in "A Trampwoman's Tragedy" is divided into four sections: it begins with the tedious journey from Wynyard's Gap and slowly unfolds the trampwoman's weathered relationship to her fancy-man, to Jeering John, and to Mother Lee. The first four stanzas are punctuated with information about the sunblaze and its journey westward. The incremental repetition of "the livelong day" in the second line reinforces the "weariness of the flesh and spirit" which they feel.²⁴

From Wynyard's Gap the livelong day,
 The livelong day
 We beat afoot the northward way
 We had travelled times before.
 The sunblaze burning on our backs,
 Our shoulders sticking to our packs,
 By fosseway, fields, and turnpike tracks,
 We skirted sad Sedge-Moor. (Stanza I)²⁵

The next four stanzas (5-8) set forth with a refrain of "O deadly day" the story of how she teases her lover as they reach their destination and the sun begins to sink. In

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Hardy, Collected Poems, pp. 182-184.

final perversity she denies that her fancy man has fathered the unborn child which she is to bear.

Then in a voice I had never heard,
 Had never heard,
 My only love said to me: "One word,
 My lady, if you please!
 Whose is the child you are like to bear? -
 His? After all my months of care?"
 I nodded - still to tease. (Stanza VIII)

Stanzas 9-11 recount "at set of sun" the murder of Jeering John, the hanging of the fancy man, the deaths of both Mother Lee and the child. Finally night has fallen, and the poem takes on a more complex dynamic; for she renews her love with the ghost of her man and is able to reconcile herself to loneliness through having told him the truth about the child. The realistic narrative glides smoothly into the supernatural for two reasons: first, the setting prepares for the ghost--her weakness, the red moon, the falling leaves, the wind's stirring, and the ghost's disappearance at the light of day make the experience seem illusory. Second, the reader brings expectations of the medieval ballad to Hardy's poem and is, therefore, willing to accept the unreal.²⁶

O doubt not but I told him then,
 I told him then,
 That I had kept me from all men
 Since we had joined lips and swore.
 Whereat he smiles and thinnes away
 As the wind stirred to call up day. . .
 - Tis past! And here alone I stray
 Haunting the Western Moor. (Stanza XIII)

²⁶Friedman, p. 284.

The whole ballad is intricately bound together by the progression of the sun in the sky which marks both the passage of time and life. This is, of course, the traditional way of expressing time in the ballad.²⁷ Natural phenomena, as so often in Hardy's lyrics, provide the atmosphere and the tone. As she accepts the bleakness of her existence in the bare dawn, as she becomes like a ghost herself--haunting the moor, the trampwoman's life has come full circle like the sun.

"A Trampwoman's Tragedy" is a splendid poem and an excellent example of successful imitation of a folk art in literary form. Conventional pattern (two quatrains), balladic incremental repetition in the second line of each stanza, homely detail, objective presentation, immediate and violent action, a beginning in medias res, dialogue, and other ballad characteristics combine well with elements not usually found in traditional ballads--that is, specificity of detail, romanticized landscapes, and a surprisingly modern tone. Even though Hardy modifies the tradition in this way, the fusion preserves the integrity of the ballad form.

In the end, however, it is the tone of the lyric which makes it extraordinary. Hardy has captured one side of the human condition which has particularly intrigued writers in this century: the sudden and scarcely motivated

²⁷Wells, p. 89.

waste of human potential caused by ennui and spiritual malaise. "A Trampwoman's Tragedy" breaks the bonds of the ballad form in order to particularize its action: the trampwoman becomes vulnerable to the dark fact that passion, violence, and destruction sometimes provide the only release from the humdrum of life.

"The Second Night" is another of Hardy's fine ballad imitations. A tragic tale of a faithless lover who learns of the suicide of the woman he has forsaken, the poem reveals through dialogue the fragility of love, the destructive quality of love-forsaken, and the importance of commitment. Just as most ballads are divided into scenes, Hardy's poem falls naturally into three movements.²⁸ The first section of dialogue reveals an unnamed young man in conversation with a woman who angrily refuses to accept his deft apology for not keeping an appointment with her the night before. Although a few place names are mentioned in the ballad (West Hoe Pier, Cremyll, and Edgcumbe), the setting is generally defined by natural phenomena--cliffs, water, trees, stars. In proper ballad tradition, Hardy lets character and place emerge from concrete details which give, however, a feeling for the general and abstract. "This conventional description, known as ballad commonplace. . . may represent evolution from detail in the direction toward which all ballad style progresses, that of simplifying to

²⁸Ibid.

the utmost in order to intensify the action. Whatever its origin, the commonplace serves to free the attention of the singer and the listener for the business at hand, and to provide a chance for the individual imagination to run its course."²⁹ Hardy's use of ballad commonplace in this poem is in large measure responsible for the successful presentation of theme.

In the first scene the young woman knows that her lover has found another, and she accuses him of infidelity. His cruel reply is honest, at least, and is filled with self-indictment and resignation: "So be it." Restless and dissatisfied, he admits that he can never be faithful: "Tis that, unresting to wander wide/ has ever been my plight/ and at least I have met you at Cremyll side/ If not last eve, tonight." The section ends with her understanding that he is doomed as well as she. In fact, his lot seems more terrible--the endless search, a lifelong lack of the sureness that love can bring, an incapacity for sustained human relationships. The tension in the poem begins to tighten with her knowledge:

You get small rest - that I read quite;
And so do I, maybe.
Though there's a rest hid safe from sight
Elsewhere waiting me.

The second scene begins with the appearance of "a mad star" which falls from the sky into the sea. As in folk ballads, the falling star in Hardy's poem seems to be

²⁹Ibid., p. 84.

an omen, a sign. When the young man looks at his love after he has seen the star, he knows that she has been transformed. The sparks from the star gleam in her eyes as she fades from his sight.

A mad star crossed the sky to the sea,
Wasting in sparks as it streamed,
And when I looked back at her wistfully
She had changed, much changed, it seemed.

The sparks of the star in her pupils gleamed
She was vague as vapor now,
And ere of its meaning I had dreamed
She'd vanished - I knew not how.

These two stanzas accomplish a kind of transformation from the material world to the immaterial. At first, the star seems to be a simple and common ballad image. The movement of the sparks from the sky into her eyes has changed her as she vanishes into thin air. Stunned, the young man, though unable to understand what has happened, is also changed by the moment. The supernatural element so common to the folk ballad becomes in Hardy's stanzas a much more complicated possibility--a sophisticated and modern image.

In the third section, the revelation of her suicide through the boatman's description which is factual, even crass ("Pity she's dead: So much for the faithful-bent") contrasts with Hardy's conclusion. "Again a star overhead shot through the firmament." In this last line, there is a suggestion of tragic recognition. The star somehow symbolizes the young man's knowledge of all that she was and all that he is.

The most amazing quality of the poem is that Hardy has told his tale in completely traditional ballad style: he has not moralized, he has not violated the objectivity necessary to the form. The latter, according to E. K. Wells,³⁰ is the most difficult aspect of imitation of the oral tradition. Yet, Hardy has also managed, as he did in "A Trampwoman's Tragedy," to extend the ballad to a modern theme without in any significant way deviating from the traditional form.

Hardy accomplishes this because he has mastered in "The Second Night" the art of allusion and the art of dialogue. "It has been said that a ballad's power lies not in what is told, but in what is left untold. Nowhere is this truer than in its use of the concrete for the abstract, its allusive statement."³¹ This, too, is the power in Hardy's poem because he does not interpret, but lets the dialogue and the star-spark transformation move the listener to his own conclusions. The dialogue serves the double role of providing allusive statement and of presenting both dramatic confrontation and characterization. In this sense, it is an excellent method for focusing on the story, the most important element in ballad form. At the same time he also delineates personality without succumbing to the

³⁰Ibid., p. 325.

³¹Ibid., p. 88.

psychological and moral interpretations which must always be intrusive in the ballad.

In "The Second Night" the broken appointment becomes symbolic of the broken tie between the two lovers, and it leads to death and to a terrible confrontation with the self. In this ballad, loss of love is equivalent to loss of life in a strangely profound and powerful way.

These two poems prove Hardy's success in ballad imitation. His adaptations are also worth reappraisal. For example, lyrics like "Weathers" and the charming "When I Set Out For Lyonesse" are clearly in the ballad tradition, but they have been personalized.³² Hardy's own experience gives the inspiration for the poems, and the ballad provides the form. In some of these lyrics, there are only slight traces of the ballad, but even these remnants add to the effectiveness of the poem. Perhaps, "During Wind and Rain" is the best example of Hardy's rather loose ballad adaptations:

During Wind and Rain

They sing their dearest songs-
He, she, all of them, yea,
Treble and tenor and bass,
 And one to play;
With the candles mooning each face. . .
 Ah, no; the years O!
How the sick leaves reel down in throngs!

They clear the creeping moss-
Elders and juniors, -aye;
Making the pathways neat
 And the garden gay

³²See especially the interpretations of "When I Set Out For Lyonesse" by Brown and Howe.

And they build a shady seat. . . .
 Ah, no; the years, the years;
 See, the white storm-birds wing across!

They are blithely breakfasting all
 Men and maidens - yea,
 Under the summer tree,
 With a glimpse of the bay,
 While pet fowl come to the knee. . . .
 Ah no; the years O!
 And the rotten rose is ript from the wall.

They change to a high new house,
 He, she, all of them - aye,
 Clocks and carpets and chairs
 On the lawn all day
 And the brightest things that are theirs. . . .
 Ah, no; the years, the years;
 Down their carved names the rain drop ploughs.³³

The source of Hardy's power in this lyric, as in many others, is the past. Memories, created through small vignettes, contrast in each stanza with death and the present. "One feels, considering just the opening of each verse, that the memories are distinct and active of their own accord, returning upon the poet as if uninvited; and by him quietly checked, so as not to intrude upon others, advancing claims for sympathy."³⁴ These vignettes from the past evoke the seasons and the weather through positive images. Notice that either "aye" or "yea" affirms each scene. Breakfasting under a tree, clearing the garden, singing by candlelight, or moving to a new house are all small, even trivial events. Yet each takes on specificity through detail. "The candles mooning each face" bring a warmth to human activity. The

³³Hardy, Collected Poems, pp. 465-6.

³⁴Brown, p. 149.

use of the noun "moon" as a verb participle is excellent; for it creates the image of a halo of light against the darkness. The creeping moss in the garden makes the task of clearing it necessary and real. The "glimpse of the bay" in the breakfast scene makes the setting more beautiful and specific. The same is true of the "clocks and chairs and carpets" of the final stanza. (The consonance here is also effective.)

There is an artlessness about these images which "vouches for a truthfulness that has no designs upon us."³⁵ In each stanza the fifth line presents an added detail, an after thought which seems quite natural as a completion of the scene. Yet each time it breaks the rhythm and supplements an already perfectly formed quatrain. For example, in the third verse, the breakfast under the tree is clear and self-contained in the first four lines. Then Hardy adds "while pet fowl come to knee." This small domestic detail brings a final touch to the scene--it is neither necessary nor superfluous; it is simply there. Yet it gives new and seemingly unplanned immediacy to the memory.

Consequently, when the last couplet introduces its plaintive note of grief, regret, and negation, the contrast with the positive images of things past is more painful. In the penultimate line of each stanza comes a broken refrain (alternately "Ah, no; the years, O" and "Ah, no: the years,

³⁵Ibid.

the years") which places personal regret in the context of general human experience. As a ballad technique, this refrain has the sound and rhythm of the speaking voice. The repetition helps to "recollect the way many men and women in all ages have found things to be."³⁶ The refrain functions, as it does in traditional ballads, to give assurance and weight to this generalized experience and to negate the forward motion of memory with the continual recurrence of the cycle of the seasons, death, and time. In each stanza the refrain is reinforced by an image of death and decay in the final line--as if the repetition had released or extended itself in some new image of the present. These lines "have the bold folklore suggestiveness of balladry."³⁷

How the sick leaves reel down in throngs!

See, the white storm-birds wing across!

And the rotten rose is ript from the wall.

Down their carved names the rain-drop plough.

The seasons and weather are drawn through pejorative imagery --the emphasis is on decay and not on renewal. The flowers are rotten; the leaves, sick; the birds are "storm-birds" and the rain-drop wears away the names chiselled on the tombstones. The present brings constant reminders of men's mortality. There is "sympathy" and "regret" for "the lovely world" of the past;³⁸ but time and death persistently negate

³⁶Ibid., p. 150.

³⁷Ibid., p. 151.

³⁸Hynes, p. 123.

that world. Yet, the recognition of mortality does not bring anger or indignation.

There is no real tension in the poem between past and present; there is simply a juxtaposition of an empty present with a rich, fresh, and emergent past. This juxtaposition without tension is made possible by ballad techniques: the refrain; the rhythm--"the folksong lilt," as Douglas Brown calls it;³⁹ and the incremental repetition of "he, she, all of them" (with some variation) in the second line of each stanza. The transience of human life--represented in the last verse, for instance, by the act of moving furniture and the tombstones--is softened by the repetitions, echoes, and variations of words and images which reinforce the cyclical nature of time and death.

"During Wind and Rain" is a fine poem because it combines Hardy's natural strengths in form--the ballad and the elegy.

The particular poetic sources are these: a vital relation with traditional music, folksong and balladry; a somber feeling for the transience and the intermittent bitterness of the human lot, for the necessity of suffering, drawn from the truthfulness of Hardy's own acceptance, from his nostalgia, and from the simple, generous wisdom he brought to bear--from what Middleton Murry so excellently called "the deliberate purity of his responsiveness"; a peculiar flair for catching the timbre of the perceived "moment" and for recording a sudden profundity of sensation; and a unique elegaic feeling responsive to the poignancy of incident returning unsought upon the unguarded memory. . . .⁴⁰

³⁹Brown, p. 150.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 152.

Hardy also chose ballad adaptation as the vehicle for Wessex legends. These adaptations are much closer to the traditional form than "During Wind and Rain." "At Stag's Heath" tells the sad tale of the agony of the woman who betrayed Monmouth in 1685. Almost all of these legends show a sharp strain of irony, but never at the expense of the characters. For example, "The Turnip Hoer" who falls in love with a noblewoman whose life he once saved does not appear foolish, but seems a victim of a clash of social values. In this ballad the tragedy of obsession and the power of the idee fixe become horrifyingly apparent.

The detachment which gives Hardy mastery over the impersonal ballad relates to his reluctance to psychologize. His few attempts at moralizing or at delving into the nuances of character weaken or destroy his adaptations. As Irving Howe has pointed out in his examination of "A Sunday Morning Tragedy," Hardy's parenthetical statement--"Ill-motherings/ Why should they be?"--is too simple to be helpful, yet is destructive to the unity of the poem. The intrusion of the poet only serves to "soften and confuse" in the ballad form.⁴¹ Many examples can be found to support Howe's analysis. Most often, however, Hardy successfully balanced his innovations with the traditional technique. For instance, "The Satin Shoes," the narration of a young bride's madness, and "The Forbidden Bans," in which the

⁴¹Howe, p. 171.

father dies apoplectically as he forbids his son's marriage, both have stories which might have been written for sheer sensationalism. Instead, Hardy, in the first case, handles the subject with subdued pathos; in the second, the emotion is controlled by being presented only in its subsequent effect.

"The Sacrilege," "The Vampirine Fair," "The Flirt's Tragedy," "The Tree," and "The Lost Pyx" all show Hardy as a successful adapter of ballad form. There are lapses and partial failures, but generally the critic, if he is willing to judge the poems as adaptations and does not (he should not) insist on ballad imitation, must find Hardy competent in his use of the ballad for both imitation and adaptation. Friedman writes, "If one reads his "The Lost Pyx," a medieval legend of the sort that Southey and Wordsworth treated, side by side with Yeats' 'The Ballad of Father Gilligan,' which tells a similar story, one discovers that Hardy's banal phrases, matter-of-fact tone, and pedestrian arrangement of places and occurrences go farther toward creating an atmosphere in which miracles are credible than Yeats's graceful and calculated naivete . . . Hardy's very roughness, quaint diction, and turgidity are, in his ballads, at least, a positive strength."⁴² Indeed, Hardy quite often transcends the limitations of the oral tradition and produces in these charming country sketches, lyrics of

⁴²Friedman, p. 335.

Wessex life, and literary ballads poetry of excellence and wisdom.

Hardy deserves a reputation as a master of the ballad as long as the reader remembers that the ballads, like his other poems, are uneven and that Hardy was even better at other types of lyric poetry. If Hardy must be known primarily as a "ballad-maker," then let that reputation rest on the relationship between the ballad and Hardy's Weltanschauung, on the compatibility between the ballad world and what Howe calls "the Hardyian weather."⁴³

⁴³Howe, p. 168.

III

PHILOSOPHICAL POEMS

T. S. Eliot once said, "Hardy would have been better for a better philosophy or none at all"; and his criticism seems to be representative of the extremely qualified praise that Hardy's poetry has received.¹ Southworth, for example, disagrees with Hardy's philosophical views and asserts that Hardy does not recognize the dignity of the human spirit.² What plagues the critics who dislike Hardy's Weltanschauung is his so-called pessimism. Blackmur has even gone so far as to suggest that Hardy, like Swift, is a man whose "Sensibility is violated by ideas."³

Hardy himself is partially to blame for this criticism, however; for he insisted that he be taken seriously as a philosopher and was especially sensitive to attacks on his ideas. When he chose to defend himself on rare occasions, his statements were almost always defenses of his philosophy. A close reading of the "Apology" for

¹T. S. Eliot, "Poetry and Propaganda," The Bookman, LXX (Feb., 1930), 597.

²James Granville Southworth, The Poetry of Thomas Hardy (New York, 1947), p. 229.

³R. P. Blackmur, Language as Gesture (New York, 1952), p. 79.

Late Lyrics and Earlier reveals his tendency to regard himself as thinker as well as poet.⁴

Since less than five per cent of Hardy's poetry was directly concerned with what Southworth calls "the Imponderables,"⁵ clearly their influence on both Hardy and his critics has been great--perhaps, too great. It is time that we recognize that the philosophical poems are weighed too heavily in assessments of Hardy's worth as a poet and that the lyrics themselves are much better than critics have suggested.

That critics have taken Hardy seriously as a philosopher at all is somewhat astonishing. Many books, like those by Rutland, Marsden, Morrell, and others, have been written--at least, in part--in an effort to systematize and identify Hardy's world-view. Long discussions of the influence of Mills, Schopenhauer, Darwin, Spencer, et al have led to conclusions that Hardy is a meliorist, a Manichean, a phenomenologist, and/or a determinist (to name but a few of the labels he has received).⁶ Yet, as Hardy himself

⁴Thomas Hardy, Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy (New York, Macmillan Co., 1925), p. 525.

⁵Southworth, pp. 92 et passim.

⁶See the following: Ernest Brennecke, Jr., Thomas Hardy's Universe (London, 1924); Kenneth Marsden, The Poems of Thomas Hardy: A Critical Introduction (New York, 1969); Roy Morrell, Thomas Hardy: The Will and the Way (Kuala Lumpur, 1965); W. R. Rutland, Thomas Hardy: A Study of His Writings and Their Background (Oxford, 1938); Harvey Curtis Webster, On a Darkling Plain: The Art and Thought of Thomas Hardy (Chicago, 1947).

suggested in the "Apology" to the Late Lyrics and Earlier, his Weltanschauung is "a series of fugitive impressions which I have never tried to coordinate."⁷

Perhaps, if Hardy had tried to write a serious treatise on his ideas as Yeats did in A Vision, his readers would have been able to deal with his philosophy more easily. Hardy did not, however, write a systematic treatise on his ideas. Instead he made isolated statements in his fiction, notebooks, and letters which gave the impression that he had come to grave conclusions about the cosmos. Most of his statements are similar to his reply to Alfred Noyes who had accused him of pessimism: "... my sober opinion,--so far as I have any definite one--of the Cause of Things, has been defined in scores of places, and is that of a great many ordinary thinkers: that the said cause is neither moral nor immoral, but unmoral: 'loveless and hateless' I have called it, 'which neither good nor evil knows'. . . ."⁸

There is a metaphysics woven through the lyrics as well as the novels; but the philosophy itself tends not to be very interesting or original or well-developed. Hardy's strength is not for philosophizing in verse. Yet I think it must be said that his effort to do so, as crude and clumsy as it often is, and leading as it often does to poor poems,

⁷Hardy, Collected Poems, p. 526.

⁸Florence Emily Hardy, The Later Years of Thomas Hardy (New York, 1930), pp. 216-7.

also enables him to do something more impressive--which is to present the experience of a man who struggles with philosophical ideas, as in "Hap," "In Tenebris I," and other poems.

Certainly, as a sensitive man who experienced in his twenties the crisis in belief which so many other nineteenth century intellectuals also experienced, Hardy could hardly be expected not to struggle with the dominant philosophical issues of his time. Indeed, as the new scientific views began to undermine the traditional Christian belief which had provided both warmth and security for his social and religious life in the rural world of Dorset, he became obsessed with them.

The first phase of Hardy's crisis in belief resulted from his friendship with Horace Moule, the son of the vicar of Fordington. Moule, older and a classical scholar at Queens College, Cambridge, discussed Greek literature with Hardy and directed his reading. Because of these discussions, "Hardy began to grapple earnestly with the difficulty of reconciling religious belief with the modern outlook; Horace Moule remained a convinced Christian, an admirer of the liberal Theologians."⁹ As a result of his association with Moule, Hardy began to read Huxley and Mill and periodicals like The Saturday Review. Slowly, but surely, Hardy's religious faith was undermined.

⁹Douglas Brown, Thomas Hardy (London, 1961), p. 4.

The dilemma of this country man, studying the works of Darwin, Huxley, Spencer, Mill and others late into the night as he turned to the new scientism and at the same time craved the certainty of the Christian faith of his childhood, is poignant. In the end, however, the new ideas proved intellectually dominant. From Mill, in particular, he learned that "there must be no evasion of the problems posed by the existence of suffering and pain."¹⁰ Mill's skeptical analysis of Christianity and his dedication to rational inquiry influenced Hardy enormously. According to Rutland, Mill's ideas affected Hardy more than anyone else's because he admired Mill personally as well as intellectually.¹¹ The following description by Hardy corroborates Rutland's theory:

The appearance of the author of the treatise On Liberty (which we students of that date knew almost by heart) was so different from the look of persons who usually address crowds in the open air that it held the attention of people for whom such a gathering in itself had little interest. Yet it was, primarily, that of a man out-of-place. The religious sincerity of his speech was jarred on by his environment--a group on the hustings who, with few exceptions, did not care to understand him fully, and a crowd below who could not. He stood bare-headed, and his vast pale brow, so thin-skinned as to show the blue veins, sloped back like a stretching upland The picture of him as personified earnestness surrounded for the most part by careless curiosity derived an added piquancy . . . from the fact that the cameo clearness of his face chanced to be in relief

¹⁰Ibid., p. 21.

¹¹Ibid.

against the blue shadow of a church, which, on its transcendental side, his doctrines antagonized.¹²

When Hardy returned to Dorset to become a writer, his experiences in London (like the one described above) as well as the ideas he encountered there had transformed him. If there were ever any danger that he might have succumbed in his writing to regionalism, such a danger was averted by his years in London.¹³

At that time, Huxley, too, had a profound effect on Hardy, contributing to his loss of faith. Huxley's idea that "there is no alleviation for the sufferings of mankind except veracity of thought and action, and the resolute facing of the world as it is" becomes one of the strongest of Hardy's convictions.¹⁴ In a poem called "In Tenebris II," Hardy, like Huxley, pledges himself to take "a full look at the worst."

From Darwin and Spencer, Hardy learned to face the cruelty of the struggle for survival and the harshness of an accidental universe. Much of his agnosticism came straight from Herbert Spencer's First Principles. In this work he also found the idea of emergent consciousness which later became the "Immanent Will" of The Dynasts.

¹²F. E. Hardy, The Early Life of Thomas Hardy (New York, 1929), p. 43.

¹³Irving Howe, Thomas Hardy (New York, 1967), p. 14.

¹⁴Brown, p. 3.

The works of Mill, Huxley, Darwin, and Spencer did not, however, provide sudden revelation for Hardy. Instead, he found in them confirmation for his natural bent. Before he read them, he had mastered the Greek tragedies and had underlined the most pessimistic passages in Sophocles. He had also noticed that Crabbe "laid bare the sordid miseries of ordinary lives."¹⁵ Hardy had a predilection for the pessimistic; and the writers he encountered during his years in London set these impulses free. In one sense, then, the experience was liberating. In another, however, it was destructive; for Hardy never accommodated to his loss of faith.

Hardy had been raised in a world which believed that a man could not live without some kind of ontological system. If faith is lost in one system (e.g. Christianity), one must improvise something else in its place. In many ways, Hardy's philosophy is Christianity minus the active, benevolent intelligence at the center.

While the other writers Hardy studied took the new thought as a philosophy of hope, optimism, and progress, Hardy responded to it with sadness and pessimism. The reasons for this reaction are difficult to articulate because Hardy was such a private person. Therefore, critics have been forced to guess about his response. Howe suggests that "Part of the answer is that the advanced skepticism of

¹⁵Ibid., p. 20.

nineteenth century philosophers could be joined with--and serve to rekindle--the country fatalism which in Dorset lay buried beneath the surface of Christianity and which for Hardy constituted a folk heritage."¹⁶ Others have hinted that his melancholy resulted from the loss of love in a marriage which was childless and empty. Probably a combination of the reasons given provides the explanation: from his crisis in belief and its resultant skepticism and from his personal experience, Hardy saw the prospects for life as sobering and desperate. Whatever happened in those early years, Hardy was left with a "lifelong increment of sadness"¹⁷ which gave all of his work a dominant elegaic tone.

So Hardy developed his mechanistic view of the universe, deciding that the natural universe is neutral--neither "moral nor immoral" as he told Noyes. Man is subject to the whims of time and chance for no moral reason; and his reaction to the natural order should be submission or detachment; for however he rebels, he can in no way control his life.

Under such circumstances human consciousness, then, becomes a burden as Howe and Miller suggest.¹⁸

Though the detached clarity of vision which is possible to the human mind has come from physical nature, it is radically different from its source. It sees nature for

¹⁶Howe, p. 28.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Miller, Thomas Hardy: Distance and Desire (New York, 1970), p. 12 and Howe, p. 24.

the first time as it is, has for the first time pity for animal and human suffering and brings into the universe a desire that events should be logical and reasonable, a desire that people should get what they deserve. But of course the world does not correspond to this desire.¹⁹

Because of this duality, such consciousness becomes a burden, and man, given the choice, should choose never to be born at all. Hardy takes this position in several poems--in particular in "To An Unborn Pauper Child," and "Tess's Lament."

At the core of this mechanistic universe is not god but what Hardy calls the "Immanent Will." This power is not transcendent; it is a force within the natural world. Hardy's concept is "a version of the inherent energy of the physical world as seen by nineteenth century science: an unconscious power working by regular laws of matter in motion."²⁰ The events of the world at one moment lead inevitably to those in the next moment. In this manner, all things have been and always will be fated.

Hardy uses the word "will" here in a special way, for he means to imply an unconscious willing. In a letter to Edward Clodd, he explains the term:

What you say about the "will" is true enough, if you take the world in its ordinary sense. But in the lack of another word to express precisely what is meant, a secondary sense has gradually arisen, that of effort exercised in a reflexive or unconscious manner. Another word would have been better if one could have had it, though "Power" would not do, as power can be suspended or withheld, and the forces of Nature cannot.²¹

¹⁹Miller, p. 13.

²⁰Ibid., p. 4.

²¹F. E. Hardy, Early Life, p. 320.

The Immanent Will then is a blind force which shapes things in patterns determined by its energy translated through time and chance.

The only hope for man is in the emerging consciousness of the "Immanent Will." In another letter to Clodd, Hardy explains his theory:

That the Unconscious Will of the Universe is growing aware of Itself I believe I may claim as my own idea solely--at which I arrived by reflecting that what has already taken place in a fraction of the whole . . . is likely to take place in the mass; and there being no Will outside the mass--that is the universe--the Whole Will becomes conscious thereby: and ultimately it is to be hoped, sympathetic."²²

Whether the idea is original with Hardy or borrowed from Spencer, Schopenhauer, Schleiermacher, Hauptmann, and/or Haeckel, it is clear that man must endure things as they are until such consciousness arises in the Immanent Will.

Hardy in his "Apology" for Late Lyrics and Earlier declared his philosophy to be "distinctly meliorist." He insisted that all of his works were but "one plea against man's inhumanity to man; woman, and lower animals." Here he insists that man has some small hope of his own, some small freedom within the confines of his fated life: "Whatever may be the inherent good or evil in life, it is certain that man makes it much worse than it need be. When we have got rid of a thousand remediable ills, it will be time enough to

²²Ibid., p. 335.

determine whether the ill that is irremediable outweighs the good."²³

To these beliefs which he formed in his twenties, Hardy clung tenaciously for the rest of his life. They are neither remarkable nor surprising for a man of his time, place, and temperament. What is remarkable, perhaps, is that he did not grow beyond them--that he continued to hold to the ideas of his youth and to refine and deepen them for fifty years. His writing is one long testament to the singleness of his vision of life.

The greatness in Hardy's poetry does not come from his philosophy. It comes from his struggle against it. It is like the grit of the oyster; from it pearls do emerge. For example, he intends that man should not struggle against the natural order, but submit: Gabriel Oak is such a man. At the same time, he secretly loves those who struggle mightily against their fate--like Henchard and Tess. He believes in the neutrality of the universe, but constantly slips into a kind of gnosticism in which the natural world is malevolent. "The President of the Immortals had finished his sport with Tess." The poems, as well as the novels, show his inconsistencies. In the transformation of philosophy into art, the clumsy philosophical structure sometimes collapses, sometimes provides rare wisdom. That wisdom usually comes--not from the bare and borrowed ideas of

²³Hardy, Collected Poems, pp. 525-533.

nineteenth century modernism, but from the experience of a man struggling with them. "His writing, at its most distinguished, displays a unique convergence of traditional and modern, both impulses in a fruitful entanglement, neither in harmony nor struggle, but in a kind of sustaining friction with one another."²⁴

The dominant characteristic of Hardy's philosophical poems is their strange mixture of residual Christian belief and acquired disbeliefs. This mixture, I think, accounts for Hardy's special way of regarding things. As a lapsed Christian he could not stop seeing the universe as animated; and as a "modern thinker" he had to see it as mechanical. He resolved the conflict in several ways. First, he often juxtaposed his view of the animated universe as desire and his view of the mechanistic universe as actuality. Second, he created for his neutral universe a mythical superstructure in which Time and Chance become Doomsters, (The Spirit of the Years; or the Spirit of The Pities) and the first cause becomes the "Immanent Will." In his epic on the Napoleonic Wars, The Dynasts, this superstructure is elaborately worked out. In the shorter lyric, it appears on a smaller scale. These personifications are not simply poetic devices, however; they also serve Hardy's need to animate the universe, to have someone to blame, to hate, and to love.

At the same time, they are merely personifications. Whatever his reasons, Hardy thought ideas like God, chance,

²⁴Howe, p. 30.

and time would be more concrete (for himself as well as others) if he personified them. He explained it this way:

In my fancies or poems of imagination, I have of course called this power all sorts of names--never supposing they would be taken for more than fancies. I have even in prefaces warned readers to take them as such--as mere impressions of the moment, exclamations in fact. But it has always been my misfortune to presuppose a too intelligent reading public, and no doubt people will go on thinking that I believe the Prime Mover to be a malignant old gentleman, a sort of King of Dahomey--an idea which so far from my holding it, is to me irresistibly comic.²⁵

It is precisely the strange mixture of animation in a mechanistic universe which makes Hardy's personifications work: they are strange, eccentric, but effective when used as a way of blending belief with disbelief. They are, on the other hand, terrible when they are presented in the abstract as something pat or finished.

When Hardy's view of the neutral universe is placed in juxtaposition with his desire for an animated, God-centered world, his personifications work best. Yet many critics have been myopic in their views of the philosophical poems. They accept Hardy's declaration of the neutral universe at face value and fail to see the complexity of the world he presents. For such people, the personifications become either real or silly: either way the meaning is lost.

I. A. Richards, for example, contends that "Hardy makes no reaction to the universe, recognizing that it is something to which no reaction is more relevant than

²⁵F. E. Hardy, Later Years, p. 217.

another."²⁶ This, of course, is not so. Richards has confused Hardy's view that the first cause of things is unmoral with Hardy's consistent expression in his poetry that he wishes this were not true. In fact, the whole of Hardy's philosophical poetry is his strong, but sad reaction to the universe. Delmore Schwartz has refuted Richards also:

It is just that view of the neutral universe which prepossesses Hardy almost always and gives much of the power to the most minute details of his poems. Perhaps, one ought not to say Hardy's beliefs, but Hardy's disbeliefs; whichever term is exact, the fact is that his beliefs or disbeliefs make possible the great strength of his verse.²⁷

In the same article Schwartz also states categorically that Hardy fails to make abstractions work. Yet there are many poems like "God-Forgotten," "The Subalterns," and "Nature's Questioning," in which Hardy succeeds in his use of abstractions. Most of these fuse his belief to his disbelief, and the personal quality and the pain of the disbelief lend authenticity to the abstractions. In this sense, Hardy's early sonnet "Hap" is remarkable.

If but some vengeful god would call to me
From up the sky, and laugh; "Thou suffering
 thing,
Know that thy sorrow is my ecstasy,
That thy love's loss is my hate's profiting."

Then would I bear it, clench myself, and die,
Steeled by the sense of ire unmerited;
Half-eased in that a Powerfuller than I
Had willed and meted me the tears I shed.

²⁶Ivor Armstrong Richards, Science and Poetry (New York, 1926), pp. 81-2.

²⁷Delmar Schwartz, "Poetry and Belief in Hardy," Hardy Centenary Number, Southern Review, VI (Summer, 1940).

But not so. How arrives it joy lies slain,
 And why unblooms the best hope ever sown?
 - Crass casualty obstructs the sun and rain,
 And dicing Time for gladness casts a moan. . .
 These purblind Doomsters had as readily strewn
 Bliss about my pilgrimage as pain.²⁸

The meaning of "Hap" is quite clear, but the form offers challenge. The first quatrain of the sonnet is the antecedent of a hypothetical or conditional syllogism which expresses the speaker's wish that some vengeful god might have caused his suffering. The consequent of the argument is in the second quatrain: only then will he be able to bear his pain. In the first line of the sestet, however, he denies the antecedent, thereby denying the consequent. This means, of course, that the argument is valid, but not true. Since there is no vengeful god, he cannot bear his pain. It is of course a dramatized statement of the dilemmas experienced by a man still deeply tied to a system of belief he can no longer credit.

The form is perfectly logical, and this is important to the rest of the poem; he is unable to find the answer he seeks and must conclude that it does not exist. Here the poem shifts to a question and answer method. Yet, it is clear that he expects no answer. Looking for the cause of the disasters of his life, Hardy concludes in various ways that the moving forces of the universe, casualty and time, are indifferent--that there is no reason for his pain. His conditional argument (octave) ends in a negative conclusion.

²⁸Hardy, Collected Poems, p. 7.

The sestet then provides a different answer. The sonnet form itself has become an integral part of the meaning of the poem in "Hap."

The abstractions in the poem are really essential in the sonnet, and they work because they are inherently persuasive and because they are framed in particulars. The vengeful god has a personality; casualty is juxtaposed with sun and rain; and time is casting dice. The characterization of the speaker (accomplished through his characterization of God, Casualty and Time) gives the poem a personal aura and specificity which lend credence to the abstractions.

The poem is one of experience, of a man struggling with ideas. The emphasis is not on the ideas, but on the struggle. Yet, the abstractions indicate that the poet must have intended "Hap" to be an exemplum of sorts, that he intended that we extend his conclusions to man in general.

The title of this lyric suggests the idea of chance; for that is what "Hap" means, and it stands as an ironic comment on the meaningless suffering of man. The word is derived from the Old Norse "happ" which means good luck. Hardy obviously intended the word play in the title, for it reveals his well-known interest in little known words.

In the sonnet the rather elevated diction is dictated by the appearance of the vengeful god at the beginning and is unified by the reference to life as a pilgrimage in the last line. Yet the reader has no trouble also accepting the pejorative and almost slangy language

which refers to the doomsters--time and chance. Here is an instance in which Hardy has shown skill in shifting levels of diction.

Though this poem was written very early in Hardy's career--1866--,"Hap" represents the philosophical poems at their best; it provides the central theme and images for one aspect of Hardy's view of the human condition. Crass casualty and time remain the doomsters in all of his poetry until they emerge as the Immanent Will and Spirit of the Years in The Dynasts. Almost all of the poems of belief or disbelief work around Hardy's despair that the universe is indifferent to man. In "God-Forgotten" God says of the earth:

It lost my interest from the first.
My aims succeeding ill.
Haply it died of doing as it durst?
(Stanza 5)²⁹

Unlike Kafka who in his parable of the Emperor's message shows the Emperor's attempts to get his message through to man, Hardy pictures God as being totally uninterested in the progress of his subjects. Needless to say, Hardy's view, though humorously shown in "God-Forgotten," is much less comforting than Kafka's. In the "Subalterns" various forces--the sky, the north wind, sickness, and death declare the necessity for their causing pain; and the speaker is much comforted, for he could not possibly bear their indifference.³⁰

²⁹Ibid., p. 112.

³⁰Ibid., p. 110.

Among the philosophical poems which are abstract and which concentrate on Hardy's concept of the neutral universe, there are some poems totally snared in abstractions: "Doom and She," "By the Earth's Corpse," "The Masked Face," and others. "Hap" proves that Hardy could present his neutral view of the universe and his struggle against acceptance of that view in successful poetic form. However, Hardy also had a tendency to write philosophical poems based on pat and undeveloped ideas and frozen in abstraction. "The Masked Face" is an excellent example of this tendency:

The Masked Face

I found me in a great surging space,
 At either end a door,
 And I said: "What is this giddy place,
 With no firm-fixed floor,
 That I knew not of before?"
 "It is Life," said a mask-clad face.

I asked: "But how do I come here,
 Who never wished to come;
 Can the light and air be made more clear,
 The floor more quiet some,
 And the doors set wide? They numbe
 Fast-locked, and fill with fear."

The Mask put on a bleak smile then,
 And said, "O vassal-wight,
 There once complained a goosequill pen
 To the scribe of the Infinite
 Of the words it had to write
 Because they were past its ken."³¹

Delmore Schwartz also chose this poem to represent Hardy's failure to make abstractions work in his poetry.³² Schwartz was insightful in two ways: first, the frequent failure of

³¹Ibid., p. 490.

³²Schwartz, p. 125.

Hardy's philosophical poems comes from the failure of imagery rather than from the failure of philosophy; and second the poem itself is perhaps the best example of Hardy's tendency to present his philosophical views without the concrete imagery of his struggle with those ideas. It is the combination of the abstract imagery of his philosophy and the concrete imagery of man's experience in struggling with such ideas that makes Hardy's powerful and successful philosophical lyrics. "Hap" is a good example of this combination.

"The Masked Face" remains, however, in a state of abstract and frigid assertion. Hardy was obviously not involved with the poem, and consequently the reader finds nothing in the lyric that rings true. Yet the idea in "The Masked Face" is not without possibilities. Man can look for meaning in life and find none. Even the agnostic answer from the masked face at the end of the poem is a viable position--that man cannot possibly understand the mystery of life; that life is a mystery to be lived and accepted, rather than a problem to be solved, is somehow comforting.

Hardy's expression of these ideas, however, makes them seem trite. The choice of the main image--the mask-clad face--insures that triteness. In order to make the image work, Hardy would have to have given it much more complication and specificity than he did. Even then such an image seems doomed to achieve an effect opposite from the one Hardy intended.

The other dominant image--the locked doors at "either end" of a great space (which is life)--also seems trite. It fails not because it is too common and overused, but because Hardy does nothing to make it his own. Whenever a poet uses a traditional image (e.g. the sea, the moon, the stars, lights, and/or dark), that image must somehow take on newness; or it becomes flat and too easy. The vengeful God in "Hap" achieves such freshness, but the masked face in this poem does not. The goosequill pen anecdote at the end of "The Masked Face" is the final mistake. In combination with the other rather pretentious images, it simply becomes silly.

Furthermore, the diction in this poem is archaic and disfunctional. In Hardy's lyrics such diction is often a sign of his lack of commitment or involvement; it is an indication that the poet refused to complete the creative process which would result in a successful fusion of idea and form. As he attempted to push the idea into a form which did not work, his language showed the strain. Here such phrases as "giddy space" and "vassal-wright" annoy the reader. Yet Hardy uses the word "wight" with great success in other poems (e.g. "And There Was a Great Calm"). The archaisms like "I found me" serve no communicative or aesthetic function.

Many of Hardy's philosophical poems deal with the other side of his belief in the neutral and meaningless universe expressed in "Hap" and "The Masked Face." His

despair over the meaninglessness of human life is deepened by the residue of lost faith. In some lyrics this despair is translated with a lingering desire for a reason for things. Indeed, "The Oxen" in which the poet, picturing the birth of Christ, longs to follow in the gloom "hoping it might be so" is especially moving.³³ So too is "A Drizzling Easter Morning" in which Hardy observes "And on the road the weary wain/ plods forward, laden heavily;/ And toilers with their aches are fain for endless rest/ though risen is he."³⁴ "The Impercipient" is, perhaps, the most poignant of the poems which express Hardy's nostalgia for Christian belief. Sitting in a cathedral service, the speaker feels the intense isolation that his disbelief forces on him, but he asserts "a bird deprived of wings goes earthbound willfully!"³⁵ Gladly would he believe if he could.

The most famous of the poems which turn on Hardy's desire for a reason for things is "The Darkling Thrush." Some interpreters see it as a nineteenth century set-piece to be compared and contrasted with other lyrics like Shelley's "To a Skylark." Certainly, it helps to contrast Hardy's aged and gaunt thrush with Shelley's blithe-spirit soaring "higher still and higher" because the contrast shows the deep division between the joy of the bird in Hardy's

³³Hardy, Collected Poems, p. 439.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid., p. 59.

poem and the agony of the man as he contemplates the century past and the century to come.

The focus in the poem moves from the coppice gate, the spectre gray frost, the bird, and the tangled bine-stems to the land which seems to be "the Century's corpse outleant," with "his crypt the cloudy canopy/ the wind his death lament." Harsh and austere, all is death and decay. Unfortunately, the turn of the century does not bring a transformation of this decay into optimism through the beauty of the bird's song. Indeed, Hardy's thrush is denying the drab evidence of the world around him. He is as joyous as the song-birds of other poets, but despite the hard conditions of life rather than because of its beauty and joy. His challenge to the gloom only emphasizes the fact that man seems to have gone beyond the possibility of knowing such spontaneous happiness. Since the bird can know nothing of man's pain, he has some chance for joy. Man, however, can only listen; for he knows that there is no hope for him:

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.³⁶

Some unfortunate personifications (like "Century's Corpse") mar the poem a little, but Hardy does not allow

³⁶Ibid., p. 137.

them to usurp its integrity. Sharp and clear, "The Darkling Thrush" triumphs over this, to show Hardy at his characteristic best.

In his lyrics Hardy's philosophy moves beyond his view of a neutral universe in which man is subject to the whims of time and chance and even beyond his continuing desire for a *raison d'être*. The final step in his philosophy is taken with the idea of Immanent Will--that unconscious force which urges and directs everything and everyone and which is slowly becoming conscious of itself. "The Convergence of the Twain," a poem on the sinking of the Titanic, illustrates this final development. Because he saw in this catastrophic event not only the power of time and chance, but also the vanity of man who tries to transcend them, he emphasizes the moment of collision.

The Convergence of the Twain

I

In a solitude of the sea
Deep from human vanity,
And the Pride of Life that planned her, stilly
couches she.

II

Steel chambers, late the pyres
Of her salamandrine fires,
Cold currents thrid, and turn to rhythmic, tidal
lyres.

III

Over the mirrors meant
To glass the opulent
The sea-worm-crawls - grotesque, slimed, dumb,
indifferent.

IV

Jewels in joy designed
 To ravish the senuous mind
 Lie lightless all their sparkles bleared and
 black and blind.

V

Dim moon-eyed fishes near
 Gaze at the gilded gear
 And query: "What does this vaingloriousness
 down here?"

VI

Well: while was fashioning
 This creature of cleaving wing,
 The Immanent will that stirs and urges
 everything

VII

Prepared a sinister mate
 For her - so gaily great -
 A Shape of Ice, for the time far and
 dissociate.

VIII

And as the smart ship grew
 In stature, grace, and hue,
 In shadowy silent distance grew the iceberg too.

IX

Alien they seemed to be:
 No mortal eye could see
 The intimate welding of their later history.

X

Or signs that they were bent
 By paths coincident
 On being anon twin halves of one august event.

XI

Till the Spinner of the Years
 Said "Now!" And each one hears,
 And consummation comes, and jars two hemispheres.³⁷

Though it deals with the sinking of the Titanic, "The Convergence of the Twain" begins after the fact. The ship already lies in the depths of the ocean, her boilers transformed into "rhythmic tidal lyres"; slimy seaworms squirm over the mirrors meant "to glass the opulent." The images are grotesque and funereal. Then Hardy poses his central question: "What does this vaingloriousness down here?" The immediate and apparent answer is, of course, that it collided with an iceberg. Yet the word "vaingloriousness" indicates the contrast which Hardy makes between the vanity of the people who constructed and sailed on the ship and the final hideous state of the vessel on the ocean floor. Hardy also indicates that there is no rational reason for this unholy marriage of iceberg and ship except that chance and the "inscrutable irony of things" had brought the two together.

As in the other poems of belief and disbelief, so here Hardy also has a whole set of suppositions which lead to the images and ideas in this lyric. Specifically, he attempts to indicate that the ship and the iceberg were destined for each other. With the introduction of the Immanent Will, the catastrophe goes beyond the merely accidental.

³⁷Ibid., p. 288.

The sexual imagery which he chooses supports this view of destiny. The poet lets the nexus at which time and chance bring the Titanic and the iceberg together symbolize all such convergences.

The imagery in this poem is, in the first half, extremely lush. The first half of the poem is filled with polysyllabic words, verbs in the active voice, and an abundance of adjectives. All of the images which define the smart ship are exotic: jewels, joy, moon-eyed, sensuous. Bare and abstract by contrast, the second half describes the iceberg world. It is simply a "shape" appearing in "shadowy silent distance." The personifications (Immanent Will and Spinner of the Years) are symbolic of the ominous and fated nature of the event. As in the other philosophical poems, Hardy uses these figures to represent abstract concepts; but the concrete imagery of the ship and the iceberg lends them specificity. In the end they add magnitude to the catastrophe.

The irony, an important element in the success of the poem, inheres in the event itself. Hardy heightens it with his organizational pattern. In the lyric he traces two separate developments and then merges them. Taking a term from Yeats, Hynes calls it an antinomial pattern, with the ship as thesis and the iceberg as antithesis, and demonstrates that this is typical of Hardy's formal development.³⁸

³⁸Samuel Hynes, The Pattern of Hardy's Poetry (Chapel Hill, 1916), pp. 45-55, et passim.

The ironic implications are deepened further because Hardy defines the accident as an unholy mating. He uses sexual imagery much as Donne does in his holy sonnet "Batter My Heart, three personned god"--in "Convergence of the Twain" the iceberg and ship finally meet in sexual union: "couches," "ravish," "mate," "intimate welding," and "consummation." Through these images the ironic violence and gratuitousness of the catastrophe become real.

The short initial lines of the stanzas slide into long pulsating ones which change the tone to a cold, inhuman one. Ominously, the cosmic mismating of the ship and the shape of ice becomes a pattern for all those convergences, gone astray through time and circumstance.³⁹ The event is a perfect symbol for Hardy's philosophy.

"Convergence of the Twain" is "superbly presentational,"⁴⁰ but at first glance the poem seems atypicall--so much so that critics have lamented that Hardy did not write more lyrics about historical events or about things like railroads and boats.⁴¹ Evidently, however, what led Hardy to the topic of the sinking of the Titanic was its relationship to his view of life. Upon close examination the poem seems very much at the core of Hardy's philosophical poetry: it contains representation of his favorite motifs on chance

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Richard C. Carpenter, Thomas Hardy (New York, 1967), p. 173.

⁴¹Brown, p. 162.

and time; the "juxtaposition of destructive opposites"⁴² is another familiar theme as well as structural device; the Hardyian abstractions (Immanent Will and Spinner of the Years) appear in order to create cosmic proportions and atmospheres for the fateful accident. In its pattern and in its philosophical perspective, the poem stands at the center of Hardy's work; for it leaves one with a sense of those unresolved contradictions that often serve as the basis of his poetry.

If the Immanent Will unconsciously determines the life of man through the workings of time and chance, man is left with few possibilities for hope or happiness. The best he can do is to recognize his situation and to accept it. In the end, he must let go of all--love, people, nature, and his own mortality. As he comes to the other side of despair, he assumes a position of awareness and detachment.

Many of Hardy's philosophical lyrics show man's experience and accommodation to the bleak universe which he sees. As a final movement in the philosophical poems, Hardy comes to his first concern--man and his struggle with a pessimistic view of life. "In Tenebris I" is a powerful evocation of man's attempt to face the universe as it is:

"In Tenebris I"

Wintertime nighs;
But my bereavement pain
Cannot come again:
Twice no one dies.

⁴²Carpenter, p. 172.

Flower petals flee
 But since it once hath been
 No more that severing scene
 Can harrow me.

Birds faint in dread:
 I shall not lose old strength
 In the lone frost's black length;
 Strength long since hath fled!

Leaves freeze to dun;
 But friends cannot turn cold
 This season as of old
 For him with none.

Tempests may scath
 But love cannot make smart
 Again this year his heart
 Who no heart hath.

Black is night's cope;
 But death will not appal
 One who past doubtings all
 Waits in unhope.⁴³

The experience in the poem obviously starts from the speaker's perception of the coming of winter (it is a monologue); and as he reflects, his thought develops according to the associations of his own existence with various destructive aspects which the season suggests to him. Each stanza poses a painful situation--then reverses that situation, intensifying it by the assertion in the last line that the speaker is incapable of the experience because he has suffered beyond it. Thus, he cannot mourn the dead nor feel the torture of parting; he has neither friend nor love. Each image gets more violent; he proceeds from the withering of flowers in a harrowing harvest to tempests and finally to death itself. The tension which builds in the fifth stanza

⁴³Hardy, Collected Poems, p. 153.

with the tempest is muted by the change of focus from the season to the night. This makes possible the speaker's calm acceptance of the meaninglessness of his existence. Having stripped himself of all comfort, he coldly faces the darkness of his life.

Hardy's technique in the poem complements his basic purpose. The first person point-of-view contributes to that quality in Hardy's poetry which critics like Brown, Guerard, Lewis, and others variously describe as his sincerity, personal honesty, undeviating fidelity to life; a quality which they all admire. At the same time that Hardy's utterance is intensely personal, he also focuses on condition, not on character; and he uses several methods to achieve the effect of distance in his poetry. In Early Life he speaks of Turner's paintings: "... each is a landscape plus a man's soul. . . . He first recognizes the impossibility of really reproducing on canvas all that is in the landscape; then gives for that which cannot be reproduced a something else which shall have upon the spectator an approximate effect to that of the real."⁴⁴ Here Hardy recognizes the relationship of the objective to the subjective. He sees that the artist must select details for their effect and not merely for their fidelity to the objective fact. This is, in effect, an anticipation of Eliot's objective correlative. For Hardy selection becomes "a

⁴⁴F. E. Hardy, Early Life, p. 283.

disproportioning . . . of realities to show more clearly the features that matter in those realities."⁴⁵ In the poetry Hardy's process of selection reveals his attempt to combine the principle of sincerity with an equally important desire to objectify his internal conflict. Thus, he infuses more emotion in the landscape in the above poem than he does in his character. Petals flee; birds faint; but the speaker is incapable of response, for he is tragically beyond it.

Certain other elements of the style also serve to objectify the intensely personal revelations of "In Tenebris I." The closed stanzaic form and the short line (dimeter for lines one and four; trimeter for lines two and three), and the heavy concentration of accent help to confine the emotion. The reader then has no time for sentiment.

Thus, too, the emphasis in other poems on irony, on the flashback, on the return, on remembrance of things past, for all of these techniques have a way of filtering emotion. One is tempted to describe this special quality of Hardy's, this kind of muted candor, as a masked unmasking; but that is not quite sufficient. Whatever one calls it, it is a technique which provides a certain personal quality that is Hardy's alone.

The style of "In Tenebris I," also complements the poet's intention. The title means "in the night" or "in the darkness" and gives connotations of the depths of hell. It

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 299.

thereby prepares the reader for the Biblical imagery which follows. So also does the epigraph which is from the Psalms. The reader then readily accepts such terms as "hath," "scath," (the - e is dropped for the sake of rhyme), or "cope," which in addition to meaning the arch of the sky, has religious reference--it is a long, cape-like vestment.

Furthermore, the natural imagery--the winter, the death of the flowers, the ominous birds, the tempest--are all archetypes of death. Thus, the switch from winter images to the night in the last stanza is a logical culmination of experiences all related to death; and the style here shows the intensifying pain of his life.

On another level, the reference to the dark of his world: "lone frost's black length," "Leaves freeze to dun," and the black of the night bring fullness to the title of the poem and help to create a symbolism of the world which is very much like the world created by the imagery of the Old Testament, especially in the "Book of Job." The blackness and the weather in both Hardy's poem and in Job emphasize the tragic sense of man. At least, we can assume that the images and diction of "In Tenebris I" are intended to create an ironic comparison between the two. Finally, a contrast is necessary; for the afflictions of the man in "In Tenebris" are more meaningless than Job's because they are not God-sent.

Though the style is functional in this poem, many critics have objected to Hardy's penchant for archaisms,

coined words, and dialect; to the way in which he mixed levels of diction; to the oral dissonance in many poems. F. R. Leavis has said for example: "If one says he seems to have no sensitiveness for words, one recognizes at the same time that he has made a style out of stylelessness."⁴⁶ Leavis's remark is correct, yet he underrates Hardy; for at his best he was an extremely conscious stylist, as "In Tenebris" indicates. Here the Biblical references justify the archaisms, and the coinage of the word "unhope" is an exceptionally good one, for it captures the meaning and mood perfectly.

We need only read these two lines from "In Tenebris" to know that Hardy's aim was not musicality: "In the lone frost's black length/ Strength long since hath fled." Hynes explains it this way: "I think he heard a different kind of music, and a kind which should not sound strange to the modern reader's ear--it is not so different, after all, from the dissonances of Meredith and Patmore and Hopkins, or, for that matter, of Pound and Eliot."⁴⁷ Hardy's style in this poem, then, is a function of his belief--his unfaith and unhope. Here style blends with idea in such a way as to make clear without sentimentality Hardy's anguish and acceptance that man is without the comfort of larger meaning in the universe.

⁴⁶F. R. Leavis, "Hardy the Poet," The Southern Review, VI (Summer, 1940), 88.

⁴⁷Hynes, p. 60.

Thomas Hardy was compelled to "take a full look at the worst." Through that look he concluded that man must accept the idea that he is at the mercy of chance and time in a universe shaped by the Immanent Will which unconsciously determines everything as it slowly becomes conscious of itself. In his philosophical lyrics, these ideas are not presented as a systematic metaphysics; but they provide a substructure for his poems which deal with man's struggle with his belief and disbelief. At their best these poems successfully present major themes which make sense to modern man. Hardy's crisis in belief and his subsequent philosophical development yielded poetry of nostalgic yearning for traditional religion, poetry of exploration of the neutral universe, poetry of desperation for man's vulnerability to time and circumstance, and poetry of man's experience in his struggle with such belief. At their worst, these lyrics are lifelessly abstract and unbearably pessimistic.

Irving Howe has written the best conclusion about the relationship between Hardy's poetry and his philosophy:

Hardy's beliefs matter, but not as raw hunks of doctrine we must accept or deny; they matter as irritants, provocations and stimulants for the release of his sensibility. He takes his beliefs with complete seriousness, and so must we; it would be foolish to deny that our attitudes toward his poetry are strongly affected by the extent of our accord with its substructure of belief; yet in reading his best poems, as perhaps in reading all successful poetry, an appropriate response must soon transcend issues of doctrine. Transcend, not remove.⁴⁸

⁴⁸Howe, p. 176.

Hardy's philosophical poems, though they comprise only five per cent of his lyrics, form the basis for the rest of his work. Furthermore, these philosophical poems are better than their reputation indicates. In fact, a careful analysis proves that, though some fail wholly as poetry, they are not generally eccentric; and they are frequently excellent and powerful evocations of man's acceptance of and agony in an absurd world.

IV

LOVE POEMS

More than half of Thomas Hardy's poems are on the theme of love, and these lyrics are consistent in attitude and imagery throughout the nearly seventy years of his career. For Hardy love is the one hope for transcending time and chance in a fateful universe. In the poetry and in the novels love is possible and sweet only at its conception and in the period which follows when desire is strong, but possession impossible. Once consummated, love dies: it becomes ordinary, tedious, or, worse, destructive.

Love was the central concern not only of Hardy's art, but also of his life; and, indeed, on the theme of love his life and art seem to fuse. In the poems, in particular, Hardy's views and images of love come largely from the experience of his relationship with his wife--Emma Lavinia Gifford. Without a doubt, his marriage to her was the most important event of his life; and his emphasis on the loss of love stems from the slow and painful disintegration of their feelings for one another. Consequently, a study of the love poems which are autobiographical in nature is necessary to an analysis of Hardy's presentation of love.

The first days of his courtship are recorded again and again in detail in a number of lyrics--"Ditty," "When I

Set Out for Lyonesse," "Wessex Heights," all of the poems of the *Veteris Vestigia Flammae* collection to mention a few. At first what amazed Hardy most about his meeting with Emma Lavinia Gifford in 1870 was his own fickleness. During the week that he was in Cornwall talking, walking, picnicking with Emma, he was drawing away from Tryphena Sparks whom he had left behind in Puddletown.

It is difficult to say whether Tryphena finally jilted him (as Deacon and Coleman suggest)¹ or whether Emma replaced Phena in Hardy's affections during the four years that followed his first trip to Cornwall. Since Hardy left no autobiographical record of his affair with Tryphena Sparks, and since the only other account has come from Tryphena's eighty year old daughter, we are left with the evidence in the poetry. Here Hardy insists that it was he who proved to be false to Tryphena. In a poem called "The Wind's Prophecy" are the same details of the journey to Cornwall that Hardy chose for many of his love poems--the cliffs at the sea coast, the woman he met the end of the journey, and the wind. Here each time the traveler makes his choice for love, and the wind contradicts him:

¹Lois Deacon and Terry Coleman, Providence and Mr. Hardy (London, Hutchinson, 1966). The attempt to reconstruct Thomas Hardy's affair with Tryphena Sparks is a valiant one, but exaggerated. See John Paterson, "The Toucan Press Monographs," Victorian Studies (September, 1965) and Don Hogan "Biography and Mr. Hardy," Victorian Studies (September, 1967) for a somewhat better perspective on the relationship.

I say: "Thus from my lady's arms
 I go; those arms I love the best!"
 The wind replies from dip and rise,
 "Nay, toward her arms thou journeyest

I sigh: "My eyes now as all day
 Behold her ebon loops of hair!"
 Like bursting bonds the wind responds,
 "Nay, wait for tresses flashing fair!"

"I roam, but one is safely mine,"
 I say. "God grant she stay my own!"
 Low laughs the wind as if it grinned:
 "Thy love is one thou'st not yet known."²

Clearly the lover does not intend his infidelity to the woman with "ebon loops of hair" (Tryphena); rather, he intends to be the opposite--"God grant that she stay my own." However, it is not to be. In a later stanza the cloud "speaks of wrecks and bellies down with black alarms." Nature denies man's will. What becomes evident in this poem is that man is not capable of fidelity in a chaotic, disordered universe where his intentions and actions are subject to time and chance. The clouds and the wind are much more knowing and more powerful than he, and love becomes the fragile toy of circumstance.

This admission of fickleness is merely a corollary to his axiom that his trip to Cornwall was purely a chance happening that turned out to be fateful. In all of the poems in which he describes that journey he refers to the consciousness that both he and Emma later had of their mutual destiny. One example will prove the point:

²Thomas Hardy, Collected Poems (New York, MacMillan, 1925), p. 463.

"A Man Was Drawing Near to Me"

On that gray night of mournful drone,
 Apart from aught to hear, to see,
 I dreamt not that from shires unknown
 In gloom, alone
 By Halworthy,
 A man was drawing near to me.

I'd no concern at anything,
 No sense of coming pull-heart play;
 Yet, under the silent outspreading
 Of even's wing
 Where Otterham lay,
 A man was riding up my way.

I thought of nobody - not of one,
 But only of trifles - legends, ghosts, -
 Though on the moorland dim and dun
 That travelers shun
 About these coasts
 The man had passed Tresparret Posts.

There was no light at all inland,
 Only the seaward pharos-fire.
 Nothing to let me understand
 That hard at hand,
 By Hennett Byre
 The man was getting nigh and nigher.

There was a rumble at the door,
 A draught disturbed the drapery,
 And but a minute passed before,
 With gaze that bore
 My destiny
 The man revealed himself to me.³

In this lyric (as in "The Wind's Prophecy") the contrast is between the ominous natural signs--gray night, gloom, dim and dun--and the significant occasion for the human beings. The most powerful contrast in the poem, however, is between the woman's constant reiteration of her unawareness of the man's impending arrival ("I dreamt not," "I'd no concern," "I thought of nobody") and the flash of

³Ibid., p. 549.

recognition of her destiny that comes in the gaze she receives when "the man revealed himself."

Two central ideas emerge from this poem. First, there is evidence again (as in "The Wind's Prophecy") that the meeting of the two lovers is fated--"with a gaze that bore my destiny." Each stanza insists not only that she has no knowledge of the approach of the man, but also that she has no control over the situation. The artful parallelism of each stanza, with the short final lines which gives the physical location of the traveler in progress, reinforces the inevitability of the meeting.

Second, the notion of the gaze as the moment of conception of love is also important. This theme is present in many poems and in almost all of the novels. The "animated eye"⁴ of the lover is the center of his being and of his power over the beloved.⁵ Just as in the Bible love begins with "the lust of the eyes" (1 John 2:16) and in the Middle Ages and Renaissance the eyes were the openings through which love might first penetrate, so for Hardy "the drama of fascination begins with a look."⁶ Think of Gabriel Oaks watching Bathsheba Everdene look at herself in the mirror as she looks at herself looking at herself in an endless round

⁴J. Hillis Miller, Thomas Hardy: Distance and Desire (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 119. Mr. Miller's book has provided the spark for the organizing principle of this chapter.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

of reflections in the opening scene of Far From the Madding Crowd. Oaks is captured in that moment, and the pattern of their relationship is established permanently.

From these two notions--the fated view of love and the gaze--comes the obvious conclusion that love for Hardy is a state that one falls into and out of. Love is something the lover carries around inside him as he waits for the right or fated object on which to confer it. This is, of course, a highly romantic view of love and one which at the beginning is bound to be terribly exciting and in the end always impermanent. If love is not the result of active interrelationship, but rather a quantity pent up and ready to be bestowed upon an object, it is bound to diminish in time. When the lover confers his magical gift of love, the result will, indeed, be magical; but when the experience is no longer new, desire will be replaced by familiarity, and the lover will need repetition of the pattern with new loves in order to achieve the experience of love.

In fact, this seems to be what happened to Hardy. The glow of the early days of his relationship with Emma was sustained for a while by his separation from her:

And I have wasted another day
But wasted - wasted do I say?
Is it a waste to have imaged one,
Beyond the hill there, who, anon,
My great deed done,
Will be mine always?⁷

⁷The poem is called "The Sun on the Bookcase." Carl J. Weber, Hardy's Love Poems (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1963), p. 137.

In both the novels and the poems, love is enhanced and inflamed when the beloved is unobtainable for one reason or another. The scene in Jude the Obscure in which Sue Bridehead is actually sleeping in Jude's room and in his clothes, but forbidding him to possess her is evidence of this principle. In "The Minute Before Meeting," which, as both Miller and Weber suggest, refers to Emma, the lover admits that he relishes the anticipation of the meeting more than the meeting itself.

At that time Hardy loved Emma for her beauty, for her accomplishments, and for her encouragement of his writing.⁸ The elements of difference between them--the disapproval of her father, financial insecurity, her emphasis on social status, disagreements in belief--were minimized. In addition, the distance between Cornwall and Dorset helped to keep their interest in each other constant. Finally on the 17th of September, 1874 Thomas Hardy and Emma Lavinia Gifford were married in London. At the same time in the September issue of Cornhill magazine appeared Chapter XLI of Far From the Madding Crowd. In it is this conversation between Bathsheba and her husband, Francis Troy:

⁸Biographical information on the relationship between Hardy and his wife Emma is generally agreed upon by most critics and biographers and has been deduced from letters, autobiography, poems, and the accounts of friends and acquaintances. See, for example, Florence Emily Hardy, The Life of Thomas Hardy (London, MacMillan, 1962); Carl J. Weber, Hardy of Wessex (New York, Columbia University Press, 1940); Irving Howe, Thomas Hardy (New York, MacMillan, 1967).

Bathsheba. . . don't go too far, or you may have cause to regret something.

I do that already, she said.

What do you regret?

That my romance has come to an end.

All romances end at marriage.

I wish you wouldn't talk like that. You grieve me to my soul.⁹

Almost as if this passage were prophetic, in the Spring of 1875 the Hardys were at Bournemouth for a brief vacation, and some incident brought a division between them to the surface. As Hardy recorded the moment in Early Life, "We were irked by the scene, by our own selves."¹⁰ In several poems he records their growing estrangement. In "The Rift," for example, he laments "So sank I from my high sublime/ And never I knew or guessed my crime."¹¹ Because the early times were so lovely for Hardy and Emma, he found the erosion of feeling between them all the more painful. Although there were better times for the Hardys after this period, the romance, like Bathsheba's, was obviously gone. Hardy began to enjoy the social company of other women in the drawing rooms of London; and Emma became bitter, conscious of the difference in their status, and competitive.

⁹Thomas Hardy, "Chapter XLI," Far From the Madding Crowd, Cornhill Magazine, September, 1874.

¹⁰See the poem "We Sat at the Window," in Hardy's Collected Poems, p. 402.

¹¹Ibid., p. 589.

Even worse, her hardening religious attitudes caused her to disapprove of her husband's novels so that she stopped copying manuscripts for him and at one point tried to persuade his publishers not to print Jude the Obscure.¹² As if these were not enough reasons to cause estrangement, Hardy also lamented the fact that they were childless.¹³

Any number of poems might illustrate the lack of love between them--"She Charged Me," "Had You Wept," "Without, not Within Her," "You were the Sort that Men Forget," "The End of the Episode," "The Wound," and others. Perhaps, the best choice is "The Division."

Rain on the windows, creaking doors,
With blasts that besom the green,
And I am here, and you are there,
And a hundred miles between!

O were it but the weather, Dear,
O were it but the miles
That summed up all our severance,
There might be room for smiles.

But that thwart thing betwixt us twain,
Which nothing cleaves or clears,
Is more than distance, Dear, or rain,
And longer than the years.¹⁴

This is a slight poem, but it offers more than biographical information. With the use of the most ordinary images, the weather and the miles, Hardy creates in the first stanza a vivid picture that might be the opening of any traditional love lyric. The second line, however, characterizes

¹²Weber, Love Poems, pp. 49-50.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Hardy, Collected Poems, p. 204.

it in Hardy's style. "With blasts that besom the green" introduces a feeling of ominousness through its imagery. Together with the creaking doors, the image sets the whole stanza just slightly ajar. By the time the reader gets to the third line of the second stanza, he recognizes that this is not a traditional love lyric at all and that the images have been reversed by the subjunctive mood of the second verse.

In the last stanza, the first two lines have become the most frequently quoted statement of the failure of the marriage of Thomas and Emma Hardy. For example, on December 15, 1949 Siegfried Sassoon wrote to Sir Sidney Cockerell, "The Division . . . obviously refers to Emma."¹⁵ The sound of the words themselves is sufficient to evoke the meaning-- "That thwart thing betwixt us twain." I suppose that the admission of the division between them which neither severs the relationship nor allows itself to be repaired is the most remarkable aspect of the poem. In a very personal tone with words that only he might choose (cleaves, betwixt, thwart), Hardy has captured an aspect of the loss of love which is not just personal.

Finally, the relationship of the Hardy's deteriorated so completely that they seldom even spoke to one another in the last years of their marriage. In a line in "The Going" Hardy asks plaintively, "Why then latterly did

¹⁵Siegfried Sassoon, Siegfried's Journey (New York, Viking Press, 1946), p. 123.

we not speak?"¹⁶ Consequently, when Emma died on November 27, 1912, Hardy was overwhelmed by an unexpected resurgence of love. From her death and the recapturing of what Hardy called "the old affection"¹⁷ came the poems of 1912-1913 called Veteris Vestigia Flammae (ashes of an old flame), a collection of twenty-one elegies that are also love poems. "Beeny Cliff (March 1870-March 1913)" has, perhaps, the most lush and elaborate diction and imagery of these 1912-1913 poems; it is also characteristic of the group in structure and content; and there is no better recapture of love after death than this:

I

O the opal and the sapphire of that wandering western
 sea,
 And the woman riding high above with bright hair
 flapping free -
 The woman whom I loved so and who loyally loved me.

II

The pale mews plained below us, and the waves seemed
 far away
 In a nether sky, engrossed in saying their ceaseless
 babbling say,
 As we laughed lightheartedly aloft on that clear-
 sunned March day.

III

A little cloud then cloaked us, and there flew an
 irised rain,
 And the Atlantic dyed its levels with a dull mis-
 featured stain,
 And then the sun burst out again, and purples prinked
 the main.

¹⁶Hardy, Collected Poems, p. 318.

¹⁷Weber, Love Poems, p. 76.

IV

- Still in all its chasmal beauty bulks old Beeny to
 the sky,
 And shall she and I not go there once again now March
 is nigh.
 And the sweet things said in that March say anew there
 by and by?

V

What if still in chasmal beauty looms that wild weird
 western shore,
 The woman now is - elsewhere - whom the ambling pony
 bore,
 And nor knows nor cares for Beeny, and will laught
 there nevermore.¹⁸

The lover (clearly Hardy himself) has obviously visited Beeny Cliff on two occasions--the second is forty-three years after the first and after the death of the woman "with the bright hair." Yet the first scene is more distinctly created than the second, even though the former is evoked by verbs in the past tense and the latter has the force of the present. This is exactly what the poet intends, since on the second occasion the place, although still beautiful, cannot be the same because she is not there with him. The power of memory conquers the present briefly before the lover must face his loss.

The opening stanzas which create the riding scene at Beeny Cliff are as beautiful as any Hardy ever wrote. The first line of each verse describes the scene--the sea, the cliffs, the sky, and the woman on the horse. With vivid imagery (opal and sapphire, wandering western sea) the first

¹⁸Hardy, Collected Poems, p. 330.

two lines prepare for the human values of the third--the overt statement of their love and laughter. All of the magic of the early beginnings of love appears here with clarity and force.

The third stanza differs from these first two verses significantly. For one reason, it describes only natural phenomena and does not make any statement about the activity or feelings of the lovers. For another, the images do not have all positive connotations ("dull misfeatured stain," for example). Indeed, here a brief rain has clouded the scene for a moment before the sun returned and "purples prinked the main." It casts a shadow on the happiness of the previous stanzas. There are, I think, two reasons for these differences. First, it is true that it did rain briefly during that 1870 visit to Beeny Cliff (Hardy on foot --Emma astride her pony);¹⁹ but this account has much more than biographical significance. In effect, this description of the rain is a harbinger of the changes in the scene during that last sad visit; it provides a clear, but delicately complex transition from the memory of love to the admission of death and aloneness.

Stanzas IV and V describe the second visit Hardy made to Beeny Cliff, and both verses follow the same pattern. However, this structure reverses the method of the first two stanzas. Instead of two lines depicting the scene and the

¹⁹Weber, Love Poems, pp. 9-15.

third presenting the lovers in relation to the setting and to each other, these verses present one line of description and two lines of lamentation that the man and woman can never visit the place together again because she will "laugh there never more." Since the setting is not as important to him any longer, the emphasis shifts to the impossibility of repeating the journey in the same way.

The first line of the fourth stanza simply states that Beeny is still there and still beautiful. The question which follows asks plaintively if the moment can ever be repeated, but the answer is obvious. The only repetition possible is of the phrase describing the cliff "Chasmal beauty," for the woman is elsewhere and dead. It matters not that the cliff is still there.

In this last section the subtle shifts in language and emphasis give the second visit to the cliff an aura of unreality; there is an emptiness that is poignant and that provides a perfect, but horrifying contrast with the first section of the poem. The images of the second visit are more negative and haunting: "chasmal beauty"--and "wild weird western shore." At the same time the diction is much more simple, direct, and less latinate: "And shall she and I not go there once again now March is nigh?" The use of one syllable words in the previous sentence is an enormous contrast to the language of the first three stanzas. In the end, then, there is no resolution and no acceptance, only

contrast and recognition; and in this sense it is the most painful poem of the 1912-1913 collection.

Because Siegfried Sassoon was so moved by this lyric, he too went to visit Beeny Cliff in 1938 and wrote this tribute to the poem and to all of the verses of Veteris Vestigia Flammae: "When I got home, I reread the 1912-1913 poems; how queer and unique they are; I'd always admired 'Beeny Cliff' tremendously but the others now seemed equally fascinating. . . ."20

What is even more fascinating in a consideration of these love poems is that after their initial happiness the only way that Hardy was able to make his love for Emma live again was through death. Yet it clearly is not just a recreation of old memories nor simply "an expiation."²¹ These poems reveal the recreation of love itself. For Hardy, Emma became again beloved once death had released them both.

In these autobiographical poems Hardy's ideas on love are clear. At its conception love is the best experience in life; yet it is not a chosen experience. The lovers are destined for one another, and the bestowing of love is a magical act which transforms the lovers and the world around them for as long as it lasts. This period is not long, however, unless time, circumstance, and/or space keep the lovers apart and prolong the period of desire. All too

²⁰Sassoon, p. 95.

²¹I. Howe, p. 181.

soon, the glow of romance is gone; and the lovers feel the slow erosion of the bond between them. Finally, love dies; it is always impermanent and perfidious. The one chance for love to live beyond the initial lovely moments is in memory.

Not all of the love poems can be assumed to be autobiographical, however. What is most striking about those that are not directly related to his marriage is their similarity in attitude to the biographical ones. In the love lyrics there appears to be no difference between life and art, for Hardy's experience of love completely dominates his poetry. The stages of love in all of the poems on this theme parallel the stages of Hardy's relationship with Emma.

In the love lyrics there is a wide range in tone--from ecstatic happiness to profound sorrow. Not surprisingly the few poems of ecstasy are about falling in love. The most charming of these is "When I Set Out for Lyonesse":²²

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

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

²²Weber shows that this poem was written before Hardy met Emma, and it is probably entirely fictional and may have been composed on the train as Hardy travelled to Cornwall the first time. The word Lyonesse is a place name from the Arthurian legends which was located close to Cornwall; Hardy uses Lyonesse synonymously with Cornwall.

When I came back from Lyonesse
 With magic in my eyes,
 All marked with mute surmise
 My radiance rare and fathomless
 When I came back from Lyonesse
 With magic in my eyes.²³

Irving Howe has noted that "the pleasing interplay of three and four beat lines takes the form of a chant-like and enchanted repetition."²⁴ Indeed, this lyric has been more frequently set to music than any other poem Hardy wrote.²⁵ In addition to the lilt of the words and the rhythm and refrain, several other qualities make this lyric successful.

The pattern of the journey is a favorite subject of Hardy's, and it works particularly well here. The first stanza establishes his loneliness as he begins his trip, but the setting is highly romantic ("the rime was on the spray" and the "starlight"). The clues are well-placed to indicate that the journey will be a fortunate one. Since the scene is prepared, the reader knows from the connotations of the imagery exactly what happens even though the lover declares that he never would have guessed what would "bechance" at Lyonesse. Obviously, he has fallen in love. The change brought about by his sojourn is evident; for in the third stanza the lover gives off "a rare and fathomless radiance" and has magic in his eyes. As in poems like "Ditty" and "He Abjures Love," love here changes the ordinary to the rare.

²³Hardy, Collected Poems, p. 293.

²⁴Howe, p. 178.

²⁵Weber, Love Poems, pp. 91-92.

In all, this simple three part pattern tells just enough of the story to make its point. There is a marvelous economy of detail in this lyric that Hardy is not always able to match. Compare the interest of what is left unsaid in this poem with the explicitness of "The Division," and the mastery of technique here becomes evident.

For an analysis of Hardy's attitudes on love, three ideas in this poem are important. The first is the change that love makes in the lover--"magic" is the word Hardy uses here. In "When I Set Out for Lyonesse" as in any number of other poems, the lover is magically changed by the experience of love. Furthermore, he is always taken by surprise as if love occurs every time "at first sight." The lover cannot know that the magic of love will overtake and transform him, but neither could the wisest wizard or prophet guess it. The third idea is also for Hardy always related to the experience of falling in love--chance. Twice in the second stanza of this lyric the word "bechance" appears. The lover has not really made a choice; love has simply happened to him. Of course, this view of love fits Hardy's larger view of "the way things are"--that man has very little control over his life and that both time and chance play havoc with his best intentions. Just like his personal love poems, however, such an attitude precludes the possibility of sustained love relationships.

In the beginning the lovers in Hardy's non-autobiographical lyrics go from a state of loneliness or of boredom

to a magical state of tumultuous emotionality. This is just what happens in "When I Set Out for Lyonesse." This magic invests both the beloved and the world with the same wonderous qualities. "I Was the Midmost" has a stanza which illustrates this point:

She was the midmost of my world
 - When I went further forth
 And hence it was, whether I turned
 To south, east, west, or north
 Beams of an all day Polestar burned
 From that new axe of earth.²⁶

For the lovers existence becomes narrowed to their own experience, and everything radiates from there. The microcosm does not represent the macrocosm; it is the macrocosm. In other poems things also become invested with this radiance. Furniture, houses, musical instruments become transformed in the presence of the lovers. Even in a somewhat silly poem like "John and Jane" this miracle is accomplished.

They find the world a pleasant place
 Where all is ecstasy and grace
 Where a light has risen that cannot wane
 Do John and Jane.²⁷

In the first line of the next stanza, the image is a clichéd one, but it is a good example of the point in question "They see as a palace their cottage place."

²⁶Hardy, Collected Poems, p. 630.

²⁷Ibid.

"Great Things" which Irving Howe has called a "splendid song"²⁸ is an excellent illustration of the marvelous and transforming aspects of love:

Sweet cyder is a great thing,
 A great thing to me,
 Spinning down to Weymouth town
 By Ridgeway thirstily,
 And maid and mistress summoning
 Who tend the hostelry:
 O cyder is a great thing,
 A great thing to me!

The dance is a great thing,
 A great thing to me,
 With candles lit and partners fit
 For night long revelry;
 And going home when day-dawning
 Peeps pale upon the lea:
 O dancing is a great thing,
 A great thing to me.

Love is, yea, a great thing,
 A great thing to me,
 When, having drawn across the lawn
 In darkness silently,
 A figure flits like one a-wing
 Out from the nearest tree:
 O love is, yes, a great thing,
 A great thing to me!

Will these always be great things,
 Great things to me? . . .
 Let it befall that one will call,
 "Soul, I have need of thee":
 What then? Joy-jabouts, impassioned flings,
 Love and its ecstasy,
 Will always have been great things,
 Great things to me!²⁹

It is a mistake, I think, to interpret this poem as an expression of appreciation for the small things of life. For the speaker in the lyric cyder, the inn, dancing, the

²⁸Howe, p. 178.

²⁹Hardy, Collected Poems, p. 630.

candlelit room, and the love-play on the lawn among the trees are all genuinely great things--made great by the enhancement of love. In fact, they are the very things which finally make death acceptable not because they are small consolation, but because they are enormous consolation. Love in its ecstasy is the one positive value (even if it is a thing) in Hardy's poetry which can conquer death in this way and which can provide meaning for life.

As with "When I Set Out for Lyonesse," much of the beauty of this poem comes from the alternating three and four beat lines, the repetition of phrases and sounds, the parallelism of the stanzas which builds successively from minor activities to major ones without giving any of them inferior status. With great gusto, the poet moves from cyder to love as if he were a skillful musician reaching a crescendo. The last stanza quietly puts the whole matter of life into perspective, and the denouement is both right and beautiful.

However, the problem for Hardy is always in the sustaining of the early rapture of love. Poem after poem recounts the ecstasy only to contrast it with the agony. Desire is kept alive primarily when the beloved is unobtainable. The lover is kept in a white heat of passion that is sexual or almost religious in nature. Because the loved one sometimes represents more than herself (or himself)--a connection with art, the past, the exotic, or the ideal, for

example--the lover's passion is heightened far beyond sexual desire.

"The Well-Beloved" which captures in poetry the main theme of Hardy's strange novel by the same name illustrates the lover's passion as he approaches his bride from whom he has been separated and his disillusionment when he finally can possess her:

I went by star and planet shine
Towards the dear one's home
At Kingsbere, there to make her mine
When next the sun upclomb.

I edged the ancient hill and wood
Beside the Ikling way,
Nigh where the Pagan temple stood
In the world's earlier day.

And as I quick and quicker walked
On gravel and on green,
I sang to sky, and tree, or talked
Of her I called my queen

"O faultless is her dainty form,
And luminous her mind;
She is the God-created norm
Of perfect womankind!"

A shape whereon one star-blink gleamed
Slid softly by my side,
A woman's; and her motion seemed
The motion of my bride.

And yet methought she'd drawn erstwhile
Out from the ancient leaze
Where once were pile and peristyle
For men's idolatries.

"O maiden lithe and lone, what may
Thy name and lineage be
Who so resembles by this ray
My darling? -Art thou she?"

The Shape: "Thy bride remains within
Her father's grange and grove."
-"Thou speakest rightly," I broke in,
"Thou art not she I love."

- "Nay, though thy bride remains inside
her father's walls," said she,
"The one most dear is with thee here,
For thou dost love but me."

Then I: "But she, my only choice,
Is not at Kingsbere Grove?"
Again her soft mysterious voice,
"I am thy only love."

Thus still she vouched, and still I said,
"O sprite that cannot be!" ...
It was as if my bosom bled,
So much she troubled me.

The sprite resumed: "Thou hast transferred
To her dull form awhile
My beauty, fame, and deed, and word,
My gestures and my smile.

"O fatuous man, this truth infer,
Brides are not what they seem;
Thou lovest what thou dreamest her;
I am thy very dream."

- "O then," I answered miserably,
Speaking as scarce I knew,
"My loved one, I must wed with thee
If what thou sayest be true."

She, proudly, thinning in the gloom
"Though, since troth-plight began,
I have ever stood as bride to groom,
I wed no mortal man!"

Thereat she vanished by the lane
Adjoining Kingsbere town,
Near where, men say, once stood the Fane
To venus, on the Down.

- When I arrived and met my bride
Her look was pinched and thin,
As if her soul had shrunk and died,
And left a waste within.³⁰

In the first four stanzas, the young man has been walking
"quicker and quick," by night and by day, in order to reach
his loved one. Filled with anticipation, he sings the

³⁰Ibid., p. 120.

praises of his perfect queen--"the God-created norm of perfect womankind." His is idealized love, and his emotional state is clearly the passionate desire for possession: "there to make her mine."

In the next ten stanzas there is a dialogue between the young man and a "shape" which has emerged from the area near a pagan temple. At first the lover mistakes this maiden "lithe and lone" for his beloved. She, however, insists that his young woman is still at home and that he, in truth, loves not the young woman waiting at Kingsbere, but her.

The shape or sprite convinces the young man finally that he has "transferred to her dull form awhile my beauty, fame, and deed, and word,/ my gestures and my smile." Indeed, this lover (all lovers, according to Hardy) is in love with a dream of the goddess of love--Venus. Of course, this is not an unusual idea: the lover has created an image of his beloved which is strictly of his own making. It is, however, a deadly version of love, for it makes the act of loving dependent on the maintenance of illusion. In the end it is impossible to sustain--particularly if one is constantly confronted by reality's "dull form."

The critical point is the last stanza. When the young man realizes that the image of Venus is no longer superimposed on his beloved, she looks to him "pinched and thin" as if her "soul had shrunk and died." From a state of heightened desire at the beginning, the lover has moved to a

place and time where he might easily possess the woman only to discover that love has been illusory and has literally and symbolically disappeared. Indeed, in the end the woman has not been just diminished, but entirely emptied--wasted.

The theme which Hardy presents here is a popular one both for him and other writers (Proust, for example) and one which seems to have a reality based both in Hardy's own experience and in the experience of others. What is different in this poem is that the dialogue with the goddess takes on such an air of reality because of the setting--the eerie pagan temple and the night--and the archaic grammar. The reader feels drawn into the supernatural. It is difficult then to accept the scene as symbolic rather than literal.

However, I do not mean to suggest that this is a very good poem either. At times it drags on without purpose. For example, stanza eleven could be omitted without changing the meaning of the poem in the least. A few images seem almost to be parodies of traditional love images, and yet Hardy is perfectly serious about them. (O faultless is her dainty form, etc.) In addition some of the archaisms are forced--e.g. "upclomb."

In the end, though, the theme is effectively demonstrated through the change in the lover's view of the beloved; and the use of the supernatural is believable and also effective as symbolism. Moreover, neither the method nor the theme is atypical for Hardy. "He Abjures Love," "The Self-Unseeing," "Ditty," "At Waking," "The Dark-Eyed

Gentleman," all contrast the early magic of love and the desire for possession with the dreariness of the loss of love. This list might easily stretch to more than a hundred poems.

In the lyrics which express the disillusionment and emptiness of the final stage of love, the lover finds himself alone and lonely, withdrawn from the activities of life, and bitter in the knowledge of the perfidiousness of love. One of Hardy's earliest poems "Neutral Tones," which F. R. Leavis has judged one of his finest,³¹ paints an unforgettable picture of the tedium and death of love.

We stood by the pond that winter day,
And the sun was white; as though chidden of God,
And a few leaves lay on the starving sod;
 - They had fallen from an ash and were gray.

Your eyes on me were as eyes that rove
Over tedious riddles of years ago;
And some words played between us to and fro
 On which lost the more by our love.

The smile on your mouth was the deadest thing
Alive enough to have strength to die;
And a grin of bitterness swept thereby
 Like an ominous bird a-wing

Since then, keen lessons that love deceives,
And wrings with wrong, have shaped to me
Your face, and the God-curst sun, and a tree,
 And a pond edged with grayish leaves.³²

The title promises a direct remembrance of the speaker's experience, but instead the neutral tones belong to the scene and to the condition of love, not to the speaker's

³¹F. R. Leavis, "Hardy the Poet," The Southern Review, VI (Summer, 1940), 88.

³²Hardy, Collected Poems, p. 9.

presentation or remembrance of the incident; for he has learned much since that day by the pond and his reflections about this occasion reveal a quiet, but terrible contrast between what he is and what he was, between what Guerard calls "the knowledgeable present and the innocent, unknowing past."³³ Indeed, the past is portrayed not only in terms of innocence, but also in terms of the lover's ignorance of the situation. He is able to grasp the meaning of the occasion later through the painful filtering of experience.

The dramatic setting of the first stanza is far from neutral in tone; though the sun is white, it has received a chiding from God--this stark image sets the scene ajar. The gray leaves lay on the starving sod--again the passivity of the winter setting is violated, this time by the word "starving" which makes the reader sense that the description of love which follows will not be simply a reportorial rendering of fact; but will be a dramatic scene tinged with the color and wisdom of memory.

In the second stanza the riddles of love which she had enjoyed have become tedious, and they debate about which of them has lost more through love. The use of the word "played" in this context makes the lack of communication horribly clear. However, he has not anticipated the break in their relationship as she has. The end of love is

³³Albert Guerard, Thomas Hardy (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1964), p. 166.

apparent to her, but he is slow to see it. They simply do not "connect" in Forster's sense.³⁴

In the third stanza, however, he sees the deadness of her smile and its consequent metamorphosis into a grin of bitterness. Yet they remain mysteries to him, "like an ominous bird a-wing." The bird threatens, but he has only a dim awareness that something has gone awry.

The last stanza shifts from the past to the present and to the keen lessons of the perfidy and cruelty of love which he has learned since that day by the pond. The shift is to the impact of the moment which etches itself permanently into his mind: the sun is no longer chidden by God, it is curst; the fearful immobility of the scene is a portrait of the self-knowledge he has attained. Guerard, briefly but beautifully analyzing the poem, refers to its "dry sincerity."³⁵ Hardy has taken an extremely personal moment of failure--of both love and understanding--and juxtaposed it with an even more tortured expression of self-awareness. Yet, Hardy writes not from the fullness of young emotion, but from the dryness of age. People do get dry; and sometimes that dryness allows for an accuracy and honesty which no young person can reach. In the end, it is this "dry sincerity" which provides the richness and the truth for this lyric and for the best of Hardy's poetry.

³⁴See E. M. Forster, Howard's End. The two words "Only Connect" stand as an epigraph to the novel.

³⁵Guerard, p. 168.

Hardy sees traditional poetic devices as means by which he can force an immediate contrast between his own style and the object which is figuratively presented, indicating an instant sense of alarm toward that feeling or object. He uses poetic figures primarily for pejorative images, and he creates them infrequently. Consequently, the reader focuses on them immediately. His poetry is not highly symbolic: his primary use of symbol is to let the setting--usually place or weather--reinforce the speaker's feeling and thought. Thus, in "Neutral Tones" the setting becomes symbolic of the event. Hynes says, "Love and weather, the emotions and the elements symbolize each other in a way common to many of Hardy's best poems. . . ." ³⁶ Because Hardy's emphasis is never on the elements or on the weather, but rather on serious emotions or experiences, he uses the weather to represent the situation of his speaker. The weather and the feelings are in a kind of equilibrium, each reinforcing the other, and neither conceivable without the other.

The selection of detail in the poem is at once economical and complete. For example, in the final two lines not only do the tree, the pond, and the metamorphosed sun recapture the experience and round out the first stanza, but the simple evocation "your face" also carries within it the riddle of her eyes, the words which passed between them

³⁶Samuel Hynes, The Pattern of Hardy's Poetry (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1961), p. 136.

without really connecting, and the deadness of the smile which became a bitter grin.

Guerard comments at length on the roughness of the meter of this poem and shows that like other Hardy lyrics, "Neutral Tones" is complicated in technique. Written in iambic pentameter, the poem has both eight syllable lines of regular iambic meter and a nine syllable variation of a five-accent/ten syllable line and a great number of inverted feet (twenty-four in sixteen lines, according to Guerard). He summarizes his technical analysis this way: "not only does a colloquial speech rhythm move in counterpoint to the metrical system, the metrical line itself oscillates between the strict accentual syllabic norm and the looser accentual."³⁷ He then concludes that Hardy would not permit his reader to "settle comfortably into a familiar gait."³⁸

Most important, the state of disengagement of the narrator at the end of "Neutral Tones" is clear. As in most of the novels and in many of the poems, the lover has had a moment of recognition in which he realizes that he has "lost" the magic of love; and from there he moves to a position of detachment--Think of the speaker of "In Tenebris I" who says:

Tempests may scath
But love cannot make smart
Again this year his heart
Who no heart hath.

³⁷Guerard, p. 169.

³⁸Ibid.

He has moved to the position of one who "past doubtings all, waits in unhope."³⁹

Indeed, the one consolation for the inevitable death of love is that the "great things" about it can be captured in memory--as Hardy does in the poems of 1912-1913. Even though distance or social class or the separation of death itself might come between lovers, memory has the power to rekindle the fires of love and to make it burn again. In the end, however, this too fails. Hardy records this failure of memory in a poem called "The Second Attempt":

Thirty years after
I began again
An old-time passion:
And it seemed as fresh as when
The first day ventured on:
When mutely I would waft her
In Love's past fashion
Dreams much dwelt upon,
Dreams I wish she knew.

I went the course through,
From Love's fresh-found sensation-
Remembered still so well -
To words charged anew,
That left no more to tell:
Thence to hot hopes and fears,
And thence to consummation,
And thence to sober years,
Markless, and mellow-hued.

Firm the whole fabric stood,
Or seemed to stand, and sound
As it had stood before.
But nothing backward climbs
And when I looked around
As at former times,
There was Life - pale and hoar:

³⁹Hardy, Collected Poems, p. 153.

And slow it said to me,
 "Twice-over cannot be!"⁴⁰

The first stanza poses the possibility of success a la recherche du temps perdu; but certain key words indicate the tenuous nature of that possibility--"seemed," "dream," and "wish." Therefore, the somber ending of the second verse is not surprising. The second stanza describes exactly the stages of love which have been found in Hardy's autobiographical and nonautobiographical poems. Love goes from lovely beginning to consummation to markless sober years. In the third stanza the lover admits that the fabric of memory which seemed so real--real enough to be passion--is only illusory. When he looks around, he must confront the reality of life: "Twice-over cannot be!"

When even memory fails to make love last, the choices left to man for the conquering of chance and time which thrust him headlong toward his own death are limited. Hardy finds it best to live as a detached observer "in quiet, screened, unknown," "shut from the noise of the world without/ Hearing but dimly its rush and rout."⁴¹

Hardy's love poetry, then, is highly romantic in attitude. Love exists inside the lover and can be conferred once he has found the proper object for it. This giving of love, however, does not depend upon choice, but upon chance.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 718.

⁴¹Ibid.; the poem is called "A Private Man on Public Men."

Once given, though, love has the power (or rather the lover does) to transform the beloved and the physical world with magical beauty. Therefore, the beginning of love is the happiest time of life; for then and only then does the lover seem to have a raison d'etre. Indeed, Hardy's only truly joyful poems describe this kind of love.

All too soon, however, love dies; and nothing--not even memory--can sustain it. In most of the poems the temporary happiness is contrasted with the permanent agony of the loss of love. Others concentrate solely on the painful state of the lover after love has died--better never to have loved at all than to have loved and lost. The only way, then, that man can really live is to withdraw, to watch life as an observer. Otherwise, he is doomed to repeat the painful cycle of love over and over again.

The poetry in all of these stages of love is consistent in attitude and tone, but enormously varied in its expression. As the largest group (more than half of Hardy's lyrics), the love poems are representative of Hardy's work. By this I mean that they are sometimes great and at other times poor; they are sometimes perfect and often flawed; they are even eccentric and naive at times. What is most characteristic about this group of lyrics, however, is that even though they were written over a period of fifty years, they reveal the same views of love. He simply reworked the same themes over and over again in order to show the depth and complexity of the human experience of love as he saw it.

What he saw did not give him reason to rejoice, and his love poems are not lyrics of celebration (except for the two I have mentioned). By and large they are not lyrics with a sense of fun. But they are wise, and they are true.

Hardy's solution to the question of love both in his life and in his art is not one that most of us would choose or even agree with, but the Hardyian experience of love--which is not love, but infatuation or a self-centered, almost infantile expression of man's desire for approval and release--is a common experience. There is enormous human understanding in the presentation of the problem.

V

DEATH: THE ELEGIES OF 1912-1913

For Thomas Hardy death, like love, was a major concern of both his life and his art. Just as his relationship with his wife Emma provided the central experience for his ideas about love and for the love poems, so Emma Hardy's death in 1912 brought from Hardy his finest elegies--a group of twenty-one lyrics which he called Veteris vestigia flammae.¹ As I have said, his marriage to Emma Hardy and her death forty years later were the most significant events of Thomas Hardy's life and, therefore, the most significant influences on his poetry.

Thomas Hardy had placed his hopes for happiness in his marriage to Emma Lavinia Gifford; and when that marriage failed and his hopes of love were lost, he withdrew from love as if one such failure were all he could bear. He insulated himself from further hurt by assuming the stance of the detached writer-observer. Consequently, the

¹Thomas Hardy, Collected Poems (MacMillan, 1925), pp. 318-336. Because the thesis of this chapter is that these poems must be read in sequence in order to be fully understood and appreciated, I ask the reader to look now at the entire series which is appended to this chapter. In the text each poem is discussed as it appears in the collection, and the reader can also refer to this appendix as he considers each lyric.

resurgence of feeling which came to him when his wife died was as unexpected as it was welcome; and the poems which followed are a delicate, deep blending of the themes of love and death.

Even the epigraph for the "Poems of 1912-1913" combines the concepts of love and death. Veteris vestigia flammae--"the ashes of an old flame"--comes from Vergil's Aeneid (IV, 23).² In this section of the epic Dido declares that her love for her dead husband is reborn in her relationship with Aeneas. This new alliance, however, ends in betrayal, separation, and suicide.

Here Hardy is obviously making an analogy between the death of Emma and Vergil's account of Aeneas' betrayal of Dido, but the similarities go much deeper than the re-awakening of feelings for a loved one who has died. He sees a complex relationship of the living to the dead. In both works, the dead person judges the living betrayer in mute but unforgiving terms. In both works the living are forced by death to come to new and hard conclusions about themselves, about the dead loved ones, and about life--past, present, and future.

The complex juxtaposition of the living and the dead can only be understood in Hardy's Veteris vestigia flammae by reading the whole collection. Just as a sonnet sequence--Sidney's Astrophel and Stella, for example--presents a whole

²See J. Hillis Miller, Thomas Hardy, Distance and Desire (Cambridge, 1970), p. 252.

which equals more than the sum of its parts, so also does Hardy's series present a dramatic totality which cannot be grasped from any single poem in the group.

That Hardy intended these lyrics as a single, sequential work seems to be supported by both internal and external evidence. For instance, some poems written about Emma's death at the same time as those included in the 1912-1913 collection are not part of the series. This indicates that Hardy chose only the lyrics which contributed in theme and form to the sequence. Furthermore, the poems are not arranged in chronological order. "Rain on a Grave," dated January 31, 1913, precedes by several poems "The Voice" which bears the date December, 1912. Obviously Hardy planned a specific order for these poems which was more important than date of composition.

The internal arrangement of the poems is similar to the movements in a symphony; or, as Miller suggests "like that rise and fall of the ocean waves which move within the lines of 'In Front of the Landscape.'"³ The sequence begins with anguished attempts to recover the past and moves to a climax with the recovery of past time and love in "After a Journey." Finally the poet moves to a position of loss and acceptance of death in the last poem "Where the Picnic Was."

Yet, the movement is much more complex than this brief summary indicates. As Irving Howe notes in his

³Ibid., p. 249.

analysis of the Poems of 1912-1913, "Four major poems carry the development of feeling. . . . About these great poems there coil themselves a series of lesser pieces, usually written in three-beat lines, serving as variations in feeling and recollection."⁴ The major poems are "The Going," "The Voice," "At Castle Boterel," and "After a Journey." The most famous and often anthologized poems like "The Going" however, derive their complete meaning only in the context of the whole sequence.

Clearly there is movement within the separate groups of poems: each poem carefully placed in relation to the others. Each group then moves toward a climactic recapture of the dead woman's presence only to return again to the theme of loss; then, the next movement rises and falls back again. This internal rhythm of alternating a recaptured past with a present of loss and death doubles on the larger and parallel movement of the whole collection. The small groups present variations on the theme and at the same time move the whole sequence through subtle shifts in person and tense to climax and denouement.⁵ This internal thematic arrangement of the lyrics supports the external evidence already presented that Hardy intended the collection as an organic whole and that each poem contributes in theme and form to a loose but complicated pattern.

⁴Irving Howe, Thomas Hardy (New York, 1967), p. 183.

⁵Miller mentions ideas similar to these, but does not give detailed explanations or evidence, pp. 250-252.

In this sense, then, each poem must be read as a single lyric and also as an integral part of a larger work. For example, "The Going" can be analyzed as a single poem and as an example of Hardy's view that love--always doomed to die--can only be recaptured by memory, and often only when death itself has separated the lovers. Yet when seen as what Howe calls "the opening cry"⁶ of the sequence, "The Going" then becomes exposition, initial statement of themes, and center of the first grouping of poems within the collection.

The Going

Why did you give no hint that night
That quickly after the morrow's dawn,
And calmly, as if indifferent quite,
You would close your term here, up and be gone,
Where I could not follow
With wing of swallow
To gain one glimpse of you ever anon!

Never to bid good-bye,
Or lip me the softest call,
Or utter a wish for a word, while I
Saw morning harden on a wall,
Unmoved, unknowing
That your great going
Had place that moment, and altered all.

Why do you make me leave the house
And think for a breath that it is you I see
At the end of the alley of bending boughs
Where so often at dusk you used to be;
Till in darkening dankness
The yawning blankness
Of the perspective sickens me.

You were she who abode
By those red-veined rocks far West,
You were the swan-necked one who rode
Along the beetling Beeny Crest,

⁶Howe, p. 183.

And reining nigh me
 Would muse and eye me
 While life unrolled its very best.

Why then latterly did we not speak,
 Did we not think of those days long dead,
 And ere your vanishing strive to seek
 That time's renewal? We might have said,
 "In this bright weather
 We'll visit together
 Those places that we once visited."

Well, well! All's past amend,
 Unchangeable. It must go.
 I seem but a dead man held on end
 To sink down soon. . . . O you could not know
 That such swift fleeing
 No soul foreseeing -
 Not even I - would undo me so!⁷

"The Going" illustrates its basic impulses and qualities and expresses the poet's desolation at the death of his long estranged loved one. The experience has caused him to reflect on his reaction to her death because her going has moved him so deeply that his life is irrevokably altered by the separation.

The poem falls quite naturally into four parts: stanzas one and two are paired, as are four and five; three, however, is very similar to the last one. The first two stanzas explore his wonder at her failure to include him in her moment of death. As a terrible contrast to her agony stands the meaningless activity of the speaker at the same moment--he watched morning harden on a wall as she died! The choice of the word "harden" is a master touch, for the implications are both graphic and thought-provoking. This

⁷Hardy, Collected Poems, p. 318.

section is egocentric but the speaker in "The Going" is conscious of his self-concern and is in control of it.

The third stanza shows his restless efforts to recapture her and the folly of such expectations. Though he sees the difficulty and the sheer uselessness of his situation, he has not accepted it. The focus shifts a little here so that the emphasis is on her activity as it relates to him rather than on his activity in relation to her.

In the following two stanzas he explores the fond memory of their early relationship and the dismal failure of their late one. He wishes only that they had tried to recapture the happy times before it became impossible to do so. Because of the beautiful quality of the riding scene at Beeny Cliff, the lack of communication between them in later years is all the more poignant. In this section the emphasis has shifted to the first person plural; it is no longer you or I, but we. As in the first two stanzas, contrast makes the power of the poem here.

In the last verse he recognizes the finality of her going, accepts it, but knows that, in a way no one could possibly have guessed, her death has moved him more than anything he has suffered or might suffer. The persona presented has a classic tragic recognition.

The clarity and power in the diction ("like wing of swallow," "Morning harden on a wall," "darkening dankness," "swan-necked one who rode along beetling Beeny Crest"), the closed, closely rhymed stanzaic form, and the dependence on

memory which are so effective for achieving distance in Hardy's poetry are doubly effective here because death has made them necessary. Hence the poem is more intimate than others; in fact, it is remarkably frank (the revelation of their not talking to each other); but at the same time the emotion is controlled and ordered in such a way that in short phrases like "Well, well," or "Unchangeable. It must go," the speaker can effect a release of tension which permits him to make without sentimentality his final admission that her death has virtually undone him.

"The Going" follows the same pattern as some of the early poems, "Neutral Tones," for example: it is a dramatic monologue with a variety of quick vignettes shaped by memory which release to the reader an immediate understanding of a complex situation. His looking for her at the end of the alley or her riding with him on Beeny Cliff tell in an instant a whole history of relationships. Hardy makes each image specific, graphic, and heavy with importance in "The Going."

The use of verb tense and pronouns is significant in this poem. The shift to the present tense in the third stanza indicates that she still has a hold on him--that he can neither let go nor accept her death. In the first half of the poem there is no description of the relationship of the lovers; there is only his reaction to her death.

Finally the past begins to emerge, to be recreated. From this recreation he sees that his accusations can no

longer be confined to her; he too must share the failure: his questions then begin with the first person plural--we. This is, of course, critical to his understanding of his life and her death.

As exposition the poem gives the central situation of the collection--her death and his reaction to it; the good and bad extremes of the love relationship; and a calm, but incomplete acceptance of the present which is a movement beyond despair. The central themes of the whole sequence--loss of life and love, recapture of the past through memory, and acceptance (or non-acceptance) of loss, death, and present time--receive their first treatment in this lyric. In fact the poem presents in its own movement the whole direction of the series: it begins with her death and his anguish, moves to a momentary recovery of their early love, and then to a recognition that such recapture is not possible permanently and that the final response to death is acceptance. "The Going," then, is the pattern for the larger work; and as such it is essential because it represents the whole in microcosm. It is, therefore, the only poem in Veteris vestigia flammae which can be somewhat independent of the collection. But the reverse is not true: the sequence cannot be independent of "The Going." It is not only the whole in microcosm, but also the initial statement of the moment and meaning of death; and consequently "The Going" is indispensable to the series.

The second lyric of the Veteris vestigia flammae collection is "Your Last Drive." As variation on a theme, this poem treats only one aspect of "The Going," the surprise the lover feels when she dies and his lack of preparation for her death. Here again is the hint that she knew it was coming but did not tell him: her face has "a last time look"; written on it is not only her death message, but also subtle accusations about his possible responses to her dying.

Like the first poem, this one begins with two stanzas in which the dead woman is addressed by her lover in the second person--as if she could hear him and respond. Each stanza contains a contrast between the ordinary sights she saw and the extraordinary and momentous occasion--the last time she would ever see such things. In the first verse the "borough lights" "by the moorway" beam on her face, yet they do not reveal that she will be dead within a week. In the second stanza she passes the graveyard and views it with "heedless eye"; yet she remains in there "everlastingly" just eight days later. Through time and death, the casual and simple act of taking a drive in the country becomes significant. Each stanza carefully catalogues detail of both: "to be in a week the face of the dead," and "you passed the spot where eight days later you were to lie." Her last drive, then, was a memorable occasion, but only when viewed as past action. When it happened, the drive was ordinary; subsequent events changed

it so that it acquired significance. In this sense, the past is altered, transformed, by death.

The third stanza shifts to the lover who speaks to the woman in the first person singular--I. First comes his sad and simple statement of his regret for not having gone with her. Then he insists that even if he had gone, he would never have guessed that she was about to die; nor would he have known what she was thinking about him. He is struggling here not just with surprise and anguish, but also with guilt.

In the hypothetical message from the woman which follows, she suggests that she will not know his response to her death, nor will she care whether he might praise or censure her. The point, of course, is not that she is now beyond knowing or caring what he does. The point is that while she lived, she did not know whether he would care if she died or whether he would praise or blame her after death. What is revealed is the loss of contact--of love--between the husband and wife at the moment of her death. Her last drive without him symbolizes the failure of the relationship.

The last stanza shifts again to the poet who speaks to her "ghost." He reaffirms her inability to know or care what he does, but pledges not to slight her for that reason. In a poignant question he reveals that he has not in the past done things for "profit," for what they might materially accomplish. He knows he can no longer change

their relationship or her death; but he remains, and in him are feelings which have reawakened and to which the question "what profit" cannot even apply.

Carefully, the poet pulls back and reiterates that she is "past love, praise, indifference, blame." What is left unsaid is that he is not past any of these.

In this poem a sense of privacy is created by the I-you dialogue, the reader seems almost excluded. He concentrates on the guilt and anguish of the living when the dead cannot know the positive residue of an eroded love and the power of death to change everything--including the past--and the powerlessness of the individual to change anything--especially death. What is left, however, is the one who is living; and somehow that is sufficient.

Compared to "The Going" this poem lacks the power of imagery. Neither the event nor the lovers have much specificity here. "Your Last Drive" succeeds in content more than in form. The second stanza illustrates this point:

And on your left you passed the spot
Where eight days later you were to lie
And be spoken of as one who was not
Beholding it with a heedless eye
As alien from you, though under its tree
You soon would halt everlastingly.

Here he names the "spot," but it has no real description--except for "its tree." In contrast, listen to these lines from "The Going":

You were she who abode
By those red veined rocks far west
You were the swan-necked one who rode
Along beetling Beeny Crest.

In this stanza both the woman and the setting are vivid and clear. The differences in concreteness of the imagery are apparent. In both poems, the images come from nature; yet, in the first they are so vague that they fail to catch or convince the reader; in the second they are not only strong, but also memorable.

In this poem, as in others, Hardy liked to choose seldom-used, unusual, archaic, and coventry words. Sometimes they fail him; on other occasions they represent his style at its best. Robert Graves tells a marvelous anecdote about Hardy's vocabulary in The Crowning Privilege:

I remember that when I stayed with Thomas Hardy in 1920 he complained to me: "Yesterday I was not sure of a rustic word which I wanted to use in a poem, and once again I found myself at a loss; because the only authority quoted for it in the Oxford English Dictionary was my own Under the Greenwood Tree."⁸

Another contrast can be heard in the meter of each poem. Though both stanzas have four beat lines, the rhythm works differently in each. In the verse from "Your Last Drive" there is almost a sing-song quality to it. Like the imagery and the diction, the meter is undistinguished. In the selection from "The Going," however, the iambic beat has enough variation to provide both interest and tension: for instance, "By those red veined rocks far west" should be read in a sprung rhythm (it could be regularized by pronouncing the -ed in veined, but the result is not nearly as

⁸Robert Graves, The Crowning Privilege (London, 1955), p. 196.

interesting as the first reading). The last stanza of "The Going" shows even more irregularity.

Hardy's use of rhythm is generally varied. Dr. Elizabeth Hickson who has done the definitive study on Hardy's versification writes:

Of the 916 poems listed we find only 141 which duplicate a metrical scheme used before, and on further study even these, in many cases, prove to be different because of the rhythmical variations introduced between the lines.⁹

Yet, though there is obviously great variety in Hardy's use of meter, all of the critics who work seriously with Hardy's metrics (especially Marsden, Southworth, and Hickson) agree that Hardy's rhythms, rhyme, and stanzaic patterns are traditional.¹⁰ For those who look to Hardy for modern innovation in form, disappointment is inevitable. His strength lies elsewhere.

Marsden does an excellent analysis of the strength in Hardy's metrics.

We find a form, half lyric, half meditative, in which the voice seems both to obey and defy the underlying structure. As Barfield says 'the stresses are accordingly more subtle, depending on the way in which the emotional meaning--as it were--struggles against the rigidity' . . . it is difficult to find a poet whom the remarks fits better than it does Hardy. . . The way in which the thought runs with the rhythm and clashes with it embodies the work of a mind forming its thought slowly and painfully, but precisely.¹¹

⁹Elizabeth C. Hickson, The Versification of Thomas Hardy (Philadelphia, 1931), p. 50.

¹⁰See Marsden, pp. 101-133 et passim.

¹¹Ibid., p. 31.

This description characterizes the role of metrics in "The Going" very well. In the case of "Your Last Drive," however, no analysis of the rhythm adds to appreciation of the poem. Perhaps the tie between the event and the final dialogue is too tenuous. Yet, whatever its imperfections the poem successfully provides both variation and complication to the themes introduced in "The Going."

"The Walk" presents a contrast to "Your Last Drive," and at the same time it reinforces the themes of loss and nonacceptance of death. The situation in "The Walk" is the opposite of that in the previous poem. Here the poet is the one who goes through a normally shared experience alone. In the first stanza he walks alone, but he is not lonely. Because she is "weak and lame," her absence is tolerable; for he knows that she will be present at his return. In the second stanza, he takes the same walk to the same place--again without her. This time, however, it is different. He describes the transformation of the walk caused by death: "Only that underlying sense of the look of a room on returning thence." Just as the mind can construct the emptiness of a room once people have left it and still know that the construction is imaginary, so the emptiness of place once she has died can only be dimly apprehended. The last metaphor is paradoxical, and the paradox is doubled by the last two words: "returning thence." At first glance it seems that Hardy has chosen the wrong word and that he meant leaving instead of returning. The choice of the word

returning, however, is perfect here because the whole poem centers on the return, and it proves that one can return from place and time after all.

This pattern in which the poet returns to a place which the lovers have formerly shared only to find time, place, and himself irretrievably changed by her death is not just the structural principle in this lyric; it appears in many of the lyrics of 1912-1913.¹² It is, in fact, the predominant pattern in the series. The advantage of such a pattern is obvious. The return forces a necessary contrast between shared past experience and a present of loss which is symbolic of the transforming nature of both death and time. The structure per se stands for the idea.

Another contrast between "Your Last Drive" and "The Walk" is also important; this contrast is structural too. The meter is considerably faster in "The Walk." The combination of dimeter and trimeter is varied only in the last line of each stanza when the reader is forced by the fourth beat to slow down and focus on the image presented. Both the strong rhyme and the couplet rhyme scheme (aa bb cc dd) emphasize the fast pace of this short lyric. It has a kind of erratic quality that courts failure, but it is saved by the fact that it has only two stanzas. It stops just when it is about to become excessive.

¹²See "The Voice," "After a Journey," "Beeny Cliff," "At Castle Boterel," "St. Launce's Revisited," and "Where the Picnic Was."

Not only do the rhyme and rhythm work well for the brief presentation, but they also provide contrast and variety in relation to the length of line and number of stanzas of the previous poem. This short poem speeds the pace of the series in a simple statement of loss.

The diction of this lyric is also stripped and bare. Contrasted, for example, with the opulence of word choice in "Beeny Cliff," the diction here is "lean and spare" and the "hungry look" coincides with the desire of the walker to find meaning in an act which has lost all meaning. J. I. M. Stewart puts it this way: "It is another characteristic of the finest of these poems that their diction is, for Hardy, singularly pure. 'The Walk,' 'The Haunter,' 'The Voice,' 'After a Journey,' 'A Death Day Recalled,' 'Beeny Cliff,' 'At Castle Boterel,' 'The Phantom Horsewoman': one can read them through (and to do so is one of the most moving experiences poetry affords) with scarcely a consciousness of an odd word or expression."¹³

"The Walk" is the third poem in the collection of 1912-1913; and like the first two lyrics, it is an address to the dead woman. In a highly personal tone, the bereaved lover calls her "you" as if she still has consciousness even though she is dead. Again this poem really focuses on the speaker, on the "I" rather than on the woman. As if to explain himself to her, he confines his world to the

¹³J. I. M. Stewart, Thomas Hardy: A Critical Biography (New York, 1971), p. 232.

relationship they once had and to the new relationship they have even though she is dead. He is not freed by her death; instead he is held by his failure to accommodate to it. In an eerie way, he feels her absence more than he had ever felt her presence.

"Rain on a Grave" completes the first movement of the series. Not a great poem by any means, it opens with a weak stanza. The rhyme jangles and is strained (amain, disdain, pain, rain, lately, straightly), and the diction seems tortured. Yet the simile "as at touch of dishonour" is excellent. It captures perfectly her dread of getting wet in the rain. A small, but perfect touch, however, cannot save this stanza which illustrates all too well Hardy's genius at awkwardness.

The idea in this stanza is that the rain falls on her grave "ruthlessly" because "lately" when she had been alive, she had hated to be touched by it. There is an irony in the situation which is lost in Hardy's presentation since the possibilities of the idea are destroyed by the form. The concept is obscured (clouds spout upon her), overdone (so straightly such arrows of rain), and crabbed (waters amain/ in ruthless disdain). Yet the idea forces itself through--"the past and present move towards a terrible linkage."¹⁴

¹⁴Howe, p. 185.

The next stanza, however, is a perfect contrast to the first; and it sets a new tone for the poem. Here the situation is given a new focus. The woman in earlier times would seek shelter from a sudden summer shower: the situation is described in terms of this simple act. The whole verse is lighter, less heavy-handed, and less clumsy. Both descriptions of the rain and of the woman take on more positive connotations. For example, her head is "delicate," and the drops "chance to pelt her" in a summer "spill": A graphic picture of a soft flight from summer showers emerges, and the result is fortunate. Even the final image is lovely -- "Birds close their bills." At first glance it looks a little forced--perhaps, the word "bills" was chosen to rhyme with "spills." Then the truth of the image forces itself home. Birds are silent when it rains. The image is right, and it is uniquely Hardy. In a poem Hardy wrote called "Afterwards," an elegy about himself, there is a line which captures Hardy's greatness and which describes this bird image: "He used to notice such things."¹⁵

The third stanza moves away from the rain on her grave, but creates a unity with it in the phrase "exposed to one weather" and a contrast in the words "sunny," "clear," and "prime of the year." The important idea is not the weather, however. He finally voices his desire to have died

¹⁵Hardy, Collected Poems, p. 52.

with her. At least then they would be together, as they were in earlier times when they would walk together to the cemetery.

The fourth verse describes that release, but it is not presented in personal terms--instead, it is a kind of transformation. The idea is related to the Biblical concept "dust to dust returneth." It relates also to the line in Homer's Iliad: "Like a generation of leaves, so is that of man." But it goes beyond these western sources to the oriental concept of transmigration of souls: "Till she form part of them" (the daisies and the stars),/ Aye, the sweet heart of them." The satisfaction of such a transformation is that (unlike her distaste for the rain), she loved these flowers "all her life's round." As Howe points out in his discussion of a similar poem by Hardy (it is actually called "Transformations"), "That philosophy of Hardy which too frequently lured him into frigid assertion is here dissolved into a genuine vision of an ultimate mixture of flesh and dust."¹⁶

The diction, rhyme scheme, and meter in the last two stanzas of "Rain on a Grave" help to create this blending of flesh and dust. Unlike the strained language of the first verse, the vocabulary here is simple, natural, and pure; the choice of words ("sunny," "clear," "prime," "blades," "daisies," "stars," "heart") is aimed at constructing a

¹⁶Howe, p. 180.

world which was "loved beyond measure/ with a child's pleasure" by the dead woman. Here Hardy succeeds without condescension in establishing that childlike vision.

The rhyme scheme--unusually repetitious even for Hardy who enjoyed stanzaic forms with only two or three rhyme sounds--is also child-like and clear. In the third stanza, for example, the scheme is ab c ac aabb. But even the scheme does not give an adequate description, for the word "there" is used as an end-rhyme in four of the nine lines; and "weather" and "together" reinforce this as echo rhymes. Even though six of the nine lines in the verse end with almost the same sound, the rhyme has enough variety ("away there," "stray there," "day there," "lay there") to be interesting as well as pleasing. The simplicity of the rhyme scheme, like the diction, is part of the creation of the purity and simplicity of the natural world which she loved and with which she will blend.

The meter is also complementary to this vision of transformation. The last stanza illustrates this clearly:

Soon will be growing
Green blades from her mound
And daisies be showing
 Like stars on the ground
Till she form part of them--
Aye--the sweet heart of them
Loved beyond measure
With a child's pleasure
 All her life's round.

The first four lines have five syllables each (though Hardy insisted that he never counted syllables--only stresses) with two stresses. The important lines are lines five and

six; for they describe the actual joining of the woman and the earth. Each of these has six syllables and three accents: each begins with a trochee and ends with two iambic feet. This, of course, slows the reader who has become accustomed to dimeter and focuses on the central and climactic image. The last three lines slip back to dimeter to bring the stanza quickly to a close. The beat is regular and open; yet it has enough variation (anapests--e.g. "on the ground" and "from her mound" and trochees--e.g. "Aye--the") to provide an interesting pattern. The combination of weak (3) and strong (6)¹⁷ endings also adds variation. All of this is simply to say that the rhythm works well with the content of the poem and emphasizes the transformation that Hardy wishes to effect.

In this lyric Hardy presents the conventional consolation pattern,¹⁸ but he goes beyond it. The contrast between the rain on her grave in the first stanza and the star-like daisies soon to grow there in the last verse makes the transformation more significant than that which the conventional pattern offers. The enmity between the woman and the rain (distain, arrows, dishonour) gives way to a blending of natural elements (the woman among them) that is pure but

¹⁷Time has come, I think, to drop the use of the adjectives masculine and feminine to describe strong (accented) and weak (unaccented) end syllables.

¹⁸Howe, p. 180.

sensual, a merging of lovers. Not only has the earth accepted her, she has also accepted the earth.

For the first time in the "Poems of 1912-1913" the woman is here referred to as "she" instead of as "you." For the first time she is not only dead, but also "resting in peace." The only reminder that all is not finished, that the merging is not complete, is the first line of stanza four: "Soon will be growing." The reader is left then with a present in which there is rain on a grave, a past in which the dead woman was repulsed by such contact with the rain, and a future which promises transformation and consolation. The series has moved to its first accommodation with death, but it is conditional.

"I Found Her Out There" reworks several of the themes of the previous poems--it concerns her grave, and it ends also with the possibility of transformation. "Rain on a Grave" is both the climax of the first movement of the collection and a transition to the next movement. The use of the images "the sweet heart of them" and "with a child's pleasure" in "Rain on a Grave" is echoed in the final lines of "I Found Her Out There," where Hardy uses "with the heart of a child." This is not, as some critics might suggest, a tired repetition of images. Instead, it is the deliberate selection of the repetition of themes, rhymes, and/or images found often in sonnet sequences. The effect, of course, is unification of the separate parts of the collection into a

whole. Through such techniques the poems are bound inextricably together.

"I Found Her Out There," however, differs significantly from the previous poem. It is a lyric which like "The Going" depends for its imagery on the early days of Emma and Thomas Hardy's courtship. There is a strong sense of place in "Your Last Drive," "The Walk," and "Rain on a Grave," but the place is Max Gate and the surrounding area. In the major poems of the collection the past in Cornwall is always contrasted with Max Gate. Even though all of the poems are structured by contrast, the greatest, most ironic, and most tragic differences are in those poems which work the beauty and happiness of the past in Cornwall against the death and emptiness of the present in Dorset.

For Hardy place is a condition of identity. Sometimes a change of place--like Jude Fawley's move to Christminster--can destroy a person. Sometimes a place and a man have a symbiotic relationship--like the heath and Clym Yeobright. Sometimes places are representative or symbolic of the character's situation--like Tess's end at Stonehenge. Whatever the relationship between man and place in Hardy's works, clearly that connection is significant.

In this poem the woman has been out-of-place: she had lived in an area which suited and inspired her, which made her alive and beautiful; the man had found her there and taken her elsewhere. Consequently, he is responsible for her feeling of rootlessness ("I brought her here.")

Even though she had moved only a few miles, Hardy considered her deracinated. Worst of all, she has even been buried far from the land and the sea she loved ("In a noiseless nest/ no sea beats near").

The first two stanzas present the basic contrast between Cornwall and Dorset, past and present, life and death. The first verse describes, but does not name Beeny Cliff: it suggests the beauty ("purple strand"), isolation ("a slope few see") and strength ("hurricane shakes the land") of nature and of her place in that scheme of things.

The second verse describes her insulated grave (noiseless nest, loamy cell) and her final separation from the sea "she loved so well." The key, however, is in the first two lines: "I brought her here and have laid her to rest." His, then, is the responsibility for taking her from her natural place and for burying her in a grave far from it. The implication is that, like Jude Fawley, she is changed and defeated by the loss of a supportive environment.

In the next two stanzas the woman is placed back in her natural setting. There is violence in the elements ("haunted heights," "Atlantic smites," "blind gales sweep," "dipping blaze," "wind tugged," "flapped ... like a flail"); and this violence inspires her--she "gazes," "sighs," and "listens" while the whole scene reminds her of Lyonesse (Hardy's synonym for Camelot). She is at home in this romantic place and the elements--violent though they may be--do no more to her than to "dye" "her face fire-red" or

to tug at her tresses or to wrinkle her brow with thought. Indeed, she thrives in this atmosphere. In these verses Hardy graphically creates a woman blended with the elements.

This picture is romantic and tinged with nostalgia; but the poet deflates the romanticism and carefully controls the nostalgia. The third stanza begins, "So she does not sleep by those haunted heights"; and the fourth verse ends "To the murmuring miles/ She is far from now." The romantic picture is framed by its own destruction. The present destroys the past. Memory, however powerful or beautiful, cannot overcome the reality of the present and of death.

Yet the poet cannot stop with his acknowledgement of her permanent deracination. In the final stanza he holds out the hope that her shade might move underground to the sea. The poem seems to end on the same note of conditional consolation as "Rain on a Grave," but such a conclusion is deceptive. In "Rain on a Grave" the transformation of flesh and flower is natural and expected. It gives the feeling of real acceptance even though the future tense holds only a promise. In "I Found Her Out There," however, Hardy once again refers to her "shade" and its desire to find union with its natural place. Instead of acceptance, then, the closing stanza of this poem reintroduces restlessness: the woman has been "laid to rest," but her "shade" cannot rest. What consolation is offered here?--Very little. Once again the movement in Veteris vestigia flammae subtly slips away from acceptance of death, and the man slips slowly, but only

partially back to his grief, to his loss, and to his failure to accommodate to any of it.

Unlike the previous poem the meter in "I Found Her Out There" is a two beat line which is predominantly anapestic (e.g. "on a slope," "on the pur/ple," "in a noise/less," "in its throbs," "of a child"). The most common variation is the iambic foot ("I brought," "the sound," "And joy," "and sobs," "long heard"). Such a tripping and lilt-ing rhythm works beautifully against the images which show the resistance of the lovers as he struggles against acceptance of his loss. A tension is created between the smoothness of the rhythm and the rhyme scheme (every stanza is abba cdcd) and the uncertainty and restlessness of the images. In the previous poem "Rain on a Grave," the rhythm complements the imagery and unifies the poem in order to achieve transformation. In this poem, however, the rhythm is successful in a different way: it contrasts with the imagery in order to mirror the tension which exists within lover as he once again moves away from acceptance of death.

The appearance of the shade in the last stanza of "I Found Her Out There" prepares for a change in point-of-view. In that poem and in "Rain on a Grave," the woman is referred to as "she" or "her." This use of the third person makes possible some movement toward understanding and acceptance of death. As long as he can refer to his beloved in the second person as if she were still alive, neither of them is at peace. The I-you relationship is personal, exclusive,

and unreal. The third person, on the other hand, is more objective, inclusive, and real.

In "Without Ceremony" the poet reverts to direct address. The idea expressed in the title and made final in the last line "Good-bye is not worthwhile" is an answer to the question posed in "The Going": "Why did you not tell me?" The answer is a simple one--the woman had always left without telling him. The first two stanzas indicate as much.

The idea that good-byes are superfluous at first seems not only right, but also obvious--even a little romantic. But what seems on the surface to be freedom created by the close relationship of lovers becomes in actuality an excuse for thoughtlessness and hurt. A close look at the first two stanzas uncovers evidence. Even if she should be excused for refusing to wish her guests and relatives good-bye ("it was not your way"), he does not really excuse her: the clause "I hastened to rejoin you/ as I inferred" reveals not only that he had taken care of their guests in her place, but also that he feels some bitterness about it.

In the second verse her behavior is no longer a matter of social grace or etiquette--or even of idiosyncrasy; it is complete disregard for the other person's feelings or needs. She "careers" off unannounced before he has a chance to notice that she has gone. The damning detail here is that he did not even have time to see that her "trunks were

down." She had packed them and had left before he even knew of her plans.

The final stanza reiterates the accusation made in "The Going," but it proves deeper than the question posed earlier. This answer is a bitter one--why should he be surprised by her unannounced death? She had acted even in her final moment completely in character. Read properly, the words "my dear" in the first line carry a bitter sadness.¹⁹ The meaning should have been clear to him from the beginning; but after a lifetime of unannounced departures, he still tries to explain to himself her last leaving. Even in her final act, she has found him vulnerable. In this there is a common human experience; which does not make it any less painful. The answer to his question, though apparent, offers him neither consolation nor understanding--only recognition.

The details revealed here are personal and ugly ones, the residue of a strained relationship. The contrast with the imagery of "I Found Her Out There" is most significant: the early with the late relationship, the ease of her place in Cornwall contrasted with the rootlessness of her home at Max Gate, the guilt of his taking her from her natural environment contrasted with the guilt of her disregard for him and all others in his environment. In this poem the

¹⁹In almost every instance when Hardy uses this phrase, he means it ironically, even sarcastically. See, for example, "The Division."

failures are seen as entirely hers. The formal elements of this lyric work well, but they indicate that Hardy meant the poem as a minor part of the movement away from the acceptance of death that had been begun in the previous poem. The subject of "Without Ceremony" is simple and uncomplicated--accusation and recognition; and the form complements this subject. The meter is a regular iambic trimeter, and the stanzaic pattern is short (five lines) with a simple rhyme scheme (abccb). Since most of the stanzas in the Veteris vestigia flammae series are longer than five lines and since most of the lyrics have more verses than this one, clearly the brevity of this poem is significant, dictated by the nature of the subject.

"Lament," on the other hand, shows her successes and her joys. The first two verses describe social events she would have enjoyed--an afternoon party and an evening with dinner guests. Each situation, however, is hypothetical and is made conditional by the verbs--"would have loved," and "would have reigned." Here she is gay, happy, and generous; she is completely different from the woman pictured in the previous poem, and all the same she is still that woman with a better side showing. All that is best in her personality is called forth only to be negated by the intrusion of reality in the last four and a half lines of each verse. In both stanzas the gaiety gives way to gloom as the poet forces himself to remember that she is dead. Positive images (smiles, generous delight, freely bestowed) are

replaced by negative ones (shut, jailing shell, tiny cell, no cups flow, powerless). In terms of structure and content the contrast is both powerful and effective; but the emotional impact is devastating.

The third verse is similar to the first two stanzas --it poses one of her favorite activities and then cancels it by reference to her death. It differs from the others, however, because this situation does not include other people. Instead it shows her delight in natural phenomena--the first snow drops and the crocuses in spring. Here her joy in nature is linked to "Rain on a Grave" and "I Found Her Out There" by the repetition of the woman-child theme. In all three lyrics Hardy describes her love of flowers, the sea, or the snow as child-like. Here, for example, he uses the phrase "with a child's eager glance." In each case the images are positive.

Each time Hardy presents and varies a theme (like the one above), each time he adds more details, the characterizations take on added dimension. In the process the whole sequence becomes more unified and considerably more complex--an added argument for reading the "Poems of 1912-1913" as a series.

The last verse in this poem shifts the point-of-view. For the first time the poet introduces the first person plural "we" that does not refer to him and her. The pronoun either refers to him alone or to those who now live with him: in either case, it does not matter. What does

matter is that he faces reality in a clear-eyed manner. He laments that he is living and able to do all of the things she loved, but unable to enjoy them as she did. Slowly the verse slides into the final lines. This time, however, she is not in jail, powerless, possessed, or entranced. She is in "her yew-arched bed." There is in these lines still a lament: "she is shut from the cheer of them." But there is also an acceptance essential to an understanding of death-- "dead to all done and said."

Taken by itself this poem is a good one--perhaps, a little too soft in texture, the images too easy. It has slight imperfections which annoy the reader (e.g. the repeated use of "cloy" in the last verse).

Even the rhymes sometimes seem to be too repetitious (e.g. "staying," "things," "gaying," "junketings," "her," "but," "shut," "dead," "said," and "bed"--ab ab cc dd eee). It is, however, the break in rhythm and meaning in the seventh line of each stanza which makes the poem work in terms of both form and content. The strength of the lyric hinges on the place in each stanza where the reality of her death intrudes and interrupts his wishful thinking about the past or his sad account of his present situation. Like so many other poems in this series, the structure here is determined by contrast.

This is also true of the rhythm. In the seventh line of each stanza the regular iambic beat is literally interrupted with ellipses (i.e. "with welcomings...But,"

"on her guests...But," "For crocuses...chanced," and "as us they cloy!...But.""). This enforced pause prepares for and strengthens the contrast which follows. A second element in the form of this poem which works well is the use of the refrain "she is shut" in three of the four verses; for it places emphasis through repetition on the last part of each stanza and helps to focus on his attempt to face reality. Consequently as a whole the poem works well.

Viewed as a part of the whole series, however, "Lament" has added meaning. It shows a side of her personality that is good and not dependent on the early relationship of the lovers. In other poems the only positive images of her relate to their early romance in Cornwall. In "Lament" the situations are common to their daily routine through forty years of marriage. This favorable view of her is new to these poems, an act of justice, an acknowledgment from maturity. The point-of-view is significant also. The third person pronoun provides more objectivity than the I-you monologue of the previous poem. Here he moves toward reality and acceptance of her death.

"Lament" also contrasts with "Without Ceremony" in another important way: the latter catalogues her failures and mistakes, and the former gives a vision of her successes and good points. In other words, this poem provides the reverse side of the previous lyric.

"The Haunter" differs from all of the previous poems in Veteris vestigia flammae because it is spoken entirely by

the dead woman. Hardy often wrote lyrics with feminine personae: the "She to Him" poems, for example. Generally these lyrics with feminine voices are effective, for Hardy was able to create women in his poetry as well as he could in his novels.

Hardy gives voices to the dead often. Each time he shows the dead speaking, however, the spirit is restless, rootless, but objective. Death, though it has not given the dead the oblivion they desire, has at least made them capable of seeing life more clearly. In "The Six Boards," "Friends Beyond," "Not Only I, and "In the Evening," "Paradox," and other poems, the dead have "detachment, lucidity, and power to view each event in the perspective of a vision of life as wide as all time and space."²⁰ For instance, in "Paradox"²¹ the woman is "lost to each meadow, each hill-top, each tree around," but she has "largened sight" and can "see around" "the whole truth." The dead in "Midnight on the Great Western" have "spacious vision."²²

The dead in Hardy's poetry are freed from the limitations of normal consciousness and have an enlarged, more philosophical view. Yet for Hardy's characters this is not a blessing. Neither life nor death is a release from the terrible burden of consciousness. Hardy's poem which

²⁰Miller, p. 227.

²¹Hardy, Collected Poems, p. 773.

²²Ibid.

relates to Tess of the D'Urbervilles, "Tess's Lament," is characteristic. Both the living and the dead follow her dictum. Given the choice, says she, "I'd have let my life unbe."²³

In death the Hardy character finds a new form of consciousness. "With death the individual will, which kept each character focused on a single aim in life, relaxes and gives place to a lack of will which must passively witness the inexorable repetition of the drama of existence, like those bad dreams which compress an eternity of experience in an instant."²⁴

"The Haunter," though she is a constant companion to her husband, wants only to communicate with him: "What a good haunter, I am--O tell him." But she cannot. Here Hardy gives a glimpse of the dark notion that it may be impossible to die.

This lyric has irony on other levels also. The first stanza describes the central situation--her hovering presence and her inability to let him know about it. In the second verse, however, she is bitter about her plight: "When I could answer, he did not say them." She was not wanted while she lived and is desperately wanted now that she is dead. The irony intensifies with these lines: "Never he sees my faithful phantom/ Though he speaks

²³Hardy, Collected Poems, p. 161.

²⁴Miller, p. 236.

thereto." Now the lack of communication is complete. Not only does she long to tell him of her presence, but he also is reaching for her. Yet the tone of the poem is not agonized. There is a note of quiet desperation which is quite beyond live emotion. It is filtered through death and has detachment and accommodation in it.

In the third stanza this is particularly true. Through a dream-like sequence, she goes with him. The images are vivid and definite: "shy hares print long paces," "night rooks go," and "into old aisles." But the places are blurred and out-of-focus--in the past, in memory. She almost merges with him ("close as his shade can do"), but again she lacks "the power to call to him" The intimacy of the dream of companionship of the first six lines is destroyed by the distance and lack of communication in the last couplet. She is as close to him as possible, but death precludes the possibility of human intimacy and communication.

In this sense, the last verse is particularly sad. If it were not for the nostalgia that touches both this stanza and the preceding one, tragic would be the right word. As it is, her faithfulness and concern for his loss and sorrow ("if he but sigh") are manifestations of her pledge to do "all that love can do." Love here merely exists in a passive state--the woman is faithful, but she cannot reach him. She pleads for someone to tell him that she is doing all that she possibly can to make "his path

worth pursuing"; but in this case "all that love can do" is nothing.

The most important aspect of "The Haunter," however, is that Hardy tries to present the woman's side of the relationship. As he stretches to move outside of his own experience to the imagined consciousness of another, the series begins to achieve new wholeness, honesty, and justice. For the moment Hardy has moved past the limitations of his own vision and has forced himself to see through her eyes.

The form of the poem is especially interesting because of Hardy's attempt to give the woman her true voice. In doing so, he introduces an unusual rhythm--alternating lines of four and three iambic feet. This alternation forces a halting pace which constantly slows the reader, only to speed him up again. Along with consistent use of enjambment (the stanzas are end-stopped only at the fourth and eighth lines), this rhythm serves to give the impression of everyday speech patterns to the woman's voice.

The relationship of "The Haunter" to the series is clear, then. "Lament" showed the lover close to reality and to acceptance of death. This lyric, however, denies the finality of death and makes the separation of the lovers clear. In effect, it gives the poems a new direction because it does not simply move the lover away from his acceptance of death as so many of the other poems in this group do. Instead, it provides a new view of death itself.

In addition, "The Haunter" also makes clear that the love which had died while she was alive is renewed in both of them. That renewal per se is good; but it is also futile, for the two are isolated from one another. The whole collection, then, takes on new meaning from this poem.

"The Haunter" is important as an introduction to the following poem, "The Voice," which is the central statement of Hardy's redefinition of love and death. Here he hears the voice; however, there is no lack of communication. Hearing her voice, his anguish is increased. This statement is an open one: either the woman is calling or it is the breeze--his dead loved one, "dissolved to wan wistlessness." Both possibilities take the form of questions: "Can it be you that I hear?" or "Is it only the breeze?" These questions, however, are not answered. Instead, both possibilities are kept alive by the last stanza:

Thus I, faltering forward
Leaves around me falling,
Wind oozing thin through the thorn from norward
And the woman calling.

The last two images coexist (or blend); they are linked by the coordinating conjunction "and" as if both are equal. Both are one: the wind is the woman, and the woman is the wind.

In this sense the starkness of the images is important. Contrasted with the fair days of their early love and the "air blue Gown" which she wore as she waited for him in Cornwall, his present situation is much more painful--

"faltering," "leaves falling," "oozing thin," and "thorn."
In spite of this, he moves forward, for the woman is calling.

The woman for whom he searches--the one he can hear but cannot see--is his dead beloved; but she has gone through a transformation beyond death, one for which he has longed. She has become once again the woman whom he first loved in the early days of his Cornish romance:

Saying that you are not as you were
When you had changed from the one who was all to me
But as at first, when our day was fair.

Yet this cannot be accepted as merely a feat of memory, a recreation of a dead relationship. The woman calling to him is beckoning not from the past but from death. What Hardy has managed is not a recapture of the past as much as a transformation through death of the woman who had long before changed into someone he did not love. She is transformed into the woman he had once loved.

The rhythm is particularly effective in this poem. In the first three stanzas the lines alternate between five and four iambic feet with many variations--anapests and dactyls predominate (e.g. "call to me," "call to me," or "to the town," "in its listlessness"). This produces something similar to the halting effect of the voice in "The Haunter." Here, however, the lines are longer, frequently end-stopped, and with many internal caesuras. As a result, the movement is slow, plaintive, and meditative, which makes the change in rhythm in the fourth stanza all the more dramatic. As the man stops thinking about the voice and the

woman and moves falteringly into action, the rhythm suddenly breaks. As he moves in the direction of the voice the pace becomes fast and irregular. The first two lines have only three stresses. Then comes a five beat line which is followed by a final short trimeter. Like the last verse in "The Going," the contrast between this irregular stanza and the previous three heightens the tension of the ending.

No analysis of this lyric, however, can quite catch the extraordinary combination of sound and rhythm, death and life, past and present, image and spirit. There is a perfection here of both form and content which is rare for Hardy--for that matter, any poet. F. R. Leavis described it this way: "The Voice really does evoke the emptiness of utter loss, exhibiting that purity of recognition which is Hardy's strength. His verse has no incantation: it does what it says, and presents barely the fact recognized by a mind more than commonly responsible and awake."²⁵

In this lyric he moves as far as he can in the direction of a relationship with her beyond death, and that is only in the realm of imagination, not reality. But what is remarkable is the openness of the poet. He has moved beyond any need to pose or to pretend to an honesty about himself and about her. Irving Howe says of "The Voice" that it is "a surge of anguish, but anguish grasped and

²⁵F. R. Leavis, New Bearings in English Poetry (New York, 1932), pp. 59-60.

contained."²⁶ By this he does not mean that the poem is controlled or artificial, but that the poet gives a sense of "surrender"²⁷ to the truth of his experience. That surrender in turn brings understanding and release.

"The Visitor" ends this movement in which her spirit hovers near him. Again it is in direct speech. In this lyric her spirit comes from Mellstock (where she is buried) to the house where they lived together "twenty years and more." This time, however, her entrance is different--she can walk through the door without opening it. The setting is gray, weak, eerie. What she sees is exactly what almost every dead person would find if he could return to his old home: that is, that the place has been deliberately changed so that the dead person no longer is comfortable there.

The living have need to make external changes of place in order to accept the death of loved ones, and Hardy demonstrates the psychological meaning of this need in this poem. When she finds her room changed in its most significant details and when she finds the house filled with strangers, she realizes that she no longer belongs in the home: "I don't want to linger in this re-decked dwelling." She recognizes that she must return to the graveyard where she does belong, to "the mute and manifold/ souls of old." Thus, she finally puts herself to rest. This means, of course, that he too has put her to rest.

²⁶Howe, p. 326.

²⁷Ibid.

The long six beat iambic lines work against the climactic line of each stanza which has only one anapestic stress. Thus the slow rhythm reflects her slow progress through the house, and the surprisingly short final line not only adds variation, but also brings each stanza to a strong conclusion. The meter, then, reinforces the slow and deliberate process by which she finally lets go of the world of the living.

Though this is not a brilliant poem like "The Voice," it reveals a fine understanding of how we all cope with death (at least in external ways). It is a small, even obvious, truth; but, nevertheless, significant--as significant as Heidegger's observation that without death there would be no philosophy.

Perhaps, Hardy can be best understood in terms of the comparison just made. Although he was often considered to be philosophical (in the pejorative sense), his real voice was not philosophical. His real voice is described in the line (already quoted) which he wrote to himself: "He used to notice such things."²⁸ His greatness comes not just from noticing things, but from seeing their significance in terms of the human condition.

"A Circular," taken by itself, would seem a small statement on the irony of a typical Hardyan situation: the reading of mail intended for someone else. The tension here,

²⁸Hardy, Collected Poems, p. 521.

of course, comes from the frivolity of the fashion circular intended for someone who is dead--new clothing is the anti-thesis of the shroud worn for eternity: up-to-date costume of life contrasted with the costume of death. The situation symbolizes all of the painful small reminders that bring back the memory of the dead to the living.

What gives interest to this short lyric, however, is the tone. The poet has an attitude toward the circular which is sad and a little bitter. There is little wonder that he finds the contents absurd--"clothes, in tints as shown"; yet they also characterize the woman for whom the leaflet was intended, "the lady proud." There is a double view-point here. The first is the anguish of the lover as he looks at the painful reminder of his dead wife, and the second is a clear-eyed view of the silliness of her love of finery.

In this way, this lyric follows "His Visitor" very well. Here she is dead, buried, gone: the reminder of her hurts him, but it is not unbearable. The point-of-view moves toward objectivity and the facing of death. With its emphasis on the material--on the absurdity and transitoriness of the material--it completes Hardy's sequence on the possibility of love beyond death.

Each stanza has four lines rhymed abab; the scheme is simple and clear. The first three lines have a regular iambic beat with four stresses, but the fourth line has only three iambic feet and provides variation. The rhyme and

rhythm emphasize the uncomplicated and obvious simplicity of the subject. The ordinary act of opening the mail is supported by an ordinary form.

In the last two lines, however, there is a change: suddenly--like an Elizabethan sonnet--there is a reversal. The woman cannot wear the fashionable clothes advertised in the circular because she is dead. Yet the rhythm does not become irregular in any way. The tension created by the failure of the rhythm to follow the change in imagery is slight, but important: it creates just the right amount of understatement. The poem--which could have been trivial--takes on its own modest significance.

Too often Hardy pushed a minor vignette to major scale, and in the process he sacrificed its real possibilities. The "Satires of Circumstance" are the best examples of this tendency in Hardy's poetry. In "A Circular," however, the form balances perfectly with the subject. The poem, though slight, succeeds both independently and as part of the group.

"A Dream or No," the next poem in Veteris vestigia flammae begins a new movement. Here the lover again turns to the past and to the early days of his courtship, but with the difference that he is now considering a return to the place where those happy memories occurred. He begins with a question--"Why go to Saint-Juliot?" The rest of the lyric is a rationale for not going there, for he fears the possibility that he has dreamed the past, that he has through the

years created a place and a love and a woman who has never existed except in his fantasies.

In the first stanza he makes the suggestion that he has been possessed, that he has been under some spell. Most of his life he has been influenced by one place and by the events which occurred there.

The answer to his query about going to Saint-Juliot is "yes" in the second verse. Then, however, the imagery switches from magic to dreams. For the first time, the details of Emma's appearance and of their meeting and courtship by the Cornish coast take on a dream-like quality. In all of the other poems these details are vivid and concrete. Here Hardy slowly selects images which turn the past--so real in other poems--into fantasy: words like "maiden," "hiding," "lonely," and "night things" make the love relationship seem more like something out of Camelot than like the late nineteenth century courtship of a young architect and his young woman. That, of course, is Hardy's intention; for he fears that his feelings for the place and the woman are far deeper than the reality warrants. He sees clearly that he fell in love with the woman in her setting ("so sweet her life there") and not just with the woman. It may also be that he has difficulty holding on to his memories.

Consequently, when he no longer can see her there, he must call into question her existence and finally the existence of the magic places he shared with her. Otherwise,

he must face the reality of the failure of their relationship and of her death; and this he cannot do.

This attempt to recapture the past through the recapture of place ends in rejection of both. Viewed in relation to the other poems in the collection of 1912-1913, this is an interplay of illusion and reality. It poses the deadly possibility that his memory of the past--especially of his early love relationship with Emma--has been created solely by him.

"After a Journey" is the main exposition of the return-to-place theme introduced in "A Dream or No." In this lyric, however, the place is real; and so is the woman. Once again only the spirit of the woman is present. Unlike "The Haunter" and "The Voice," though, this time the woman has form ("thin ghost"), but no voice ("Voiceless"). She has finally materialized; and rightly so because he has returned to her place. Indeed, it is clear that he makes a pilgrimage to Cornwall not only to relive the past through place, but also to relate to and finally exorcise her spirit from the present.

In the first stanza, he begins by referring to the ghost by the first person neuter pronoun "it." As he considers following this spirit, however, he slips into direct speech and the poem takes on a personal immediacy. Everywhere he looks, past memories create her presence. Unlike the woman in the previous lyrics, her presence is concrete: "nut-colored hair," "gray eyes."

The second stanza depends for its meaning on its relationship to the previous poems in the series. For example, the "yes" which begins this verse parallels the "yes" of the second stanza of "A Dream or No." Each is an affirmation of the power of place in his relationship with his woman. The second "yes" is a much more clear-eyed answer, however. It is in no way dependent on magic or trances. In the first line, "I have re-entered your olden haunts at last," the important words are "re-entered" and "haunts." He has physically re-entered the place, but the word carries a double meaning because the following lines prove that he has taken a double journey, through both space and time. He has returned to these places at the cost of scanning "the dark space" of their relationship. He has looked at their "deep division" in the past in order to come to terms with it: "But all's closed now, despite Time's derision." Time ("past," "years," "summer," "autumn," "first," and "last") becomes spatialized here ("olden haunts," "dead scenes," "dark space") in order for him to re-enter her place. The transformation is extraordinary. In this context, then, the most important words are "at last."

The word "haunts" is also important. First, it plays on the previous poem "The Haunter." Miller notes,

The subtle irony of this word is characteristic of these poems and their interrelation. The word of course recalls the earlier poem in the series, "The Haunter." Haunting the spot when they were live young lovers in the

past, they haunt it once more now that she is a ghost and he is an old frail man following that ghost.²⁹

Second, the word "haunts" here refers to the places she visited frequently, loved, and thereby made her own. As a frail spirit, she is incapable of haunting them now as she did then. Hardy has inverted the word.

The third stanza moves to pleasant memories of place. In this verse time is also spatialized: "then the fair hour, from forty years ago" is realized as a waterfall with a mist-bow in fair weather with a cave underneath from which a hollow voice still echoes. The scene spans a duality of time--the past "when you were all aglow" and the present of "the thin ghost that I now frailly follow." Only the word seems keeps the recapture of time through space in abeyance.

In the last stanza the contrast between the scene of preening birds and lazy seals and the deep meaning given the place by the lovers' presence is powerful. The man is able to understand "what there is flitting here to see," and he can finally let her go. He knows that she must vanish as the "dawn" comes. (He means the dawn metaphor both in the physical and in the metaphysical sense.) Still, he is grateful to her and to have been brought there and would gladly repeat the process. In the final lines he experiences his own transformation: "I am just the same as when/ Our days were a joy and our paths through flowers."

²⁹Miller, p. 250.

The rhythm in this poem helps to achieve this transformation. The lyric begins with an eight line stanza in a regularized iambic pentameter. Variation in the meter comes from an extra syllable in the second and fourth lines. The extra syllable, however, does not spring the rhythm because it is not accented. Instead, it simply slows the pace a little. In contrast, the seventh line is shortened to three beats to speed the stanza to conclusion. This technique is most important in the last three verses where the final line is a contrast to the rest of the stanza and is also its focal point.

Notice that Hardy achieves his transformation in the last stanza without any shifts in the poem's basic structure: every stanza has the same meter and line length; every stanza has the same number of lines; every stanza has the same rhyme scheme (ab ab cddc). The modern reader would have other expectations of form here. Had this poem been written by Eliot or Yeats, the form in the last stanza would have changed to reflect the internal change in the lover. Yet Hardy's form, as I have already mentioned, does not fail; it succeeds. In no way does the content struggle to break past its form: structure and idea are, instead, complementary. Perhaps, this, as much as anything else, demonstrates Hardy's place as a 20th century poet. Hardy's use of form is traditional and tightly structured. In this lyric, the form is clearly chosen because it facilitates the transformation caused by the journey. However, the change comes

within the structure and within the tradition without shattering either. Hardy was Victorian in his use of form here, but modern in impulse and idea. It is the perfect blending of two eras in "After a Journey" which helps to show that Hardy's work is a major bridge between nineteenth and twentieth century poetry.

The poem is the climax of the lover's effort to merge with his dead wife and to be transformed by his experience of her and the past through death. In effect, space here has conquered, even transcended, both death and time. Howe calls this "an ecstatic recapture";³⁰ and, indeed, it is.

In the first stanza of "A Death Day Recalled" Hardy catalogues instances of the lack of human response to her death by all of the places which she loved. In the second verse he contrasts their "unheeding" listless responses with her enormous pleasure and delight in these places which remain unmoved by her death. She, in fact, had mourned for them when she was in other places. Again Hardy returns to the theme of her deracination. He ends with much stronger words of accusation--each image beautifully appropriate to the spot and to the woman.

Taken out of context, this lyric seems somewhat superficial. In relation to the other poems of 1912-1913, however, it is meaningful. First, in several of the

³⁰Howe, p. 183.

previous lyrics ("The Going," "I Found Her Out There," "The Voice," "A Dream or No," and especially "After a Journey"), these places--Beeny Cliff, Vallency, Bos, Pentargan Bay--are endowed with human meaning and emotion by the power and presence of human relationship which transforms them. Suddenly he realizes that no meaning and emotion comes from the places when she dies. If space is changed by relation to the lovers, the transformation is then dependent on the subjective human significance and is nothing permanent at all. Clearly her absence (permanent) leaves the natural phenomena as they were before she invested them with the transforming magic of her being--indifferent to human suffering and mortality. In essence, then, this poem is an inversion of the pathetic fallacy. He, however, is not willing to accept this; his questions in the end are rhetorical; they require no answers. They simply show his anguish and refusal to accommodate.

Second, the looseness of the imagery--in contrast to the specific, vivid images in "After a Journey," at first seems a mistake: soft, weak, and repetitious. Certainly in some ways this is true. At the same time, Hardy achieves precisely the effect he desires--the lack of human response by nature contrasted with the emotion the lover invests in it.

Third, the repetition of the place images in the first and third stanzas seems redundant. On close examination, though, there are significant differences. In the

first verse, the places are given minor, slight, unnatural responses: "quiver," "grew gray," "utter," and "mutter." Their absurdities are intended. In the third verse the responses are stronger and more natural: "purl deplore," "Thunder," and "sunder." The movement has been toward a natural, violent, and neutral view of the elements and away from human response. At the same time, the man, in anguish as he recalls the day of her death, desires strong reactions from the places she loved. In reality his own response becomes more extreme as he remembers without relief and without comfort.

The relationship of "A Death Day Recalled" to the series becomes clear through an analysis of form. Since it comes after a major poem, its form is dictated by its role as a minor, supportive piece. Consequently the pace is fast; the basic rhythm is iambic trimeter. The lyric is short (three 8-line stanzas, fast, and uncomplicated because it deals with a single, minor but significant point. In relation to the previous lyric, "A Death Day Recalled" is a movement away from the recapture of past time and love through space. Here, in fact, place is incapable of relationship with the lovers. The bond has been broken by death.

"Beeny Cliff (March 1870-March, 1913)" is a perfect contrast to "A Death Day Recalled." In this lyric, another of the group written on the return journey that Hardy made to Cornwall in 1913, the imagery is primarily that of the

setting and events of his early courtship with Emma. Unlike "A Death Day Recalled," however, there is here more lush, complicated diction and meter (a heavy hexameter); and at the same time a more realistic view of both time and space. The key to the poem is the combination of richly connotative imagery with a clear and objective look at things as they are (and were). Hardy accomplishes this by describing the beauty of the scene with opulence ("sapphire," "opal," "nether sky," and "irised rain") and by describing the lovers' activities in simple terms--"the woman riding high there" and "we laughed lightheartedly." In this way the scene from the past finally comes into focus for him.

The last two stanzas place the past and the scene in perspective. The penultimate stanza asks the question--Can we not return to Beeny Cliff to recapture that sweet moment? In the final verse the answer is both strong and negative. It does not matter if the place is still there and even still beautiful; for she is dead. Here Hardy moves at last toward a clear acknowledgement of her death and the impossibility of reliving the past.

The structure of this poem is typical of Hardy's formal pattern. First he poses a situation (in this case a scene from the past) and then presents a contrast or antithesis (in this lyric, the impossibility of recapturing the scene in the present). Hynes calls it an antinomial process (after Yeats) and suggests that it is Hegelian (thesis-

antithesis-synthesis).³¹ Whatever label is used to describe Hardy's method, the important element in his formal structure is that he generally gives contrasting situations or ideas in order to show the ironic sadness of the human condition.

Although critics often find fault with the formal elements of Hardy's poetry, his basic structural pattern is not only effective, but also essential and integral. The antinomial structure is determined by the content of his poetry; for Hardy's ideas are almost always concerned with the duality of man's existence: present and past, choice and cause, desire and actuality, life and death, reason and emotion, thought and action.

In the poems of Veteris vestigia flammae this duality is expressed in highly personal terms. "Beeny Cliff" is a simple statement of that duality without any attempt to accept it or to change it. "At Castle Boterel," the next poem in the series, does both; and, therefore, it is the climactic lyric in the collection.

The first stanza sets the scene in the present: it is raining as he is driving away from the castle; and when he looks back, he sees an event from his past. In visual terms, Hardy uses the flashback technique; and the moment he describes is memorable. In his discussion of Jude the Obscure, Irving Howe describes Hardy's ability to capture

³¹Samuel Hynes, The Pattern of Hardy's Poetry (Chapel Hill, 1966), p. 160.

deep meaning in small events as vignettes.³² Howe's term fits the scene created here exactly. Hardy's method is dramatic, graphic, and narrative all at the same time.

As soon as he creates his vignette--the lovers climbing the hill on the road leading a pony and chaise--he sees that it will not suffice to show the significance of the moment through the objective recording of details and events. Consequently he moves away from description to explanation: "Something that life will not be balked of/ Without rude reason till hope is dead/ And feeling fled."

This is not sufficient either, because his generalizations do not capture the personal. Finally he moves from the objective and general to the subjective. He asks, "Was there ever a time of such quality?"; and his answer is "never." However, he does qualify his answer with a subjective phrase--"to one mind." He realizes that thousands of others have climbed the hill and that the primaeval rocks along the road represent the long order of things. He does not ignore objective reality; he simply rejects it. Instead, he adds to the record a subjective "colour and cast" because what is significant to him is "that we two passed."

At this point, the present contrasts with the vignette from the past. Again, however, the present is also an entirely subjective one. He contradicts yet acknowledges reality: he knows that she has died. Time is the objective

³²Howe, pp. 108-146.

fact--"unflinching," operating by "mindless rote." But he transcends time and death: "to me. . . one phantom figure/ Remains on the slope."

Yet he affirms the existence of her spirit only to let it go; and it is in this release that he finally comes to terms with his loss and his life. "I look back at it . . . for the very last time." At the same time he also accepts his own mortality ("for my sand is sinking/ and I shall traverse old love's domain/ Never again."). What becomes clear about his struggle to accept her death is that his acknowledgement of his own mortality is inextricably bound to it. One includes the other.

However, his understanding of death is related to many ideas which are brought together in the final stanza of this lyric. The first of these ideas is love. In the "Poems of 1912-1913" love exists in three stages: 1) the love between him and Emma during their courtship and marriage; 2) the relationship gone dead through bitter division for most of the years of their marriage; and 3) love rekindled through death. The most bitter fact of these lyrics is that early love was lost and the lovers spent forty empty years together. When her death made that recapture physically impossible, he attempts to make it spiritually possible. He senses that unless he comes to terms with their experience of love, he cannot understand the meaning of either life or death. In "After a Journey" he begins to understand love through his voyage through time (memory) and through space

(the return to Cornwall). In this poem he accepts the brutal conclusion which had been obvious for forty years: "I shall traverse old love's domain/ Never again." "Domain" here means both place (Cornwall) and state of being. Hardy finally faces life without love; his life then is without personal meaning, but it does have at long last recognition.

The critical factors in this recognition are time and memory. Time for Hardy is the central difficulty in life, for it provides objective evidence that man has no power to control his own affairs. His future is obvious; in time he will die. Hardy's poem "I Look into My Glass" is a touching description of the aging process and of man's inability to control or stop it. Consequently he struggles to give life meaning by transcending time and thereby death.

In this sense Hardy lives with constant duality. He has an objective world-view in which man is the toy of time and chance in an indifferent universe; but he makes for himself a subjective reality through love, memory and art. In the poems of 1912-1913 memory is a function of love. Hardy, in his seventies, had no need to lie or to hide; and carefully, painfully, he goes over his happiest memories and his saddest ones--seeing Emma's charms and her faults; seeing his own strengths and weaknesses. Memory is here relentless.

Memory alone, however, is not sufficient for this search, for it is constantly assailed by his inability to live with her death. Finally Hardy solved the problem by making a return journey to Cornwall forty-three years (March,

1870-March, 1913) after he first met Emma there; for he knew that his feelings for her were related to the place as well as to the time.³³ The combination of past time, the present, and the place finally give him transcendent experiences first of love ("After a Journey"), then of death ("At Castle Boterel").

Memory and time because they are subjective and objective facets of the same experience lead to Hardy's chief structural method--not just in the Veteris vestigia flammae collection, but in most of the poetry. Here it is evident that form grows out of the ideas. Hardy's pre-occupation with time and obsession with memory led him often to a structure of juxtaposition of present and past time or objects or people. Out of that juxtaposition comes contradiction or contrast; usually--as in this poem--one event is "followed by another which substantially modifies the first. . . ."34

The stanzaic form and rhythm of "At Castle Boterel" also reinforce his acceptance of death. Obviously this lyric is a major piece in the series: the line length and number of verses (7) alone indicate this. Each stanza has four long lines (alternating five and four beats) and one short one (two beats) with a tight, strong rhyme scheme

³³For biographical details, see Weber's account or that of Florence Hardy or any number of other critical biographies.

³⁴Marsden, p. 106.

(ababb). The final short line--with its fast pace, contrasting imagery, and quickly repeated rhyme--leads easily to release. Hardy often uses a short line to change pace and to lead rapidly to conclusion. In this case, the short line is the conclusion. If we contrast this use of dimeter as the final note of acceptance ("Never again") with the use of the short line as penultimate line in "After a Journey," it is clear that in each lyric the shift to the short line works to change pace--but for different reasons. In "After a Journey" Hardy's object is transformation. Consequently, the short line serves to shift focus and to lead to the final long line in which the transformation actually takes place. In "At Castle Boterel" the lover confronts death, accepts it, and finds release. The short final line expresses that release with its ease, directness, and simplicity.

The last five poems of the collection of 1912-1913 serve as variations on the theme of acceptance and filter and soften the power of the climax reached in "At Castle Boterel." "Places," I think, is the least successful poem in the series. In only two of his lyrics does Hardy try to consecrate the place where Emma lived--"Places" and "Ditty."³⁵ Obviously the creative impulse for these poems comes from his strong feelings about the significance of place to the woman and because of that to their love. In

³⁵See Collected Poems.

both lyrics, however, he fails--particularly in imagery and diction. In the first and third stanzas of "Places" the images are too general and too easy--clicheed: "the sweetest the house saw" and "fresh fruit in bloom." In the second verse the images have specificity, but no effect: "the stammering chimes that used to play/ The quaint one hundred and thirteenth tune/ In Saint Andrew's tower." It is obviously a private and exact detail, but it does nothing to give an understanding or feeling for either her or her place. It is precisely this kind of private detail which destroys much of the meaning of modern poetry (some of Pound's Cantos, for example). It is to Hardy's credit, however, that he did this very seldom.

To make matters worse, the diction in the final verse is not only stiff and belabored; but it also obscures the meaning: "To whom today is beneaped and stale and its urgent clack but a vapid tale." These same weaknesses appear in "Ditty."

The stanzas in "Places" like those in "At Castle Boterel" end with a short line (two of them, as a matter of fact). Yet the rapid conclusion and change of pace achieve nothing here because the concluding lines really do not substantially change the poem: "Yet it was so/ On that day long past," "In Saint Andrews tower/ Night, morn, and noon"; "And its urgent clack/ But a vapid tale." The shift from iambic tetrameter to dimeter in each stanza has a negative effect because it arouses expectations in the reader which

the images do not fulfill. In this lyric unlike most of the others in this collection, the rhythm fails. More accurately, the content fails the form (which then also fails).

Yet this lyric has value in relation to the series. Its movement is in harmony with "At Castle Boterel," for in it are variations on the themes of memory versus time and the sad acceptance of loss. It is a reiteration of the understanding achieved in the previous poem.

"The Phantom Horsewoman" is the most important statement of his relationship to her after the climactic acceptance of "At Castle Boterel." It is the only poem in the whole series which creates a narrative voice that does not belong to one of the two lovers. The movement here is to the most objective point-of-view possible--that of a detached observer. With such a viewpoint, personal motivation and intimacy are sacrificed to objectivity and control. At this point, the exchange is both effective and necessary.

The first stanza simply presents the situation--a man who often stands and gazes at the sea. The form is tight, highly controlled; the beat is fast; the rhyme is masculine, complicated. The first and last lines of each verse explain the situation, and the seven intervening lines add specificity and description. It is a form that appears quite simple, but it is not.

The second stanza answers the narrator's question-- "What does he see?" The man gazes at a phantom horsewoman-- "what his years bring back/ a phantom of his own figuring."

The contrast between the great clarity of memory and of the day is powerful. The scene begins to emerge. But the third stanza indicates that the vision no longer depends on his returning to her place: "he sees this sight/ but everywhere/ In his brain." Not only is he free at last of time and space; but memory has created in him a permanent vision. The last stanza finally specifies it, a beautifully detailed vignette of Emma riding her pony on Beeny Cliff "as when first-eyed/ Draws rein and sings to the swing of the tide."

The important ideas emerge in the last stanza. The first is, of course, the purity of vision of memory. He no longer struggles with meaning or guilt or recreation, but simply accepts and enjoys the memory as it is. The second important concept is the destruction of time by memory-- "she still gaily rides." Yet against that triumph of memory there is the reality of time--"toil-tried/ He withers daily." He ages with the consolation that in his memory (and because of his memory), she is still young and alive.

The stanzaic form adds to the power of Hardy's poem. Each verse begins and ends with a four or five beat line which frames and contains a picture. Each picture is a memory sketched in the seven intervening lines. These lines are iambic dimeter with the major variations in rhythm provided by anapests (e.g. In a care/ worn craze). The opening and closing lines are slow and closed by their rhyme (each stanza begins and ends with the same sound). On the other hand, the short lines move quickly to draw the memory

contained within the framework of the two longer lines. Surely this simple verse form is effective as a vehicle for this objectification of memory as art.

"The Spell of the Rose" seems out of place in this series. It follows "The Phantom Horsewoman" only if the two are read in isolation from the rest of the collection. In "Castle Boterel" the lover turned away from her spirit for the last time. Suddenly in this poem her restless shade appears again: she sees the absence of rosebushes around the house at Max Gate as representative of the unhappiness and division that came between them there. For her the rose is a symbol of love. Consequently her planting of the rose bush is an act aimed at the recreation of love: "I'll mend these miseries." She wonders (because as a ghost she is just as isolated from him as she was in life) if he can now be rid of his "blurred Misvision" and finally see her as she was.

The diction here is strained (and "Misconceits raised horrid shows"). The rhythm and rhyme are undistinguished. In each stanza, lines one, four, five, and six are iambic tetrameter; and lines two, three, and seven are iambic trimeter. The rhyme scheme is abbbaab. Yet such a description can in no way help the reader understand or appreciate the poem; for there is no apparent way (as there is, for example, in "The Phantom Horsewoman") that the form effectively helps or contrasts with the content of the poem.

The next poem "St. Launce's Revisited" more clearly belongs to the denouement of the "Poems of 1912-1913." If "The Phantom Horsewoman" is the final tribute to the triumph of memory, then this lyric is a perfect tribute to the transcendence of place.

Hardy begins with a command: "Slip back, Time!" Yet as he approaches the inn where he had once stopped forty years before, he finds that "it /is/ not as on my visit/ when hope and I were twin." Though he finds everything and everyone strange, he is still able to slip back to his first visit through memory. The inn is important to him because he hired a horse and a "man for bearing" him to Emma's home.

Suddenly, however, the present intrudes. He poses the possibility that if he should continue his journey "Toward the Atlantic sea there," he would once again find her family there. However, the harsh reality of time intrudes, for his conditional thought is wasted. They are dead, buried, "banished ever into nought." The short, fast-paced verses (alternating dimeter and trimeter) reinforce the transitory quality of all that lives. Contrasted with the fleeting nature of life and memory is the inexorable onslaught of time and death.

Perhaps, what Hardy is saying in these last poems is that no man--however wise and sensitive--can ever sustain the clarity of vision necessary to an understanding of love and death. At best he can hope to recognize himself in his

moments of failure as well as in his moments of transcendence.

"Where the Picnic Was" is a final poem of return--to place and to time. Again the pattern is a present-past contrast. It is made more powerful because he returns to the place of the summertime picnic in the dead of winter. The movement in the poem is swift (from past to present to past to present). Unlike most of the other lyrics of the series, however, the emphasis is on the present rather than on the past. The place where they built the fire is not as memorable as the charred circle which is left a year later as a relic, symbol, and sad reminder of all of the fires which have been extinguished in the year following that picnic--the fire of friendship ("two have wandered far... into urban roar/ where no picnics are"); the fire of life ("one has shut her eyes/ For evermore"); the actual fire which warmed and fed them.

The form of this concluding poem differs in an interesting way from all of the previous lyrics in Veteris vestigia flammae. All of the others had verses of equal length. In this poem, however, Hardy breaks verse form for the first (and last) time. Here we have two verses of nine lines of anapestic and iambic dimeter rhymed abacbaddc. The last stanza, however, is very different from the first two almost as if it were a different poem entirely. It has twelve lines with a contrasting break in the middle (7th

line). The first six lines are rhyming couplets, and the last six rhyme aba aba.

When examined closely, however, this break in form works very well. The first two stanzas describe a setting and situation at two contrasting seasons of the year. The last verse shows the relationship of the people to that setting--past and present (in that order). In effect, then, the last verse doubles on the first two--with one slight variation: the relationship of human beings to the place and situation becomes clear. A man, present in the loneliness of winter, remembers two others who can no longer be with him and one other who is dead. The series comes full circle with the permanence of death in the last line "For evermore."

The "Poems of 1912-1913" are, without a doubt, the most extraordinary collection of elegies in English. The elegaic tone which was always Hardy's true voice finds its most natural and most eloquent expression in this series. Here personal experience is rendered into art and into general human truth with an openness that only age and suffering can make possible. Hardy opens himself to memory in such a painstaking and relentless fashion that the past seems recaptured in a Proustian sense. Death and time are transcended through memory and space and love.

In the end, however, all of the generalities fade before the richness of the poetic persona, the old man who tears the veil from his eyes to take "a full look at the

worst" and at the best. In Veteris vestigia flammae Hardy creates a man and a woman who have some recognition of what it is to love, to hate, to live, to die, and to remember. The human condition is drawn with both sympathy and harshness in ways that most men are afraid to think of, much less to admit to others. Indeed, these twenty-one poems are remarkable in form and idea: their whole equals far more than the sum of the parts. The whole is a struggle to make meaning when there is none, to make beauty from pain; to wrest life from death; to rise phoenix-like from "the ashes of an old flame."

POEMS OF 1912-1913

VETERIS VESTIGIA FLAMMAE

THE GOING

Why did you give no hint that night
 That quickly after the morrow's dawn,
 And calmly, as if indifferent quite,
 You would close your term here, up and be gone
 Where I could not follow
 With wing of swallow
 To gain one glimpse of you ever anon!

Never to bid good-bye,
 Or lip me the softest call,
 Or utter a wish for a word, while I
 Saw morning harden upon the wall,
 Unmoved, unknowing
 That your great going
 Had place that moment, and altered all.

Why do you make me leave the house
 And think for a breath it is you I see
 At the end of the alley of bending boughs
 Where so often at dusk you used to be;
 Till in darkening dankness
 The yawning blankness
 Of the perspective sickens me!

You were she who abode
 By those red-veined rocks far West,
 You were the swan-necked one who rode
 Along the beetling Beeny Crest,
 And, reining nigh me,
 Would muse and eye me,
 While Life unrolled us its very best.

Why, then, latterly did we not speak,
 Did we not think of those days long dead,
 And ere your vanishing strive to seek
 That time's renewal? We might have said,
 "In this bright spring weather
 We'll visit together
 Those places that once we visited."

Well, well! All's past amend,
 Unchangeable. It must go.
 I seem but a dead man held on end
 To sink down soon. . . . O you could not know
 That such swift fleeing
 No soul foreseeing--
 Not even I--would undo me so!

December 1912.

YOUR LAST DRIVE

Here by the moorway you returned,
And saw the borough lights ahead
That lit your face--all undiscerned
To be in a week the face of the dead,
And you told of the charm of that haloed view
That never again would beam on you.

And on your left you passed the spot
Where eight days later you were to lie,
And be spoken of as one who was not;
Beholding it with a heedless eye
As alien from you, though under its tree
You soon would halt everlastingly.

I drove not with you. . . . Yet had I sat
At your side that eve I should not have seen
That the countenance I was glancing at
Had a last-time look in the flickering sheen,
Not have read the writing upon your face,
"I go hence soon to my resting-place;

"You may miss me then. But I shall not know
How many times you visit me there,
Or what your thoughts are, or if you go
There never at all. And I shall not care.
Should you censure me I shall take no heed,
And even your praises no more shall need."

True: never you'll know. And you will not mind.
But shall I then slight you because of such?
Dear ghost, in the past did you ever find
The thought "What profit," move me much?
Yet abides the fact, indeed, the same,--
You are past love, praise, indifference, blame.

December 1912

THE WALK

You did not walk with me
Of late to the hill-top tree
 By the gated ways,
 As in earlier days;
 You were weak and lame,
 So you never came,
And I went alone, and I did not mind,
Not thinking of you as left behind.

I walked up there to-day
Just in the former way;
 Surveyed around
 The familiar ground
 By myself again:
 What difference, then?
Only that underlying sense
Of the look of a room on returning thence.

RAIN ON A GRAVE

Clouds spout upon her
 Their waters amain
 In ruthless disdain,--
Her who but lately
 Had shivered with pain
As at touch of dishonour
If there had lit on her
So coldly, so straightly
 Such arrows of rain:

One who to shelter
 Her delicate head
Would quicken and quicken
 Each tentative tread
If drops chanced to pelt her
 That summertime spills
 In dust-paven rills
When thunder-clouds thicken
And birds close their bills.

Would that I lay there
 And she were housed here!
Or better, together
Were folded away there
Exposed to one weather
We both,--who would stray there
When sunny the day there,
 Or evening was clear
 At the prime of the year.

Soon will be growing
 Green blades from her mound
And daisies be showing
 Like stars on the ground,
Till she form part of them--
Aye--the sweet heart of them,
Loved beyond measure
With a child's pleasure
 All her life's round.

Jan. 31, 1913.

"I FOUND HERE OUT THERE"

I found her out there
On a slope few see,
That falls westwardly
To the salt-edged air,
Where the ocean breaks
On the purple strand,
And the hurricane shakes
The solid land.

I brought her here,
And have laid her to rest
In a noiseless nest
No sea beats near.
She will never be stirred
In her loamy cell
By the waves long heard
And loved so well.

So she does not sleep
By those haunted heights
The Atlantic smites
And the blind gales sweep,
Whence she often would gaze
At Dundagel's famed head,
While the dipping blaze
Dyed her face fire-red;

And would sigh at the tale
Of sunk Lyonesse,
As a wind-tugged tress
Flapped her cheek like a flail;
Or listen at shiles
With a thought-bound brow
To the murmuring miles
She is far from now.

Yet her shade, maybe,
Will creep underground
Till it catch the sound
Of that western sea
As it swells and sobs
Where she once domiciled,
And joy in its throbs
With the heart of a child.

WITHOUT CEREMONY

It was your way, my dear,
To vanish without a word
When callers, friends, or kin
Had left, and I hastened in
To rejoin you, as I enferred.

And when you'd a mind to career
Off anywhere--say to town--
You were all on a sudden gone
Before I had thought thereon,
Or noticed your trunks were down

So, now that you disappear
For ever in that swift style,
Your meaning seems to me
Just as it used to be:
"Good-bye is not worth while!"

LAMENT

How she would have loved
 A party to-day!--
 Bright-hatted and gloved,
 With table and tray
 And chairs on the lawn
 Her smiles would have shone
 With welcomings. . . . But
 She is shut, she is shut
 From friendship's spell
 In the jailing shell
 Of her tiny cell.

Or she would have reigned
 At a dinner to-night
 With ardours unfeigned,
 And a generous delight:
 All in her abode
 She'd have freely bestowed
 On her guests. . . . But alas,
 She is shut under grass
 Where no cups flow,
 Powerless to know
 That it might be so.

And she would have sought
 With a child's eager glance
 The shy snowdrops brought
 By the new year's advance,
 And peered in the rime
 Of Candlemas-time
 For crocuses . . . chanced
 It that she were not tranced
 From sights she loved best;
 Wholly possessed
 By an infinite rest!

And we are here staying
 Amid these stale things,
 Who care not for gaying,
 And those junketings
 That used so to joy her,
 And never to cloy her
 As us they cloy! . . . But
 She is shut, she is shut
 From the cheer of them, dead
 To all done and said
 In her yew-arched bed.

THE HAUNTER

He does not think that I haunt here nightly
How shall I let him know
That whither his fancy sets him wandering
I, too, alertly go?--
Hover and hover a few feet from him
Just as I used to do,
But cannot answer the words he lifts me--
Only listen thereto!

When I could answer he did not say them:
When I could let him know
How I would like to join in his journeys
Seldom he wishes to go.
Now that he goes and wants me with him
More than he used to do,
Never he sees my faithful phantom
Though he speaks thereto.

Yes, I companion him to places
Only dreamers know,
Where the shy hares print long paces,
Where the night rooks go;
Into old aisles where the past is all to him,
Close as his shade can do.
Always lacking the power to call to him,
Near as I reach thereto!

What a good haunter I am, O tell him!
Quickly make him know
If he but sigh since my loss befell him
Straight to his side I go.
Tell him a faithful one is doing
All that love can do
Still that his path may be worth pursuing,
And to bring peace thereto.

THE VOICE

Woman much missed, how you call to me, call to me,
Saying that now you are not as you were
When you had changed from the one who was all to me
But as at first, when our day was fair.

Can it be you that I hear? Let me view you, then,
Standing as when I drew near to the town
Where you would wait for me: yes, as I knew you then,
Even to the original air-blue gown!

Or is it only the breeze, in its listlessness
Travelling across the wet mead to me here,
You being ever dissolved to wan wistlessness,
Heard no more again far or near?

Thus I; faltering forward,
Leaves around me falling,
Wind oozing thin through the thorn from norward,
And the woman calling.

December 1912.

HIS VISITOR

I come across from Mellstock while the moon wastes weaker
To behold where I lived with you for twenty years and more:
I shall go in the gray, at the passing of the mail-train,
And need no setting open of the long familiar door
As before.

The change I notice in my once own quarters!
A formal-fashioned border where the daisies used to be,
The rooms new painted, and the pictures altered,
And other cups and saucers, and no cosy nook for tea
As with me.

I discern the dim faces of the sleep-wrapt servants;
They are not those who tended me through feeble hours and
strong,
But strangers quite, who never knew my rule here,
Who never saw me painting, never heard my softling song
Float along.

So I don't want to linger in this re-decked dwelling,
I feel too uneasy at the contrasts I behold,
And I make again for Mellstock to return here never,
And rejoin the roomy silence, and the mute and manifold
Souls of old.

1913.

A CIRCULAR

As "legal representative"
I read a missive not my own,
On new designs for senders give
For clothes, in tints as shown.

Here figure blouses, gowns for tea,
And presentation-trains of state,
Charming ball-dresses, millinery,
Warranted up to date.

And this gay-pictured, spring-time shout
Of Fashion, hails what lady proud?
Her who before last year ebbed out
Was costumed in a shroud.

A DREAM OR NO

Why go to Saint-Juliot? What's Juliot to me?
 Some strange necromancy
 But charmed me to fancy
That much of my life claims the spot as its key.

Yes. I have had dreams of that place in the West,
 And a maiden abiding
 Thereat as in hiding;
Fair-eyed and white-shouldered, broad-browed and brown-
tressed.

And of how, coastward bound on a night long ago,
 There lonely I found her,
 The sea-birds around her,
And other than nigh things uncaring to know

So sweet her life there (in my thought has it seemed)
 That quickly she drew me
 To take her unto me,
And lodge her long years with me. Such have I dreamed.

But nought of that maid from Saint-Juliot I see;
 Can she ever have been here,
 And shed her life's sheen here,
The woman I thought a long housemate with me?

Does there even a place like Saint-Juliot exist?
 Or a Vallency Valley
 With stream and leafed alley,
Or Beeny, or Bos with its flounce flinging mist?

February 1913.

AFTER A JOURNEY

Hereto I come to view a voiceless ghost;
 Whither, O whither will its whim now draw me?
 Up the cliff, down, till I'm lonely, lost.
 And the unseen waters' ejaculations awe me.
 Where you will next be there's no knowing,
 Facing round about me everywhere,
 With your nut-coloured hair,
 And gray eyes, and rose-flush coming and going.

Yes: I have re-entered your olden haunts at last;
 Through the years, through the dead scenes I have
 tracked you;
 What have you now found to say of our past--
 Scanned across the dark space wherein I have lacked you?
 Summer gave us sweets, but autumn wrought division?
 Things were not lastly as firstly well
 With us twain, you tell?
 But all's closed now, despite Time's derision.

I see what you are doing: you are leading me on
 To the spots we knew when we haunted here together,
 The waterfall, above which the mist-bow shone
 At the then fair hour in the then fair weather,
 And the cave just under, with a voice still so hollow
 That it seems to call out to me from forty years ago,
 When you were all aglow,
 And not the thin ghost that I now frailly follow!

Ignorant of what there is flitting here to see,
 The waked birds preen and the seals flop lazily,
 Soon you will have, Dear, to vanish from me,
 For the stars close their shutters and the dawn whitens
 hazily
 Trust me, I mind not, though Life lours,
 The bringing me here; nay, bring me here again!
 I am just the same as when
 Our days were a joy, and our paths through flowers.

A DEATH-DAY RECALLED

Beeny did not quiver,
 Juliot grew not gray,
Thin Valency's river
 Held its wonted way.
Bos seemed not to utter
 Dimmest note of dirge,
Targan mouth a mutter
 To its creamy surge.

Yet though these, unheeding,
 Listless, passed the hour
Of her spirit's speeding,
 She had, in her flower,
Sought and loved the places--
 Much and often pined
For their lonely faces
 When in towns confined.

Why did not Valency
 In his purl deplore
One whose haunts were whence he
 Drew his limpid store?
Why did Bos not thunder,
 Targan apprehend
Body and Breath were sunder
 Of their former friend?

BEENY CLIFF

March 1870-March 1913

I

O the opal and the sapphire of that wandering western sea,
 And the woman riding high above with bright hair flapping
 free--
 The woman whom I loved so, and who loyally loved me.

II

The pale mews plained below us, and the waves seemed far
 away
 In a nether sky, engrossed in saying their ceaseless babbling
 say,
 As we laughed light-heartedly aloft on that clear-sunned
 March day.

III

A little cloud then cloaked us, and there flew an irised
 rain,
 And the Atlantic dyed its levels with a dull misfeatured
 stain,
 And then the sun burst out again, and purples prinked the
 main.

IV

--Still in all its chasmal beauty bulks old Beeny to the sky,
 And shall she and I not go there once again now March is
 nigh,
 And the sweet things said in that March say anew there by
 and by?

V

What if still in chasmal beauty looms that wild weird
 western shore,
 The woman now is--elsewhere--whom the ambling pony bore,
 And nor knows nor cares for Beeny, and will laugh there
 never-more.

AT CASTLE BOTEREL

As I drive to the junction of lane and highway,
 And the drizzle bedrenches the waggonette,
 I look behind at the fading byway,
 And see on its slope, now glistening wet,
 Distinctly yet

Myself and a girlish form benighted
 In dry March weather. We climb the road
 Beside a chaise. We had just alighted
 To ease the sturdy pony's load
 When he sighed and slowed.

What we did as we climbed, and what we talked of
 Matters not much, nor to what it led,--
 Something that life will not be balked of
 Without rude reason till hope is dead,
 And feeling fled.

It filled but a minute. But was there ever
 A time of such quality, since or before,
 In that hill's story? To one mind never,
 Though it has been climbed, foot-swift, foot-sore,
 By thousands more.

Primaeval rocks form the road's steep border,
 And much have they faced there, first and last,
 Of the transitory in Earth's long order;
 But what they record in colour and cast
 Is--that we two passed.

And to me, though Time's unflinching rigour,
 In mindless rote, has ruled from sight
 The substance now, one phantom figure
 Remains on the slope, as when that night
 Saw us alight.

I look and see it there, shrinking, shrinking,
 I look back at it amid the rain
 For the very last time; for my sand is sinking,
 And I shall traverse old love's domain
 Never again.

PLACES

Nobody says: Ah, that is the place
 Where chanced, in the hollow of years ago,
 What none of the Three Towns cared to know--
 The birth of a little girl of grace--
 The sweetest the house saw, first or last;
 Yet it was so
 On that day long past.

Nobody thinks: There, there she lay
 In a room by the Hoe, like the bud of a flower,
 And listened, just after the bedtime hour,
 To the stammering chimes that used to play
 The quaint Old Hundred-and-Thirteenth tune
 In Saint Andrew's tower
 Night, morn, and noon.

Nobody calls to mind that here
 Upon Boterel Hill, where the waggoners skid,
 With cheeks whose airy flush outbid
 Fresh fruit in bloom, and free of fear,
 She cantered down, as if she must fall
 (Though she never did),
 To the charm of all.

Nay: one there is to whom these things,
 That nobody else's mind calls back,
 Have a savour that scenes in being lack,
 And a presence more than the actual brings;
 To whom to-day is beneaped and stale,
 And its urgent clack
 But a vapid tale.

Plymouth, March 1913.

THE PHANTOM HORSEWOMAN

I

Queer are the ways of a man I know:
 He comes and stands
 In a careworn craze,
 And looks at the sands
 And the seaward haze
 With moveless hands
 And face and gaze,
 Then turns to go. . .
 And what does he see when he gazes so?

II

They say he sees as an instant thing
 More clear than to-day,
 A sweet soft scene
 That once was in play
 By that briny green;
 Yes, notes always
 Warm, real, and keen,
 What his back years bring--
 A phantom of his own figuring.

III

Of this vision of his they might say more:
 Not only there
 Does he see this sight,
 But everywhere
 In his brain--day, night,
 As if on the air
 It were drawn rose bright--
 Yea, far from that shore
 Does he carry this vision of heretofore:

IV

A ghost-girl-rider, And though, toil-tried,
 He withers daily,
 Time touches her not,
 But she still rides gaily
 In his rapt thought
 On that shagged and shaly
 Atlantic spot,
 And as when first eyed
 Draws rein and sings to the swing of the tide.

THE SPELL OF THE ROSE

"I mean to build a hall anon,
 And shape two turrets there,
 And a broad newelled stair,
 And a cool well for crystal water;
 Yes; I will build a hall anon,
 Plant roses love shall feed upon,
 And apple-trees and pear."

He set to build the manor-hall,
 And shaped the turrets there,
 And the broad newelled stair,
 And the cool well for crystal water;
 He built for me that manor-hall,
 And planted many trees withal,
 But no rose anywhere.

And as he planted never a rose
 That bears the flower of love,
 Though other flowers throve
 Some heart-bane moved our souls to sever
 Since he had planted never a rose;
 And misconceits raised horrid shows,
 And agonies came thereof.

"I'll mend these miseries," then said I,
 And so, at dead of night,
 I went and, screened from sight,
 That nought should keep our souls in severance,
 I set a rose-bush. "This," said I,
 "May end divisions dire and wry,
 And long-drawn days of blight."

But I was called from earth--yea, called
 Before my rose-bush grew;
 And would that now I knew
 What feels he of the tree I planted,
 And whether, after I was called
 To be a ghost, he, as of old,
 Gave me his heart anew!

Perhaps now blooms that queen of trees
 I set but saw not grow,
 And he, beside its glow--
 Eyes couched of the mis-vision that blurred me--
 Ay, there beside that queen of trees
 He sees me as I was, though sees
 Too late to tell me so!

ST. LAUNCE'S REVISITED

Slip back, Time!
Yet again I am nearing
Castle and keep, uprearing
Gray, as in my prime.

At the inn
Smiling nigh, why is it
Not as on my visit
When hope and I were twin?

Groom and jade
Whom I found here, moulder;
Strange the tavern-holder,
Strange the tap-maid.

Here I hired
Horse and man for bearing
Me on my wayfaring
To the door desired.

Evening gloomed
As I journeyed forward
To the faces shoreward
Till their dwelling loomed.

If again
Towards the Atlantic sea there
I should speed, they'd be there
Surely now as then? . . .

Why waste thought,
When I know them vanished
Under earth; yea, banished
Ever into nought!

WHERE THE PICNIC WAS

Where we made the fire
In the summer time
Of branch and briar
On the hill to the sea,
I slowly climb
Through winter mire,
And scan and trace
The forsaken place
Quite readily.

Now a cold wind blows,
And the grass is gray,
But the spot still shows
As a burnt circle--aye,
And stick-ends, charred,
Still strew the sward
Whereon I stand,
Last relic of the band
Who came that day!

Yes, I am here
Just as last year,
And the sea breathes brine
From its strange straight line
Up higher, the same
As when we four came.
--But two have wandered far
From this grassy rise
Into urban roar
Where no picnics are,
And one--has shut her eyes
For evermore.

VI

WAR POEMS

Accoutred in kaleidoscopic hues/
That would persuade us war has beauty in it.¹

In Thomas Hardy's poetry and novels, life is determined by time and chance, mindless agents of an unconscious will immanent in the universe. Each man struggles against the will through reason and love. In the end, however, neither reason nor love is triumphant. Man, then, can only recognize and finally accept his meaningless existence. Death is inevitable and almost desirable as an obliteration of human consciousness. Yet Hardy does not even grant such peace to the dead: they are often condemned to a restless, detached, and objective view of the living.

In Hardy's view war emerges as the most effective method for the defeat of love and reason; for it is impersonal, yet hateful, destructive, and irrational. For Hardy war and the men who create it are agents of the Immanent Will like time and chance; they simply carry out its mindless decisions. In a real sense, war and the death and destruction it brings are conclusive evidence that man has

¹Thomas Hardy, The Dynasts (MacMillan, New York, 1959). See the ending.

no control over his life and that love and reason can never sustain him.²

In The Dynasts, Hardy's long epic-drama on the Napoleonic Wars, this view of war is clear; but the philosophy is incompatible with the form. Irving Howe has suggested that "what he [Hardy] might have considered, however, was the advisability of even attempting a cosmic 'epic-drama' once there was no place in it for God. . . . I see no way, then, of escaping the conclusion that The Dynasts is a vast and awkward hybrid, a heroic effort to do what could not be done within the terms of Hardy's vision."³ In his short war poems, however, Hardy's view of war is not incompatible with the form and does not suffer from overexposure as it does in The Dynasts. The same philosophy is there, but it does not obtrude. It serves simply as a substructure, and in the best poems it is particularized and finally transcended.

Hardy wrote two formal collections of short war poems. The first is in Poems of the Past and Present; and most of the lyrics on the theme of war in that volume seem to have been written in 1899. The second collection, composed during the First World War, was published separately as Poems of War and Patriotism. Many poems on the same

²For detailed information on Hardy's philosophy, read the critical studies by Elliot, Rutland, Weber, Miller et al.

³Irving Howe, Thomas Hardy (MacMillan, New York, 1967), pp. 156-157.

theme are also scattered throughout the other volumes of Hardy's lyrics. When all of these poems are considered, the somewhat startling conclusion must be remembered that war was a major concern to Thomas Hardy, who never fought in or experienced battle in any way, and that a greater number of his poems deal with aspects of the tragedy of war than his critics have realized.

As a young boy, Thomas Hardy had been moved by the stories of soldiers who had served in the wars against Napoleon, and he had read A History of the Wars. As a young man, he visited Chelsea Hospital to talk with "the old asthmatic and crippled men, many of whom...had fought at Waterloo."⁴ He made plans for a narrative poem on the Battle of the Nile and later for a series of war ballads. None of these were written. In 1876 Hardy actually visited the field of Waterloo, and in June of 1877 he formulated the first plans for The Dynasts which took more than thirty years to complete. During those years he collected a Napoleonic library and spent long hours doing research in the British Museum. For almost all of his life, Thomas Hardy worried about the nature of war; he merely saw the Napoleonic Wars as a prototype because they show most clearly "the rulers of Europe in their desperate struggle to

⁴Florence Emily Hardy, The Later Years of Thomas Hardy (MacMillan, New York, 1929), pp. 33-et passim. All of this information on Hardy's preoccupation with the Napoleonic Wars and with soldiers can be found in this volume.

maintain their dynasties rather than to benefit their peoples."⁵

Hardy's preoccupation with war, manifested in the thirty years of study which culminated in The Dynasts, resulted in many fine short poems as well; yet not a single study of Hardy's war poems has been done even though several books and a myriad of articles have explored the meaning and structure of The Dynasts. Just as many critics make the mistake of treating Rilke's Sonetten an Orpheus merely as the by-products of his Duineser Elegien, so critics have assumed that Hardy said all that he had to say about war in his epic-drama. On the contrary, these short poems present, with few exceptions, a somewhat different view of war from The Dynasts. This view is more personalized, particularized, and modern. Except for several patriotic and rather jingly lyrics written at the beginning of World War I, Hardy's war poems concentrate on several themes that either are not emphasized or are not presented successfully in his epic: the loss of the heroic concept of war, the agony of the individual soldier or of those whom he has left behind, the emptiness of both victory and defeat, and the personal confrontation with death and destruction. Concentrating as he did on the impact of war on the individual, Hardy, it becomes clear, ended by questioning the validity of the concept of heroic or epic poetry.

⁵Ibid.

This transformation of attitudes is common to the twentieth century war poet. When Sassoon, Graves, Blunden, Owen, Sorley, and Rosenberg wrote their first poems in World War I, they too were filled with patriotism, hope and a kind of heroic anticipation. As soon as the horror of the war in the trenches hit them, however, their poetry became disillusioned, bitter, but at the same time more moving and intense. Needless to say, their poetry came to institute a denial of the heroic concept of war.⁶

Most of the war poems of Thomas Hardy, although they were written long before World War I, were in theme very much like the poetry of the young Georgian poets whose careers began during the First World War; Hardy's ideas were a strong influence on these younger men. All of these poets rejected the tragic and heroic dignity of the epic and moved to the confined sphere of the individual soldier. J. H. Johnston describes it this way:

..... modern war poetry is almost exclusively concerned with the experiences of the ordinary soldier; this figure, elevated by his obscurity, his sufferings, his patience and endurance, is the anonymous "hero" of contemporary poetry. He is, however, a passive rather than an active figure; as a mere unit in a vast military machine, he is controlled by directive intelligences remote from the battle field. As the poet depicts him he is a victim rather than a hero; what he does is not so important as what is done to him. Since the individual soldier can know little of the war outside his limited and generally passive experience of it, this fact . . . contributes even further to the reduction of

⁶See Robert H. Ross The Georgian Revolt: Rise and Fall of a Poetic Ideal, 1910-1922 (Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale, 1965), pp. 139-165.

perspective and the consequent loss of temporal, moral, and physical proportion.⁷

Hardy's early poem called "The Man He Killed" is perhaps the best example of Hardy's concentration on the individual soldier:

Had he and I but met
By some old ancient inn
We should have set us down to wet
Right many a nipperkin.

But ranged as infantry,
And staring face to face,
I shot at him as he at me,
And killed him in his place.

I shot him dead because -
Because he was my foe,
Just so: my foe of course he was;
That's clear enough; although

He thought he'd list, perhaps,
Offhand like - just as I -
Was out of work - had sold his traps -
No other reason why.

Yes; quaint and curious war is!
You shoot a fellow down
You'd treat if met where any bar is,
Or help to half a crown.⁸

On a primary level, "The Man He Killed" is a reflective poem. The soldier/speaker ponders the irony of killing a man whom he would have befriended under ordinary circumstances. But it is also more than that. The conclusion ("Quaint and curious war is") is not at all the conclusion Hardy wishes the reader to reach. A short dramatic

⁷J. H. Johnston, English Poetry of the First World War (Princeton, 1965), pp. 15-66.

⁸Thomas Hardy, Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy (MacMillan, New York, 1925), p. 269.

monologue, this lyric forces the reader to go beyond the answer provided in the poem.

Hardy has characterized the speaker in several ways that lead us to believe he is an ordinary country man: he uses dialect (nipperkin, 'list); he is in the infantry; he has enlisted because he was out of work; he has sold his traps. Yet, this simple man is struggling with an enormous public question: why does one man kill another man in war? His answer ("because he was my foe") is not a convincing one. The word "foe" strikes a troubling note. It makes the reader realize that the man is struggling with and trying to comprehend his act. The word is a perfect choice and along with the jingly phrase "just so" it creates just the right tension in the poem. A glance at the third stanza reveals its hesitations, word repetitions (because--foe), and conditional ending (although). Clearly it should be read with faltering voice and indecisiveness. The soldier is not at all certain that the man was his foe in any real sense.

What Hardy has created in "The Man He Killed" is a distinctive character, a "common" man who is wrestling with the terrible morality of war. He grapples with the problem as best he can--in the end, realizing dimly that the terrible irony of war and of his part in it. The lameness of his inability to go deeper into the impenetrable mystery of one man's killing another. In essence what he does is merely to articulate it. Benjamin DeMott says of this poem,

"The achievement of the poem is to give formed substance to a human effort to comprehend what is beyond comprehension."⁹

Hardy's "The Man He Killed" expresses well a central problem of war. The need to rationalize the act of killing and to ponder national enmities touches each of us as the most critical questions about war. In this case, Hardy's convoluted style, homely characterization, and halting meter are just right for the subject. Most of all, the strength in the poem lies not in the importance of the theme, but in the way Hardy individualizes one man's reaction to it. That individualization touches each of us personally.

Many of Hardy's war poems follow the pattern of personal response of "The Man He Killed." "Drummer Hodge," for example, tells the poignant tale of a young drummer boy who is buried far from his Wessex home. In this lyric, as in many of his poems--e.g. "The Second Night," Hardy uses star symbolism to unify his images and to represent the permanence of death. The poem evokes a strong sense of that finality. Others are also good--"Before Marching and After," "His Country," "Two Soldiers," and "Wives' Lament" to name but a few.

At first glance the Poems of War and Patriotism are easy to dismiss; for one could assume that Hardy was so old at the time of World War I that he did not realize what was happening. Hardy, however, is never so easily dismissed.

⁹Benjamin DeMott, Supergrow (E. P. Dutton and Co., New York, 1969), p. 149.

On subsequent readings the reader is forced to discover that he has been sidetracked by the patriotic poems (of which there are only four or five) and that he does not really appreciate the others--most of them are quite good. "I Looked Up From My Writing" is the last poem in the collection and is one of the best of the war poems written about personal experience.

I looked up from my writing,
 And gave a start to see,
 As if rapt in my inditing,
 The moon's full gaze on me.

Her meditative misty head
 Was spectral in its air,
 And I involuntarily said,
 "What are you doing there?"

"Oh, I've been scanning pond and hole
 And waterway hereabout
 For the body of one with a sunken soul
 Who has put his life-light out.

"Did you hear his frenzied tattle?
 It was sorrow for his son
 Who is slain in brutish battle
 Though he has injured none.

"And now I am curious to look
 Into the blinkered mind
 Of one who wants to write a book
 In a world of such a kind.

Her temper overwrought me,
 And I edged to shun her view,
 For I felt assured she thought me
 One who should drown him too.¹⁰

While not a typical war poem "I Looked Up From My Writing" expresses a situation which has always confronted poets--even those who wrote as soldiers from the battle-

¹⁰Hardy, Collected Poems, p. 519.

fields--that is, the predicament of the writer who sees that his work seems trivial and somehow suspect in juxtaposition with the realities of war. Here Hardy is questioning his own "blinkerred mind" for wishing to continue writing in a world where young men are dying and old men are drowning themselves in order to avoid the unnatural task of burying their children.

The personification of the moon in this lyric seems to happen naturally. In the first stanza, the poet's startled reaction to the "gaze" of the moon leads the reader to a suspension of belief. It is easy then for him to accept the dialogue between the moon and the poet in the following stanzas. In fact, what actually happens is very close to Sartre's concept of the gaze (le regard) which forces the person gazed upon to recognize that he is living in bad faith.¹¹ In a real sense, the poet learns from the moon that he has been acting in bad faith; and he attempts to "shun her view." Yet, the ending is too easy, too expected.

Hardy uses the techniques of personification and dialogue in this poem in order to keep it from being confessional or sentimental. In many other lyrics, he finds similar devices to control emotion and to mask his own feelings. Yet, in spite of the carefully controlled method

¹¹Jean Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness (New York, 1959), pp. 285 et passim. See also Sartre's play No Exit in which the character of Inez strongly represents this concept.

here, the poem is clearly a personal struggle between the poet and his conscience, between his compulsion to write and his growing awareness (sparked by the father's suicide at the death of his son) that poetry does not belong in a world at war. The personification of the moon gives psychic distance to the despair and agony of the writer, but the dramatic power of his realization is sustained (even though the ending does not quite work). War in this lyric is seen from the oblique angle of the poet's anguish over the deaths of both father and son. The poem is quiet--no gory details --but it brings home to every man who has not gone to war the guilt and sorrow that remind him that others are dying while he goes on with the business of his life.

In both collections of war poetry juxtaposed with the lyrics of personal response are poems which depend on abstract qualities for both their content and imagery. These, like the poems of experience, range in quality from the very poor to the distinguished. For example, "Men Who March Away" (published first in the London Times on September 9, 1914) expresses the righteous crusading spirit of the first weeks of the war:

What of the faith and fire within us
 Men who march away
 Ere the barn-cocks say
 Night is growing gray,
 To hazards whence no tears can win us;
 What of the faith and fire within us
 Men who march away?

.

In our hearts believing
 Victory crowns the just,
 And the braggarts must
 Surely bite the dust,
 Press we to the field ungrieving
 In our heart of hearts believing
 Victory crowns the just.¹²

The poet Charles Sorley, who died on the battlefield in Germany before he was twenty, judged this poem in a letter dated November 30, 1914:

Curiously enough, I think that "Men Who March Away" is the most arid poem in the book, besides being untrue of the sentiments of the ranksmen going to war: "Victory crowns the just" is the worst line he ever wrote--filched from a leading article in the Morning Post, and unworthy of him who had always previously disdained to insult justice by offering it a material crown like Victory.¹³

Indeed, Sorley was right. The poem lacks integrity in form and content. The imagery is stale and the style repetitious. Worse, the ideas in the poem are unconvincing and unbelievable. Hardy was responding to the great public fervor at the beginning of the war in this poem, but the attempt was unsuccessful. The poet who thought life unjust certainly could not have deluded himself that war might be otherwise.

Yet "And There Was a Great Calm" (On the signing of the Armistice, November 11, 1918) is a distinguished description of the way things are in war--at home and on the battlefield, with friend and with foe. Hardy juxtaposes all of the abstract qualities men worry about in time of conflict--Passion, Despair, Anger, Selflessness--with the

¹²Hardy, Collected Poems, p. 506.

¹³Charles Sorley, Letters (Cambridge, 1919), p. 246.

specific and ugly realities of battle. "And 'Hell' and 'Shell' were yapped at Lovingkindness." (Line 8) The first half of the poem works neatly to the climax of the war "when old hopes that earth was bettering slowly were dead and damned." (Line 25); and the last stanzas express the inability of men to accept or even to understand the peace.

Calm fell. From heaven distilled a clemency;
There was peace on earth, and silence in the sky;
Some could, some could not shake off the misery:
The Sinister spirit sneered: "It had to be!"
And again the Spirit of Pity whispered, "Why?"¹⁴

This poem was written just a few years after "Men Who March Away"; and it shows Thomas Hardy as he best considered the annihilation and human destruction of war. In the last line his questioning of the whole rationale for war has a direct relationship to the previous poem and to the major premise of The Dynasts.

Furthermore, "Channel Firing," "Souls of the Slain," "The Going of the Battery," "In Time of the Breaking of Nations," and many others are strong abstract expressions of various aspects of the war theme which more than compensates for the failure of such poems as "England to Germany in 1914," "An Appeal to America in Behalf of the Belgian Destitute," or "A Call to National Service." On one hand, all of Hardy's poems which are patriotic, are lost in abstraction and are totally unconvincing. On the other hand, anti-war lyrics are powerful in their apprehension of

¹⁴Hardy, Collected Poems, p. 557.

the total horror of war. What finally becomes clear is that Hardy could not write good positive or heroic poems about war. He could only write good anti-war poems.

"The Sick Battle-God" is an example:

I

In days when men found joy in war,
A God of Battles sped each mortal jar;
The peoples pledged him heart and hand,
From Israel's land to isles afar.

II

His crimson form, with clang and chime,
Flashed on each murk and murderous meeting-time,
And kings invoked, for rape and raid,
His fearsome aid in rune and rhyme.

III

On bruise and blood-hole, scar and seam,
On blade and bolt, he flung his fulgid beam:
His haloes rayed the very gore,
And corpses wore his glory-gleam.

IV

Often an early King or Queen,
And storied hero onward, caught his sheen;
'Twas glimpsed by Wolfe, by Ney anon,
And Nelson on his blue demesne.

V

But new light spread. That god's gold nimb
And blazon have waned dimmer and more dim;
Even his flushed form begins to fade,
Till but a shade is left of him.

VI

That modern meditations broke
His spell, that penmen's pleadings dealt a stroke,
Say some; and some that crimes too dire
Did much to mire his crimson cloak.

VII

Yea, seeds of crescent sympathy
 Were sown by those more excellent than he,
 Long known, though long condemned till then -
 The gods of men in amity.

VIII

Souls have grown seers, and thought outbrings
 The mournful many-sidedness of things
 With foes as friends, enfeebling ires
 And fury-fires by gaingivings!

IX

He rarely gladdens champions now;
 They do and dare, but tensely - pale of brow;
 And would they fain uplift the arm
 Of that weak form they know not how.

X

Yet wars arise, though zest grows cold;
 Wherefore, at times, as if in ancient mould
 He looms, bepatched with paint and lath;
 But never hath he seemed the old!

XI

Let men rejoice, let men deplore,
 The lurid deity of heretofore
 Succumbs to one of saner nod;
 The battle-god is god no more.¹⁵

The first five stanzas characterize the battle god in his prime "in days when men found joy in war." His glorious and heroic deeds are preserved in works of historians and poets. Yet, throughout these stanzas are images which are not heroic at all; and the pejorative connotations of these words undercut the glory of the battle god--e.g. "murderous meeting time," "rape and raid," "bruise and blood-hole," "gore," "corpses." The light imagery which first

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 88-90.

characterizes the battle--god is both sustained and brilliant. Slowly, Hardy diminishes the "glory-gleam" of the battle-god until in the fifth stanza his fortunes shift. At that point his form fades to a shadow. "New light spreads."

Even though the diction is archaic and quaint in places (as Hardy's diction often is) this poem is a powerful one. Clauses like "he flung his fulgid beam" and lines like "'Twas glimpsed by Wolfe, by Ney anon,/ And Nelson on his blue demesne" show, however, the unevenness in Hardy's style. The form also suffers--from a few silly internal rhymes (e.g. "Some that crimes too dire/ Did much to mire his crimson cloak."). Yet in general he handles this extremely tight rhyme scheme with skill--each quatrain rhymes abcb with an interval rhyme in line four with the end rhyme of line three; and the reader is neither bored nor excessively aware of it.

In the last half of the poem, Hardy explores the reasons for the change in attitude toward war: new ideas, the works of writers, or the excesses of war itself. Finally, he concludes that amity and sympathy have conquered war, that finally men can see "the mournful manysidedness of things." This recognition makes war in the old heroic sense impossible. In the last three stanzas, Hardy acknowledges that war continues, but that the Battle-God no longer has worshippers. Men are disillusioned and saner. They no

longer believe in war or in the tragic and heroic possibilities of such conflict.

Hardy has personified the god in order to kill him, and in the process to destroy the abstract concept of the epic or heroic nature of war. In this case, the personification is given so much specificity that the reader feels almost as if he is reading a Greek or Roman epic and that the form itself, as well as the battle god, is being killed. The god, once fearsome, has grown weak and is "bepatched with paint and lath." The poem which shows the literal transformation of the god provides substance for Hardy's position that war will never again be glorious for man.

These lyrics which express the agony of the individual soldier and the loss of the heroic concept of war have strongly influenced war poets in this century. Specifically Thomas Hardy's short war poems and The Dynasts have influenced Brooke, Sorley, Sassoon, Groves, Owen, Rosenberg, and Blunden. Some of these poets--Sorley, Sassoon, Groves, and Blunden--have written their impressions of Hardy and his work in letters, autobiographies, and/or critical works.¹⁶ Even though each makes an effort to denounce Hardy's philosophy (especially in The Dynasts), each reflects Hardy's concern for the individual soldier who becomes part of the impersonal armies of the war. Except for

¹⁶See Sorley's Letters; Groves, The Crowning Privilege; Blunden, Thomas Hardy; Sassoon, Letters and Siegfried's Journey.

the early poems of Brooke and for the work of David Jones, all of the World War I poets take an anti-heroic, anti-romantic view similar to that of Hardy's in The Dynasts and in poems like "The Sick Battle God."¹⁷ Not only did Hardy's ideas on war influence the World War I poets, but also his formal techniques were often adapted by the younger men--especially his abstract images and personifications.

Charles Sorley admired Hardy for his objectivity and praised his war poetry because "it has a realism and a true ring."¹⁸ In a few of his early poems, the influence of Hardy is apparent in his pessimistic abstractions. In "The River" he talks of the "black inscrutability" of the forces of nature. Man's can only surrender his life to "one great strength/ That moves and cannot die." These phrases sound very much like Hardy's Immanent Will which he often describes as inscrutable in both The Dynasts and in the shorter war poems.¹⁹

Later in two lyrics called "Rooks" he also echoes Hardy's persistent nostalgic desire for a return to Christian belief:

Yet how? since everything must pass
At evening with the sinking sun
And Christ is gone and Barabbas

¹⁷Johnston confirms this. See pp. 15-16 et passim.

¹⁸Sorley, Letters, p. 246.

¹⁹All poems by Sorley can be found in Marlborough and Other Poems (Cambridge, 1916). The fourth edition which was enlarged and rearranged in 1919 is a better edition, however.

Judas and Jesus, gone, clean gone,
Then how shall I live on?

Sorley's later poetry is even more deeply influenced by Hardy. Compare the following lines from Sorley's sonnet: "When you See Millions of the Mouthless Dead" and Hardy's "The Souls of The Slain."

When you see millions of the
mouthless dead
Across your dreams in pale
battalions go,
Say not soft things as other
me have said,
That you'll remember. For you
need not so.
Give then not praise. For,
dead. How should they know
It is not curses heaped on such
gashed head?
Nor tears. Their blind eyes
see not your tears flow.
Nor honour. It is easy to be dead.

XIII

Then bitterly some: Was it wise now
To raise the tomb-door
For such knowledge? Away!
But the rest: Famed we prized till
today;
Yet that hearts keep us green for old
Kindness we prize now
A thousand times more!²⁰

In each poem the living cannot reach the dead with their words or deeds; in each there is no honor or fame in a soldier's death. Johnston describes the parallels this way: The haunted, visionary quality of [Sorley's] sonnet brings to mind Hardy's "The Souls of The Slain," wherein the victims of the Boer War, after their spectral visit to England's shores, plunge to the 'fathomless regions/ Of

²⁰Sorley, p. 84.

myriads forgot.' In Sorley's poem the restless dead march on in hallucination and nightmare ... they exist as a reproach to the conscience and not as a comfort to the imagination."²¹ Wilfred Owen's fine poem Dulce et Decorum Est" has the same vision and the same theme.

Isaac Rosenberg also shared Hardy's views and vocabulary. "In War" is a short narrative lyric which reveals Rosenberg's ability to make abstractions work with the same techniques Hardy used--

In the old days when death
Stalked the world
For the flower of men
And the rose of beauty faded
And pined in the great gloom,

. . . .

How death had kissed their eyes
Three dread noons since
How human art won
The dark soul to flicker
Till it was lost again

And we whom chance kept whole -
But haggard,
Spent - were charge
To make a place for them who knew
No pain in any place.

. . . .

What are the great sceptred dooms
To us, caught
In the wild wave?
We break ourselves on them,
My brother, our hearts and year.²²

²¹Johnston, p. 69.

²²Isaac Rosenberg, Collected Works (London, 1937). "Daughters of War" can also be found in this volume.

Here the abstractions (death, art, chance, sceptred doom) have specificity through detail, e.g. Death closes the eyes of the dead with kisses at a particular time. Yet these images are restrained--the gory realism of the poems of Owens and Sassoon is not introduced. Like Hardy, "the emphasis is on the timeless and universal in human conflict";²³ this poem has a sense of doom and fatalism--the inexorability of death, time, and chance that is reminiscent of Hardy's philosophy. The tone and rhythm, however, are very different from Hardy's. Another long epic-like poem by Rosenberg called "The Daughters of War" has been compared to The Dynasts. A long narrative on the Amazons, it has both the strengths and the weaknesses of Hardy's epic-drama. Johnston compares these works and suggests that Hardy and Rosenberg are the only 20th century poets "whose imagination could work successfully on a large visionary scale!"²⁴ Both The Dynasts and Daughters of War take the same attitudes toward war--that war is inexorable, but not heroic. Both works fail to make the abstractions and the epic form fit their vision.

During the first thirty years of this century every English school boy or girl grew up with Hardy's poetry. The World War I poets looked to Hardy as a model. Even later poets like Auden proudly admit that they "cut their literary

²³Johnston, p. 229.

²⁴Ibid., p. 232.

teeth" on Hardy's lyrics. At the mention of Hardy's war poetry, Auden in a recent lecture began quoting from memory long sections of The Dynasts, "The Man He Killed,"²⁵ "The Pity of It," and other lyrics. Thomas Hardy was enormously important to these poets, and they have acknowledged their debt to him in their poetry as well as in their personal writing.

Important as a strong influence on later poets, Hardy's war poetry also offers an important contrast to The Dynasts. It successfully focuses on the effects of war on the individual through poems of experience and on the loss of the heroic concept of war through poems of an abstract, impersonal nature. Both types of poetry are necessary and valid in presenting the ugliness and insanity of modern warfare.

²⁵Auden gave his final lecture in the United States at the State University College, New Paltz, New York on March 15, 1972.

POETIC DEVELOPMENT

Someone once said of Hardy that he never changed as a poet; he just did more with what he had. This statement tells us most of what we need to know about his poetic development. This is not to say that Hardy's poetry shows no development, but rather that Hardy's method was to return decade after decade to the same themes with the same distinctive voice. In that process his poetry became consistently better, even if his range grew narrower.

This kind of development--of finding a voice and exploring the limits of its range--seems strange for a poet who wrote his lyrics over a period of almost seventy years. Hardy's earliest dated poems are from the 1860's, and one of his last verses bears the date August, 1927. Because of the length of his career and the sheer volume of the poetry, the reader naturally brings to Hardy's lyrics expectations of variety and depth that in the end are simply not there. Instead, Hardy's development seems to have been a refinement of the views and structures he had formed early in his career. Indeed, he held doggedly to his youthful philosophical views throughout his life; and his style, distinctive from the beginning, became even more clearly his own.

Hardy's poetic development must be studied through two methods. First, an analysis of dated poems can show chronological development. Second, since so many poems are

undated, a study of the process of revision is also helpful --particularly in the development of diction. Yet, any discussion of Hardy's development as a poet is difficult because Hardy did not begin publishing his verse until he was fifty-eight years old. Since some of the poems in his first collection are dated as early as the 1860's, he had obviously written many of them long before they were published. Quite often, also, poems with early dates appear in later volumes so that we cannot assume that each volume of poetry represents a chronological development in relation to earlier ones. Even worse, Hardy dated only about one-fourth of his poems so that we have no idea when he wrote the remaining three quarters of the lyrics.

Nor does Hardy provide much information about the dating of the poems in his autobiography. From the dated poems and from the autobiography, it is possible, however, to draw conclusions as to when he had really productive periods of writing. Although his writing of poetry was consistent and continual, he had apparently two extremely productive periods. The first was in the 1860's and the second was between 1910 and 1920. In the years 1872-1890, there is only one dated poem. Hynes has called this a "sterile period,"¹ but he obviously refers only to the poetry, for in these years all of the novels from Under the Greenwood Tree (1872) to Tess of the D'Urbervilles were written.

¹Samuel Hynes, The Pattern of Hardy's Poetry (University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1961), p. 62.

Hardy's first productive period in the 1860's was obviously at the time when he was vacillating between the writing of poetry and the writing of novels. His architectural work for Hicks occupied him only part of the time, and he was free to take himself seriously as a writer. He wanted to be a poet; he was writing lyrics in a white heat of creativity; he simply could not find a publisher. At this point he decided to give up poetry and to try a new form--the novel. He recalled in Early Life that "under the stress of necessity" he began to write "a kind of literature in which he had hitherto taken but little interest--prose fiction."² At the same time Hardy also recalled that period with a certain bittersweet rationale in Early Life: ". . . and by 1865 he had begun to write verses, and by 1866 to send his productions to magazines. That these were rejected by editors and that he paid such respect to their judgement as scarcely ever to send out a ms twice was in one feature fortunate for him since in years long after he was able to examine those poems of which he had kept copies, and by the mere change of a few words or the rewriting of a line or two make them quite worthy of publication."³ He also indicated that he continued to write poetry even when he was certain that there would be no chance of publication.⁴

²Evelyn Hardy, The Early Life of Thomas Hardy (MacMillan Co., New York, 1929), p. 62.

³Ibid., p. 64.

⁴Ibid.

The dated poems from the productive period of the 1860's are varied, but they share certain similarities. At first glance, the great number of sonnets in the group becomes apparent: e.g. "Hap," "She to Him," (I, II, III, and IV), "In Vision I Roamed," "At a Bridal," "To an Actress," "Discouragement," "Her Reproach," "Revulsion," and "A Confession to a Friend in Trouble." Most of these sonnets are concerned with the loss of love in one way or another. In general the meter is iambic pentameter; and the form is that of the Petrarchan sonnet. Many others from this period take a four line stanza form of twelve lines that is very similar to the sonnet--"Neutral Tones," "Postponement," "Her Dilemma," and "To a Motherless Child."

What is most notable about the poetry of the 1860 period is the lack of variation in form which is characteristic of Hardy's later poetry. Here his style is only beginning to be individualized. In the "She to Him" poems Hardy is clearly strangling his own voice in an attempt to sound like Shakespeare. Yet in a lyric like "Neutral Tones" the distinctive Hardy sound is not only present, but also mature. The same is true for "The Imprecipient" and for "Hap." These are great poems. Too often, however, the specificity and personal power of poems like "Neutral Tones" gives way to generality and abstraction in other lyrics. "At a Bridal," for example, has a subject that Hardy normally would use to good effect--a lover watches as his beloved

marries another "as slave to mode's decree." In this case, however, the images are vague, loose, and unconvincing.

AT A BRIDAL

Nature's Indifference

When you paced forth to await maternity,
A dream of other offspring held my mind,
Compounded of us twain as Love designed;
Rare forms, that corporate now will never be!

Should I, too, wed as Slave to Mode's decree,
And each thus found apart, of false desire,
A stolid line, whom no high aims will fire
As had fired ours could ever have mingled we.

And, grieved that lives so matched should miscompose,
Each mourn the double waste; and question dare
To the great Dame whence incarnation flows.
Why those high purposed children never were:
What will she answer? That she does not care,
If the race all such sovereign types unknowns.⁵

1866

The language is strained and pretentious. The simple situation in which the lover, seeing his loved one marrying another, mourns the children which might have been born of their love, is literally obscured by the style. What destroys the poem even more is the thinly veiled pretense that the speaker cares that his beloved is lost to him. But his grief seems to have a false ring, for he seems more interested in his idea than in his situation. The intent of the poem is obviously that nature is completely indifferent to man's sufferings, but the lofty language defeats the possibility of giving any specificity to such an argument.

⁵Thomas Hardy, Collected Poems (MacMillan Co., New York, 1925), p. 8.

Yet even here, however, are signs of the true Hardy voice. The vocabulary--in particular the coinage of the word "unknows"--has sometimes the sound of Hardy's mature expression. The theme is also one that fascinated him again and again. The materials for a good Hardy poem are here. Had Hardy written it later, he might have made the scene specific; and he then could have permitted his idea of nature's indifference to emerge from the situation effectively. As it is, he has thrown both the fable and the idea away.

Like "At A Bridal" most of Hardy's themes are present in the poems of the 1860's. At the center are lyrics about love, or, perhaps, it might be better to say the loss of love. These poems might be called personal, but not in the same sense that we apply the term to the late lyrics --especially those in Veteris vestigia Flammae. Instead the fictional persona masks Hardy more carefully than those in later lyrics. For example, Marsden has called attention to many poems which have a feminine persona: i.e. "She to Him" I, II, III, and IV, "Her Definition," "Her Reproach," and "Her Confession."⁶ In this first collection, Hardy's efforts at detachment from life, at being a spectator, are both obvious and strenuous. The use of the female persona is but one example of this tendency.

⁶Kenneth Marsden, The Poems of Thomas Hardy: A Critical Introduction (Oxford University Press, New York, 1969), p. 185.

Though Hardy creates female voices in his later poetry, they are more than an attempt to mask his own personality; they are also more clearly an attempt to break past his own self-concern. His efforts to filter himself out of his early poetry give way to a much more personal voice in the later lyrics (Veteris vestigia Flammae in particular). In many of the poems of the 1860's he uses technical devices like the flashback to protect and to hide himself; in later poems he uses them to control emotion and guard against sentimentality.

Less prominent than the love theme is evidence of Hardy's predilection d'artiste for overt philosophical statement. Also absent are the idiosyncratic satires. All in all, however, the early Hardy is the same as the late Hardy, only a little weaker.

In the next twenty years, Hardy wrote few poems--altogether about fifteen dated lyrics and about 50 undated ones. This count is substantiated by Hardy himself who wrote in Later Years that his output of poems dwindled during "the middle period of his novel writing producing few or none."⁷ Of these fifteen poems, of interest are six lyrics on the Napoleonic war and a few poems related to his memories of Tryphena Sparks: "Thoughts of Phena" and "In an Eweleaze near Weatherbury." A few others may also be

⁷Evelyn Hardy, The Later Years of Thomas Hardy (MacMillan Co., New York, 1930), p. 66.

written about her--"To an Orphan Child," "Her Immortality," and "Her Death and After."⁸

During this period, however, Hardy's style took shape; and the intensive novel writing led finally to a mature voice in the poetry. Perhaps, the slow evolution of that maturity is best represented by the contrast between the early poem "Revulsion" and "He Abjures Love" which was written during his middle period:

REVULSION

Though I waste watches framing words to fetter
Some unknown spirit to mine in clasp and kiss,
Out of the night there looms a sense 'twere better
To fail obtaining whom one fails to miss.

For winning love we win the risk of losing,
And losing love is as one's life were riven'
It cuts like contumely and keen ill-using
To cede what was superfluously given.

Let me then never feel the fateful thrilling
That devastates the love-worn wooer's frame,
The hot ado of fevered hopes, the chilling
That agonizes disappointed aim!
So may I live no junctive law fulfilling,
And my heart's table bear no woman's name.

1866

HE ABJURES LOVE

At last I put off love,
For twice ten years
The daysman of my thought,
And hope and doing;
Being ashamed thereof,
And faint of fears

⁸For information on Hardy's relationship with Tryphena Sparks, see Lois Deacon and Terry Coleman, Providence and Mr. Hardy (Hutchinson, London, 1966). Their efforts to reconstruct this secret love of Hardy's are exaggerated but interesting.

And desolations wrought
In his pursuing.

Since first in youthtime those
Disquietings
That heart-enslavement brings
To hale and hoary,
Became my housefellows,
And, fool and blind,
I turned from kith and kin
To give him glory.

I was as children be
Who have no care;
I did not shrink or sigh,
I did not sicken;
But lo, Love beckoned me.
And I was bare,
And poor, and starved and dry.
And fever-stricken.

Too many times ablaze
With fatuous fires.
Enkindled by his wiles
To new embraces,
Did I, by wilful ways
And baseless ires,
Return the anxious smiles
Of friendly faces.

No more now will rate I
The common rare,
The midnight drizzle dew,
The grey hour golden,
The wind a yearning cry,
The faulty fair,
Things dreamt, of comelier hue
Than things beholden! . . .

-I speak as one who plumbs
Life's dim profound,
One who at length can sound
Clear views and certain.
But--after love what comes?
A scene that lours
A few sad vacant hours,
And then, the curtain.⁹

1883

⁹Hardy, Collected Poems, pp. 11 and 220.

Like many of the 1860-1870 lyrics, "Revulsion" is a Petrarchan sonnet on the theme of the catastrophe of love. In every way, the poem is conventional. As Hynes suggests, "Almost anyone could have written it; it is competent in the sense that it makes a coherent statement without violating the rules of the sonnet form, but it is entirely unlike Hardy."¹⁰

Hynes is correct in his judgment of the sonnet, but the diction of "Revulsion" is Hardy's. Phrases like "unknown spirit to mine in clasp," "to fail obtaining," "keen ill-using," and "love-worn wooer's frame" are typical Hardyian diction. No other poet would choose a phrase like "junctive law." The failure is in the triteness of the imagery. If a poet chooses common images, he must somehow make them new. Hardy's images (e.g. burning-losing, love-sickness) seem very shop-worn. Here Hardy succumbs to the traditional imagery of the form without possessing it in any way. The poem is finally an exercise--like those done by struggling students in creative writing workshops where teachers insist on mastery of the sonnet form.

The poem is not a total disaster, but it is sentimental--it proclaims feeling instead of really evoking it. Hardy's poem is not cheap; it is merely a young poet's attempt at describing an unearned emotion.

"He Abjures Love," on the other hand, is not a great poem either; but the difference between the two is enormous.

¹⁰Hynes, p. 135.

Two things, I think, are important in consideration of development in this poem; and they can both be illustrated through the last two stanzas. The first is that Hardy's characteristic style is present and effective--for example, "I speak as one who plumbs Life's dim profound." In addition to the mournful sound (achieved by his use of nasals), the transformation of the adjective "profound" into a noun works well here; and it is, needless to say, typical of Hardy. The second is the perfection of the fifth stanza and the Hardy attitude apparent in it. The idea that once love is lost, all that was rated rare becomes common is a persistent theme in Hardy's poetry and novels. Think of Eustacia Vye's disillusionment with Clym in Return of the Native. At first she finds him rare because she is fascinated by his connection with the beau monde of Paris; later she sees him as an ordinary man and despises him for being merely himself. What Hardy is saying in Return of the Native, in "He Abjures Love" and in other poems in that love gives a special and unreal glow to the ordinary; and when it dies (as surely it will), the reality is uglier than it was before the dream of love enhanced it.

The images which support Hardy's contention are excellent. He simply takes the traditional images of love poetry and reverses them. Thus, the dew is really midnight drizzle; the golden hour is, in fact, gray; the yearning cry is only the wind. Yet, the result is not high-spirited like Shakespeare's "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun."

Instead, the result is deflation. Love as a concept is merely a dream and a dangerous one at that, for all that one has when it dies is a "few sad vacant hours" before one's own death. Love is an experience of diminishment to be avoided at all costs. In the contrast between these poems of his early and middle periods, the development of Hardy's themes and form is unmistakable.

After 1895 Hardy began to write poetry exclusively, and consequently there are more poems dated in the 1890's than in the 1880's. On December 25, 1890 Hardy wrote "while thinking of resuming the 'viewless wings of poesy' before dawn this morning, new horizons seemed to open, and worrying pettinesses to disappear."¹¹ He did then take up again his writing of poetry, but did not produce any lyrics dated 1891 (the year *Tess* was written) or 1895 (*Jude the Obscure* appeared that year). Shortly after that he began work on *The Dynasts*. Therefore, *Poems of the Past and Present* and *Time's Laughingstocks*, both published while Hardy was writing his epic, have a high percentage of poems written in the 1890's.

The second productive period for Hardy as a poet was the decade from 1910 to 1920. As Hynes suggests, part of the impetus for this creative surge was the completion of *The Dynasts* in 1909 and the beginning of the First World

¹¹Hardy, *Early Life*, p. 302.

War.¹² However, the death of Emma Hardy in 1912, it seems to me, is the most important inspiration for the poetry which followed. Nothing in his life appears to have had so profound an effect on him as did the death of Emma Lavinia Gifford Hardy, and he transformed his grief into poetry. Hardy, then, came to full bloom in his seventies; his, in the most factual way, is a poetry of old age. This is not surprising if we remember that Hardy once said of himself that he was a child until he was twenty-five and a young man at fifty.¹³

In the forty years between his two most productive periods Hardy had become more steadily himself. He stopped imitating Shakespeare and Swinburne, and he stopped writing in that almost anonymous style of his early period. In developing he cultivated those themes and meters and diction which were most suited to him. In a wry comment, Samuel Hynes demonstrates that "the bad early poems are bad Shakespeare or bad Swinburne; but the bad late poems are bad Hardy."¹⁴

In the second productive period (1910-1920), the poems of 1912-1913 which are titled Veteris Vestigia Flammae (in the ashes of an old flame) have already been discussed, but they give the best evidence of Hardy's style in later

¹²Hynes, p. 133.

¹³Hardy, Early Life, p. 42.

¹⁴Hynes, p. 137.

periods. Each is a bittersweet elegy in memory of the woman whose marriage to him promised much but fulfilled little. These lyrics are Hardy's most personal expressions,--an expiation, he once called them.

The full range of his development becomes clear when lyrics from the 1860's (even the best ones like "Neutral Tones") are juxtaposed with poems from the 1912-1913 collection. "Ditty," written in 1870, is the only poem Hardy dedicated to his first wife while she was alive (though "The Minute Before Meeting" probably refers to her also). In contrast to a poem like "The Going" which refers to events of the same time and situation, "Ditty" shows how unsure Hardy's early poems could be.

DITTY

(E.L.G.)

Beneath a knap where flown
 Nestlings play,
 Within walls of weathered stone,
 Far away
 From the files of formal houses,
 By the bough the firstling browses,
 Lives a Sweet: no merchants meet
 No man barter, no man sells
 Where she dwells.

Upon the fabric fair
 "Here is she!"
 Seems written everywhere
 Unto me.
 But to friend and nodding neighbors,
 Fellow-wights in lot and labours,
 Who descry the times as I,
 No such lucid legend tells
 Where she dwells.

Should I lapse to what I was
 Ere we met;
 (Such will not be, but because

Some forget
 Let me feign it) - none would notice
 That where she I know by rote is
 Spread a strange and withering change,
 Like a drying of the wells
 Where she dwells.

To feel I might have kissed -
 Loved as true -
 Otherwhere, nor Mine have missed
 My life through,
 Had I never wandered near her,
 Is a snart severe - severer
 In the thought that she is nought,
 Even as I, beyond the dells
 Where she dwells.

And devotion droops her glance
 To recall
 What bond-servants of Chance
 We are all.
 I but found her in that, going
 On my errant path unknowing,
 I did not outskirt the spot
 That no spot on earth excels,
 Where she dwells.¹⁵

"Ditty" concentrates on the place where the young man's beloved lives. At the heart of the poem is the lover's amazement that quite by accident he has found the woman that he adores: "I but found her in that, going on my errant path unknowing." It is obviously painful to him to realize that he might have loved another had he not "wandered near her."

Unintentionally, the poem focuses on the speaker in an extremely self-centered way. Except for the first stanza which describes the location of the young woman's house, the lover seems to be interested only in his own reactions. Only he has the power to see the fabric which bears the

¹⁵Hardy, Collected Poems, p. 15.

"lucid legend" "Here is she." It is almost as if he alone brings some magic to the relationship, and there is no evidence in the poem that she inspires his magic or even that the place creates it. Instead, he confers it beneficently on them. When he poses the hypothetical situation that he might "lapse" to what he was before they met, he suggests that there would be a "strange and withering change/ Like a drying of wells/ Where she dwells." The place has taken on his magic and should he for some reason stop loving her, the place where she lives would immediately lose its aura of loveliness. Indeed, it would be much worse than before; for the wells would be dry. Just as the rare becomes common in "He Abjures Love," so does the magic of love in this poem depend on the young man--that magic would be a common setting without him.

Finally, both the strength of the memory of the chance meeting and the strength of place come through in this lyric, but the unintended egocentricity of the point-of-view casts a shadow on the memory. It is at best an ambivalent tribute that the poet gives his wife in this poem; and the ambivalence is neither faced nor acknowledged. There is a laxness in the creation of the persona that unconsciously reveals extremely personal attitudes at the expense of the art. In the end, then, the poem is more interesting than good.

The diction in this poem is strained and overdone; obviously it reflects the tension between the idea and its

faulty execution. The first two lines indicate the major failures: "Beneath a knap where flown nestlings play." Here the choice of the word "knap" appears to be a circumlocation; the same is true of the phrase "flown nestlings." The image of the young birds at play has possibilities for charm, but the diction almost deliberately obscures the image. In the last stanza the personifications and the diction have the opposite effect: their flaw is overgeneralization. "And devotion droops her glance/ To recall/ What bond-servants of Chance/ We are all." The image is trite and overused, and the language is inflated. Here Hardy is straining to show the profundity of his concept, and the result is strained, not profound.

On the other hand, "The Going," written forty-two years later, centers on the same materials, but the results are much different as the analysis in Chapter five demonstrates. In "Ditty" the poet thinks he learns one thing, but an analysis of the poem shows that he is unaware of his true feelings. The poem lacks both unity and integrity; but "The Going" has both of those qualities to perfection. In this case there is no doubt that "The Going" is a more powerful poem than "Ditty;" but both are also much alike. They depend on the same materials for their impetus and the purpose of each poem is essentially the same. Hardy's development is clearly in his understanding of the relationship he has had with his wife, in his handling of the materials for the poem, and in the style itself. Indeed, he

never radically changed as a poet, but he did much more with what he had.

Hardy's development, therefore, was a steady movement in the same direction without great alterations in style or subject that culminated in the poems of 1912-1913. Hynes correctly suggests that the change from Hardy's early to late periods "is only relative and the change from one to the other (principally a matter of abandoning alien styles) came about slowly," but was completed by 1910.¹⁶ After this, development in Hardy's poetry is primarily evident in matters of diction. The last three volumes of his poetry reveal a decline of power and contain many poems written in earlier years. There is noticeable in the last volumes a decided slackening of intensity and a mellowing.

Poetic development can be approached in two ways--through analysis of dated poems and through the process of revisions. The second method is extremely helpful in tracing the development of diction; and since in the last volumes development seems to be almost entirely a matter of refinement of style, it is best studied through Hardy's process of revision.

Robert Graves wrote in The Crowning Privilege that Hardy once remarked to him that "he was not interested in the fate of his poems once he had written them."¹⁷ Hardy

¹⁶Hynes, p. 139.

¹⁷Robert Graves, The Crowning Privilege (London, 1955), p. 20.

was not quite truthful in his statement.¹⁸ Although he was not the careful reviser that Henry James was, for example, he did make changes in his published poems that were often quite extensive. He revised his poems for the first time after the completion of The Dynasts when he was preparing the Wessex edition of his complete works. In Later Years he mentions that he was correcting proofs for the novels in April, 1912, and probably he revised the poems at the same time. In this edition are Wessex Poems and Poems of the Past and Present. The revisions done on these two collections were almost complete, as Hynes puts it "so thorough that two-thirds of the revised poems were not altered again."¹⁹

In 1916 Hardy reworked his verses for the publication of Selected Poems. In addition to the two volumes included in the Wessex edition, poems from Satires of Circumstance and Time's Laughingstocks appeared in this selection. In some cases the revisions he made were only partial and were not completed until the publication of the Collected Poems.

Hardy did his most significant revising for the volume of Collected Poems which appeared in 1919. This revision is thorough and probably took a great amount of

¹⁸It is not a truthful statement for two reasons: first, Hardy made careful revisions; second, he was terribly thin-skinned and could not bear criticism. He cared desperately about critical opinions of his poetry.

¹⁹Hynes, p. 139.

time and effort for its completion. Between 1922 and 1925 he also revised Later Lyrics and Earlier and made a few changes in Human Shows (1925). Since Winter Words was published posthumously, it naturally had no revision.

Hynes notes that he made the greatest number of changes in Wessex Poems (66 2/3 per cent) and the least in Human Shows (3 per cent).²⁰ When the revisions are studied carefully, Hardy's tendency to do less and less revising as the years progressed is understandable. He was searching for his voice in the early poems, and his reworkings of these volumes prove that he moved steadily toward more simplified and more characteristic diction and toward less stilted rhythms. As he became more surely himself, he naturally found less to revise in the later volumes. Indeed, as the poetry became better, it needed less revision.

In the early volumes the most extensive revisions generally appear in the best poems. Marsden suggests that "if Hardy was relatively soon satisfied with a poem, it was likely to be an inferior one."²¹ He showed much more interest in the perfection of the lyrics which showed most promise. (It must also be admitted that Hardy was not a self-critical man and that quite often he did not distinguish good from bad poems.) In these early volumes, the trend in Hardy's revisions was to remove archaisms and

²⁰Ibid., p. 140.

²¹Marsden, p. 189.

awkward words. For example, in "The Dance at the Phoenix" he changed the following lines:

And, as o'ernight from Pummery Ridge
As overnight from Pummery Ridge.

In the Wessex edition of his poems (Volume 19, page 50) in "Her Death and After" is:

And I drew to its banks and clomb.

Hardy later changed it to:

From its hollows of turf and loam,
and finally in Collected Poems, it becomes:

From its hollows of chalk and loam.

Originally the stanza looked like this:

And to shun his nod
By her hallowed sod
I went from the tombs among
To the Cirque of the Gladiators which faced
That haggard mark of Imperial Rome,
Whose pagan echoes mock the chime
Of our Christian time
It was void and I inward clomb.

Obviously Hardy realized that the last line introduced a discordant element into the stanza, and his revisions are attempts to achieve unity in the stanza and to fit it more closely into the entire poem. No doubt, there is great improvement, once the archaism (clomb) has been removed; the stanza seems more complete.

The first line "It was void and I inward clomb" presents a new and totally alien idea. Hardy obviously did not intend a change of focus or such a dramatic shift; consequently in the second version he omitted the words "void" and "inward." Once he did this, however, the last line

became superfluous: "And I drew to its banks and clomb." Thus, in the third version he deleted the first person and concentrated instead on the mocking echo image: "From its hollows of turf and loam." The connotations of the word "hollows" reinforce the word "mock" without the discord of the first version. In the final revision, the change of "turf" to "chalk" not only sounds better but also blends with the "haggard mark" image. In the long process of change, this last line has become better both in diction and in content.

One more example. In "My Cicely" the stanza

I shuddered, said nothing, and wandered
To shades of green laurel.
Too ghastly had grown those first tidings
So brightsome of blee.

is changed to:

I shuddered, said nothing, and wandered
To shades of green laurel
More ghastly than death were these tidings
Of life's irony.

Here the revisions of the last two lines show a more characteristic Hardyian diction and eliminate the archaism of the first version.

Indeed, in the early revisions dialectic and archaic words are effectively removed in favor of more understandable selections: "vlanker" becomes "flapping"; "en" becomes "him"; "clomb" becomes "loam"; "blee" becomes "irony." Hardy also changes some of his coined words: "undecreased" appears later as "no decrease"; "irised" appears as "iris-hued"; "hocus satirific" appears as "seeming derision."

Clearly the direction of these revisions is toward more common and less eccentric diction, but these changes also make the poetry more distinctively Hardy's.

In the later poetry the revisions take the opposite direction. Here Hardy begins to add more eccentric diction. Hynes suggests that this turn works well because by that time Hardy has learned the "limits of his eccentricity" through the creation of The Dynasts.²² It does seem that these choices, though eccentric, are not as troublesome as they are in the early poems. In fact, most of them make the poems more precise and bring the reader to a greater understanding of the nuances in the lyrics. In these verses, for example, "passed" is changed to "pilgrimed"; "husband" to "life-mate"; "reflecting" to "glassing"; "possessor" to "bed-winner." In each case the change is not only more graphic, but also more metaphorical. He also made efforts to smooth syntax and awkward rhythms ("Moments the mightiest pass uncalendared" becomes "The mightiest moments pass uncalendared.") The revisions of "The Haunter" best show, perhaps, Hardy's method of change in the later poems:

But cannot answer his words addressed me
is changed to:

But cannot answer the word he lifts me.
Yes. I accompany him to places

is changed to:

²²Hynes, p. 146.

Yes. I accompany him to places
Where the shy hares show their faces

is changed to:

Yes. I companion him to places
Where the shy hares print long paces.

The language is clearly more Hardyian and it is also more descriptive. For instance, in the last line "show their faces" is a cliché; but the image of the hares shyly bounding away is much more graphic and successful. The verb "print" is simple, but powerful.

At the same time, Hardy also reworked the ending of "The Hunter."

And if it be that at night I am stronger
So, too, by day I do.
Please, then, keep him in gloom no longer
Even ghost tend thereto!

Tell him a faithful one is doing
All that love can do
Still that his path may be worth pursuing
And to bring peace thereto.

The new ending is muted, softer. The focus is shifted from the first to the third person as it should be. Indeed, the rewriting is complete (except for the do-thereto rhyme) and smooth.

In the later poems (those published in the 1920's) there is more description, and the revisions tend also to follow this trend. And there is less philosophy, less tension in these lyrics. Marsden concludes that "if these volumes have fewer of his vices; they lack many of his

virtues too."²³ The revisions are few, but they are competent.

In his mature poetry, Hardy's style is closer to conversational language--less archaic, fewer words in dialect, few inversions in the syntax. At the same time, however, Hardy's style is peculiarly his own. This distinctiveness was enhanced by the process of revision he devised. He learned to control his method and to refine it. Yet, even in revision, Hardy did not show radical stages of development--indeed, in revising there is evident only a clear line toward his own talent, narrow, limited, but great in its own way.

Both types of evidence--comparison of dated poems and study of revision--prove that Thomas Hardy's development as a poet was not dramatic. It did not need to be, for Hardy was himself from the beginning, and he worked steadily on the style and themes of his youth until he had them firmly as his own and thoroughly explored. He did not range far, but he did go deep.

²³Marsden, p. 208.

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