THE THEME OF TIME IN HARDY'S POETRY

THE THEME OF TIME IN THE POETRY OF THOMAS HARDY

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SCOPE AND CONTENTS: In an examination of Hardy's dominant concern with Time, the thesis attempts firstly to consider this concern in two ways. In the first chapter, Hardy's formulation of a myth of Time is examined, and in the second chapter the interpretation of Time largely by the subjective mind, as represented by the poet or poetic persona, is considered. Secondly, the thesis attempts to relate these treatments of Time, as considered over the whole of Hardy's poetic production, specifically to a detailed critical examination of several poems, in the third chapter.

PREFACE

Throughout this thesis I have consistently used the abbeviation C.P. to refer to The Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy (London: Macmillan, 1962), which is a reprint of the fourth edition of 1930. I have also used the abbreviation The Dynasts to refer to The Dynasts. An Epic-Drama of the War with Napoleon. Parts I and II (London: Macmillan, 1962), and The Dynasts. An Epic-Drama of the War with Napoleon. Part III [and The Famous Tragedy of the Queen of Cornwall] (London: Macmillan, 1963), both of which are reprints of the first Pocket Edition of 1924.

I wish to express my thanks to Dr. J. Dale for his assistance in the preparation of this thesis, and to Dr. R. M. Wiles for his help during its early stages.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

There would appear to be two major factors that inhibit a fair appraisal of Hardy as a poet, or rather two assumptions, as their truth is doubtful. The first, and most serious, is the common feeling that the poetry of Hardy does not answer to modern ideas and theories of poetry, or rather that the critical apparatus which the modern critic has at his disposal is not fitted to deal with the kind of poetry Hardy produced. A. J. Guerard has summarised this kind of problem:

> Presumably something about Hardy's poetry — perhaps its peculiar blend of plainness and eccentricity, perhaps the uninhibited directness of its sad and tired wisdom, perhaps the surface simplicity — disarms the critic. Much modern criticism consists of the elucidation of mysteries. But the interpreter is left with little to do where the poem's manifest meaning is so often the real one.[1]

I think Guerard makes clear from his tone that the real responsibility lies with the critic, and not with Hardy, and I would agree with him. Criticism cannot afford to entrench itself behind any one viewpoint or orthodoxy, or it loses its vital connection with literature and its worth as an intellectual pursuit. The assumption that Hardy's poetry lies outside the scope of modern critical methods and approaches is, in any case, largely a false one, as I hope to demonstrate.

The second fashionable error, which seems to have persisted from the time Hardy first published verse, is that Hardy is first

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[1] A.J. Guerard, Thomas Hardy (Norfolk, Conn.: James Laughlin, 1964), pp. 160-61.

and foremost a novelist, and his poetry is of secondary value. Perhaps today, when there is more evidence of interest in Hardy as a poet, this attitude has become transformed to a view that Hardy wrote a considerable amount of indifferent verse, and simply because he wrote so much, occasionally turned a good line, or even more occasionally a good poem. This has affected even these critics who recognise Hardy as a significant poet, and formulates itself usually into a demand for a strict selective process in reading the poems, as in R.P. Blackmur's essay on Hardy's poems:

> Both for those who enjoy the bulk of Thomas Hardy's poems and for those whose genuine enjoyment of a few poems is almost overcome by a combination of depression and dismay at the bulk, the great need is some sort of canon ....[2]

I would not deny that there are a number of Hardy's poems that we can recognise as his major achievements, although it would be difficult to envisage complete agreement on which poems exactly constitute this central core, nor would I deny the value of selections of a poet's work — how else do we come to read more of any poet but by an initial interest in one poem, or group of selected poems? To attempt an appreciation of any poet simply by reading gradually through his complete works would be an arduous and unproductive process in most cases. However, assuming the reader has acquired an interest in Hardy's poetry, by whatever means, I think he can ill afford to ignore the majority of the Collected Poems.

I believe that the problem that seems to arise in criticisms of Hardy's poetry, and this latter demand for selectiveness in reading the

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[2]R.P. Blackmur, Language as Gesture (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1952), p. 51.

poems, are in some way connected. Hardy writes poetry in widely different styles and modes, but concerns himself with a few basic themes, as even a superficial reading of the poems will reveal. One of these basic concerns, with which this thesis deals, is the concept of Time. This is a concern that seems to be at the basis of Western thought and consciousness, certainly since the Middle Ages, and a case could be made out to show that Hardy is an important forerunner of the modern literary concern with Time, as A. J. Guerard, in another context, had claimed Hardy to foreshadow typically modern concerns in the novel.[3] This, however, is not my purpose here, but rather to examine the symbolic and metaphoric value of Hardy's concern in the context of the poems. The major obstacle in such an examination is the fact that Hardy does not use Time consistently as a symbol for any one particular belief or approach, but in a wide variety of ways. In a sense, the search for significance in Hardy's treatment of Time is subject to so much qualification as to make it valueless. J.G. Southworth has given expression to this attitude:

> A preliminary glance at Hardy's images on Time supports the theory of the importance of his moods. It is not enough to say that he has a "saddened sense of Time" or of the "vastness of Time". He subordinates his conception of Time to the emotional unity of the poem. He does the same for his conception of Fate, Chance, God, and so forth. Time is a productive force, an evil force that separates lovers, or "dooms man's love to die". It is a condition, a builder and destroyer, a sportsman that "but rears his brood to kill", a spirit that destroys the good as easily as it destroys the evil. It is an unthinking force that holds man in bondage or in prison, and mistreats him as a puppeteer might mistreat his puppets. Time is likened to a soldier, the Fair's hard-hitter, to a cruel tyrant, a sleepless sculptor, a philosopher, or a weaver. Time is a cynic, a derider, a scoffer, and a mocker. Time has human features:

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[3] A.J. Guerard, Thomas Hardy, "Hardy and His Admirers".

> hands, fingers, tongue, but lacks teeth. It is a housemistress, can swing us around, and has power of cure. Time is kingly and sublime. Time possesses "untraveled [sic] space", a den, vaults, a cell, and an hour-glass. It is also likened unto a horse to be "reined back".
>
> Now, how is it possible to select any one or any several of the foregoing conceptions as truly indicative of Hardy's thought? They are poetic impressions, and must be looked upon as such, which have no significance apart from the poem in which they occur.[4]

This argument is based on Hardy's own defence of his poems against the charge of "pessimism", something about which he was rather untypically querulous. In the "Apology" prefixed to Late Lyrics and Earlier, for instance, Hardy claims that his poems are "a series of fugitive impressions which I have never tried to co-ordinate".[5] This view of the poetry, which Southworth supports, is valid as far as it goes, but I do not think it can be made to go very far. Hardy is chiefly concerned to defend not the poems as such, but the "thought", or the "philosophy", which lie behind them: Southworth is also concerned to refute any attempt to systematise "Hardy's thought". Reviewers and critics have always given way to the dangerous, and fruitless, tendency, when dealing with Hardy's work, to separate "the thought" or "the philosophy" from the actual expression. Such attempts justify rebuttal, but there is no need, as Southworth implies in the passage I quote, to claim that each image or each poem is mutually independent, and gains whatever strength of impression it may have strictly from within itself. This is rationing Hardy's "fugitive impressions" at one impression per one poem, and if this were truly the case the Collected Poems would soon have us confused beyond comprehension, and individual poems would bore us with

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[4] J.G. Southworth, The Poetry of Thomas Hardy (New York: Columbia University Press, 1947), pp. 97-98.

[5] C.P., p. 527.

one-directional simple-mindedness. There does exist a connection between the individual poems in the Collected Poems: not a logical or "philosophical" connection, but a connection that is established inevitably by echoes, contrasts, and re-statements in the poems, and which enriches the significance of symbols and images. When we read one poem, we do not, or cannot, put out of our mind similar or contrasting treatments of the same theme that occur in other poems we have read. This is the precise way in which "the literary tradition" can reinforce our reading of a poem, and Hardy may be said to build, over the course of several poems, a tradition of his own, as well as relying upon the former tradition. Individual images, and individual poems, come to acquire meaning and significance because of the accretions of sense and association which have become attached to them as a result of constant re-statement: and this is the way in which the theme of Time is shaped in the poetry. Single poems therefore come to have something of the significance of songs in a song cycle. If we are to look upon them as independent statements, we must bear in mind their context, and the qualifications that the other parts of the whole throw upon them.

This process of interdependence and mutual support between the poems was noticed by Lascelles Abercrombie in a study that was first published in 1912. Abercrombie also exemplifies, in his opening statements, a typical attitude I outlined above:

> The novelist versifying himself is not often a success. He is apt to think that the skill habitual to him will serve his turn in poetry, if only he adds to it a little concern for the laws of metre; and Hardy's earlier poems seem only one more negative proof, that nothing requires a more patiently specialised skill than poetry. But if we persevere in reading these pieces of interesting thought and strict external form, combined, on the

> whole, with unexciting, unpoetic language — language that neither stirs imagination nor gives living shape to the substance — we shall come to perceive that a somewhat novel kind of poetry is beginning to emerge out of the general failure; and in several pages of the second volume, and in most of the third, it becomes evident that Hardy has made a genuine addition to English poetry; he has brought a decidedly unusual idiosyncrasy both of substance and of method into fine artistic control.[6]

What the critic charts is not really the development of Hardy's technique — what development there is cannot be dealt with thus simply — but rather the development of his own reading of the poems, and the process of expansion of meaning and significance as he reads more of them. This can only imply that they lend strength and meaning to one another, and ultimately reduces itself to the proposition that we must read the bad poems in order to understand fully the successful ones. Assuming the constant alertness of the critical intelligence in the reader, this may not be as absurd as it sounds. Even so, two major objections can be raised against an approach of this kind. One is that it fosters a mystique about Hardy's work that is inimical to objective critical judgment. Critics too often (and by no means is this tendency confined to critics of Hardy) take refuge from laziness or incomprehension in vague remarks and inscrutable non-judgments, which are epitomised in the following statement by Southworth: "When Hardy is at his best — and his best is to be found in those poems where he struggles to understand life — his language is pure Hardy ....".[7] I would dissociate myself from this kind of approach to Hardy's work. I certainly consider it necessary that the whole of the Collected Poems be considered in an examination of

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[6]L. Abercrombie, Thomas Hardy. A Critical Study (New York: Viking Press, 1927), pp. 133-34.

[7]Southworth, The Poetry of Thomas Hardy, p. 126.

Hardy as a poet, but I would not urge that we must accept all that Hardy wrote despite critical evidence. The second objection that could be brought to bear is that in constructing a schematisation of Hardy's treatment of Time, I am falsifying the reading of individual poems, in the same way that Hardy could see the generalisation "pessimism" deforming and distorting his "series of fugitive impressions". In fact, it will be seen that, despite a deliberate attempt (in Chapter I) to discover a consistent approach to Time in the poems, there is little evidence with which to construct a theory of Hardy's use of Time which is always true. The tendency to see a simple idea or image behind the poems disintegrates further in Chapters II and III, and the thesis does not work towards any simple "conclusion" as such.

In Chapter I of this thesis, I have attempted to examine the systematisation Hardy gave to his concern with Time as a myth. That is, it having been admitted that Hardy exhibits a repeated concern with Time, how does he deal with the idea in the poems? The traditional manner in which abstract ideas or concepts are dealt with in poetry is in terms of myth, or of allegory. Hardy does not, unlike Blake or Yeats, construct his own private system of myths and symbols, but relies to a large extent upon existing beliefs and myths. Nor does he attempt to draw this body of traditional belief into a closer focus, but is content to imply and to leave deliberately indistinct his image of Time. In this connection, I have examined in this chapter Hardy's epic-drama, <u>The Dynasts</u>. The direct relevance of this work to the poems is dubious, but as Hardy is here obliged, in constructing "the Overworld" to the drama, to give definite expression to a myth of Time, as represented by the Spirit of the Years,

it forms a useful comparison with, and point of reference for, the myth of Time as manifested in the poems.

I have considered in Chapter II the response of the individual, either to this myth, or else simply to the idea of Time, where it does not receive mythic formulation. This individual response, as manifested in the poem by the poet or a persona, is of primary importance to Hardy, and it is really a series of subjective reactions to experience that make up his "fugitive impressions". The importance of the subjective mind in interpreting experience, particularly experience of Time, is the main concern of Chapter II. Despite Hardy's claims that the poems are not autobiographical,[8] I think his concern with the individual and with subjective response reflects certain facts about the way in which he writes poetry. The subjective approach in the poems is connected closely with the creative process: the mind, or memory, or imagination, through its own potential, constructs its own reality and meaning. This theme is frequently the subject of the poems, and it seems to mirror symbolically the process of writing poetry itself. This places Hardy clearly within the Romantic line of succession, but it would be another over-simplification to call Hardy a Romantic poet. However, this imaginative vision of "inner reality" which the poet or individual constructs within himself, contrasts and conflicts with the "outer reality" of the myth of Time, which is essentially a symbol for the unpleasant and inescapable facts of man's experience: change, decay, and death. These unavoidable facts, which are primarily physical, but hence affect existence as a whole, are

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[8] See Preface to Wessex Poems, C.P., p. 3.

forced upon man by Time. There is a constant tension in the poems between the recognition of these things, and a sense of being able to transcend or circumvent them by the sheer power of the imagination. This conflict is at its most explicit, though certainly not its most poetically productive, in The Dynasts, as I shall show later.

Chapter III is therefore concerned largely, in the course of practical criticism, to examine how the theme of Time is used poetically by Hardy, and to consider the conflict I pointed to above. I have not tried to impose upon the poems I examine any particular reading or interpretation, based upon a specialised theory of the significance of Time in Hardy; not only would this nullify the value of the criticism, but I do not believe that there is any simple or immediate consistency about Hardy's use of Time in the poems. In one sense, Southworth's claim, which I quoted above, that each poem, or each image of Time, generates its own significance which is exclusive to itself, is true. On the other hand, in no sense does Hardy limit the meaning he gives to Time, which is the misleading tenor of Southworth's criticism. The aim of this thesis is to examine the most significant emphases Hardy places on Time throughout the poems, and where relevant, the novels also, although I have attempted to minimise reference to the novels. Time as a symbol, or as a theme, would not be worth attention if it were used simply to allegorise one attitude, if, in other words, its symbolism were simply an equation. I suggest that in the best of Hardy's poetry, and where Time is used to the best poetic effect, the symbolism is multiple. Time is an economical expression for diverse and paradoxical meaning. Hardy constructs a good deal of this poetic effect for himself, in that he

treats Time throughout the Collected Poems in a great variety of ways. When, therefore, he is able to invoke Time in a context which is poetically valid, the concept carries a weight of inherited and associated meaning. I stress the word "poetically" because it will be seen later that Hardy can, and frequently does, write a "false poetry", in which the concept is not integrated into the expression; I examine this in dealing with the Time myth.

This thesis concerns itself largely with how Hardy uses poetically a concept which has obvious importance to him. It does not attempt to explain why Time was important to him in an abstract or "philosophical" sense, although obviously it touches on why it is of importance to him as a poet. Part of the importance is the significance of Time as a symbol of "external" reality; I have examined this aspect in terms of myth. Time is important also in that it is something whereby Hardy can order his experience. I do not mean this in the literal sense, although in the poems Time is often seen as something men impose upon their lives to give it meaning: in "Bereft",[9] the clock, a tangible, visualised (if obvious) image of Time, left "unwound", conveys a sense of chaos and disorder. I am not suggesting that Hardy necessarily sees Time as an instrument of order, and hence meaning, as frequently in the poems Time represents chaos and shapelessness, as manifested in the evolutionary process, for example. Even where Time establishes a sense of order by means of a strict temporal progression, the result is frequently an awareness of the unpleasant aspects of experience. In the poems, a temporal structure is often apparent, usually in the form of a juxtaposition of past and present. This

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[9] C.P., pp. 192-93.

aspect of the poetry has been admirably examined by Samuel Hynes,[10] whose criticism of the poems I shall refer to throughout this thesis. This strict relationship is used, however, to express a sense of pain, or loss, or bereavement. The order that Time represents is therefore connected with the mode of expression rather than the expression itself; it is the technical medium to which Hardy subjects himself before he can write poetry.

Time can assume the value of a structural frame of reference amid the welter of experience recorded and created by the conscious mind of the poet, but Hardy does not use it as such in any simple way. Hynes attempts to examine the poems as if such a simple formula were always used, and as a consequence his remarks are incomplete. The order created by Time, like the concept of Time itself, is ambiguous and not rigid. F. R. Leavis is therefore making a partial judgment also, when he says of Hardy:

> His preoccupation with time brings with it no sense of unreality .... What he valued forty years back was real and what he thought it was, and the valuing persists unchanged. In spite of time, the love and the loved object, equally real, are still present to him, and the recognition of loss is correspondingly complete and poignant.[11]

or rather, he is drawing the distinction which I pointed out above, between "external" and "internal" reality. He suggests however, that these two realities, symbolised temporally by the present and the past, remain separate, which I do not think is true. Past and present experience fuse to form a complex attitude, in which the irony is multiplied. Leavis makes an important point however, when he speaks of "valuing" in connection with

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[10] S. Hynes, The Pattern of Hardy's Poetry (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1961).

[11] F. R. Leavis, "Hardy the Poet", Southern Review, VI (1940), 94.

the process of Time. In an important way, Time represents a way in which the poet can evaluate his experience, not simply by seeing what survives in his memory, but by a constant process of comparison between past and present, and between objective and subjective reality, in which process new relationships are constantly being created, and hence new evaluations always being made. I believe that the various attempts to understand the poetry in terms of a consistent pattern are bound to be self-defeating, as I do not believe that any simple theory can encompass Hardy's poetic technique, unless it is either incomplete, or heavily guarded with qualifications, both of which are critically valueless.

Time here is not treated as the key to the meaning of the poems, for it is not, but rather as a concept and a symbol which develops poetically into an instrument of expression of considerable subtlety and suggestiveness. It is not given an allegorical clarity in the poems, and it is precisely because of the variety of meaning it can imply that it has such poetic importance. Hardy's poetic technique is always exploratory and tentative, and criticism cannot afford to forget this.

CHAPTER I

On June 16th, 1875, Thomas Hardy wrote in his notebook:

> Reading the Life of Goethe. Schlegel says that "the deepest want and deficiency of all modern art lies in the fact that the artists have no mythology."[1]

to which Evelyn Hardy adds the comment:

> This is an interesting note: Hardy's mind was mythopoeic, as well as analytic, and though he continually strove to impose the dictates of reason, his interest in the occult, in the unconscious, and in myth and legend, continued to obtrude, almost to his astonishment.[2]

It is clear that Hardy was aware of a characteristically modern problem which confronts the artist, which many critics and literary historians have chosen to label "the problem of belief". In other words, how does the poet communicate to an audience which no longer is bound to have a wide common ground of ideas and beliefs? The "problem of belief" in itself is of course something of a catch phrase in modern criticism, and it assumes somewhat blandly the uniformity of man's social and cultural life before the series of crises which are supposed to have produced the problem, but it is nevertheless a central concern to the modern poet, and the above quotation shows it to have been so to Hardy.

The way around this problem depends of course on the individual artist, and it is this central position of the artist which is precisely the strength and the weakness of modern poetry; it depends upon the success of the individual attempt. A favourite means to circumvent the

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[1] Thomas Hardy's Notebooks, ed. with notes by E. Hardy (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), p. 51.

[2] Ibid.

lack of common ground between poet and reader, is for the poet to erect his own system of beliefs in an attempt, to adapt Wordsworth, to create the terms by which he is to be appreciated. This is not eminently satisfactory, and has led many critics to assert that there can be no modern epic, for this genre traditionally relies on a system of belief, and an acceptable machinery of supernatural beings. Critics who consider this a specifically modern problem might consider the fact that Pope was never able to write an epic poem, without resorting to the irony of The Rape of the Lock or The Dunciad. However, the question of epic seems to bring to a head the issues involved in the connection between poetry and belief, and as Hardy in The Dynasts wrote what he called "an epic-drama", we can assume the question to have been of some importance to him. This work would therefore seem the obvious starting point in a consideration of the mythopoeic element in Hardy, because in an epic he was obliged to give his myths some systematisation, and also because The Dynasts was produced at a relatively early date in his poetic career, and thus is likely to have influence on, or at least to be representative of, the rest of the poetic corpus. As I am primarily concerned in this chapter with how Hardy treats time as a mythic concept, or as a deity, the main figure of interest in The Dynasts is the Spirit of the Years, for he is a kind of God of Time.

Whatever our particular view of The Dynasts, I think we must admit two things to be evident. One is the superiority in dramatic interest and poetic importance of the scenes in "the overworld" to the actual chronicle of Napoleonic history. There are obvious exceptions to this which immediately spring to mind: the scene of Nelson's death,

the deserters in the cellar, and so on, but on the whole the human action (I refer to dramatic action, not what we are encouraged to imagine by means of description, as in the description of battles) is dramatically and poetically flat compared with that of the spirits. This is, of course, intentional; Hardy is placing the overworld scenes deliberately as high points of interest and attention. The second thing that is obvious is that within this sphere of interest the Spirit of the Years occupies a central position. This is not to say necessarily he is the most interesting figure to the reader, and indeed in this respect he is eclipsed by the spirits of Pity and Irony, but he is clearly the senior, and is the arbitrator of disputes between the others, and seems generally to be accepted as a superior.

The importance of the spirits of course lies in what they symbolise rather than anything else. We may realise more of their significance if we examine the closing scene of the first part. Pitt is lying on his death-bed:

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES (to the Spirit of the Years)

Do you intend to speak to him ere the close?

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

Nay, I have spoke too often! Time and time,
When all Earth's light has lain on the nether side,
And yapping midnight winds have leapt on roofs,
And raised for him an evil harlequinade
Of national disasters in long train,
That tortured him with harrowing grimace,
Have I communed with that intelligence.
Now I would leave him to pass out in peace,
And seek the silence unperturbedly.

SPIRIT SINISTER

Even ITS official Spirit can show ruth
At man's fag end, when his destruction's sure!

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS

It suits us ill to cavil each with each.
I might retort. I only say to thee
ITS slaves we are: ITS slaves must ever be!

CHORUS (aerial music)

Yea, from the Void we fetch, like these,
And tarry till That please
To null us by Whose stress we emanate.—
Our incorporeal sense,
Our overseeings, our supernal state,
Our readings Why and Whence,
Are but the flower of Man's intelligence;
And that but an unreckoned incident
Of the all-urging Will, raptly magnipotent.[3]

What emerges from this passage, and from the whole of The Dynasts, is a sense of the importance of the Immanent Will, the unconscious force which lies behind the whole of the drama. Another important idea expressed here is that the spirits are projections of the mind of man. As to our more immediate concern with Time and the Spirit of the Years, this passage sheds light on several significant ideas. If the spirits truly are "the flower of Man's intelligence", Hardy is representing symbolically the fact that the concept of time is one of the oldest ideas known to man, and an idea which is central to his mind. The Spirit of the Years tells us that he has often "communed" with Pitt. On the other hand, the Spirit of the Years is significantly different from the other spirits. He does not indulge in "readings Why and Whence", which we might imagine to be the most obvious manifestation of man's intelligence, but accepts events as they are in a fatalistic way. In the passage above we get a clear indication of a close relationship between the impersonal, unconscious Immanent

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[3]The Dynasts, I, VI, viii.

Will and the Spirit of the Years, even if it is a sardonic aside. The Spirit Sinister calls Years "ITS official Spirit", and this, combined with other hints elsewhere, tends to create the impression that the Spirit of the Years is nothing to do with man or his intelligence at all, but is yet another imponderable force in the universe in which man is trapped. The Spirit of the Years shares many of the qualities that the Will possesses: he is aloof, cold, fatalistic, inhuman, and often it seems to be a tenuous dividing line which separates an unconscious Will from relentless Time. Years is "ITS slave" in a real sense; it is the unfolding of time that reveals "the workings of the Will", albeit that the events are predetermined, so that the two forces exist in a very close relationship.

Yet the Spirit of the Years is conscious, whilst the Immanent Will is definitely not, and therefore, whilst in one sense the Spirit of the Years is the dramatic spokesman of the Will, he is able to appreciate the ideas of the Spirits of Pity and Irony, and on occasion to sympathise with them. Thus the symbolic figure of Time in The Dynasts is essentially a divided character. On the one hand the Spirit of the Years is an impersonal automaton, and on the other a sympathetic figure aware of the human tragedy, and a satisfactory balance is never quite struck between the two, unless we consider the juxtaposition to be a further twist of irony by Hardy. However, these two qualities of the Spirit of the Years are relevant to our consideration of the myth of Time, and I shall examine them in greater detail below.

Of the two aspects the more important, particularly with the rest of Hardy's poetic work in mind, would seem to be that of the vision of Time as a concomitant of the Immanent Will. The qualities that this

association lends to Time are repeatedly outlined by the Spirit of the Years himself:

> Mercy I view, not urge;— nor more than mark
> What designate your titles Good and Ill.
> 'Tis not in me to feel with, or against,
> These flesh-hinged mannikins Its hand upwinds
> To click-clack off Its preadjusted laws;
> But only through my centuries to behold
> Their aspects, and their movements, and their mould.[4]

That is, Time is an impersonal force, like magnetism or gravity, which simply exists, and has little directly to do with humanity. It is absurd therefore to suppose that it can be endowed with a moral sense, or indeed any consciousness at all (which of course is the weak link in Hardy's attempt to dramatise Time), beyond being a passive beholder. Like the Will itself, it is not an evil force, for it is morally neutral; if man chooses to interpret it as evil, the judgement is purely his own. Such a state of affairs is unfortunate, but not tragic, as Hardy realised in a poem he wrote before The Dynasts:

> 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!"
> . . . . . .
> 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 strown
> Blisses about my pilgrimage as pain.[5]

Time is not a "vengeful god", and human suffering faced with these conditions has more futility and absurdity about it than tragedy. The sense of tragedy springs from the consciousness; the Spirit of the Pities can

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[4] Ibid., I, Fore Scene.

[5] "Hap", C.P., p. 7.

see war as a tragedy only because he can conceive of the force behind the universe as evil, or at least misguided. If we can get beyond the purely human response, and see the forces behind the universe as morally neutral, or amoral, and therefore inhuman, the sense of the tragic disappears in the face of overwhelming absurdity. We might be tempted to see this as an extension of the ironic vision, but it is not that either, for irony demands as much involvement as does the response of pity: it is merely the result of the involvement that differs. So that where the Spirit of the Years can be said to share the qualities of the Will, Hardy is expressing a view of Time which is utterly hopeless and futile, a force which is terrifying because it is so mechanistic and impersonal.

In this connection we might note in passing that Time as a mechanical force also represents the principle of evolution. Darwin's theory captivated Hardy's creative mind from an early point in his career. In The Dynasts, because of the fore-ordained and predetermined nature of time, geological and biological evolution is a terrifying process, in which the individual loses his significance entirely:

> Yet but one flimsy riband of Its web
> Have we here watched in weaving — web Enorm,
> Whose furthest hem and selvage may extend
> To where the roars and plashings of the flames
> Of earth-invisible suns swell noisily,
> And onwards into ghastly gulfs of sky,
> Where hideous presences churn through the dark —
> Monsters of magnitude without a shape,
> Hanging amid deep wells of nothingness.[6]

The question of evolution is one to which Hardy returns, and I shall refer to this again.

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[6] The Dynasts, III, After Scene.

If the above passage reveals the main characteristic of the Spirit of the Years to be unconsciousness, he is also obviously a conscious character, as are the other spirits. He is a split personality, and the conscious half of his character is forever attempting to construct an apology for the unconscious half. He represents within himself the reactions of Pity and Irony (that is, the human consciousness) to the blind impulses of the Immanent Will. Aware of this conflict, he adopts a defensive stoicism or fatalism, which he also tries to preach to the other spirits, but the claims of the Spirits of Pity and Irony break in upon him nevertheless. Because of this, some critics have tried to see a development in the character of the Spirit of the Years, which, because of his close connection with the Immanent Will, expresses dramatically the optimistic process which is foreseen at the end of the drama:

> .... the rages
> Of the ages
> Shall be cancelled, and deliverance offered from the darts that were,
> Consciousness the Will informing, till It fashion all things fair![7]

However convincing this may seem, I do not think it is so. What we see in fact is the continual division in the character of the Spirit of the Years, a constant process of conscious intellect examining unconscious force. The Spirit also clouds the issues frequently, noticeably at the end of the drama, where he admits to having been conscious at one time:

> You almost charm my long philosophy
> Out of my strong-built thought, and bear me back
> To when I thanksgave thus .... . Ay, start not, Shades;
> In the Foregone I knew what dreaming was,
> And could let raptures rule! But not so now.
> Yea, I psalmed thus and thus .... . But not so now![8]

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[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

If we try to include such hints into a clear systematisation, the whole matter soon becomes hopelessly confused. The fact is that the characteristics of all the spirits, not merely the Years, are not rigid at all, and vary as Hardy sees the need for them to do so. He defends this himself in the Preface:

> They [the Spirits] are intended to be taken by the reader for what they may be worth as contrivances of the fancy merely. Their doctrines are but tentative, and are advanced with little eye to a systematised philosophy warranted to lift "the burthen of the mystery" of this unintelligible world.[9]

It may therefore seem somewhat futile to examine the Overworld in The Dynasts as if it were an established and clearly demarcated pantheon, but I believe that this is significant in itself. Perhaps one of the reasons why The Dynasts fails is because Hardy fails to establish a strong mythic structure, a structure of belief, when he so obviously needs one. It is not my purpose here to discuss The Dynasts in detail, so that I would make one point only. That is, that where Hardy has a chance to create a myth, a god of Time, he divides and fragments it, although doing so is detrimental to the drama, until we are left with several conflicting concepts.

In The Dynasts, then, we are given no clear image or icon of Time as a force in the universe, although Time plays a central role in the drama, nor would it be wholly valid to apply such an image to the rest of the poetry, even were it there. We therefore expect that we will get a considerably less clear image from short poems, although it is again evident that the theme of Time is a constant concern of the poet. We gather this impression only from reading a number of poems, and it is only by considering Hardy's treatment of the theme over a number of poems

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[9] Ibid., Preface, viii.

that we shall gain a precise impression of its importance. This is a more difficult task than it might appear, because so much that Hardy implies about Time is, characteristically, traditional, to the extent that it defeats analysis. That is to say, the qualities of Time in the poems are what we habitually associate with that phenomenon: it is the agent of change, and hence of death and decay. What exactly are our own notions about Time, and how much we have absorbed from literature, notably the Bible, is a nice question, but it is clear that Hardy works well within the range of our traditional assumptions, and these assumptions lie behind many of the poems. Where Hardy creates an image of Time however, he departs from traditional assumptions. He clearly feels a continual need to create a personal relationship with the forces and impulses around him, in an attempt to break through the desolate prospect of the universe that the Immanent Will and Its associates present. If one is to see everything in terms of physical and biological laws, the human condition becomes at once hopeless and insignificant. This is at the root of the ever-present sense of despair in Hardy. Man has somehow become removed from the forces of the universe, and has developed along separate lines, and he is therefore estranged from and unable to understand these forces, and incapable of seeing any meaning in them or in his own position. Hardy is continually searching for a scheme of belief which will once more restore the balance that the decay of the old faiths has upset. He regrets the decline of Christianity, but it is clearly not a satisfactory solution for the present problems (see "The Impercipient"[10]). He therefore needs continually, as stated above, to create a personal relationship with the

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[10] C.P., p. 59.

forces around him, to create gods. This is another aspect of the interest in the mythopoeic which was mentioned at the start of this chapter, and in which light I examined The Dynasts. I quote now a passage from J.O. Bailey's book, which contains an extract from a letter Hardy wrote to Dr. Saleeby in 1915:

> "Half my time — particularly when writing verse — I 'believe' (in the modern sense of the word) ..... in spectres, mysterious voices, intuitions, omens, dreams, haunted places, etc., etc. But I do not believe in them in the old sense of the word any more for that."
>
> If I understand Hardy's distinction between the "old sense" of believe (faith, trust, as in God) and the "modern sense" (intellectual assent) when he was writing poetry Hardy was able to create and use supernatural phenomena to which he gave intellectual assent as symbols for some underlying, invisible Reality, but he did not believe these symbols for Reality to be knowable, sensible, ponderable facts.[11]

What is clear in Hardy's words, apart from a typically modern distinction between the intellect and the creative mind, is a sense of the symbolic power of poetry to create a truth beyond immediate "reality", and to which Bailey rightly draws attention. Therefore when I say that Hardy felt a need to create gods, I do not mean to suggest he was being naive. I mean that as a poet he feels a need to establish a connection between himself and the world around him, and hence to give a meaning to that world. He needs not only to perceive with his intellect, but also with his imagination.

His imaginative perception of Time, though only a part of this process, is nevertheless very important. We have seen that in The Dynasts Hardy eventually fails to establish a satisfactory image of Time. In the poems, I think we can trace a tentative exploration of this problem, until

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[11] J.O. Bailey, Thomas Hardy and the Cosmic Mind (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1956), pp. 24-25.

eventually Hardy discovers a satisfactory solution. In several of the poems, Hardy carries over the mythology of The Dynasts, with varying degrees of success. I have already quoted "Hap" above, and although the deities of this poem are not explicitly those of The Dynasts, they exhibit something of the same characteristics:

> — Crass Casualty obstructs the sun and rain,
> And dicing Time for gladness casts a moan ....
> These purblind Doomsters had as readily strown
> Blisses about my pilgrimage as pain.[12]

As long as the poet's sense of pain remains connected with a universe governed by idiotic chance, there is little meaning in the individual response to it (as Hardy admits in this poem). The image of Time therefore can be nothing more than trivial: Time as a gambler. Artistically therefore, we feel it is contrived and artificial, we feel that the metaphor is somewhat arbitrarily imposed upon us, and thus the poem is a failure, irrespective of its philosophical truth or otherwise, or of its importance to Hardy. We are therefore faced with a circular problem; unless Hardy can break away from this kind of abstract thought, his artistic expression is bound to be correspondingly futile.

The use of "the Doomsters", however, does not necessarily mean that the poem is bound to be a failure. It does not strike us as incongruous, or as artistically faulty, that they should appear, in somewhat transmuted form, in "The Convergence of the Twain":

> Till the Spinner of the Years
> Said "Now!" And each one hears,
> And consummation comes, and jars two hemispheres.[13]

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[12] C.P., p. 7.

[13] C.P., p. 289.

The validity of the inclusion of this piece of Hardy's mythology is ensured for a start by the context of the poem in which it occurs. We are prepared for such a close by the stark, unearthly treatment of the "Titanic" and the iceberg; "the Doomsters" do not thrust themselves in as a ready-made explanation for the disaster. However, it is dubious if we can regard "the Spinner of the Years" merely as being transposed from The Dynasts. Clearly this reference means more to us if we have read the latter, and this is one of the ways in which Hardy's mythology expands. The Spirit of the Years is behind this figure, as is the Immanent Will: there is a connection between "the Spinner" and the "viewless, voiceless Turner of the Wheel"[14] of The Dynasts. That the Will and Time exist in a close relationship we have already seen. Yet the poem can be extremely meaningful without bringing The Dynasts into consideration at all, because Hardy in this poem has extended his image of Time. We understand perfectly well what is meant by "the Spinner of the Years" because we are prepared to accept a spinner in control of the universe: we make the imaginative transference of the Greek fates to the image of the Years, and in doing so include them in the poem by association. Therefore the symbol becomes at once less private and more meaningful.

This brings us on to a consideration of what I previously chose to call the "traditional" aspects of Hardy's imagery. The traditions on which Hardy draws are two in number: one is the literary tradition, and the other is the indefinite, but no less present, body of unspoken assumption with which we approach ideas. The two are obviously hard to

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[14] The Dynasts, I, Fore Scene.

separate and consider in isolation, because they exist together and act and react one upon the other. In illustration of what I mean, we have only to think of Shakespeare's sonnets, which constitute the major literary forerunner of Hardy's preoccupation with Time. When Shakespeare writes:

> But wherefore do not you a mightier way
> Make war upon this bloody tyrant Time?[15]

or:

> When I have seen such interchange of state,
> Or state itself confounded, to decay,
> Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminate
> That Time will come and take my love away.[16]

we do not have to think hard about the images in which Shakespeare expresses the quality of Time. They are on the whole expected, if not predictable, and yet Shakespeare in the act of writing poetry is giving conscious expression to what is unspoken, and therefore modifying experience in the reader's mind. Do we gain such a clear sense of the destructive power of Time because the poems fulfil our expectations, or as a result of the skill of Shakespeare's poetic rhetoric? The question is incapable of being answered, and it would be fruitless to do so in any case.

We may notice that Shakespeare in the Sonnets does not construct a definite mythopoeic structure. When he speaks of "this bloody tyrant Time" we may or may not be aware of the personification, but there is no need for us to summon up a mental image of a Spirit of the Years for us to be clear about what he means. The qualities which Time possesses throughout the sequence of sonnets vary, as do the images which are used to express these qualities. In fact, Hardy is heir to a wide range of

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[15] Shakespeare, The Sonnets, ed. G.B. Harrison (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961), 16, ll. 1-2.

[16] Ibid., 64, ll. 9-12.

moods and modes of expression, as far as the Sonnets were an influence on him, and Shakespeare's tone varies from a gentle, wistful melancholia to work of great tragic intensity.

However, where Hardy is too conscious about his literary inheritance, when it is not integrated into his own poetic expression, he tends to produce album verse. The most obvious examples are the four sonnets "She, to Him", which are deliberate copies of the Shakespearian model. When he writes: ".. Sportsman Time but rears his brood to kill" [17] we are aware at once of the imitation, and aware that it is bad imitation. Shakespeare would never allow his image to stray into such irrelevant detail. We experience a sense of the ludicrous in envisaging Shakespeare's Time dressed in tweeds and brandishing a shotgun, so that the initial misgiving we have when we recognise the sonnet form is completely justified. We sense that Hardy has attempted to be original, but his failure only accentuates the fact that he is expressing himself in an alien mode.

This problem arises when Hardy is too glib about the traditions his images invoke. A poem which is not a conscious imitation, but which exhibits the same kind of fault, is "A Broken Appointment":

> You did not come,
> And marching Time drew on, and wore me numb.— [18]

This, though at first glance it may appear to be Shakespearian or "traditional", is a confusion, and adds nothing to the poem. My main objection to it is the lack of logical connection between the two images of physical action or condition: marching, and numbness. No connection can be supposed to exist between them: numbness is a state resulting

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[17] C.P., p. 12.

[18] C.P., p. 124.

from physical inaction, whilst marching is a reasonably violent form of exercise. Something that marches is military, brisk, and lively, and is therefore unlikely to induce a state of lethargy or mental numbness . If we are asked to make the connection by supposing that the poet is numb because Time has marched over him, we are again faced with the ludicrous, and can only suppose that after such an experience he would be extremely sensitive rather than "numb". This treatment may seem irreverent, but I see no reason to be reverent to third-rate poetry. Hardy is here using pseudo-traditional imagery as a stop-gap, and such a use is irresponsible and self-defeating.

Thus Hardy can be too precise or too vague in the treatment of myths at his disposal. Exactly what the nature of these traditional myths of Time is would be a question demanding a large amount of documentation, and is too vast for me to consider in any depth here. I think, however, that most of our traditional ideas about Time are conveniently summarised in the characteristic icon of Time, which is to be found from the Middle Ages onward in emblem books, on gravestones and church monuments, and in paintings and woodcuts, and which depicts an old, bearded figure, usually carrying a scythe or an hourglass, or both: the "Father Time" figure. We suspect that a good many of the characteristics of this figure lie behind the Spirit of the Years, and Shakespeare very clearly had an icon of this sort in the back of his mind as he wrote the Sonnets. The symbolism of the age of the figure is easy enough to understand: it makes clear to us the effect of Time on the human being, and hence, by a simple extension of the process, the imminence of death. The hourglass explains itself; Hardy includes in the sketches he did for the original edition of Wessex Poems a drawing of an hourglass (There

are also two moths in the drawing, a biblical allusion which intensifies the destructive power of Time). The scythe is perhaps the most fruitful symbol. Firstly, it establishes a connection with death, or Death, as a symbolic figure. Death as a visual emblem is also armed with a scythe; in this case it is normally a skeleton or emaciated corpse that carries it. We have only to look at mediaeval carvings of the Last Judgement, or the paintings of Bosch or Breughel to see it, and the figure continued in vogue throughout the Renaissance. Death's scythe is traditionally used to mow down the living, and presumably the power of Time's scythe amounts to the same thing. Secondly, of course, the scythe is an agricultural implement, and this is the implied metaphor on which the mowing of life by Death or Time rests. It is connected with the activity of harvest, which symbolically is when the fruit of the previous year's growth is gathered, as is the seed of the subsequent year's growth. The scythe therefore represents a connection with the seasonal cycle of life. The scythe is thus an ambiguous symbol, connected both with death and the forces of life. The mediaeval Christian could presumably also establish the correspondence between this implied growth in the autumn harvest and the implied resurrection in physical death. In short, traditional Time, like Death, is destructive and inimical to man, and yet contains the hope of continued life in its connection with the seasonal progression.

It is clear that Hardy draws on this tradition, as does Shakespeare, but again it needs to be digested into Hardy's own manner and idiom before it becomes valid as poetic expression. I drew attention above to a poem where Hardy uses "marching Time" to fill out a line,

or to disguise an idea he is not very clear about, and in such poems the presence of Time as a god or a mythic being serves little purpose. Hardy achieves integration however in the following poem, which though by no means "great", is successful in its own terms:

> Never a careworn wife but shows,
> If a joy suffuse her,
> Something beautiful to those
> Patient to peruse her,
> Some one charm the world unknows
> Precious to a muser,
> Haply what, ere years were foes,
> Moved her mate to choose her.
>
> But, be it a hint of rose
> That an instant hues her,
> Or some early light or pose
> Wherewith thought renews her —
> Seen by him at full, ere woes
> Practised to abuse her —
> Sparely comes it, swiftly goes,
> Time again subdues her.[19]

Here, precisely because Hardy senses the need for compression in this simple, elliptical poem, the image of Time is not elaborated, and is therefore successful. Even were "Time" not to begin a line, we should feel a need for the capital letter. Simply because of this, Hardy can rely upon our traditional knowledge of, and response to, the qualities of Time. To introduce Time as a "Doomster" into a poem like this would not be desirable. The mode is not melodramatic or tragic, but muted, and the simplicity closes the poem well.

Generally speaking, in Hardy's poetry there is an inimical relationship, a struggle, between the poet, or mankind as a whole, and the forces of Time, and in this he reflects traditional attitudes. Man resists change, as he resists death and physical decay, which as we have

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[19] "Wives in the Sere", C.P., pp. 132-3.

seen are connected to Time symbolically and by implication. Even in the reasonably simple poem quoted above, Time "subdues" the ageing woman, as if quashing a rebellion or repressing a show of will. Time even here is the "bloody tyrant" or relentless master. I have said that traditional symbolism of Time is ambivalent in that it can also suggest life and regrowth as well as death, in its connection with the seasonal cycle. In Hardy we might expect this to be stressed, for we know from reading the novels his interest in and concern with the Dorset countryside and agricultural life. But we also know from the same source Hardy's sense of the peculiar position of man in the universe, and with relation to nature. The forces that have given birth to man seem now to be singularly indifferent to him, and there has developed a rift in man's connections with his surroundings. The cycle of Time seems to be directed against him, rather than furthering his development. We see something of this sense in the following poem:

Here by the baring bough
    Raking up leaves,
Often I ponder how
    Springtime deceives,—
I, an old woman now,
    Raking up leaves.

Here in the avenue
    Raking up leaves,
Lords' ladies pass in view,
    Until one heaves
Sighs at life's russet hue,
    Raking up leaves!

Just as my shape you see
    Raking up leaves,
I saw, when fresh and free,
    Those memory weaves
Into grey ghosts by me,
    Raking up leaves.

Yet, Dear, though one may sigh,
Raking up leaves,
New leaves will dance on high —
Earth never grieves!
Will not, when missed am I
Raking up leaves.[20]

Here, although the old woman knows that the spring will follow the autumn and winter, it has no meaning for her as an individual. She senses that she may not be there to see the spring in any case. The seasonal cycle continues with what seems to be supreme indifference to the lot of the individual, and the re-birth of the leaves is a flaunting irony in the face of human decay and death. The line "Earth never grieves" suggests by omission that, by way of contrast, grief and pain is the unalterable human condition. Therefore even Time as manifested in the growth cycle is man's enemy. The seasonal cycle is a healthy process for humanity at large, but Hardy's centre of interest is in the individual, and for the individual this process is one of pain and suffering. The next generation is symbolically represented here, not only by the leaves, but by the "Dear" of the fourth stanza (The old woman's daughter? A young woman, at least). This next generation does not represent necessarily any sense of hope, but rather the fact that pain and suffering are to be continued. "Spring-time deceives" now as it has always deceived. This concern with the individual's relation with his surroundings places Hardy in the Romantic tradition, but his concern is never purely an extension of egoism. He said of Wessex Poems that "The pieces are in a large degree dramatic or personative in conception; and this even where they are not obviously so."[21] The dramatic conception of the above poem is clear enough, and

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[20] "Autumn in King's Hintock Park", C.P., p. 200.

[21] C.P., p. 3.

the purpose of its form is to make clearer the relationship, or lack of it, that exists between man and nature. On the other hand, Hardy did write some poetry that expresses a primitive connection between man and nature (see "Weathers"),[22] but on the whole such a connection denies the conclusions of man's conscious mind, which are precisely what make him a man. Hardy could not advocate with Wordsworth a return to communion with nature, for this would represent a betrayal of consciousness, and an impossible retrogression in the process of evolution.

As a whole, then, a search for a consistent mythology in Hardy would seem to be fruitless. He himself reiterated his wish for readers to approach the poems without the prejudicial critical stamp of "pessimism" in their minds. He wrote in the Preface to Poems of the Past and Present:

> Unadjusted impressions have their value, and the road to a true philosophy of life seems to lie in humbly recording diverse readings of its phenomena as they are forced upon us by chance and change.[23]

and in the Apology prefixed to Late Lyrics and Earlier he called his "view of life" "really a series of fugitive impressions which I have never tried to co-ordinate",[24] both of which statements, and other similar ones scattered through the prefaces, sound very much like his apologia for the spirits in the Preface to The Dynasts, quoted above. By his own admission, then, Hardy did not want to create a definite structure of belief in his poems, and he complained when critics did it for him, and labelled

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[22] C.P., p. 533.

[23] C.P., p. 75.

[24] C.P., p. 527.

it "pessimism". And yet we have his statements of interest in the mythopoeic, and of the need for belief when writing poetry. I think Hardy was aware of the dangers of a private mythology, and a precise, private body of symbols, which may supply a need felt by the poet but are never entirely satisfactory to the reader. He was also aware of the need for mobility and subtlety in good poetry, especially in good lyric poetry, which can possibly be hindered by naive or clumsy symbolism. As a result, Hardy relies on a number of changing and conflicting symbols for Time, rather than erecting a consistent myth. I have tried to examine some of the sources on which he draws, and I have also attempted to show that where Hardy's symbol becomes too closely defined — too much of a Doomster, or too consciously "literary" — the poetry usually suffers as a result. Because of his tendency to diversity The Dynasts suffers dramatically through the fragmentation of the Spirit of the Years, but the same poetic spirit is behind this failure.

Moreover, despite the diversity, a remarkably consistent impression of Hardy's attitude to Time emerges from the poems, which makes it viable to talk of a myth of Time. This is not something that we can examine definitively, or that is conveniently summarised in one poem. The myth evolves by a process of accretion, and its importance is that once it has been established it can supply a weight of implied meaning to individual poems. Samuel Hynes makes the same observation about Hardy's imagery:

> Individual images are not often striking; they derive their effectiveness more from the accretions of emotion which tradition has given to certain experiences than from pictorial vividness or the impact of oddness.[25]

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[25] S. Hynes, The Pattern of Hardy's Poetry (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961), p. 123.

This is exactly the process of Hardy's myth of Time, and explains why so much effective weight lies behind the simple "Time again subdues her" in "Wives in the Sere". Hardy's myth works best where it is not subjected to any arbitrary systematisation, and where, as in Shakespeare's Sonnets, it rests upon a basis of traditional thought and imagery.

CHAPTER II

In the previous chapter I suggested that Hardy's attempts at systematisation of a myth were bad because he did not really believe in what he was doing. I also remarked that he believes in the validity of the individual response to experience, and in this chapter it is my intention to examine at least some of the many different relationships that may exist between the individual — the poet, or dramatic persona — and his experience of his surroundings, particularly with regard to the phenomenon of Time. In my examination, I shall consider the poems in one sense as varied responses to the myth of Time which I think we can say exists in the poems, although it is never made completely explicit. In this context the poems are largely responses, or are expressive of resistance, to a largely inhuman, destructive force. In another, equally valid, sense, the myth that I have claimed to see and examine has no objective existence at all, for the poems are also responses of the subjective mind of the observer, which creates its own reality. This imaginative power had a deep significance for Hardy as an artist, and he was also attracted to it as a philosophical idea. It occurs even in The Dynasts, where it tends to set up a conflict. On the one hand the only "reality" is that of the Immanent Will, and the Spirits, whereas the individual men, even Bonaparte, are insignificant puppets in a predetermined process. On the other hand the Spirits are "but the flower of Man's intelligence",[1] and we can find evidence through-

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[1] The Dynasts, I, VI, viii.

out the drama to suggest that the personality of individuals, and of Bonaparte in particular, has an impact upon events and helps to shape them. We can, incidentally, trace the same kind of conflict in the novels, which gives rise to critical disputes as to, say, whether Tess is a victim of "Fate" (that is, a deterministic universe), or whether, as Morrell argues,[2] her destiny is largely in her own hands. In The Dynasts, the final hope that is held out is the gradual spread of "consciousness", which means, if it means anything, a gradual application of the best products of the human mind and sensibility. In this sense, many of the poems represent an attempt to impose "consciousness" on experience.

It is a common, and usually highly fruitful, approach to Hardy's poems to see them in terms of patterned structures, in which two separate statements or attitudes are juxtaposed. R.P. Blackmur first drew attention to this, in pointing to the

> ..... obsessive ideas that governed the substance and procedure of the great bulk of the poems. Some of these obsessions — for they lost the pattern-character of ideas and became virtually the objects of sensibility rather than the skeleton of attention — have to do with love, time, memory, death, and nature, and have to do mainly with the disloyalty, implacability, or mechanical fatality of these. Some are embedded in single words and their variations; some in tones of response; some in the rudimentary predictive pattern of plot; again many in complications of these.[3]

Samuel Hynes, taking up the suggestive hints supplied by Blackmur, has produced a book on Hardy's poetry, the central thesis of which is an examination of an antinomial structure which lies behind the poetry.

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[2] R. Morrell, Thomas Hardy. The Will and the Way (Kuala Lumpur: Univ. of Malaya Press, 1965), pp. 138-166.

[3] R.P. Blackmur, Language as Gesture (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1952), p. 54.

I quote at some length from Hynes, because I believe his remarks to be important, and because I wish to make clear where I differ from him. He summarises what he sees to be the central characteristic of the poetry in the following manner:

> Briefly, Hardy's antinomial pattern works this way: thesis (usually a circumstance commonly accepted as good — marriage, youth, young love, the reunion of husband and wife) is set against antithesis (infidelity, age, death, separation) to form an ironic complex, which is left unresolved.[4]

It can be seen how this pattern relates to the theme of Time; Hynes suggests it by referring to "youth" opposed to "age" above. He then gives a more explicit account of the precise function of Time within this kind of pattern:

> In the world as Hardy saw it, Time is a one-directional and non-reversible process, implying mutability and mortality, and thus inevitably defeating man in his struggles for permanence and order. Hardy's Time is a destructive, never a curative force, and it cannot be transcended (Hardy does not find hope of immortality, as Shakespeare did in his sonnets, either in the continuation of the race or the timeless work of art or in the immortal soul).
>
> This obsession with Time is one important aspect of Hardy's philosophy, but it also has a structural dimension. Hardy most commonly organised his poems in temporal terms, rather than in spatial or logical forms: that is to say, he ordered his actions by relating them in time, and not in space or in the terms of a syllogism. Meaning is a function, not of experience itself or of reason, but of retrospection.
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> . . . . . .
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> In almost every case, however, the point of view of the poem is not the moment in the past, but a present from which the past can be viewed ironically, sadly, nostalgically. Both the theme and the structure are provided by Time.[5]

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[4] Hynes, The Pattern of Hardy's Poetry, p. 44.

[5] Ibid., pp. 50-51.

This can be recognised as a valid and productive way of looking at the poetry: I shall examine in greater detail later how it works in individual poems. But as a yardstick for all the poetry it clearly has its limitations. Hynes naturally treats his thesis with caution, and does not imply that it is the final solution to Hardy's poetry, but nevertheless it does have some rigidity, and tends to lead him into manifestly false assertions. In the section quoted above, I object principally to the first paragraph, and in particular to the bland generalisation "Hardy's Time is a destructive, never a curative force, and it cannot be transcended". This is eminently misleading, although it would seem to confirm the myth of Time that lies behind the poetry. The myth, however, is not everything, and we suspect that Hynes is allowing his thesis to govern his judgement. The relation between past and present in the poems (it is clear that Hynes is correct in pointing to this as the commonest sort of temporal structure) exists not in one archetypal, antinomial form, but in many different shades of significance, which give rise to a poetry of considerably more subtlety than Hynes implies.

Prompted by Hynes's assertion that Time "cannot be transcended" I quote a poem which quite explicitly displays a species of philosophical transcendentalism:

> We walked where Victor Jove was shrined awhile,
> And passed to Livia's rich red mural show,
> Whence, thridding cave and Criptoportico,
> We gained Caligula's dissolving pile.
>
> And each ranked ruin tended to beguile
> The outer sense, and shape itself as though
> It wore its marble gleams, its pristine glow
> Of scenic frieze and pompous peristyle.

> When lo, swift hands, on strings nigh overhead,
> Began to melodize a waltz by Strauss:
> It stirred me as I stood, in Caesar's house,
> Raised the old routs Imperial lyres had led,
>
> And blended pulsing life with lives long done,
> Till Time seemed fiction, Past and Present one.[6]

What Hardy is doing here is asserting the power of the individual mind, or imagination, to create a reality beyond "the outer sense", which sees only desolation. This process, being closely connected here with music, architecture, and the "rich red mural show", suggests also the creative process of art, which establishes a vital eternity. Here Hardy is in the direct line of literary tradition of Keats and Shakespeare. Hynes denies that Hardy has a sense of eternity similar to Shakespeare's, but I do not think we can accept this statement in the face of the above poem. Again, the same imaginative fusion is created in a later poem, "In a Museum", where the poet brings together the sound of "a contralto voice" and the sight of an extinct bird in a museum:

> Such a dream is Time that the coo of this ancient bird
> Has perished not, but is blent, or will be blending
> Mid visionless wilds of space with the voice that I heard,
> In the full-fugued song of the universe unending.[7]

This process is doubly significant here because it is created in the context of evolution, which I have previously said is usually a symbol in Hardy for the unfeeling and terrifying processes external to man. Likewise, the "visionless wilds of space", which are also consistently used throughout Hardy's work as something vast, unknowable, and hence inducing terror and despair, are here restored to order by the imaginative act. The symbol of evolution, the extinct bird, is given a being and a

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[6] "Rome: On the Palatine", C.P., p. 93.

[7] C.P., p. 404.

meaning by the creative mind, and hence the music of the spheres, order and sanity, are restored to the universe. Time is "a dream"; the external reality has been reversed by looking through it to something deeper. I would stress that I am making no exalted literary claims for these two poems, but merely pointing to a way of thinking that was as much part of Hardy's mind as his tendency to look on Time as a destructive enemy. This approach to Time meant that he could struggle with, and destroy, the myth.

This is obviously an extreme example I have used to confute an extreme statement, and more generally the individual reaction in the poems is not as assertive or as radiant as that we see in the poems above. Hardy's concern with the past partakes more of the antinomial relationship that Hynes draws attention to. Generally speaking, the past in the poems seems to symbolise a state of lost innocence or happiness, viewed from a corrupt or unhappy present. In these circumstances, therefore, the creative act of imagination, or memory, or whatever we choose to call the faculty that calls up what is past, is a painful one:

> Close up the casement, draw the blind,
> Shut out that stealing moon,
> She wears too much the guise she wore
> Before our lutes were strewn
> With years-deep dust, and names we read
> On a white stone were hewn.[8]

The physical symbol of the past is an ironist: unchanged itself, it accentuates the change that has come over human, temporal life, and thus makes it more cruel. There is a curious ambivalence about the following poem:

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[8] "Shut out that Moon", C.P., p. 201.

These market-dames, mid-aged, with lips thin-drawn,
And tissues sere,
Are they the ones we loved in years agone,
And courted here?

Are these the muslined pink young things to whom
We vowed and swore
In nooks on summer Sundays by the Froom,
Or Budmouth shore?

Do they remember those gay tunes we trod
Clasped on the green;
Aye; trod till moonlight set on the beaten sod
A satin sheen?

They must forget, forget! They cannot know
What once they were,
Or memory would transfigure them, and show
Them always fair.[9]

I think the hub on which the poem turns is the "must" of the first line in stanza four, for the word implies two distinct things, which are, however, connected. Firstly, it means, "they must have forgotten (what once they were)", or the power of their memory would be sufficient to resist physical change and to retain the beauty of their youth. This would mean again that the important agent is the subjective mind, and not any external force; the god of Time has no power. The second meaning is an imperative, a desperate, reiterated cry, appealing to the "market-dames" to put their past out of their minds. This implies that they have not forgotten, and thus throws an ironic modification on the last two lines. It also suggests that the process of remembering is painful, and therefore the poet urges forgetfulness, as he shuts out "that stealing moon" in a protective defence against the disturbing power of his memory. This double meaning of course throws different light on the sense of the rest of the stanza. If the women "must have forgotten"

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[9]"Former Beauties", C.P., p. 223. For a perceptive criticism of this poem, see P.F. Neumeyer, "The Transfiguring Vision", Victorian Poetry, III, No. 4 (Autumn 1965), 263-66.

the mystical "transfiguration" would be a beautiful thing, but is impossible, and thus the eternity he envisages is a wistful, insubstantial dream. If, on the other hand, they must forget, "they cannot know" takes on the force of "they must be prevented, or forbidden, from knowing" and thus the "transfiguration" is something that must be prevented from happening, literally, because the metaphorical transfiguration is an extension of the painful faculty of memory (also the religious and mystical "transfiguration" is often connected with pain), and symbolically, for the sight of the women as "once they were" would be a painful one to the poet. The poet defends his sensibility from shock here as he does in "Shut out that Moon". Thus a complex of ideas and emotions, essentially concerned with response to Time, is built up in this simple poem. What we see, in fact, is that Hardy has no simple preference for either past or present. He sees the past in this poem as the time of youth and love, and the present is painful insofar as these things have gone, or changed, but he does not simply long nostalgically for the past. The present is without the pain of change, for everything has already changed, and this much is a comfort. In a poem such as this it is difficult to see the validity of Hynes's theory of antinomial structure, nor does it really help if we change the label "antinomial" for "dialectical".[10] The complex of relationships that is established between past and present in this poem tends to make such definitions too simple, or too inflexible.

There is a strong feeling in Hardy's verse that to be in touch

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[10] see D.E. Mayers, "Dialectical Structures in Hardy's Poems", Victorian Newsletter, 27, (Spring, 1965), 15-18.

with the past, with "tradition", is healthful and meaningful, and there are even suggestions that a feeling for the past is directly connected with the creative process of art:

> I idly cut a parsley stalk,
> And blew therein towards the moon;
> I had not thought what ghosts would walk
> With shivering footsteps to my tune.
>
> I went, and knelt, and scooped my hand
> As if to drink, into the brook,
> And a faint figure seemed to stand
> Above me, with the bygone look.
>
> I lipped rough rhymes of chance, not choice,
> I thought not what my words might be;
> There came into my ear a voice
> That turned a tenderer verse for me.[11]

Here, artistic creation (music and poetry), is seen as a largely unconscious action prompted by the ghosts. I think the ghosts are symbols of the power of the poet's imagination to re-create the past, and hence, in some mysterious way, to produce art. It would not be an undue exaggeration to call this sense of the past, of history, and of tradition, Hardy's Muse. This sense does not relate merely to poetry, but to man's whole existence and experience. In the poem "On an invitation to the United States", Hardy says:

> I shrink to seek a modern coast
> Whose riper times have yet to be;
> Where the new regions claim them free
> From that long drip of human tears
> Which peoples old in tragedy
> Have left upon the centuried years.

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[11] "On a Midsummer Eve", C.P., p. 415.

For, wonning in these ancient lands,
Enchased and lettered as a tomb,
And scored with prints of perished hands,
And chronicled with dates of doom,
Though my own being bear no bloom
I trace the lives such scenes enshrine
Give past exemplars present room,
And their experience count as mine.[12]

The "experience" Hardy values is connected with the words "tears", "tragedy", "tomb", "doom", and so on, and we sense his refusal of the invitation is precisely because "the new regions claim them free" from human suffering. Not only is this unrealistic to Hardy, but positively not desirable. I think it needs to be firmly stated, especially since Hardy and his critics have clouded the issue with comments about "evolutionary meliorism",[13] that at the centre of Hardy's artistic vision is a deep and strong sense of and feeling for pain and human suffering. A sense of the past, especially as seen in this poem, by increasing one's awareness of such suffering increases one's sensibility and "consciousness", or on a simpler level facilitates, by a consideration of "past exemplars" a kind of stoicism, or acceptance. Therefore Hardy's constant concern with the past does not represent a search for a lost Eden or Golden Age, for he never supposes such a state to have existed. His absolutes, similarly, are not Youth or Love, for he knows that these states, like the Land of the Free, are based on a partial and unrealistic view of existence which does not take into account the centrality of suffering in human life. If we think of the third section of Tess of the D'Urbervilles,[14] which could be looked upon as a symbolic Eden, we

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[12] C.P., p. 99.

[13] see the "Apology" to Late Lyrics and Earlier, C.P., pp. 525-27.

[14] Hardy, Tess of the D'Urbervilles (New York: Random House, 1919), "The Rally", Chaps. XVI - XXIV

notice that the happiness of Tess, the central character, is constantly destroyed, or eaten away, by her inability to accept experience in the spontaneous, unconscious way of the other dairymaids (which represents the operation of her consciousness), and by her sense that her love relationship is founded on a lie, or a misunderstanding (which represents the influence of the past — here simply her own "past" — on present events).

The great irony is that what I called a healthful and meaningful process involves a deep knowledge of human suffering, but yet this tendency is creative in that "it exacts a full look at the Worst"[15] in a search for "the Better". Hardy tends to see the modern sensibility taking a different road, and looking into the future. This forward-looking tendency, however, is not an expression of hope, but the same sense of pain is brought to bear on the viewpoint, and thus produces despair (instead of stoicism) at what is to happen. Again, we need to look to the novels to see the epitome, almost the parody, of this approach; I refer to little Father Time in Jude the Obscure. The name of course is significant, especially to a study like this, but the whole episode is so obviously overplayed in such a grotesque way, that we suspect Hardy is indulging in one of his grim jokes. He points clearly to the boy, however, with his premature sense of age, and prophetic despair, as characteristic of the modern type. He would like the flowers at the Wessex Show if he "didn't keep thinking they'd be all withered in a few days".[16] The natural extension of this outlook is despair and suicide,

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[15] "In Tenebris. II", C.P., p. 154.

[16] Hardy, Jude the Obscure (London: Macmillan, 1951), V, v, p. 358.

which is, of course, what happens in Jude the Obscure. The modern type in the poems is equally despairing and self-destructive, as represented by the architect in "Heiress and Architect":

"Such winding ways
Fit not your days,"
Said he, the man of measuring eye;
"I must even fashion as the rule declares,
To wit: Give space (since life ends unawares)
To hale a coffined corpse adown the stairs;
For you will die."[17]

The question of despair here is modified by the fact that the conditions of temporal existence as stressed by the architect are in opposition to the fanciful daydreams of the heiress. Both their views of life are equally distorted, in opposite directions. In general, however, we may say that the view of the future yields a barren and desolate response as compared to the view of the past. Hardy feels that his connections with the past, which give him such vital strength personally and artistically, paradoxically remove him from the life of his own contemporaries. His connection with the past makes him belong to the past (see "An Ancient to Ancients"[18]), and there is sometimes the sense that in communing with the past he is constructing his own romance away from the unpleasant facts of "reality":

I see the hands of the generations
That owned each shiny familiar thing
In play on its knobs and indentations,
And with its ancient fashioning
Still dallying:

Hands behind hands, growing paler and paler,
As in a mirror a candle-flame
Shows images of itself, each frailer
As it recedes, though the eye may frame
Its shape the same.

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[17] C.P., p. 68.

[18] C.P., p. 658.

On the clock's dull dial a foggy finger,
    Moving to set the minutes right
With tentative touches that lift and linger
    In the wont of a moth on a summer night,
        Creeps to my sight.

. . . . . .

Well, well. It is best to be up and doing,
    The world has no use for one to-day
Who eyes things thus — no aim pursuing!
    He should not continue in this stay,
        But sink away.[19]

The last stanza of this poem may represent a view of himself in the light of "common sense", or it may be ironic, and mean the opposite of what it purports to say. It does, however, show the kind of strength Hardy drew from his imaginative projection of the past, as symbolised here and elsewhere by the ghosts. It is not a crude set of practical lessons drawn from the example of history: what we might imagine he means by "past exemplars" in the United States poem. It does not increase the capacity for practical action in the everyday sense, but increases the tendency to "sink away" from actuality. A part of Hardy's mind can see this process as unproductive, if not irresponsible, and can ignore the artistic perception of a deeper reality that the "sinking away" really brings.

What we continually notice in the poems is the immense importance of the purely personal, of the individual response to experience. Fortunately for the poems, the individual response is usually sufficiently representative to make them more than idiosyncratic. This characteristic represents another aspect of the power of the subjective mind in ordering experience. Hardy is not always simply impressed with the power of the past to pervade the present, in the sense that he always displays necessarily what we might call a historical awareness. The personal past is

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[19]"Old Furniture", C.P., p. 456.

as important to him as the historical, or traditional past (the two kinds of "past" are counterpointed in Tess of the D'Urbervilles), as in "The Roman Road":

> The Roman Road runs straight and bare
> As the pale parting-line in hair
> Across the heath. And thoughtful men
> Contrast its days of Now and Then,
> And delve, and measure, and compare;
>
> Visioning on the vacant air
> Helmed legionaries, who proudly rear
> The Eagle, as they pace again
> The Roman Road.
>
> But no tall brass-helmed legionnaire
> Haunts it for me. Uprises there
> A mother's form upon my ken,
> Guiding my infant steps, as when
> We walked that ancient thoroughfare,
> The Roman Road.[20]

What is significant about the road for the poet is its ability to arouse memories of childhood, rather than the antiquarian interest of those who "delve, and measure, and compare". Strictly speaking, the poet uses the road to re-create a scene with his memory, whilst the archaeologists "vision" the Roman soldiers with the power of their imagination. The two faculties are not entirely separate, however, as Hardy shows when he says "We walked that ancient thoroughfare". Though only one circumstance in the road's history may be personally meaningful, nevertheless the poet is aware of the fact that he and his mother are only two of the countless many who have walked where they have walked. The personal recollection therefore takes on an inner significance within the total significance of the past, which is built up of millions of such seemingly insignificant events. This at once gives the trivial event a sense of pathos through

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[20] C.P., p. 248.

its fragility and brevity, and yet also endues the personal event with a qualifying irony. The sheer scale of "the past" tends to mock the individual reversal of values, when the poet or persona claims the moment or insignificant event to be of maximum importance to him. Whether or not it is Hardy's conscious intention, this ironic tone pervades the poem "The Roman Gravemounds",[21] where the death of a cat is the most important and tragic event in its owner's experience.

Hardy, like Wordsworth, has an appreciation of and feeling for the trivial or insignificant thing or event, seeing in it perhaps a symbolic revelation of larger and more important issues. He characterises himself in "Afterwards" as "a man who used to notice such things"[22] ("Afterwards" refers to the time after his own death, and hence the past tense in the poem), the "things" being the small details of the natural world that would not be noticed but by minute observation. Perhaps the most famous lines in The Dynasts are those spoken by the Chorus of the Years on the impact of the battle of Waterloo on the world of nature. Here the small animals and plants have a more overt symbolic significance:

> The mole's tunnelled chambers are crushed by wheels,
> The lark's eggs scattered, their owners fled;
> And the hedgehog's household the sapper unseals.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Trodden and bruised to a miry tomb
> Are ears that have greened but will never be gold.
> And flowers in the bud that will never bloom.[23]

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[21] C.P., p. 373.

[22] C.P., p. 521.

[23] The Dynasts, III, VI, viii.

Hardy clearly sees a significance in isolated episodes which have no immediate relevance beyond themselves, and in this again he resembles Wordsworth. An episode which is arresting enough in itself has the power to generate its own significance, as in the poem "At a Country Fair":

> At a bygone Western country fair
> I saw a giant led by a dwarf
> With a red string like a long thin scarf;
> How much he was the stronger there
> The giant seemed unaware.
>
> And then I saw that the giant was blind,
> And the dwarf a shrewd-eyed little thing;
> The giant, mild, timid, obeyed the string
> As if he had no independent mind,
> Or will of any kind.[24]

I may seem to have strayed somewhat from my consideration of the ways in which Hardy responds to Time, but I believe this interest in minor episodes or fragments of human activity to influence his attitude to Time. Perhaps as a result of the "transcendental" tendencies we noticed earlier, but at any rate clearly because of his stress on the creative power of the mind, Hardy sees the instant of perception or creation as highly important. It is no accident that he called a volume of poetry Moments of Vision, and the word "vision" is not an exaggerated term to use about the poetry. It implies both physical and mental, and even mystical or supernatural, perception. The "moment" in which it occurs is the briefest interval in the span of Time, but it can paradoxically contain more meaning and significance within itself than anything else that has happened over the course of years or centuries. It can also, by the agency of the creative imagination, connect with another

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[24] C.P., p. 474.

hitherto unrelated point in Time, and create a unity which is beyond the power of Time. It is yet another example of the power of the poet to circumvent the unpropitious deity of Time, and to transcend the material and temporal world in which he is placed.

These "moments of vision" occur even in the novels, where they create isolated symbolic episodes, which at once give a deeper meaning to the total work in which they are enclosed, and yet in some way stand very much on their own, and generate their own significance. Briefly to illustrate what I mean, I quote from The Woodlanders this passage:

> ..... she felt it awkward to walk straight away from him; and so they stood silently together. A diversion was created by the accident of two large birds, that had either been roosting above their heads or nesting there, tumbling one over the other into the hot ashes at their feet, apparently engrossed in a desperate quarrel that prevented the use of their wings. They speedily parted, however, and flew up with a singed smell, and were seen no more.
> 'That's the end of what is called love,' said someone.[25]

It would be misleading to elevate this passage to the status of a symbol for the love relationship in the novel as a whole. It is too simple, in that sense, to be the key to The Woodlanders, although it clearly does refer to the human situation in the book. It tends to stand out, to stick in our memory when the more purely narrative sections of the novel have been forgotten, and it does this because it contains its own meaning within itself: it is complete, and separate. It is a moment within the chronological sequence of the novel, but such moments do not become modified or changed with the progress of Time, as do the characters. If Hardy did have any concept of eternity, I suggest that

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[25]Hardy, The Woodlanders (London: Macmillan, 1949), Ch. XIX, p. 168.

he envisaged it in terms of the permanent moment, the sudden flash of intuition that could see beyond the confusing and constantly changing surface of reality.

The moment has the same significance in the context of the poems. I shall examine this in more detail during the course of my criticism of the poems in Chapter III, but I think this fact is evident not only with reference to the "anecdotal" poems I referred to above, but also in those poems where Hardy recollects past events, and where the past and the present unite to form a new synthesis, as in this poem:

> 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.[26]

Hynes might point to this poem as an example of Hardy's antinomial technique, exhibiting a tension created by the contrast between past and present. This of course is in the poem; we might add that the temporal structure here is even further complicated. The woman as the poet imagines her in his solitary present, is as she was in the distant, as opposed to the more recent, past. This complicates the contrast

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[26] "The Voice", C.P., p. 325.

that Time creates, and suggests rather that the movement of Time can be circular, and can move back to a perfect state that has been destroyed. This, however, is a side issue. What is important in this poem is the resolution of its conclusion. In stanzas one and two the poet remembers the "woman much missed" and allows his imagination to become so active as to create her before him. The third stanza turns the objective side of his mind, where Time exists, on to this imaginative creation, and realises its impossibility. In this stanza the poem is localised and set in the actual world, whilst the actual details of this reality (desolation and bad weather) are images for the state of mind of the poet. The "moment" of the poem, and the point at which it crystallizes, is the last stanza. Here we have a simultaneous recognition of both sorts of reality: the wind is blowing and the woman is calling. In this way Hardy recognizes the power of memory, and yet avoids being simply sentimental. The outer and inner reality are vitally connected and lend meaning to each other. The woman's voice is the sadness of the wind, the falling leaves are the waning life of the poet, and so on. In this way, past, present, and future are brought into a new relationship. "Faltering forward" refers not merely to the man walking across the field, but his progress through life, "faltering" because he is himself growing old and approaching death, and also because he does not want to go "forward", but is continually drawn to the past. Thus the woman's calling to him is from the past, from the happiness of their early love, and also from the future, for she is calling the poet towards death: she is something of a Siren voice, attractive and yet fatal. The sudden complex revela-

tion of this conclusion is, I think, typical of Hardy's technique. "Complex revelation" may be a paradox, but the process itself is paradoxical, and tends to defeat any attempts to systematise the poems as variations upon a "pattern", which is Hynes's approach. Such achievements also give the lie to Blackmur's charge that Hardy is governed by his obsessions, or at least we may say that it is at such moments that the obsessions bear fruit. Mark Van Doren has said of Hardy:

> His imagination had always a temporal cast. His genius could endow things with age that had none otherwise, just as it could read into a single moment, recollected and reconsidered, eternities of meaning which as it passed had not been recognised; the present moment, he is always saying, contains all time and more, but nobody knows this then.[27]

Hardy can see the importance of the moment in retrospect, as in "The Self-Unseeing",[28] a poem I shall examine in detail in the next chapter, but in "The Voice" this realisation comes in the present, and as a result of the artistic ordering of the poem. Content and form in this poem are very closely connected.

In general, these qualities of the "moment of vision" in the verse seem to represent a way in which Hardy can impose order upon his experience, without falsifying it. His great dread was to seem to be, or to be represented as, producing a stock or stereotyped poetry, rather than the "series of fugitive impressions" he wished to give expression to. It is in the "moment" that these impressions achieve a new complexity, and, in the relations that are set up between them, create a new

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[27] M. Van Doren, "The Poems of Thomas Hardy", in Four Poets on Poetry, ed. Don Cameron Allen (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1959), p. 102.

[28] C.P., p. 152.

meaning. Their relation to the theme of Time is ambiguous, as a result of the continual contrast Hardy sees between objective and subjective reality. In that the moment is highly meaningful to the individual, Time is transcended, and ceases to exist. Yet we are never allowed to forget that the experience or insight is a moment, something that is utterly insignificant in the context of Time, looked upon objectively. This latter sense throws a continual irony upon the assertion of the individual, in the same way that the use of a vast panoramic viewpoint and tremendous descriptions of space and extent in both The Dynasts and the novels throw an ironic qualification on the pretensions and interests of the human beings in those works.

Poets who are haunted by a sense of Time and its power generally display also some sense of the theme of "carpe diem" in the manner of Herrick, and Hardy is no exception. This sense of joy has two aspects: it can either be a desperate mockery in the face of the hostile figures of Time and Death, or it can be an extension of the acceptance of the healthful and generative power of the seasonal cycle, which I considered in Chapter One. The first approach, which I think is nearer the seventeenth-century mood, is represented in such poems as "The Bullfinches", although this poem exhibits a hint of the irony that is found in Rupert Brooke's "Fish". This aside, the poem is a conscious and successful variation on the wistful, half-elegaic themes of Herrick:

> Come then, brethren, let us sing,
> From the dawn till evening!—
> For we know not that we go not
> When the day's pale pinions fold
> Where those be that sang of old.[29]

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[29] C.P., p. 112.

Because this poem is such an obvious copy, we do not take it very seriously. In the poem "Great Things" the speaker is completely abandoned to thejoys of the senses, even when he considers death:

> What then? Joy-jaunts, impassioned flings,
> Love, and its ecstasy,
> Will always have been great things,
> Great things to me![30]

Such a sense is rare in Hardy because he cannot believe in it very deeply. He does not see a solution to man's problems in a return to nature, and he does not see an answer to the power of Time in a cultivation of hedonism. Both these answers are inadequate for him because they are denials of the "consciousness" in man, which is the responsibility of man alone. I think Hynes clarifies this question in his consideration of Hardy's imagery:

> The vision of youth is false because it is short-sighted, sees only the present, and ignores the fundamental truths of change and mortality. In terms of imagery, the absence of death images in the world of youth makes that world untrue.[31]

"Great Things" is a poem of youthful experience, but, as Hynes remarks, the values of youth are partial and unrealistic. Whether or not Hardy is a pessimist, he is serious minded, and insists on coming to terms with all the facts of his experience.

The acceptance of the cycle of Time as healthful and meaningful therefore needs to take into account the fact of death before it becomes valid. Occasionally, this gains expression as thankfulness for change:

> Rambling I looked for an old abode
> Where, years back, one had lived I knew;
> Its site a dwelling duly showed,
> But it was new.

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[30] C.P., p. 446.

[31] Hynes, The Pattern of Hardy's Poetry, p. 120.

I went where, not so long ago,
The sod had riven two breasts asunder;
Daisies throve gaily there, as though
No grave was under.

I walked along a terrace where
Loud children gambolled in the sun:
The figure that had once sat there
Was missed by none.

Life laughed and moved on unsubdued,
I saw that Old succumbed to Young:
'Twas well. My too regretful mood
Died on my tongue.[32]

Even here the recognition of change does not bring any real positive meaning with it. The poem expresses something like the rueful "Earth never grieves" in "Autumn in King's Hintock Park".[33] The cycle of growth and death may be meaningful as a whole, but to the individuals involved in it, it is inexplicable. In this poem, the "poetic" "'twas well" is either ironic, or a conclusion that belies the preceding three stanzas. Why does Hardy use the verb "succumb" with reference to the process of change, if he wishes us to see it as something vital? He cannot forget the destructive power that is a necessary part of the growth cycle, and we sense that Life's laughter is something more than an expression of simple happiness.

Where Hardy truly seems to be at one with the process of death and decay that he senses all around him, is when he can conceive of this process, like Whitman, in an organic way:

Portion of this yew
Is a man my grandsire knew,
Bosomed here at its foot:
This branch may be his wife,
A ruddy human life
Now turned to a green shoot.

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[32] "Life Laughs Onward", C.P., p. 435.

[33] C.P., p. 200.

These grasses must be made
Of her who often prayed,
Last century, for repose;
And the fair girl long ago
Whom I often tried to know
May be entering this rose.

So, they are not underground,
But as nerves and veins abound
In the growths of upper air,
And they feel the sun and rain,
And the energy again
That made them what they were![34]

In this way, the life cycle can be connected with the ghosts that people Hardy's imaginative projection of the past, and of the tradition that gives meaning to the present. In the poem "Voices from Things Growing in a Country Churchyard" the plants, the organic rebirth of the dead, are imagined as ghosts:

These flowers are I, poor Fanny Hurd,
Sir or Madam,
A little girl here sepultured.
Once I flit-fluttered like a bird
Above the grass, as now I wave
In daisy shapes above my grave,
All day cheerily,
All night eerily![35]

The significant thing about both these poems is that Hardy conceives of life in terms of death. Death, according to Hynes, is "a subject for which Hardy seems to have had an abnormal concern",[36] and he goes on to claim that he was obsessed by "necrophilia".[37] This is clearly

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[34] "Transformations", C.P., p. 443.

[35] C.P., p. 590.

[36] Hynes, The Pattern of Hardy's Poetry, p. 114.

[37] Ibid.

absurd: Hardy's concern with death is not Gothic, but he rather sees death as a symbol, along with and as a part of Time, of the external destructive reality over which man has no control. His poetic concern is to come to terms with this reality in a satisfactory way.

We return inevitably to the central core of Hardy's view of life and of man, which does not contain any simple sense of joy or happiness. It is founded upon an attempt to understand the pain and suffering in the universe, and demands the continual "full look at the Worst" that he calls for in "In Tenebris, II".[38] His search is characteristically introspective and retrospective, that is, he examines himself as centre of his experience, and he examines himself in relation to his past experience, and in relation to the mental and physical changes that Time brings about.

In this chapter I have attempted to examine at least some of the ways in which the individual responds to experience, principally the experience of Time. Again, as in Chapter I, no immediately coherent formula emerges with which we can summarise Hardy's methods, because the poems are "fugitive impressions" and are "dramatic or personative in conception". Attitudes in separate poems therefore conflict and contradict one another, and we are imposing our own restricted reading, and impoverishing the richness of the poetic response, if we take one particular type as "the true Hardy". I think Hynes is guilty of this more than once during the course of his book, and I have attempted to show where I think he is misleading. What I think we can say is that there are

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[38] C.P., p. 154.

certain points in the poems when these various impressions fuse, or coalesce, and an extraordinarily vivid and meaningful poetry is produced. This may happen in what I have called the "moments of vision", or the poetry may be produced by an entirely different process, but I do not think we can miss the realisation of its presence. This, I believe, is what critics mean when they speak of clearing away the majority of the Collected Poems, in a vast demolition process, to salvage the "poetry" in Hardy. "The poetry is there —" says Blackmur aggressively, "... and it is our business to get at it."[39] What such critics fail to perceive is that in removing the majority of the verse, they are removing a good deal of the support of "the poetry". My purpose in this chapter has been to establish several aspects of Hardy's subjective response to Time, with illustration drawn from as wide a range of the poems as possible, and I shall go on in the next chapter to examine how these various attitudes are revealed in several specific poems.

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39 R.P. Blackmur, Language as Gesture, p. 52.

CHAPTER III

The scope of this chapter is primarily practical criticism. During the course of it I shall examine five poems in detail, and attempt to relate to them the attitudes to Time that Hardy displays throughout the body of the poetry, which I have discussed in the two preceding chapters. This may perhaps seem to be reading into the poems what I wish to discover, but I shall try to avoid imposing any specialised sense upon them. On the other hand, they have been chosen because they are relevant to the various approaches to Time I have been discussing. I would not claim that they represent a cross-section of Hardy's verse, for much of his poetry does not relate to the themes I am concerned with. Yet these themes do relate to the more important poetic productions, and the poems quoted here are all "anthology pieces", in that they often figure in selections of Hardy's poems. The anthology approach to Hardy is regrettable, but my purpose is to follow Hardy's preoccupation with Time into the indisputably major achievements of his poetry, and it is these pieces, naturally enough, that are singled out for selections.

The first poem I propose to consider is "The Self-Unseeing":

> Here is the ancient floor,
> Footworn and hollowed and thin,
> Here was the former door
> Where the dead feet walked in.
>
> She sat here in her chair,
> Smiling into the fire;
> He who played stood there
> Bowing it higher and higher.

> Childlike, I danced in a dream;
> Blessings emblazoned that day;
> Everything glowed with a gleam;
> Yet we were looking away![1]

Perhaps the first impression this poem makes is of a sense of structural simplicity, within the framework of which there exists a contrasting complexity of meaning. The "pattern" of the poem, in Hynes's sense, is the familiar one of a recollection of past experience from the viewpoint of the present. It is, in fact, based on the pattern of "The Return":

> Certain situations are obviously easily adaptable to ironic statement, and Hardy had a few which he used again and again. The Return, for instance, is one of his favorites: a person thought dead returns to those who thought him so, a husband returns to his unfaithful wife, a mature man to his childhood sweetheart, a long-absent traveller to his home village, the dead to scenes and persons from their pasts. Usually the return is to the past, and the irony is in the resulting disparity between expectation and reality.[2]

In "The Self-Unseeing" the return pattern does not have the overt irony of the "Satires of Circumstance": the return is not bitter, or amusing. The poet is revisiting an old house, which we gather is the old family home. The basic structure is that of the familiar temporal arrangement.

The first stanza exhibits Hardy's sense of the past in the antiquarian sense. The situation the poem implies is Hardy the architectural student examining an old building. The word "ancient" does not prepare us for an anecdote from his own past, but conjures up the sense of timeless tradition, rather than of an individual lifetime. Thus the episode that is described in the poem is implicitly set within the past as history, the short personal recollection within the continuum of Time. "Ancient"

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[1] C.P., p. 152.

[2] Hynes, The Pattern of Hardy's Poetry, p. 49.

implies a much greater scale of Time than the two generations represented in the poem: the "floor" was already old at the period recollected by the poet. The process of destruction of the old house is implied by the present tense in the first line ("Here is the ancient floor", as it was on the past occasion, apart from being more worn) and then by the past tense in the third, combined with the suggestive use of "former" (the "door" is now missing, broken, or blocked in?). This simple change of tense represents the change effected by Time within the poem itself. The first three lines are essentially a description of objective reality, but in the description of the floor Hardy uses the word "footworn", which immediately suggests the human inhabitants, or rather past inhabitants, of the house. The implication that the floor is hollow because countless feet have worn it away is picked up in the last line. Whilst the details of the house exist now and have existed in the past, the "feet" belong to the latter: they are "dead feet" and they "walked" on past occasions. This increases the sense of change — the human beings who once walked here are now in the grave — but it also implies, paradoxically, that the "feet" were "dead" when they were alive, when they "walked in", or to put it in a less logically absurd way, the line is a symbol for the death in life experienced by the former inhabitants of the house. I do not think this is distorting the poetry (whether it distorts what Hardy thought he was writing is a different question); I am merely extending the essential ambiguity of "dead feet". Moreover, by putting the whole line in the past tense, Hardy excludes the possibility that the "dead feet" walk now, in the present, and thus no ghosts now haunt the house. With poems like "Old Furniture"[3]

[3] C.P., p. 456.

and "The Garden Seat"[4] in mind, the implications of this line are that the past has ceased to be a vital thing for the poet, and that he is unable to re-create imaginatively the characters and events that fill his sense of the past. The "feet" are not merely "dead" physically, but also to some sense personally and imaginatively. The very act of recalling them, however, constitutes an imaginative act, so that the sense of impoverishment does not extend far.

The second stanza moves on from the somewhat generalised recollections of the first, to re-create a more closely detailed scene. The poem is still set dramatically in the present, as if the poet were pacing out "the ancient floor" to determine more clearly the things he remembers. In this, the most straightforward of the three sections of the poem, we are introduced to the "He" and "She" of the poem. If we apply our knowledge of Hardy's biography to the poem, together with the hint of "childlike" in the next stanza, we may assume that they are the poet's parents. This fits in logically: the son in the next stanza dances to the father's music. This relationship also represents symbolically the individual's connections with the past via the generations. But if we ignore biography, and biography can be too intrusive, the man and woman could equally well suggest the poet himself and his wife or lover. What is really important is the union of the human pair, whoever they may be, and the fact that they are happy: she smiles, and he plays increasingly lively music.

The third stanza brings the poet himself clearly into this situation in the past (whether or not he is the "He" of stanza two), and

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[4] C.P., p. 537.

increases the complexity of the poem. There are several things to be observed in it. The first is the sense of almost religious, or mystical, trance. The poet was "childlike" — it is significant that he does not say simply that he was a child — in a Christian sense, for which he need not have been a child physically at all (and thus can legitimately be "He" of line seven). He dances "in a dream": in a rapt, ecstatic way, and not with the quick and violent movements demanded by the quickening pace of the music. The day is filled with "blessings", and a mysterious aura invests everything (line eleven). In terms of this religious imagery, the past represents a state of grace, or of innocence (symbolised by "childlike") which has now been destroyed and lost. Music and the dance are traditional symbols of order, which in this poem belong to the past, and in Hardy's novels the dance is also used (again traditionally) as a symbol of sexual union. If we allow this allusion here, it refers back to the happiness of the pair in stanza two. Much of the sense of quasi-religious bliss that invests this stanza stems from the language of the poem. Instead of the commonplace, plodding sound and sense of "Footworn and hollowed and thin" in the first stanza, which represents the present, stanza three (the past) has the more euphonic "Blessings emblazoned that day", in which the word "emblazoned" stands out by its very richness, and suggests some of its meaning by its sound. It is in fact, a word of extraordinary suggestiveness; not only does it imply heraldry, and hence both pomp and nobility and rich colour, but the Oxford English Dictionary gives as its meaning also "to celebrate, extol, 'blaze abroad'; to render illustrious". "Celebrate" connects immediately with the religious imagery: both technically ("to celebrate mass"), and

also in the sense of rejoicing. "To blazon", to which the word belongs, means to "proclaim, make public".

Of primary significance in this last stanza is the word "dream" in line nine, and the way in which it relates to the important concluding line of the poem. Upon this relationship a good deal of the poem's meaning rests. The main question is whether the poet (and the other character or characters) is "looking away" from something because he is involved in the trance-like "dream", or whether he is "looking away" from the idyllic "dream", and is now regretting having done so. However we relate the two, the last line expresses regret for something that the poet failed to achieve in the past. If "looking away" is connected with the "dream", that is, if they amount to the same thing, what the poet regrets is having indulged in a pleasant, but unreal, romance, in which he took no account of the "realities" of change and death. If this is what Hardy means, his poem carries a heavy irony, because the present, in which the facts which Time has forced upon him are evident, is presented in an unfavourable light as compared with the past. Even if the past was irresponsible or immature, it was certainly a pleasant experience. This very fact inclines us to read the last line as referring not to the "dream", but to what is now the present. In other words, the spontaneous pleasure of the moment was spoiled by the human tendency to "look away" into the future, which Hardy outlines elsewhere as the curse of modernism. This again can mean two things: the "looking away" can connect with "dream" in a different sense, to imply the ambitions and plans for the future envisaged by the young poet, or it can refer to a sense of the inevitable process of Time — the pleasure of the family

is spoiled by their sense that it will pass, which is perhaps the significance of "dead feet" in line four. I think the main tendency of Hardy's meaning, although we must ignore none of the hints he gives us, is indicated in the title of the poem: "The Self-Unseeing". The individual fails in self knowledge and self fulfilment because he is unable to grasp the importance and potential of the moment whilst he is involved in it. The characters in the short episode are "looking away" literally from each other ("She" is "smiling into the fire"), and also figuratively to dreams of the future, or thoughts of age and death. The irony is that the situation cannot be realised until it has been destroyed, like the house, and until the poet, by an inevitable transference of imagery, is "hollowed and thin". Time is the victor whatever the individual may do.

The next poem I shall consider is "Channel Firing":

That night your great guns, unawares,
Shook all our coffins as we lay,
And broke the chancel window-squares,
We thought it was the Judgment-day

And sat upright. While drearisome
Arose the howl of wakened hounds:
The mouse let fall the altar-crumb,
And worms drew back into the mounds.

The glebe cow drooled. Till God called, "No;
It's gunnery practice out at sea
Just as before you went below;
The world is as it used to be:

"All nations striving strong to make
Red war yet redder. Mad as hatters
They do no more for Christés sake
Than you who are helpless in such matters.

"That this is not the judgment-hour
For some of them's a blessed thing,
For if it were they'd have to scour
Hell's floor for so much threatening....

"Ha, ha. It will be warmer when
I blow the trumpet (if indeed
I ever do; for you are men,
And rest eternal sorely need)."

So down we lay again. "I wonder,
Will the world ever saner be,"
Said one, "than when He sent us under
In our indifferent century!"

And many a skeleton shook his head.
"Instead of preaching forty year,"
My neighbour Parson Thirdly said,
"I wish I had stuck to pipes and beer."

Again the guns disturbed the hour,
Roaring their readiness to avenge,
As far inland as Stourton Tower,
And Camelot, and starlit Stonehenge.[5]

This is an odd poem by any standards, and if it were not for the last stanza we might well overlook it as we read through the Collected Poems, or notice it only as one of Hardy's oddities. This does not mean that we have to ignore the rest of the poem; having read the last stanza we go back and read the poem again more carefully. Brooks and Warren point this out in their short critique of the poem:

> ...the tone of the last stanza changes abruptly. The movement becomes emphatic and stately, and the imagination is presented with a sudden panoramic vision of the whole English countryside at night with the sound of the great guns dying inland. All of this elevated poetic effect is more emphatic because of the contrast in abrupt juxtaposition with the earlier section of the poem.[6]

This is clear, but if Hardy wishes to draw our attention to the last stanza by these means, what does he want to emphasise? Surely not merely the fact that he could write good poetry when he wanted to, nor merely the Miltonic magnificence of the place names in the last two lines. If

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[5] C.P., pp. 287-88.

[6] C. Brooks and R. P. Warren, Understanding Poetry (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960), p. 193.

the last stanza completes the poem satisfactorily as a whole, and I think it does, and is not merely a fragment, it must relate to what is expressed in the rest of the poem, and resolve this expression.

Thus we must look first at the rest of the poem, perhaps with this passage from Florence Emily Hardy's Life of Thomas Hardy in mind:

> ...Hardy had a born sense of humour, even a too keen sense occasionally: but his poetry was sometimes placed by editors in the hands of reviewers deficient in that quality. Even if they were accustomed to Dickensian humour they were not to Swiftian. Hence it unfortunately happened that verses of a satirical, dry, caustic, or farcical cast were regarded by them with the deepest seriousness.[7]

Hardy's odd humour in "Channel Firing" cannot be overlooked, but the implied comparison with Swift that Mrs. Hardy makes has far more relevance for this poem. The poem is a satire of a typically Swiftian target: man's pretension and futility. Hardy also uses some of Swift's techniques. The reader is implicated in the bizarre and incredible circumstances of the poem: your "great guns" shook our "coffins", says the ghost-narrator, perhaps by way of complaint. Moreover, the peculiar inverted irony of the poem is typical of Swift. What is mocked in the poem, on the surface, are the things we would normally expect to be impressive and awe-inspiring: the gloom of the church, the graveyard horrors, the last Judgment, the Old Testament God. We have a kind of mock-epic, half-hearted treatment of the Doom, in which the key note is bathos. But precisely because these things are treated in such an off-hand fashion, we begin to suspect that what is treated with nominal seriousness is the real target of the irony. The "great guns", "roaring their readiness to avenge", in the light of the rest of the poem, assume a sense of supreme stupidity and vanity.

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[7]F. E. Hardy, The Life of Thomas Hardy, 1840-1928 (Toronto: Macmillan, 1962), Ch. XXV, p. 302.

Time plays an important part in this irony. The flippant treatment of Time in the greater part of the poem does not disguise the fact that the preparation for war signified by the gunfire is a permanent symbol for the ridiculous nature of man. God explains the noise: "It's gunnery practice out at sea / Just as before you went below..", as if gunnery practice were always a part of human life. One of the ghosts wonders if the world will ever improve on the condition it was in (which implies it is in the same condition now) "in our indifferent century". The word "indifferent" suggests the attitude of the ghosts now towards the world, as epitomised by "Parson Thirdly", in contrast to the passionate, but ridiculous, attitude of the present generation of human beings. "Indifferent" also suggests the insignificance of a "century" in comparison with the vast scale of Time, an idea that is expressed in the magnificent closing lines. God furthers the irony of Time as He ponders sympathetically on the advisability of a Last Judgment at all; human beings "rest eternal sorely need". The tone is that of "you could do with a good night's sleep", which serves to make more striking the idea that man needs eternity to make up for an infinitely short but infinitely painful life, made painful, we assume by extension, by the "gunnery practice" and what it stands for.

The main ironic point of Time, however, is made in the last stanza, which I shall consider separately here. There are several ways in which we can read this last stanza, but they all reinforce and complete the ironic statement of the poem. The first thing to be noticed, which is probably obvious enough, is the way in which Hardy symbolises the reach of Time by the increasing antiquity of the places he mentions.

As the roar travels "inland", it travels further into the past, becoming gradually fainter. Hardy's reference to "Stourton Tower" poses a problem.[8] It does not have the immediate significance that the other names have, and we can only guess at what it is. It could be a church tower, like the one under which the ghosts lie, symbolising in the scale of Time the Christian civilisation of the Middle Ages (also implied by the archaic "Christés" in stanza four), or possibly it is a Napoleonic lookout tower, or a column like the one in Two on a Tower, both of which would be monuments to "red war". However, the reference implied by the other two names is unmistakable: to the fabulous romance of Arthurian Britain, and to the mysterious early pagan civilisation which built Stonehenge. They are all marks left on the natural landscape by man: expressions of a high point of culture and civilisation, now, ironically, deserted and in ruins. The guns that roar "their readiness to avenge" are by contrast vulgar and commonplace intruders into these sites of high human endeavour and devotion, and are gradually reduced to meaninglessness as their sound reaches further inland and further into the past. There is a sense also that the guns are "roaring their readiness to avenge" this past (A Jingoist interpretation of history: this poem is dated 1914), which assumes a rich absurdity in the face of the ruins, and the peace of "starlit Stonehenge". The passivity of the monuments

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[8] "Stourton" could be a Wessex name for Sturminster Newton, in Dorset. Hermann Lea, in Thomas Hardy's Wessex (London: Macmillan, 1928), gives this information about the latter:

> Just outside the town, on the other side of the river Stour, is a mound, the site of a castle where King Alfred is said to have lived. (p. 6.)

If Hardy is referring to this, he is invoking another legendary period of British history in the progression of the names. (In Tess of the D'Urbervilles, Sturminster Newton is given the name "Stourcastle".)

relates to the indifference of God and the ghosts towards human actions. When Hardy writes in the first line "the guns disturbed the hour", he implies that it is the hour only, the passing moment, that is disturbed by this latest piece of human folly, which merges into insignificance in comparison with the great stretch of human history. Time here is the ironist, but there is a sense also that Time is the medium of order, for it is Time alone that gives a meaning to human events.

"Channel Firing" and "The Self-Unseeing" are largely divergent in style and intention, but they both make important use of the concept of Time. The third poem I propose to examine is from the important group written after the death of Emma Hardy in 1912, to which Hardy gave the general title "Veteris vestigia flammae". The poem quoted here is "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.[9]

This poem again displays the antinomial arrangement of Hynes: past and present in juxtaposition, and hence contrasted. It has a more subtle expression that that simply, however, as it examines a development and conflict within the mind of the poet.

The first two stanzas initiate the recollection of a past occasion which occurred at the same place in which the poet now is. The two incidents (past and present) are connected thematically in that they both involve a horse-drawn vehicle ("the waggonette" and the "chaise": it is perhaps Hardy's intention to point the atmosphere of the two occasions by the difference in the character of the two carriages, "the waggonette" being far more prosaic and functional than "a chaise"), and they occur in the same spot. The present occasion gives rise to a recollection of the past because the physical conditions serve to remind the poet of a former time. Yet the conditions of the present are considerably different: the first episode was "in dry March weather", and

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[9] C.P., pp. 330-331.

at night. In the present, it is raining, although we are not told what time of day it is. Therefore it is paradoxical when the poet says he can "see" the couple in the dry March night (how can he "see" far at night?), whilst he is aware also that the "slope" is "now glistening wet". We are of course aware that Hardy means by "see", "imagine", or "re-create imaginatively", yet by using the word without making its metaphorical meaning overt he conveys an impression of immediacy and vividness. The first stanza shows him aware of both immediate and imaginative reality, and by his expression of this he implies that the two are closely interrelated. Time separates and unites the two occasions. Besides the general metaphor of seeing, the poem establishes a metaphorical connection between Time and physical distance. The poet "looks behind" to the road not only because he has passed it physically, but also temporally. When he says he can see the figures "distinctly yet", the line has a double meaning: he is near enough physically to see them, and his age is near enough to the point in Time at which they were there for his memory and imagination to be able to recall them. This is part of the traditional metaphor of life as a journey which Hardy uses in this poem, and uses more clearly at its close.

The way Hardy refers to the pair of lovers is significant. One of them is "myself", clearly recognised by the poet, as if the figure were as he is now. Yet his lover is merely "a girlish form", indistinct and not individualised, as if the process of memory were failing. Because we know the date and context of the poem, we can be too ready to supply ourselves with the information that he is alluding to his wife, but whether or not he is doing so, she is a remarkably

remote figure. Later in the poem she fades even more (representing the process of "shrinking"), first to a "phantom figure", and then is referred to as a decidedly neutral "it" in the last stanza. The process of recollection recalls experience as both familiar, with the poet recognising himself, and strange, as symbolised in the vaguely realised figure of the woman.

This contrast, or paradox, of recollection is clearer in the third stanza. The poet first disclaims the importance of the details of the episode, and even its consequences. If we refer the poem to Emma Hardy, "to what it led" must mean marriage and married life, and when Hardy claims that this "matters not much" the lines take on a startling significance. He is in fact denying the importance of the episode at all. Yet the next three lines reverse this assertion completely, and give the episode, its details and its consequences, the utmost significance in his life, and connect it with "hope" and "feeling", the qualities which Hardy saw as peculiarly human. Yet because we are first presented with a denial of its importance, we assume that "hope" and "feeling" have begun to die in the poet already, as has his memory, and as a result of the decay and ageing which is a central theme in the poem. Simply by his stating the importance of the episode, however, we see that the poet is still aware of it.

The fourth stanza reinforces the positive aspect of the poem. The episode was, or is now, a "moment of vision". Its importance to the poet is paramount, and it is more important than anything that has ever happened or ever will happen at the same spot. It is of eternal significance and value to the subjective mind of the poet. Hardy is

here, however, equally aware of the external reality: he knows that the expansive "time of such quality" "filled but a minute". He knows that "never" will anything be so meaningful "to one mind", but is aware also of the "thousands more" who have been in the same place. The contrast of "one" and "thousands" points the ambiguity of the experience. The moment is both absolute and minimal, as are the human beings involved. This fact throws an ironic cast on the poet's assertions of the value of the "minute", and also makes it still more precious and invaluable. The contrast in the absolute terms of Time, "ever" and "never" (lines 1 and 3) in this stanza symbolises the ambiguity of the "moment", and of this poem as a whole, and is taken up again later.

Stanza five places the past episode within the vast cosmic scale of the evolutionary process. The "primaeval rocks" are immeasurably old, and hence symbolise permanence, as opposed to "the transitory", which, it is implied, is represented by such human episodes as the poet values. Yet "the transitory" is permanent to the mind and imagination, and the rocks are significant not in respect of their age, but only insofar as they serve as reminders of the fleeting moment which is so important to the poet. They have no meaning in themselves, but only as part of the subjective perception of the individual. This supreme confidence contrasts with the introduction of the Time myth in the next stanza. In the first chapter of this thesis I suggested that the god of Time was a symbolic representation of the "realities" in man's experience, the facts of his physical existence which he cannot avoid. Time in this stanza is clearly connected with the Immanent Will in The Dynasts — both work in "mindless rote" — and Hardy is utilising a connection he has established elsewhere. Here it is suggested that Time

has power only over physical existence: Time has claimed "the substance" (both the actual occasion and the living woman), but the poet's mind can re-create a "phantom figure", and thus transcend the power of Time, although "phantom" makes this an ironic victory.

Whether or not it is his conscious intention, Hardy achieves a significant double meaning (to call it a pun would be misleading) in the word "alight" in the last line of this stanza. It means not only "get down" but also "illuminated", not literally, but metaphorically, in the spiritual sense. It captures the vivid experience of the moment that he wishes to communicate, and connects, if we think of a fading glow or of dying flames, with the "shrinking" process of the poet's memory and of the poem.

The final stanza brings all these divergent strands of the poem into a focus. The poem returns to the parallel between Time and distance that is established at the start, and returns to the present and the rain, although in a sense the poem has never moved away from the present, as the poet's recollection is conditioned by the present throughout. The figure, which in the previous stanza has mysteriously become solitary (because of the imaginative return of the poet to the present?) slowly diminishes, as the poet moves away from the hill, and as he grows so old, and incapable of "hope" and "feeling" to be incapable of remembering the past vitally. The completeness of the severance with the past is emphasised: it is "the very last time" that the poet will be here either physically or mentally, and he will return "never again". This final "never", I suggested above, contrasts with, and negates, the hopeful "ever" in the first line of the fourth stanza, which is the high point

of the poem. The metaphor with which he describes his age is that of the hourglass, the traditional accompaniment of the Time deity, and this final stanza implies the triumph of Time. It admits the eventual connection in the poet of the physical and mental faculties, which have been separated throughout the rest of the poem, and hence implies that the eternal, the importance of a moment in Time to the subjective mind, is connected to the temporal, the physical body, and hence will die. This is the ultimate irony and tragedy of man in conflict with Time, for the eternity of memory and imagination is subject to the conditions of mortality as is the individual. Hardy realises the same thing in poems like "His Immortality".[10]

The fourth poem I consider here is "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
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.

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[10] C.P., pp. 130-131.

They change to a high new house,
He, she, all of them — aye,
Clocks and carpets and chairs
On the lawn all day,
And brightest things that are theirs ....
Ah, no; the years, the years;
Down their carved names the rain-drop ploughs.[11]

This poem would seem perhaps to repeat the temporal structure of "The Self-Unseeing" and "At Castle Boterel", that is, a direct contrast between the past and present, but nowhere in this poem does Hardy use the past tense. Rather than a past occasion and a present one, we are given, paradoxically, two presents. Because of the logical impossibility of this, and because the last line of the poem, and the last line of each stanza, indicate change, we separate the two presents into actual present, and past. The poem is written, or spoken, or thought, "during wind and rain", and these conditions keep breaking in upon the recollection. The imaginative process is so vivid, however, that it cannot conceive of what has passed as being other than actual and present, thus even when the wind, rain, and death force themselves on the poet's attention he is unable to relate them to what he imagines as existing now. There is therefore no real synthesis between past and present experience, but rather a series of stark contrasts, symbolising the poet's inability to comprehend what has happened to his life.

This contrast is emphasised largely by the pattern of affirmation and negation throughout the poem ("yea" or "aye" in the second line of each stanza, followed by "Ah, no" in the sixth line). This represents a continual process of recollection of the past followed by a sudden remembrance that things are not so in the present. This is characteristic of the old person, who "lives in the past", or of the absent-

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[11] C.P., pp. 465-6.

minded person who is forever forgetting his immediate surroundings. The "aye" or "yea" implies "yes, that's the way it was, I remember", and the "Ah, no" a recall to immediate reality: "Ah, no, I'm forgetting myself". My paraphrase obviously makes Hardy's meaning more clumsy, and more comic (I would stress that here he is not attempting to be amusing), than it is in the poem, but the general sense of what I mean can be followed. On the other hand, if we take what I have called the past as the actual present, and not the imagined present, the negative and the last line in each stanza take on a different significance. "Ah, no" represents the dread of recognition of change and death which the tendency to look into the future brings. The poet is speaking from the point of view of an idyllic present and responding with shock to what he realises will happen in the course of Time. The fact that Hardy does not implicate himself as poet closely in the events of the poem — he speaks always of "they" — makes it more likely that he is implying a retrospective point of view, yet even if this is so "Ah, no" does not lose its point as a prophetic warning.

I said above that present and past were presented in stark contrast to each other, and have shown how the contrast in affirmation and negation outlines this. There is also the obvious contrast in symbolic imagery. The images of the present are of bad weather, symbolising the Winter of man's life, and hence death, which comes at the close of the poem. Hardy makes this traditional imagery quite clear: the leaves are "sick", the birds "white" (the unhealthy white of pallor and death), and the rose is "rotten". The antithesis of these images of the present is the images of Spring, symbolising youth, life, and health, which belong

to the past: the music of the first stanza, traditional symbol of order (as in "The Self-Unseeing"), the garden as a symbol of religious bliss and pastoral innocence, and generally the adjectives expressive of happiness.

There are, however, more subtle connections between the two points in Time, which create something of an impression that the two opposed occasions and moods are different aspects of one thing. On a purely technical level, for example, Hardy makes the first line of each stanza rhyme with the last, connecting them, and suggesting that what comes between is in parenthesis. The first line refers always to the past, and the last to the present, so that the contrast between them is emphasised in one sense by their connecting rhyme, and yet a link, and a similarity, is implied between them. Again, the details of the imagery reinforce the general impression of contrast, but similarities are also established. The "sick leaves" in stanza one, for example, "reel" down from the tree. This can mean they stagger or stumble, metaphorically, as if they were drunk, or because they are "sick" and dying. But a reel is also a dance, and once we realise this we connect the leaves with the music that "they" are playing. The leaves dance in ironic gaiety, because they represent a reality of which the humans are as yet unaware. If this is twisting the sense of the last line, we must turn to the fifth line. The word that stands out, probably from the whole stanza, is "mooning". It means that the candles are lighting each face like the moon, with soft, reflected illumination. Yet the moon has a traditional connection with lunacy and idiocy. If someone is "mooning about" we mean he is stupidly listless and indulges in day-

dreams. I think "mooning" here implies something of the same sense, and if so the idyll of the past is being subjected to a critical irony by the poet. The past was pleasant, but unreal in its inability to see beyond its own daydream to the inevitable realities. We are reminded of Hynes's perceptive remark about Hardy's imagery:

> The vision of youth is false because it is short-sighted, sees only the present, and ignores the fundamental truths of change and mortality. In terms of imagery, the absence of death images in the world of youth makes that world untrue.[12]

This poem does not lament overtly the inability of "they" to realise the conditions of their existence, but we gather that the poet is a (surviving) member of them, and the poem represents the jolting process of realisation which has come too late.

There are further connections between the images. In the first line of the second stanza we have the peaceful gardening symbol: "they clear the creeping moss". Connecting with this by virtue of content and alliteration is the violent image in the last line of the third stanza: ".. the rotten rose is ript from the wall". The contrast is not merely between vague gentleness, as in the simple "clear" and "creeping", and the violence of the latter line. The whole change in mood symbolises a loss of the temporary control man has over nature, that is, if we assume it is the wind that rips the rose from the wall. The authority exercised in the garden over the plants extended also to the "pet fowl"; now the wild "white storm-birds wing across". The mildness and pastoral innocence of the past has been succeeded, if not by chaos, by a wildness and ferocity which has regained control of the natural world. Similarly, "the summer tree" in the third stanza

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[12]Hynes, The Pattern of Hardy's Poetry, p. 120.

connects and contrasts with "the sick leaves" of the first.

In the last stanza the connections that are hinted at through the rest of the poem are drawn into a closer relationship. We are prepared, through the images of sickness and decay, for the poem to conclude with death. But the last line does not come with the sudden shock of contrast that characterises the last lines of the three preceding stanzas. This is because the view of the past that we are given in this last stanza is not widely removed from the present contemplation of "their" graves at the close. On the surface "they" are engaged in happy, self-centred pursuits as elsewhere in the poem: this time moving house. But the word "change" and the fact that the "new house" is "high" (the heaven of convention and popular obituaries), imply a second meaning. Furniture and possessions are disturbed in an equally unnatural way at auctions after their owners' death as when they move house.

On the whole, however, the main intention and effect of this poem is one of contrast, expressive of shock or incomprehension, or inability to come to terms with the facts that Time forces upon the poet. As such the poet is unable to conceive of the past as being past, and we have the curious phenomenon of the double present.

The final poem to be examined is "In Time of 'The Breaking of Nations'":

I

Only a man harrowing clods
    In a slow silent walk
With an old horse that stumbles and nods
    Half asleep as they stalk.

II

Only thin smoke without flame
From the heaps of couch-grass;
Yet this will go onward the same
Though Dynasties pass.

III

Yonder a maid and her wight
Come whispering by:
War's annals will cloud into night
Ere their story die.[13]

This poem is different from those I have considered so far in that the familiar temporal structure of past and present is largely irrelevant to it. It is a simple and strong assertion, written during the Great War, of faith in the regenerative, cyclic forces in nature. If Hardy is asserting the positive power of Time, however, it achieves its power in the poem precisely because he throws a heavy emphasis on the negative and destructive aspects.

We need consider only the way he describes the scenes that are presented as symbols of the natural cycle. Firstly, we have the ploughman and his horse. The man's walk is "slow" and "silent": he is tired, or old, or both, and his walk suggests a funeral march. The horse is explicitly "old" (and man and horse are connected in our mind if only because they form a team), and "stumbles" in its slow progress across the field. It "nods" because it is exhausted and decrepit, and "half-asleep". Sleep here not only carries its literal meaning, but also, because the horse is "old", its traditional metaphorical meaning of death. In the second stanza, we have another image of agricultural

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[13] C.P., p. 511.

activity, but this time it is distinctly destructive. There may also be something of this in the first stanza: the man is "harrowing" the earth, which whilst it is a distinct agricultural operation (breaking up the ground before sowing), carries connotations of pain and distress, and also of plunder and spoliation. The fire here is destroying growth, as symbolised by the grass, and yet it is itself dying: it yields only "thin smoke without flame". As such, it enforces the impression of death in the first stanza: the fire has become choked with ashes, as the vigour and passion in man and horse have been subdued by age. The fact I wish to stress is that the symbols of the positive forces of life that Hardy presents, by their fragility and decrepitude, suggest death rather than life. I reserve consideration of the last stanza until later, for Hardy's technique there is different, but again, as I shall show, death is a predominant factor.

In the Collected Poems, with reference to "The Breaking of Nations" in the poem's title, there is a footnote which refers the reader to the Book of Jeremiah. It is worth quoting not only the specific verse (20) in Chapter 51 to which Hardy refers, but the succeeding verses, as they have a close relevance to this poem. This is an instance of Hardy's use of biblical tradition, to which I referred earlier. This is something which today needs more conscious cultivation by the reader, and we are fortunate in having the reference pinpointed for us. We may notice that Hardy draws not only on the general mood and tone of the passage, but also specifically on its vocabulary:

> Thou art my battle ax and weapons of war:
> for with thee will I break in pieces the nations,
> and with thee will I destroy kingdoms;
> And with thee will I break in pieces the horse
> and his rider; and with thee will I break in pieces
> the chariot and his rider;

> With thee also will I break in pieces man and woman; and with thee will I break in pieces old and young; and with thee will I break in pieces the young man and the maid;
>
> I will also break in pieces with thee the shepherd and his flock; and with thee will I break in pieces the husbandman and his yoke of oxen; and with thee will I break in pieces captains and rulers.[14]

Hardy clearly draws his images and symbols from this passage ("man and woman", "old and young", "the young man and the maid", "the husbandman"), but instead of making them objects of destruction, he makes them stand for permanence and the forces of life. In Jeremiah, these things have the same symbolic value, but they are used to emphasise the totality of destruction (these verses come from Jeremiah's prophecy of the destruction of Babylon by Israel). The context of the passage is the destruction of war, which is obviously relevant to Hardy's poem. Jeremiah forsees the doom of the warrior, but also of every living thing; Hardy contrasts the superficially important "war's annals" with what may seem simple, but is of central significance in life. Yet we have noticed the prevalence of death in the symbols of life. Once we admit the relevance of the biblical reference, this impression is strengthened, for the vision in Jeremiah is of complete and violent annihilation, a terrifying vision of what the Great War was turning out to be to Hardy's contemporaries.

The poem rests upon another traditional basis, besides that of the Old Testament. Unless we consider the words "yonder" and "wight" (and "maid" also perhaps, although this is more normal, and occurs anyway in the passage from Jeremiah quoted above) merely examples of Hardy's love for the exotic or archaic word, they are serving a poetic purpose. Their deliberate archaism makes it reasonably clear that Hardy is in-

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[14] Jer. 51:20-23.

voking a poetic echo, in alluding deliberately to the poetry where we might find such words, the sonnets and lyrics of the Elizabethan poets. This achieves two distinct effects. Firstly it implies the whole mood of Elizabethan lyric poetry, which is consistently underscored with an elegaic note. Though it rejoices in love and its seasonal symbol, the Spring, there is a constant awareness, as in Shakespeare and Spenser, of love's transience and of the destructive effect of Time. This very fact endues Hardy's symbol of regeneration, the lovers, with some of the ambiguity of the other symbols of life. "Their story" will die, like themselves, for they are mortal. The second effect of the allusion restores some of the positive balance in the poem. By making his lovers Elizabethans, Hardy is implying the continuity of the human situation. The symbolism of the pair is strengthened because they belong to the past as well as the present: in a sense they are ghosts. The symbolism is continued into the future by the last two lines.

A similar effect is made by the last two lines of the second stanza. These activities (the harrowing, and the burning of the weeds) "will go onward the same" in the future, as they are now in the present. The line that follows: "Though Dynasties pass", throws a retrospective light on these activities. The line does not mean simply that "Dynasties" (Jeremiah's "captains and rulers") will pass in the future, but also that they are passing now, and have passed: it is in the nature of "Dynasties" to pass. "Dynasties" is in any case a word we use normally to refer to the past, particularly to ancient Egypt and to the stages of the history of China. This serves to widen the scope of the symbols of continuity even further, by implying their enduring and universal nature. "Dynasties"

has of course a somewhat specialised sense for Hardy, but even the Bonapartes, the Hapsburgs, and the Romanoffs, the dynasties of The Dynasts, have passed or are passing by the time of the poem. Yet because of the inherent ambiguity of the poem, we are led to suspect that more irony underlies such assertions than is immediately obvious. Because the man, the horse, and the fire are so mean and paltry, there is perhaps disillusioned or faintly contemptuous resignation behind the line: "Yet this will go onward the same". The same ambiguity informs the word "only" in the first line of the first two stanzas. In one sense it is drawing the obvious contrast between the seemingly insignificant episodes, and the romance of war, yet in another way it is recognising them as being insignificant. The final hope which I think the poem does express is all the more convincing and valuable because it has had to struggle through the continuous paradox which informs the poem: that is, that what is eternal and enduring is tenuous, insubstantial and momentary. Time contains and controls what is eternal.

In conclusion, I have attempted to demonstrate, over as wide a range of Hardy's poetry as possible, his preoccupation with the theme of Time. I have endeavoured to outline at least some of the different manifestations this preoccupation assumed, and in a practical examination of these poems to see how they inform and enrich his poetic achievement. I do not think we can draw any simple or immediate inferences from his concern with Time, if only because he displays this concern in so many different ways. No consistent, simple formula as to how Hardy treats Time, or responds to it, emerges either from the general treatment of the first two chapters, or the more detailed and specific examination

of this final chapter. I have, in fact, chosen five poems which differ as much as possible from each other, whilst remaining within the scope of my investigation. To impose an interpretation of Hardy's use of Time, based upon one poem or one type of poem, upon the others, serves no useful purpose: it simplifies and falsifies the nature of Hardy's poetic response. We must take into account all the forms that Hardy's concern with Time assumes and consider them together, to come to a total understanding of its importance to him. The one thing that we can state quite simply is that Time does have an overwhelming, almost obsessive, importance for Hardy as a poet. I believe that this does not necessarily reflect any purely "philosophical" interest, but represents a convenient way for him as a poet to impose a pattern, or order, upon his experience. It can be seen repeatedly that a Time relationship imposes a structural order upon the poems, and I think this is a significant pointer to a tendency that might not always assume such clear embodiment. Time as a central reference for experience has the added advantage of being enriched with literary and cultural associations, as we have seen. I am not suggesting, however, that Hardy uses the theme of Time, in general, as a short cut to writing poetry: if this were so a formulaic approach would be more evident in the poems, and more feasible in criticism. As it is, the variety of Hardy's responses to, and use of, the Time theme defeats attempts such as Hynes's, which is critically valid, but partial, to explain the poems as a whole in terms of a simple pattern.

I do not believe that such a simple explanation, either of the use of Time, or any other symbolic or structural concern, is to be found,

and this not because the critic has not searched deeply enough, but because there is more subtlety about Hardy's poetic technique than is commonly assumed. This final chapter, in its relatively detailed examination of specific poems, may seem to have clouded the issues raised in the previous two chapters, but it is intended to serve as a development of these two chapters in demonstrating what the Time theme achieves poetically. I do not use his concern with Time to "prove" anything about the poetry, or about Hardy, but rather draw attention to his use of the theme throughout the Collected Poems, and hence to the body of conflicting and contradictory meaning that becomes associated with the word and the concept. Time becomes the opposite of a short cut to invoke a certain response, but becomes enriched with a wealth of ambiguity and a multitude of associations. In this way Hardy develops the meaning and significance of his poetic expression, and it becomes apparent that the approach of modern criticism is not entirely irrelevant to his poetry. I believe that the kind of consideration that I have given to Time could be extended to Hardy's other dominant concerns, and to the main elements of his imagery, in order to explore more thoroughly the peculiar nature and power of his poetry.

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