

PENNED IN THE FIRST PERSON

Setting and Theme in the Lyrics of Thomas Hardy

by

Brian Green

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To Melissa
sine qua non

PREFACE

This thesis arises from the conviction that the Hardyian quality of mind, a mind at once tentative and courageous, is of supreme importance in our time and is most distinctly and decisively present in Hardy's short poems. The chief aim of this thesis has been to offer students of Hardy thematic and aesthetic guidelines for reading his poems so as to encounter that quality of mind first-hand. In order to develop those guidelines, I have rooted them in primary materials and biographical details germane to demonstrating Hardy's achievement as a poet. The main title of this thesis, for instance, is meant to emphasise the complex relationship between the poet and the man: culled from the preface of his third volume of verse, *Time's Laughingstocks and Other Verses*, the simple yet apposite phrase, "penned in the first person," is the invention of Hardy himself.

Other acknowledgements, professional and personal, need also to be made. In this thesis several currents of influence converge, and I must mention their springs. A considerable debt of gratitude goes to Prof. David Gillham, sometime Head of the Department of English at the University of Cape Town, who taught me that great poetry is a living instrument of the intellect. Mr Brian Lee and Prof. John van der Westhuizen, both at Cape Town, taught me the value of accurate scholarship, and I want to thank them for that. I should like to thank, too, Mr Timothy Cribb and Dr Adrian Poole, both at Cambridge, for sharing with me their compelling, humane flair for literature. For his kind and magnanimous interest in my work on Hardy, it is a pleasure for me to thank here also Prof. Michael Millgate, of the University of Toronto, whose critical and biographical studies of Hardy's career as a novelist and an illustrious literary personage of the early twentieth-century electrified my curiosity about Hardy's career as a poet. The following colleagues will know that I am indeed grateful to them for their helpful comments, practical and moral support, and academic example: Prof. John Cartwright and Dr Rodney Edgecombe, both at Cape Town, and Mr Alastair Henderson, Dr Paul Edmunds, and Prof. Michiel Heyns, all at Stellenbosch. Finally, in Dr Michael Beatty, also at Cape Town, I am grateful to have had a thesis supervisor with a fine mind and, that rare faculty, a good ear: whatever clarity this study has is due mainly to his generous acumen.

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Finally, I owe a large debt to my two daughters, Esther Green and Susanna Green, who sweetened my labours, refreshed me perpetually, and loyally and on trust had to make many indispensable sacrifices over the years. But my profoundest and most personal indebtedness is to my wife, Melissa Green, who, with her good spirits, patience, caring, and intelligent understanding, inspired and sustained me throughout.

ABSTRACT

Recognising the difficulty of making a representative selection from Hardy's short poems, this thesis aims at providing the student of literature with (a) *some principles and guidelines* for picking out such poems as are Hardy's most characteristic, accomplished, and memorable; and (b) *a multidimensional context*--biographical, aesthetic, social, historical, and philosophical--within which to read those poems.

The introductory chapter addresses the problem: What should be the approach of the student of literature to Hardy's lyrics, in view of the reductiveness of much biographical criticism, on the one hand, and the persistence of derogatory estimates of Hardy's capacities as a poet of the twentieth century on the other? The approach proposed is that the reader should start by taking Hardy at his word and assume that most of his lyrics, even his first-person lyrics, are neither directly autobiographical nor self-expressive, but (in Hardy's words) "dramatic or impersonative even when not explicitly so." Accordingly, this chapter discusses Victorian and modern theories of drama, and examines criteria for deciding when a lyric is dramatic. What emerges from the discussion forms the simple premise of this thesis: that Hardy's first-person lyrics derive their dramatic force from his use of the element of setting. The chapter ends with *a working definition of a dramatic lyric*--a short (anything up to fifty lines, say) first-person poem in which the speaker probes his mind and heart within a physical setting or landscape.

In chapter 2, existing views of the function of setting in Hardy's lyric poetry are found to be handicapped by inadequate theories of literary setting. Instead, the idea of a symbolic congruity between setting and action, and the concept of setting as spatial imagery--not merely places and objects that take up space in the fictional world of a literary work, but also dimensions of space, direction of movement, and details of landscape (such as marks, weather, and animals)--serve as the basis for discussion. A lyric setting is symbolic when it embodies a meaning beyond itself that is germane both to the local theme and structure of that lyric and also to what might be called, provisionally, Hardy's controlling, master theme, a theme which permeates all his work and comes up for detailed discussion in chapter 4. *Hardy's use of setting in his first-person lyrics*, then, is dramatic in the sense that he uses spatial images to symbolise the thoughts, feelings, and values of individual speakers.

Meanwhile chapter 3 refines the definition of a dramatic lyric in terms of content, what the genre imitates. Refutation on historical and theoretical grounds of the charge against Hardy of self-expression makes room for the lyric self that is characteristically Hardy in mode as well as matter to be described. The Hardy lyric speaker exists as an autonomous fiction (not as a satellite of Hardy), communes with himself (not with the reader), and expresses a Victorian-Edwardian mentality (not necessarily Hardy's). The mode of Hardy's lyric self consists in a wide, differentiated range of tones. The subject-matter of Hardy's lyric self is the disinterested "exploration of reality" by "the exhibition of human nature" (both phrases are his). This chapter carefully charts his progress towards a defining aesthetic of poetic form and content. That is, evolving out of his application of Victorian-Edwardian ideas to life, and out of his assimilation of the human passions to the principles of Gothic architecture, *the final definition of a Hardy dramatic lyric* arrived at is this: a short poem (of not more than fifty lines); the pronoun "I" representing a self-communing, autonomous thinker; a symbolic arrangement of spatial images; and at least one of a gamut of contemporary philosophical responses to the disruptive manifestations of Nature, either as a non-human force in the universe or as the source of unruly individual passions in regulated social life.

The idea of a *master theme* as one possible informing context for the symbolic settings in Hardy's dramatic lyrics occupies chapter 4. Fully granting that Hardy's views of reality constitute no systematic philosophy, "being," as he put it, "mere impressions that frequently change," this chapter surveys and substantiates a single, complex perspective on those lyrics. Hardy's views are sufficiently coherent to enable one to formulate, if only tentatively, a controlling concern which draws together various Victorian and perennial thematic concepts that persist throughout his prose writings--his notebooks, letters, autobiography, essays, prefaces, novels, and short stories--but mainly his novels.

One finds that *the Hardyian temper* is the disposition of a mind creatively absorbed by the interrelation between human and non-human orders of being--the ethical and the cosmic processes--as postulated by Victorian social and natural scientists. By "the cosmic process" is meant an amoral, non-sentient order in which volatile energies of inconceivable main and magnitude stream, flare, and lash; an order in which chance, causation, mutability, and evolution obtain; an order in which necessity governs organic and inorganic phenomena as well as heredity and sexual instinct. By "the ethical process" is meant the gradual sensitising of an immanent, unconscious Will by the human consciousness that all organic creatures belong to one family. The ethical process infiltrates the cosmic process, and induces into it, morality and sympathy.

Analysis of Hardy's poetic manifesto, the preface to *Late Lyrics and Earlier* (1922), reveals Hardy as a responsible and optimistic poet, for whom the ethical process has an immediate, practical goal: to improve human nature and society. Hardy's method of achieving universal compassion is to marry religion and science by means of a poetry that candidly and flexibly explores reality. And the reality Hardy is chiefly concerned to explore is (what he called) "the Worst," the physical and psychological suffering due to the (apparent) supremacy of the cosmic process over the ethical, or to the failure of human intellectual constructs--the failure, that is, of man's moral and social schemes either (being too strict) to accommodate or (being too flabby) to contain his natural instincts. For, paradoxically, Hardy believed that the moderate good of which man is capable would be achieved, not in spite of, but because of his suffering. Some trauma is necessary to advance the ethical process; suffering itself is essential to eliminate suffering--in short, only through pain is pain overcome. Hence *the Hardyian ethos* is most decidedly affirmative of human dignity and the value of life, in keeping with what Hardy took to be the force of the great tragedies of Western civilisation.

Chapters 5 and 6 address the question of *the form Hardy's master theme takes in his first-person lyrics*. How *do* they represent his master theme of man's collective consciousness evolving through the medium of pain into a union of fellow feeling and logical thinking? The answer is: by dramatising a range of rival, and hence interlocking, philosophical positions to which speakers resort in order to withstand the (apparent) supremacy of the cosmic process over the ethical. Hardy dramatises his exploration of reality by creating imaginary speakers to be the bearers of the main aspects of conceptual orientations towards "the Worst," and by embodying those orientations in spatial imagery. That is, having assimilated the orientation or framework of a philosophical position in order to make some sense of the world, a first-person speaker can, in terms of that orientation or framework, critically interpret his or her own sensuous and psychological experience. A philosophical position becomes a source of solace when it functions as a means of consoling a speaker by reinforcing his or her sense of personal identity and value--the personal conviction that one's life is somehow worth all the trouble it inevitably costs.

Chapter 5 describes three fundamental areas of thought and feeling that Hardy dramatises as *sources of solace* in his first-person lyrics, three forms of knowledge: *absolute knowledge*; its converse, *nescience*; and *relative knowledge*. Within these broad categories Hardy individuates specific shades of response, leading

topics, and dominant tones that characterise each form of knowledge. For instance, in one group of lyrics, Hardy dramatises absolute knowledge in the form of revelation or visionary insight, which has a distinctive imaginative tact and a tone of joyful celebration and optimism; in another group, nescience is marked by tones of defiance, derision, and despair, yet all are tones of affirmation; in other of Hardy's dramatic lyrics, relative knowledge springs from the assumption of the intrinsic significance of being human, and hence mortal, in the world, and of being, more importantly, not merely an object, but a person in relation to other people; so that a sense of dignity, beauty, courage, compassion, and individual moral freedom dominates these poems.

Chapter 6 describes three groups of spatial images--images of enclosure, extension, and dimension--that reflect the sources of solace discussed in chapter 5. Spatial imagery in Hardy's dramatic lyrics is not a thematic determinant, but the general, flexible correlation of image to philosophical position is what enables the critic to do two things. One is to focus on the spatial orientation of imagery as *an index to consciousness*; that is, to assign psychological as well as philosophical values to spatial images according to the thematic emphasis in a dramatic lyric, to their relation to other groups of spatial images, and to conventional symbolism. The other thing the correlation between setting and theme enables the critic to do is link up a miscellany of key spatial images into a map that incorporates and reflects the ramifying topics of Hardy's master theme; that is, construct *a network of similar settings* on principles of decorum or appropriate association.

Images of dimension, for instance, structure a speaker's relation to the world by means of references to high/low, on/off, to/from, behind/before, up/down, across/through, east/west, and so on--each with a peculiarly Hardyan thematic value. But the fundamental polarity in Hardy's dramatic lyrics, the conflict between absolute and relative knowledge, manifests itself typically in the contrast between images of enclosure, containment, constriction, limitation, and regulation, and images of extension, openness, expansion, release, and radiation. The contrast between these two groups of spatial images is most notably represented by a tension between exterior and interior space, outdoors and indoors, heath and hearth; and the central image of enclosure in all eight volumes of Hardy's short poems is the house, especially the ancestral dwelling.

Finally, chapter 6 relates setting to theme in the group of lyrics universally considered the peak of Hardy's poetic achievement, *Poems of 1912-13*. If there is a correlation between setting and theme in Hardy's first-person lyrics, and if theme is an element of genre, then the settings in this group of poems are an index to their peculiar elegiac quality. The psychological structure of this sequence of poems comprises *a pattern of tension between images of enclosure, extension, and dimension that enacts the process of the bereaved husband's mourning*--a process complicated by emotional estrangement between husband and wife, his shock at the suddenness of her death, and his denial of her importance to his life and identity; and hence a consolation rendered incomplete by the husband's failing to accept the indelibility of marital scars and to achieve the element of solace he needs most: a sense of a personal future for himself. Hardy, however, resolves the psychological tension in some degree by connecting it to an embedded stratum of ancient Cornish significance. He embodies his vision of the husband's consolation in a type of symbolic setting that is more appropriate to epic tragedy than elegy. The spatial images in the first half of *Poems of 1912-13* reflect the characters of the husband and wife; and Hardy uses these settings as characters to present the psychological action of the widower's creating a sense of a future for himself as person and as human being. Initially, the house and the coast stand opposed; but then, in a pattern of dimension and physical limitation, they become identified. Together they contrast with the phantom's boundless domain, whose awesome elemental forces of negation constantly threaten to reduce the husband's life-affirming self to despair. For

although the *elements of epic tragedy* create a sense of a dignified future for the bereaved protagonist, they ultimately also imply that men exist in a flux of time and waste. No doubt Hardy's use of setting is richer and more complex than the analysis of any one group of his lyrics might suggest, but by isolating and defining the spatial imagery of a dramatic speaker's action--here it is a bereaved husband's mental process of mourning--one does, in a sense, describe the imagination of the poet. To that extent, chapter 6 provides this thesis with an especially apt finish.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- B** *Thomas Hardy: A Biography* by Michael Millgate (London: Oxford UP, 1982)
- CL** *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy* ed. Richard L. Purdy and Michael Millgate , 7 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978-88)
- CPW** *The Complete Poetical Works of Thomas Hardy* ed. Samuel Hynes, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982-85)
- H&C** *The Poetry of Thomas Hardy: A Handbook and Commentary* by J. O. Bailey (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1970)
- L&W** *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy* ed. Michael Millgate (London: Macmillan, 1984)
- Life** *The Life of Thomas Hardy 1840-1928* comp. Florence E. Hardy (1928 and 1930; London: Macmillan, 1962)
- LN** *The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy* ed. Lennart A. Björk, 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1985)
- PN** *The Personal Notebooks of Thomas Hardy* ed. Richard H. Taylor (London: Macmillan, 1978)
- PW** *Thomas Hardy's Personal Writings* ed. Harold Orel (London: Macmillan, 1967)

Quotations of Shakespeare are taken from *The Complete Works* edited by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986). Unless otherwise indicated, quotations of standard poets are taken from *The Norton Anthology of English Poetry* edited by Alexander W. Allison et al., 3rd ed. (New York: Norton, 1983).

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTORY: THE TROUBLE WITH HARDY'S LYRICS, AND A SOLUTION

Promoting in the *Edinburgh Review* the image of Hardy as an accomplished poet, his friend Edmund Gosse writes: "still, after twenty years, there survives a tendency to take the verse of Mr Hardy, abundant and solid as it has become, as a mere subsidiary and ornamental appendage to his novels" (444). Gosse's commendatory protest is corroborated the very next year by Middleton Murry's definitive editorial claim: "We discover all that our elders discover in Mr Hardy's novels; we see more than they in his poetry. To our mind it exists superbly in its own-right; it is not lifted into significance upon the glorious substructure of the novels" (82). Critics, however, have generally been loath to assign as much value to Hardy's verse as to his novels. And Gosse and Murry express an opinion that has taken more than half a century to infiltrate Hardy criticism: Hardy's verse marks not a dwindling but the acme of creative power, and vindicates his decision to stop writing novels.¹

If Hardy's verse may be regarded as a major achievement, then the short poems are unmistakably so. Until the 1970s, the short poems usually received only a single chapter in any book on Hardy's work.² Twenty years ago the number of books in English devoted primarily to his short poems was three;³ today it is sixteen.⁴ The increase seems not only deserved but overdue.⁵ As one recent critic acknowledges, "In our own time he has been accepted as one of the major poets of the century, and with some critics, at least, his novels have been forced to take second place" (Southerington, *Vision* 152). The present study arises from my own conviction that the *Complete Poetical Works* is as considerable a literary achievement as the fourteen novels taken together.

Unfortunately, the prestige of Hardy's short poems is problematical. For those who enjoy Hardy's poems, "the great need," writes R. P. Blackmur, "is some sort of canon--a criterion more for exclusion than

¹ According to Norman Page, Hardy's decision "has produced its own mythology" (*Hardy* 161): e.g., Albert Guerard avers that *Jude the Obscure* is a thematic and formal cul-de-sac (*Essays* 1-2); William Horwath believes Hardy gave up fiction "because he could not live with the implications implicit in the kinds of characters he became almost obsessed with . . . the frustrated pseudo-modern character"; Jeremy Steele argues that poetry gave Hardy intellectual and emotional release. It may simply be, of course, that Hardy acted out of pique at the bad reception of *Jude* (*L&W* 309-10). But no explanation that omits these two facts can hope to be reliable: that Hardy wrote verse before and while he wrote novels ("General Preface" 48; *L&W* 319); and that he told Vere Collins he "never cared very much about writing novels" and "had written quite enough novels" (42).

² E.g., Chew 140-62; Johnson, *Art* 259-95; Guerard, *Hardy* 160-89; Carpenter 153-85; Howe 160-86; Trevor Johnson, *Hardy* 29-87. Notable exceptions are McDowall, who extends his discussion to four chapters (193-275), and the Thomas Hardy Centennial Issue of *The Southern Review* 6 (1940), which includes eight articles on the short poems (2-108, 179-92).

³ Hickson (but a tabulatory rather than a critical study); Southworth; and Hynes, *Pattern*.

⁴ In addition to the three just mentioned, there are in chronological order of publication: Marsden; Bailey, *H&C*; Davie, *Poetry*; Zietlow, *Moments*; Paulin; Pinion, *Commentary*; Prasad; Richardson; Gibson and Johnson; Clements and Grindle; Taylor, *Poetry*; Buckler, *Poetry*; and Das. The short poems receive four chapters in Brooks, *Structure*.

⁵ William Rutland disagrees: "Leaving the *Dynasts* out of account, would Hardy's place in English literature in the year 2037 be as high on the merits of his collections of lyrical poetry if he had not written the

for judgement" (37; see also 56). F. R. Southernington puts the problem this way: "A central body of shorter poems aside, there is a remarkable lack of consensus on the kind and value of his poetry. . . . forty years after his death his reputation as a poet still rests on the same central core of verses."⁶ But surely, with verse as difficult to value right as Hardy's is, the existence of a traditional core is even more remarkable.⁷ Why, if Hardy the poet is more highly esteemed today than ever before, has the core remained the same? It is my purpose in this chapter to oppugn the standing appraisal of Hardy's short poems. I am going to demonstrate that the appraisal, which has gone virtually unchallenged by critics and editors, rests upon what appears to be patronising preconceptions and slender evidence. Admittedly, I cannot claim to provide the one, indisputably true and definitive assessment of all the poems, because the vastness of Hardy's achievement as a poet defies reductive generalisation. But what I mean to do instead is to argue that the accepted appraisal is unsatisfactory, and then to propose an approach to the short poems that will lead to a valuation which is logically firmer than the standard one. My ultimate goal is to provide the student of literature with some guidelines for picking out the best of Hardy's lyrics. And the task will have been a worthwhile one, if those guidelines give the student some sense of being made alive and responsive to the mental energies and emotional states Hardy has embodied in his poems--a sense of fresh discovery, of the eye "still growing" (Hopkins, *Poems* 127).

I

The first point to be made about the standing appraisal is a preliminary one but instructive. Editors and critics of the short poems have been curiously confident in restricting admission to the traditional core. The orthodox valuation is evident, for instance, in this smug statement by Richard Carpenter: "Of the some nine hundred poems in the *Collected Poems* of 1925, Hardy's reputation as a major poet must rest on not more than some fifteen or twenty. Quite possibly this is more than enough" (153).⁸ Even a cursory survey of anthologies of English verse since 1928 confirms that only an inconsiderable portion--between one and two per cent--of James Gibson's edition of *The Complete Poems* forms the accepted nucleus. Coming from five of the eight volumes, though mostly from *Satires of Circumstance*, the canonised poems--those definitively considered by most critics to be Hardy's best--seem to be: "Neutral Tones," "I Look Into My Glass," "Drummer Hodge," "The Darkling Thrush," "In Tenebris I," "Channel Firing," "Wessex Heights," "I Found Her Out There," "The Voice," "After a Journey," "At Castle Boterel," "During Wind and Rain," "In Time of 'The Breaking of Nations,'" and "Afterwards."⁹

Actually, however, the whole idea of a canon is hypothetical and contentious. One recusant is Mark Van Doren, according to whom: "There is no core of pieces, no inner set of classic or perfect poems" (84; see also Davie, *Poetry* 27-28). Another is Philip Larkin, who becomes vehement in his rejection of a core when

novels? No balanced critic to-day can doubt the answer to be no" (264). For fuller discussions of the glacially slow recognition of Hardy's poetic art, see Morgan, "Reputation" and Gibson and Johnson 11-25.

⁶ *Vision* 152-53. More recently, Robert McCarthy writes: "A generally recognized difficulty in any critical appraisal of Thomas Hardy's poetry is the problem of culling forth from the poet's dauntingly various production some unobjectionable core of significant texts" ("Visionary" 85).

⁷ The difficulty is, in David Wright's words, "to make up one's mind how good, and/or how bad, almost any particular poem of Hardy's is" (16). As the key to understanding and evaluating Hardy's poems, Samuel Hynes offers "the eternal conflict between irreconcilables" (*Pattern* [vii]; see also 49-54; cf. Marsden 108). R. P. Blackmur's standard for selection is Hardy's "genuine habit of seeing" that "discovers the form" of a poem (63).

⁸ Similar views are expressed by Brown (147) and Morrell (58).

⁹ See Quiller-Couch 991-97; Church and Bozman xvi; Aldington 793-99; Auden and Pearson xiii-iv; Hayward xviii; Freer and Andrew v; Kermode and Hollander xi; Abrams, *Anthology 2*: xxv-vi; MacBeth v.

he charges Roy Morrell with "parrot[ing] the usual stuff" about most of Hardy's short poems not being worthy of serious attention. Larkin then concludes: "may I trumpet the assurance that one reader at least would not wish Hardy's *Collected Poems* a single page shorter, and regards it as many times over the best body of poetic work this century so far has to show?" ("Critic" 179; see n8 above). There is, in fact, no indefeasible warrant for reducing Hardy's corpus of short poems to a puny conglomeration, especially since, when he published a book of his poems, it is quite possible that he arranged them artistically--as one continuous work--making his "choice after full knowledge."¹⁰ As James Hepburn puts it: "Here is the problem of Thomas Hardy: everyone knows that his poetry is better than our criticism can make it out to be, but no one knows how to open up the critical ground without letting the place be flooded with vague rhetoric" (54). The canonical question, accordingly, remains an open one and no amount of posturing on either side will affect that fact. Nevertheless, the almost consistent misrepresentation of Hardy's poetic achievement is symptomatic, as I shall try to show, of a radical fallacy in current approaches to his short poems.

II

Anyone, however, who aims at enlarging the traditional core of Hardy's short poems must negotiate two obstacles: the limitations of Hardy's poetry and the influence of F. R. Leavis's celebrated quashing of Hardy's reputation as a poet--"his rank as a major poet rests upon a dozen poems" (*Bearings* 53). The obstacles resemble Philip Larkin's apparent dilemma when he decides that the reasons for Hardy's lack of good critics are "either Hardy's work is not good enough to warrant their attention, or it is not of a kind that interests them." Larkin buries the first alternative and somewhat overstates his opinion of the second, imputing to modern critics excessive sophistication and an inability to "do much for" Hardy. To escape the dilemma he postulates a non-existent "true Hardy critic" ("Critic" 174-75). In his exasperation, however, Larkin oversimplifies a complex issue, first by presenting it as strict choices, and then by truculently shifting all the responsibility onto the critics--a gesture which can only inhibit the possibility of a reappraisal of Hardy's short poems.¹¹

To concede that many, perhaps rather more than half, of those poems are flawed or unsuccessful is not necessarily to compromise on my essential aim of securing the prestige of the remainder. As Edmund Blunden says, "Were the *Collected Poems* to be reduced to a fifth of their number, or a tenth, the remaining pieces would exhibit an impressive variety as well as an organic excellence" (249). Since most of Hardy's staunchest admirers have faced the embarrassing facts about his verse, it would be otiose to rehearse them here in any great detail.¹² A brief conspectus of weaknesses will suffice.

Much of Hardy's verse is, it is true, deficient in variety and competence.¹³ The subject-matter of many poems is undeniably "narrow and monotonous," "occasional and incidental," and predictable in thought and

¹⁰ *L&W* 323. In his "Apology" prefaced to *Late Lyrics and Earlier*, Hardy writes of the "irrelation" between poems: "I must trust for right note-catching to those finely-touched spirits who can divine without half a whisper, whose intuitiveness is proof against all the accidents of inconsequence" (*CPW* 2: 322). William Buckler claims that Hardy "included and excluded poems, juxtaposed poems, grouped poems, held poems over, and we may be sure that the *Collected Poems* met with his approval for the way they were ordered as well as for the way they were dispersed" ("Assessment" 253).

¹¹ Similarly, T. R. M. Creighton's introduction is ultimately unconvincing, because he (perhaps too zealously) eulogises Hardy's "supreme articulacy" (*Poems* xvi), glossing over all possible imperfections.

¹² The question of style and subject-matter in Hardy's poems is complex. For a summary of traits, see Hynes, *Pattern* 56-73, 89-108, and "Badnesses"; Page, *Hardy* 154-83; Marsden 1-11; Grundy 1-17.

¹³ T. S. Eliot says that there are "three qualities which are seldom found together except in the greatest poets: abundance, variety, and complete competence" ("*Memoriam*" 328).

feeling.¹⁴ In its philosophical content, too, and also in the fact that Hardy hedges his propagation of that content, the verse is rebarbative.¹⁵ T. S. Eliot's response is tartly epigrammatic: "Hardy's work would be better for a better philosophy, or none at all."¹⁶ Stylistically, Hardy's short poems are questionable on the grounds of their weird and awkward diction, contorted syntax, and mechanical, cacophonous metrics.¹⁷ Perhaps Hardy himself is partly to blame for the disappointing reception given his poems, because he was determined to shape an idiom wholly his own. In defending his metrical perverseness, for instance, Hardy invokes the Gothic art-principle of spontaneity concealing design (*L&W* 323). Hardy's defence, however, has encouraged his critics to set aside their usual standards. Donald Davie, for instance, takes Hardy at his word, resorts to the mundane analogy of Victorian civil engineering, and writes a critique that ultimately indicts Hardy for "tacitly surrendering the proudest claims traditionally made for the act of the poetic imagination." But Davie's critique rests on the unlikely belief that all defects and oddities in Hardy's poems are deliberately "engineered." And in restricting the poems to a single, reductive, and possibly irrelevant context--that of scientific humanism--Davie destroys their expressive, multidimensional, and visionary effect (*Poetry* 3-12, 22-23, 62).

Fortunately for Hardy, however, most of his admirers have retained the ordinary canons of literary judgement, and made the most of the apparently incurable defects of ugly style and trivial substance.¹⁸ My own view is that one does not appreciate the superiority of Hardy's best poems without first recognising the idiosyncrasies they share with his less pleasing poems. The essential Hardyan qualities which make some poems good can only be adequately discussed after the differences between good and bad poems have been considered. To use an organic metaphor, in cutting Hardy's output down to the bone, one is likely to slight the complexity of the interdependence between those good and bad poems. Kenneth Marsden expresses a similar view, maintaining that both the good and the bad are essential to an accurate evaluation of Hardy's art, because both "have their roots in the same soil" (42).¹⁹ Thom Gunn concurs: "If the price paid for his fifty best poems is some hundreds of bad ones, it is well paid" (45). I do not mean, of course, that Hardy's flawed poems ought to be included in any final, enlarged core. Their chief function is merely as a foil, to increase the critic's ability to pick out Hardy's best poems. If one is sceptical of Hardy's artistry, it must be with the

¹⁴ These views are held, respectively, by Hynes (*Pattern* 57), Rutland (265), Blunden (248), and Richardson (78).

¹⁵ R. P. Blackmur thinks Hardy failed to "absorb [his philosophy, an annoying impediment ("a thicket of ideas" 38)] into the representative effect of his verse" (49). According to Marsden, Hardy's denying his adherence to any one philosophical view "affronts the common sense and experience of every reader" (13).

¹⁶ "Propaganda" 596, col. 2. James Southworth writes: "The ideas that impregnate his poetry are still too inexpertly grasped to be fused into workable materials. . . . This failure fully to grasp the significance of ideas deprives his poetry of the cohesiveness that results from conviction, and because of this the reader is left with no unified impression" (222).

¹⁷ These aspects are discussed, variously, by Gosse 452-53; Marsden 160-64; Gunn 37-39; Zietlow, *Moments* 26-35.

¹⁸ Morton Zabel makes the strongest case for "Hardy's success in forging, out of the baffling incongruities and discords of experience, not only an aesthetic but an art" (45). Robert Pinsky demonstrates persuasively Hardy's creative use of clashing registers, "the conversion of the whole language into poetic diction by syntactical and prosodic means" ("Hardy" 98-99). Cf. Hynes, *Pattern* 68-78. See also Neuman for a discussion of the "'rational content' of Hardy's prosody" (39).

¹⁹ Again, where I propose a comparison, James Richardson proposes an ideal synthesis: "We are encouraged to prop up a weak stanza with the memory of a better version in another poem, to construct the best of all possible Hardy poems using the fragments of other poems, which, judged as wholes, range from mediocre to stunning" (78).

recognition of what Tom Paulin calls "the diffident, quiet authority of Hardy's poetic achievement" (211)--the very recognition that F. R. Leavis withholds.

Leavis is unquestionably one of the most sensitive and shrewd critics of our time; but when he relegates Hardy he errs. The context of Leavis's iconoclasm as originally formulated is his six-page exposure of Hardy as an influence *manqué* in the tradition of English poetry.²⁰ Ironically, that broader perspective exposes major flaws in Leavis's own influential assessment of Hardy. There are premature and unrepresentative generalisations, unsupported assertions, misplaced emphasis and misconstruction on Hardy's reported words, indifference to crucial evidence (Hardy's *Life* and the "fairly frequent" [Marsden 195] revisions of his verse²¹)--all coloured by a superior, abrogative tone. There is also Leavis's dubious disparagement of Hardy in favour of Hopkins. Leavis's main error, however, is the personal attack on Hardy the man.

To Leavis, Hardy's insignificance as an influence is attributable to the ineffectualness of Hardy's life. As Robert Bilan remarks, "In explaining a failed or limited achievement, that is, Leavis's criticism often operates in a border-land between the realm of strictly literary criticism . . . and a controlled kind of biographical-psychological speculation about the nature of the author's life" (171). Irked by Hardy's apparently bucolic temperament, Leavis finds him suspect as a modern poet, lacking the compulsion and the agony to say anything important or complex, and having no profoundly creative pressure to subserve his technique. But Leavis exaggerates Hardy's simplicity, and overlooks the fact that Hardy's poetic abilities appear deficient only within the context of Leavis's subjective criteria for selection of "great" poems.²² Leavis's tacit, underlying belief that a poem and its creator are inseparable leads astray his critical attention and distorts his vision of Hardy's verse.

Moreover, poets and critics are slowly but steadily tracing Hardy's influence on the history of English poetry. Palpably "tendentious," Leavis's dismissal of that influence only nerves its opponents to refine their position (Gibson and Johnson 18).²³ As many as four alternative lines of development in which Hardy's

²⁰ The "six" pages referred to cover pages 56-62 in the 1932-edition of *New Bearings*. Leavis continued his belittling attack in his derogatory contribution to the centennial of Hardy's birthday ("Hardy the Poet"). In an earlier version of the argument, published in an essay in French in 1930, Leavis contrasted Hardy's "simple attitudes and outlook" with E. M. Forster's "scepticism" which is "more radical, more complete" (Kinch 56).

²¹ Whether or not Leavis had read the *Life* I have not been able to ascertain, but it would seem that he probably had the opportunity to do so. For according to Richard Purdy, the second volume of the *Life* appeared as early as 29 Apr. 1930 (*Study* 273). Marsden's opinion rests on his collation of Hardy's emendations in several editions of *Wessex Poems*. Florence Hardy testifies to her husband's "artistic inability to rest content with anything that he wrote until he had brought the expression as near to his thought as language would allow. He would, for instance, often go on revising his poems for his own satisfaction after their publication in book form" (*L&W* 489n1). Vere Collins, whose report affords concurrent testimony of "a large number of alterations" (4), quotes Hardy: "They tell us that Shakespeare never made any corrections. I don't believe that. Ben Jonson, who said it, probably only saw a revised copy" (55-56; see also viii). Hardy was, as Samuel Hynes concludes, "a lifelong reviser of his poems . . . correcting and improving what he had written, rewriting a line, altering a word, improving a rhyme" (*CPW* 1: xx).

²² Nowhere is Leavis more forceful than in the opening pages of *The Great Tradition*, where he specifically defines the titular adjective in a sense which is equally applicable to poetry, namely, changing "the possibilities of the art for practitioners and readers" and promoting "awareness of the possibilities of life" (10). At the time of formulating his opinion of Hardy, Leavis was simultaneously planning the complementary work, *Revaluation*, in which he identifies "the more important" poets as those who "represent significant development" of tradition (3). As a term of discrimination, then, is presumably synonymous with "artistically significant."

²³ Donald Davie claims stoutly that, "in British poetry of the last fifty years," the "most far-reaching influence" is Hardy (*Poetry* 3). Robert Pinsky develops an American connection with Ransom and Berryman

place is essential have already been mapped--humanist, existential, religious, and rural.²⁴ And as the work of a major poet of both the Victorian and modernist periods, Hardy's short poems stand ready for a close reading that will not just predicate their conventionality and simplicity, but clarify their combined effect of sophistication. By acknowledging Hardy's capacity for the impersonal, the critical, and even the allusive communication of subtle human experience, I hope to correct the moral-psychological bias in Leavis's literary assessment.²⁵

III

The radical fallacy in most current valuations of Hardy's first-person lyrics, namely, an overemphasis on historical biography, aids and abets Leavis's bias. Most advocates of Hardy's first-person lyrics assume that in order to understand them the reader must first know the facts of Hardy's life. For at least three reasons, however, the assumption is inimical to Hardy's reputation as a poet. It inhibits, even deters, some readers; it spurs those detractors of Hardy who level at him the charge of excessive self-expression; and it limits the extent to which Hardy's finest lyrics can matter to his admirers.

Nor is that the whole story. Of the many critical approaches to Hardy's verse, the biographical is surely the most apt to spawn non-sequiturs.²⁶ Two pernicious effects on criticism of Hardy's verse are confusion and speculation. Indeed, the biographical approach persists as an insidious temptation to complacency and conjecture. Richard Taylor deprecates "the confusion among some of [Hardy's] biographers about the relationship between fact and fiction" (228). Moreover, the two indispensable commentaries on Hardy's verse bristle with biographical speculations, qualified by such hedges as "perhaps," "possibly," and "probably," which make tiresome reading because no amount of qualification can authenticate sometimes wilful speculation. Attempting "to provide readers, students, and critics with data they *need* to understand a body of poems often misinterpreted," J. O. Bailey produces "factual notes and even, where facts are not available, *surmises* intended to throw light on meaning" (*H&C* vii; emphases mine). By contrast, Frank Pinion is more circumspect. While regarding the *Life* as "complementary to the poems," he is reluctant to "add to the biographical confusion which has spread in recent years" (*Commentary* xi, xii).

(*Situation* 29-46, esp. 34-35). Philip Hobsbaum laments "the wrong emphasis" placed on Hardy's verse, "the work of one great Victorian who could have had a useful influence" (*Tradition* 304). On the other hand, Thom Gunn makes out a good case for Hardy's poetry being traditional in the sense that it belongs to neither the 19th nor the 20th century but to a timeless, ancestral oral culture.

²⁴ In *Thomas Hardy and British Poetry*, Donald Davie discusses the *humanist* line through D. H. Lawrence, Auden, Betjeman, Tomlinson, and Larkin; Geoffrey Thurley plots the "English *existential* tradition" from Clare, through Hopkins and Hardy, to Edward Thomas, Lawrence, R. S. Thomas, Jack Clemo, and Ted Hughes (esp. 35, 163; emphasis mine); Samuel Hynes succinctly defines the *religious* or cosmic line, which includes Crabbe, Day Lewis, Graves, and Grigson ("Tradition" esp. 181, 189); W. J. Keith proposes a *rural* line through Clare and Barnes, to Frost, Edward Thomas, Blunden, Andrew Young, and R. S. Thomas. See also Hobsbaum, esp. 299. Philip Larkin's inclusion of twenty-seven Hardy poems in *The Oxford Book of Twentieth-Century English Verse* is, of course, the complete avatar of Hardy's modern influence.

²⁵ As William Buckler insists, Hardy the poet should be "allowed, in his controlled and concealed fashion, to be dramatic, retrospective, and consciously literary too" ("Assessment" 248; see also his *Poetry* 46-47, and Leonard Smith, "Voices"). John Bayley's paradoxical conclusion is also in point: "The way to appreciate Hardy best in his poems is to resign oneself to being cut off from him" ("Separation" 52). Hardy's allusiveness is adequately illustrated by Davie, "Purples"; Casagrande, "Record"; Steele; and Springer.

²⁶ A prime instance of this tendency is Gittings's *The Older Hardy*, to which Helen Gardner's critique is a salutary corrective (esp. 181-87). Kenneth Marsden dismisses "much biographical detail" as "irrelevant, or worse" (215). Another perpetrator of the fallacy of relating the lyrics too directly to the life is Harold Orel, *Years*. See also Hermione Lee's rev. 371, col. 1.

If Hardy's verse were as slight as the biographical criticism of it suggests, the verse would not be worth reading. Eventually, one supposes, it would be possible to take the "mythology" constructed by Bailey, say, and apply it categorically to every one of Hardy's first-person lyrics. Allusions would be fixed for all time; ambiguities would have little place. The allusions in Hardy's lyrics, however, can never be known for certain, just as the connection between lyric and life can never be proved. Hypotheses about Hardy's life, I submit, can only demean and delimit his verse and possibly distort his original vision. They also make his verse precarious, for contradictory evidence might come to light at any moment.

Biographical speculation can only trivialise a lyric and titillate the reader; neither of them can it enrich. Norman Page makes the most recent critical attempt to discourage conjecture when he says rightly that,

for all but a minority of Hardy's poems, the search for biographical solutions to the riddles they pose is likely to be an irrelevance.

...

Perhaps the gravest dangers in pursuing the biographical trail too zealously lie in the risk that the genuine sources of Hardy's distinction as a poet--his delicately individual handling of metre, language and tone--will be obscured.

(Hardy 170, 177)

For instance, introducing his analysis of "The Wind's Prophecy" (*CPW* 2: 238), Donald Davie seeks to justify in a brazen, pre-emptive parenthesis his recourse to Deacon and Coleman's "revelations": "And it may as well be said here at once that, whatever the rights and wrongs of using biographical information to assist explication of other poets, in the case of an author so secretive as Hardy it has already proved itself indispensable" (*Poetry* 20). On the contrary, "The Wind's Prophecy" requires no biographical key to render intelligible its "otherwise inexplicable urgency and ominousness," as Davie pleads (20). Within the context of a journey structure and a love theme, the landscape images are quite sufficient to imply unambiguously that the speaker's arrival will fulfil his premonition of joy. Nor would Davie's reading forfeit any of its persuasiveness for being emancipated from Deacon and Coleman; it might even gain depth.²⁷ Similarly, James Hazen nearly stultifies his sensitive analysis of "Neutral Tones" (*CPW* 1: 13) when he defers to popular "curiosity about its biographical background" ("Sun" 335). What is troubling about Hazen's analysis is the apparent need to cast about for a wider, historical context for the poem. Dissatisfied with Deacon and Coleman's account, Hazen feels "deprived of a specific biographical origin for the poem" and has to resign himself to "what is aesthetically valuable in it" (335)--as if that were merely a consolation prize. Finding a first-person lyric simple and lucid, critics allow their "knowledge" of Hardy the man to cast shadows over the lyric. But, interpreted by guess and by gossip, no poem yields its true meaning and value.

I am loath, of course, to send out of the room all biographical information, because many personal issues converge in a lyric, even though the lyric should not be identified with any of them. As Wellek and Warren rightly point out, between the work of art and the artist's life, "there are connecting links, parallelisms, oblique resemblances, topsy-turvy mirrors. The poet's work may be a mask, a dramatized conventionalization, but it is frequently a conventionalization of his own experiences, his own life" (79).²⁸

²⁷ Surprisingly, what Deacon and Coleman seem to ignore is that the character of Tryphena Sparks was good enough to secure her a teaching post at Stockwell College: see Bartle 321. In expressing his disagreement with Deacon and Coleman, Irving Howe's quiet footnote makes mincemeat of their case (*Hardy* 11n). See also Millgate, *B* 105, 588n7. Cf. Björk, "Autobiography" 24-25.

²⁸ A little earlier they write: "There is no reason to believe that Prospero speaks like Shakespeare: authors cannot be assigned the ideas, feelings, views, virtues and vices of their heroes. And this is true not only of dramatic characters or characters in a novel but also of the *I* of the lyrical poem. The relation between the

Nor do I, in any way of course, mean to suggest that a critic may leave out of account the poetic conventions of a poet's "race, place, and time" (Eliot, *Essays* 474-75). What the literary critic is obliged to reject, however, is the practice of referring nearly every lyric or every detail of a lyric to a situation in the poet's life. Where autobiography is clearly a marked feature of a lyric, and where that sort of reference genuinely elucidates an emotional struggle and deepens understanding of the lyric, a biographical approach may have value. But one must use biographical evidence critically; it must not sabotage the analysis of poetic qualities. And when demonstrably thematic demands--those due to philosophical issues, for instance--call for a biographical extrapolation, then those demands should be met. Similarly, when the text of a lyric provides no specific internal reason for such an approach, it must be abandoned. The lyric must then be analysed for its own intrinsic meaning and quality.

On the other hand, even if a definitive, accurate biography were obtainable, it would need to be appropriated to the concerns of the literary critic interested in Hardy's achievement as a poet. What is paramount is Hardy's skill in creating and recording, not an historical event, but an experience. It is, for instance, a documented fact that in the summer of 1870, when Hardy and Emma Lavinia were courting, they visited Beeny Cliff in Cornwall, one of Hardy's favourite scenes. Hardy sketched the scene and appended the place and date: "Beeny Cliff (Aug. 22.'70)" (*H&C* 302, 379; Gibson, *Chosen Poems* pl. 7). But the poem entitled "Beeny Cliff" (*CPW* 2: 62) presents the scene only as Hardy experienced it; he has made a reconstruction that is *imaginative* (see Millgate, *B* 187, 195). The historical Beeny Cliff acted virtually as a pretext for Hardy to imagine a certain kind of experience. Hardy's poetic achievement was to select and arrange the known details into an imagined scene so that they focus and register that experience. Cliff, gulls, waves, cloud, sun, and pony have no individual or intrinsic significance. They are there in the poem expressly to precipitate the pleasurable and profound memory which the poem celebrates. Hardy's setting does not literally transcribe the scene as he saw it. He is true to his experience as a man; and he is true to his imagination as a poetic artist. What a Hardyan setting typically realises is Hardy's view of human potentiality and significance within the physical universe (see Keith 98). As he wrote the day after his forty-second birthday:

in life the seer should watch that pattern among general things which his idiosyncrasy moves him to observe, and describe that alone. This is, quite accurately, a going to Nature; yet the result is no mere photograph, but purely the product of the writer's own mind. (*L&W* 158)

What matters is not that Hardy personally visited the place, but that, while remaining personally detached, he could use its scenic details to depict a state of significant joy.²⁹ Hardy finds and fuses the right note, image,

private life and the work is not a simple relation of cause and effect" (77). According to F. B. Pinion, any biographer of Hardy has to face the "difficulty of distinguishing the autobiographical from the 'impersonative'" because "even in single poems the personal may be interwoven with the fictitious" (*Companion* 119). In his search for some "clue as to the state of Hardy's emotions," Michael Millgate concedes with characteristic tact that "it is difficult to distinguish literary from personal impulse" (*B* 93). But "difficult" is surely an understatement, even for critical biographers of the calibre of Pinion and Millgate. For, as W. J. Keith puts it, Hardy's prefatory disavowals of self-expression are "as valuable for the literary critic as they may be deceptive for the biographer" (98). Conversely, some critics like to dream that all Hardy's characters and places belong to the real world; but such identifications are speculative and fanciful, bearing only some vague, indeterminate relation to fact, since Hardy's was, from the start of his literary career, expert at creating "naïve realism in circumstantial details that were pure inventions . . . figments that could win credence" (*L&W* 63; see Wing 79). Usually, the tone of a literary work is sufficient to distract, deflect, and aesthetically distort one's sense of the content as autobiographical: see Millgate, *B* 174.

²⁹ Vere Collins quotes Hardy as saying that "no place [in my books] is taken exactly from an existing one" (40).

and turn of thought. He succeeds, that is, in a complex task; he blends disparate details, making every one of them accord not only with the speaker's humanity and joy (epitomised by "bright hair flapping free"), but also with the poem's function in the series of lyrics as a whole.

What, then, should be the approach of a student of literature to Hardy's first-person lyrics in view of the continual reference, by some foremost critics, to Hardy's life? What approach will eliminate biographical conjecture and afford the student a way of entering those lyrics that will lead to a just estimate of their value as literary art? A critical approach that admits Wellek and Warren's "mirrors and masks" seems the most appropriate.

Hardy himself gives us this key to his first-person lyrics in the preface to the first edition of *Wessex Poems and Other Verses* (1898): "The pieces are in a large degree dramatic or personative in conception; and this even where they are not obviously so" (but see Hynes, *CPW* 1: xxvi). Again, in the preface to *Poems of the Past and the Present* (1901), Hardy insists that "much is dramatic or impersonative even where not explicitly so."³⁰ The most direct statement of Hardy's poetic detachment comes in the preface to *Time's Laughingstocks and Other Verses* (1909): "those lyrics penned in the first person . . . are to be regarded, in the main, as dramatic monologues by different characters" (*CPW* 1: [235]). In his general preface to the novels and poems (1912), Hardy drives home the point by means of a generic contrast and a distancing metaphor: "The limited stage to which the majority of the [novels] confine their exhibitions [of human nature] has not been adhered to [in the verse] in the same proportion, the dramatic part especially having a very broad theatre of action" (48).

Presumably, then, each of the eight volumes of poems enacts a drama of mentalities, temperaments, and sentiments in which Hardy rarely speaks in his own voice. Each lyric speaker personifies an emotion and acts for an idea, not necessarily Hardy's own.³¹ Accordingly, the approach I propose is this: to assume that most of Hardy's first-person lyrics are indeed dramatic. That assumption may yet atone for the biographical distortions of Hardy's poetry.

Finally, I am hardly the first to found a comprehensive analysis of Hardy's lyrics on such an assumption, or to argue that even ostensibly autobiographical lyrics may be read as dramatic (see, e.g., Hughes, Cavanaugh, and Buckler, *Poetry*). Norman Page shows *a fortiori* that if in *Poems of 1912-13* Hardy is "once again fictionalizing his experience," then it is probable that a good many of his other, less personal lyrics are also largely fictional (*Hardy* 174). Lance Butler may "credit every memory and every movement of [Hardy's] mind with a complete personal involvement" in *Poems of 1912-13* (*Hardy* 166); and David Wright may find that "the story they tell is exceptionally difficult to decipher--in fact impossible without some previous background knowledge of Hardy's life" (23). But Page's caution remains judicious: "though Hardy's poems may be more frequently personal than he was prepared to admit, they may also be much less consistently and reliably so than many of his commentators have chosen to assume" (*Hardy* 170-71). With that caution in mind, let us now make our approach to Hardy's first-person lyrics.

³⁰ Actually, Hardy first wrote "much is dramatic or personative both in presentation and in philosophy" (*CPW* 1: [113]).

³¹ Replying to an inquisitive literary critic, Hardy once asked Florence to write in his behalf: "Speaking generally there is more autobiography in a hundred lines of Mr Hardy's poetry than in all the novels, though there are of course in the latter isolated incidents which he may have witnessed or experienced" (Nov. 1919; *CL* 7: 161; see *L&W* 425, also 289, 55). Whereas Richard Taylor thinks this remark is disarmingly frank in its implications" (228), F. B. Pinion in his *Commentary* takes the assertion rightly, I think, as an exasperated hyperbole (xi). Indeed, read with Hardy's prefatory insistence on the dramatic status of his verse in mind, his epistolary rejoinder smacks of waspish irony.

IV

Our approach to the dramatic element in Hardy's first-person lyrics will, of course, depend on what we mean by "dramatic." It will also depend on what we know of Hardy's own idea of the dramatic. Unfortunately, the two published studies of the dramatic element in Hardy's poetry offer definitions of the term that are hardly satisfactory. Marguerite Roberts's idea of the dramatic seems too diffuse to be of much help: "the dramatic element in poetry implies action, struggle or conflict plus a sense of reality and immediacy" (430; see also 438).³² And in the more recent study, William Morgan's view of the dramatic element in Hardy's short poems is unconvincing. Morgan claims that what Hardy means by dramatic is "a temporary persona, mood, feeling, fancy, or idea," a speaker who is "not wholly and directly [Hardy] himself" ("Vision" 246, 252). But Hardy did not need to write five prefaces and take thirty years to tell his readers that. For all poems are dramatic in the sense that they do not reveal the poet fully and permanently. What we infer about a poet from his poem, even from a lyric, is bound to be "biographically a fragment" (McCarthy, "Milton" 97; see also Abrams, *Glossary* 131; Brooks and Warren, 4th ed., 15; Zietlow, *Moments* 62-63). No matter how historically or "literally true" Hardy himself may have regarded some poems (7 Feb. 1918; *CL* 5: 250), the moral and aesthetic gap between their first-person speakers and his self is, by virtue of the artistic selection a poet has to make, always there (see Elliott, *Persona* 58). As Tom Paulin puts it, "there is almost always that slight, but significant split between his self and the voice of the poem" (130). So there is nothing novel in the definition Morgan puts forward; it is, in fact, a mere tautology, the outcome of his strained reading of Hardy's prefaces. At pains to vindicate Hardy's repeated assertion that most of his poems are dramatic and not personal, Morgan has slipped (unwittingly, no doubt) into an arbitrary, ad hoc reinterpretation of the term "dramatic." Those poems that present "versions of [Hardy] himself" Morgan simply reclassifies as personal-dramatic to distinguish them from conventional "impersonal-dramatic" poems (246-47). But Hardy's assertion needs no such factitious and evasive qualification; rather, it affords his reader, as I hope to demonstrate, a far-reaching approach to his first-person lyrics.

Before, however, we can discuss Hardy's first-person lyrics as dramatic poems, we must look briefly into the question of the dramatic in general, focusing on the poetry of Hardy in particular. As a result, the present section touches on modern and Victorian theories of drama, and examines criteria for deciding when a lyric³³ is dramatic.

To broach the subject of drama, we may notice that modern theorists emphasise that drama is representational as well as literary. According to Bernard Beckerman, for instance, "Drama [is what happens] when one or more human beings isolated in time and space present themselves in imagined acts to another or others" (20).³⁴ Northrop Frye, on the other hand, treats drama as a form of literature. He defines drama succinctly as "Words . . . acted in front of a spectator" and "a mimesis of dialogue or conversation" (*Anatomy* 247, 269). Although these theatrical and verbal views of drama seem at odds, what they have in common is the portrayal of character or the adopting of a role.³⁵ In an elementary sense, of course, character is, as S. W.

³² And yet it is on Roberts's definition that Carolyn Pyrek unreservedly bases the greater part of her argument (48; 255n6). Cavanaugh's definition of the term "dramatic" is at first suitably reductive--"any element characteristic of the drama" (12)--but it soon becomes mechanical and laborious as he applies it to Hardy's short poems. The definition with which Marsden works (92) is no better than Roberts's.

³³ For the present, I am content to use the term "lyric" in its orthodox sense of any short poem marked by subjectivity: see n60 below.

³⁴ Other modern theorists include Raymond Williams 3-4, Scholes and Klaus 1-2, and Nicholas Brooke 51. I do not attempt to discuss here the view (stated by Styan vii) that drama is a social relationship in which the audience participate.

³⁵ "The range of a great dramatic text," Brooke concludes, "derives from the roles that actors play" (52).

Dawson says, "the necessary condition of drama" (62). Characterisation, or impersonation, is one of the main conventions by which drama gains meaning. It is a ground rule of drama that a playwright must remain outside his own work. In fact, whenever he enters directly into his play--speaking personally through a character--a playwright usually sounds officious and clumsy (Brooks and Heilman 24-26). Conversely, as soon as an actor speaks on stage, he takes on the character of a fictive human being. Movement and décor make the speaker distinctive physically; words make him distinctive in thought and feeling. As the mode for presenting character through words performed on a stage, then, drama relates the psychological world to the physical world, the inward to the outward, and the potential to the actual. Susanne Langer typifies drama by this expressive, poetic quality:

We know, in fact, so little about the personalities before us at the opening of a play that their every move and word, even their dress and walk, are distinct items for our perception. . . . We do not have to find what is significant; the selection has been made--whatever is there is significant, and it is not too much to be surveyed *in toto*. A character stands before us as a coherent whole. It is with characters as with their situations: both become visible on the stage, transparent and complete.

. . .

Since every utterance is the end of a process which began inside the speaker's body, an enacted utterance is part of a virtual act, apparently springing at the moment from thought and feeling; so the actor has to create the illusion of an inward activity issuing in spontaneous speech, if his words are to make a dramatic and not a rhetorical effect.

(310, 315-16)³⁶

Mention of rhetorical effect serves to turn our attention to the bogus taste that bankrupts Victorian drama of any respectable theory until the last decade of the nineteenth century. Spectacular stage-effects; predictable plots with ideal endings; grandiose, declamatory acting; uncomplicated, cardboard characters; violent appeals to the inflammable emotions of triumph, despair, and protest; and chimerical playbills to promote the whole theatrical circus (Smith, *Melodrama* 5-10)--these are some of the more potent elements of the popular idea of drama in the urban mind in nineteenth-century England (Rowell, *Theatre* 1, 131). Victorian melodrama--"the characteristic entertainment of the age" (Rowell, *Theatre* 26, 39) and "the primary dramatic mode" until the 1880s (Booth, *Dramas* 14)--panders to the audience's craving for escapist triviality, purveys the merely fashionable and commercial, and so yields no bona fide theory of drama.³⁷ For such a theory we must look to the intellectual movements against crude popular taste.³⁸ The strongest and most durable reaction is realism.³⁹ As artificiality is the mark of melodrama, realism or naturalness is the mark of

³⁶ Brooks and Heilman also see this correspondence between inner and outer worlds: "Drama depends almost entirely on what people do and say to each other: meanings, thought, feelings must in the main be externalized in conduct (though the conduct need not be violent or sensational)" (23).

³⁷ Later, of course, the "well-made" play (see Driver 49-51; Ashley 6n5) and Society drama (see Rowell, *Victorian Plays* xiii; his *Theatre* 161; Booth, *Dramas* 14-17, 20) were also fairly prominent forms and were more topical and elegant than melodrama. But both were just as contrived, formulaic, and superficial as melodrama.

³⁸ This is not to say that all popular audiences were intellectually atrophied. But "the average of the theatre-going public . . . [is] sadly pulled down by the myriad frequenters of musical farce and absolutely worthless melodrama" (Archer 8). As a popular theatrical form, melodrama continued well into the present century, although remaining slight and peripheral: see Nicoll, *English Drama* 180-82.

³⁹ Although they differed in their method, the main movements that challenged popular taste--e.g., naturalism, realism, Symbolism, and expressionism--had a common aim: to discover a deeper, more dignified view of human nature: see Driver 45-46, 73-75, 140-45; Hartnoll 790.

serious Victorian drama.⁴⁰ Serious Victorian drama aims at giving the human heart a local habitation in the theatre (see Lewes, *Reckoning* 206-07)--the intelligent, suffering heart, that is, not the sentimental one or, as Shaw puts it, "the embodiment of our romantic imaginings" (*True Blue* 218). Three-dimensional scenery that integrates character and environment (Driver 68, 91-92); a plot determined by character (Archer 15, 245);⁴¹ natural acting that probes and focuses new emotions (Driver 81, 83-85); spontaneous interaction between characters;⁴² subtle psychological analysis (Archer 247-48)--these are the stuff of late-Victorian theory of drama, where the emphasis is on plausible characterisation.

William Archer's *Play-Making* contains the first formulation of that position in English. For Archer the essence of drama is not Ferdinand Brunetière's influential idea of a clash of wills (19-21),⁴³ but character in crisis, since:

A play is a more or less rapidly-developing crisis in destiny or circumstance, and a dramatic scene is a crisis within a crisis, clearly furthering the ultimate event.

.....
If the essence of drama is crisis, it follows that nothing can be more dramatic than a momentous choice which may make or mar both the character and the fortune of the chooser and of others. There is an element of choice in all action which is, or seems to be, the product of free will; but there is a peculiar crispness of effect when two alternatives are clearly formulated, and the choice is made after a mental struggle, accentuated, perhaps, by impassioned advocacy of the conflicting interests.

(24; 34n1)

For Archer, drama works through concentration and crisis, gives us a close-up of peaks of experience, and takes us into "hitherto uncharted regions of the human soul" (249).⁴⁴ When in 1898 Hardy published *Wessex Poems*, then, the reaction against the antiquated histrionics, artificiality, and superficiality of the Victorian stage was all but complete.⁴⁵ Accordingly, late-Victorian theory of drama will sanction our analysing character and inner life in contemporary poems that purport to be dramatic.

Hardy's idea of what constitutes drama would seem to corroborate that conclusion. Finding the human "realities" of the Victorian stage distasteful if not a little depressing (*L&W* 55),⁴⁶ the theatrical sensationalism repugnant--"People are getting tired of the cumbersome *mise-en-scene*" (*CL* 1: 213)--and the censorship and

⁴⁰ True, Victorian audiences were addicted to theatrical (as distinct from dramatic, Ibsenite) realism. But the effect of the scenery was little more than eye-glutting and sensational verisimilitude: see Booth 6-8; Nicoll, *Theatre* 209-10; Bailey, *Plays* 35.

⁴¹ Reacting against commercial melodrama, Galsworthy asserts that "character is the best plot there is" (Gassner xxviii).

⁴² In a rev. of Taylor and Reade's comedy *Masks and Faces*, G. H. Lewes writes that the elements of a successful play are "character and emotion: the sharpness and individuality of the well-contrasted characters, and the unmistakable reality of the emotion arising out of the circumstance, not artificially brought in for the sake of effect" (262).

⁴³ For Brunetière, the indispensable element of drama is "the spectacle of a *will* striving towards a goal, and conscious of the means which it employs" (382). Shaw's view of a play as a parabolic problem is even narrower: "instincts and temperaments in conflict with each other and with a flinty social problem that never yields an inch to mere sentiment" (pref., *Mrs Warren's Profession* (1894), in his *Prefaces* 229, col. 1).

⁴⁴ Bailey comes to a similar conclusion about late-Victorian drama: "In the new drama the emphasis was not on what happened to the characters; it was on what happened *inside* them" (*Plays* 38; emphasis mine).

⁴⁵ "A veritable revolution [in English drama] occurred between 1850 and 1900. . . . With Pinero and Jones the stage had at last reached adequate expression of realistic aims but the task of banishing the very last relics of the older conventional theatre was left to the playwrights of the first decade of our own century" (Nicoll, *History* 1: 2, 206).

⁴⁶ See Hardy's poem "A Victorian Rehearsal" (*CPW* 3: 283, lines 1-6, 25-30) and *L&W* 237.

plagiarism vexing to a degree (*Life and Art* 128; *B* 226-27, 333, 451-52), Hardy renounced contemporary drama.⁴⁷ In a brief public statement, "Why I Don't Write Plays" (*Pall Mall Gazette* 31 Aug. 1892), Hardy declared that he regarded "the presentation of human passions" as more important than "the presentation of mountains, cities, clothes, furniture, plate, jewels, and other real and sham-real appurtenances." He also affirmed "the principle that the material stage should be a conventional or figurative arena [i.e., as simple as the Greek and Elizabethan theatre], in which accessories are kept down to the plane of mere suggestions of place and time, so as not to interfere with the required high-relief of the action and emotions." Putting it more positively in his preface to *The Dynasts*, Hardy asserted the necessary ingredients of drama to be "completely organic structure of action" and "closely-webbed development of character and motive" (6). In other words, Hardy believed in the kind of characterisation that moulds both the acting and the staging of a play--such characterisation as could at the turn of the century occur in only one place, the theatre of the mind. For Hardy, its capacity for "mental performance" was the ultimate achievement of all serious drama (6).

Hardy's resort to the imagination aligns his aesthetic of drama squarely with what Allardyce Nicoll calls the "literary-critical" view of drama that nearly all the major Romantic poets adopted (*Theatre* 208). It is easy to see that, theoretically and practically, Hardy's approach to dramatic art accords with theirs. If, as he asserts, "Art is a disproportioning . . . of realities" (*L&W* 239), then dramatic art acts like Shelley's "prismatic and many-sided mirror" (*Defence* 491), distorting human nature in order to accentuate it. Hence drama is, as Coleridge says, not an exact replica of real life but a pleasing likeness, not a copy but an imitation (*Shakespeare* 55, 94, 221).⁴⁸ Moreover, the work on which Hardy congratulated himself most, *The Dynasts* (Garrison 10; Orel, "Theatre" 98; cf. *B* 433), is a locus classicus of the closet drama (see Rowell, *Theatre* 32-38), has a "celestial" perspective that disproportions objects, persons, and events to "sublime" effect (Hardy, "General Preface" 48; Orel, *Dynasts* xix), and achieves itself above all through the characterisation of the Spirits (Rutland 330, 335).⁴⁹ At one with "the new drama of character" (Otten 10), the end of Hardy's aesthetic of drama is to imitate subjective reality by means of "imaginativeness pieced out with material helps" ("Rejoinder" 142)⁵⁰--in short, to embody and enact human consciousness.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Curiously enough, though, Hardy remained an avid theatre-goer: see Orel, "Theatre" 94-95; *B* 99, 228, 333.

⁴⁸ Hardy cites Coleridge's view on dramatic illusion in a note dated 26 Jan. 1882 (*L&W* 157) and again in his pref. to *The Dynasts* (5).

⁴⁹ Combining the epic machinery of the Spirits with "the conventions of the dramatic soliloquy" was a triumphant innovation for Hardy (Millgate, *B* 432).

⁵⁰ This echo of the Chorus in *Henry V*--"Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts: / Into a thousand parts divide one man, / And make imaginary puissance" (prol. 23-25)--economically implies that Hardy expected the reader of a play to supplement and complete the characterisation and the action.

⁵¹ Whether, like William Archer, Hardy believed that drama could advance the evolution of human consciousness towards greater compassion is arguable. But Hardy's sense of the irony, as well as the pity, of war suggests how innately dramatic (or impersonative) were his deepest impulses and interests:

Oh yes, war is doomed. It is doomed by the gradual growth of the introspective faculty in mankind--of their power of putting themselves in another's place, and taking a point of view that is not their own. In another aspect, this may be called the growth of a sense of humour. Not to-day, not to-morrow, but in the fulness of time, war will come to an end, not for moral reasons, but because of its absurdity. (*B* 410)

On Archer's view of the theatre as a strong educational influence on society, "castigating its foibles, voicing its ideals," see Schmid 44, 53. Equating the pleasure of the theatre with the "general irony of drama" (28), Sedgewick observes that the relative blindness of *dramatis personae* to their present and future is a constant source of irony to the spectator:

But the study of the dramatic in poems, and especially of those elements in Hardy's first-person lyrics that count as dramatic, also requires the setting up of criteria for deciding what is and what is not dramatic. To begin with, let us rule out of the discussion the popular, non-literary sense of surprising, compelling, and novel. Seeing that the term "dramatic" is analogical, we would do well to take into account some of the attributes of drama it implies. For if character is a necessary ingredient of drama, it is also a relative one. M. H. Abrams's handbook-definition of drama makes this clear: "Drama is the literary form designed for the theater, in which actors take the roles of the characters, perform the indicated action, and utter the written dialogue" (*Glossary* 45).⁵² Indeed, for it to be dramatic, character must spring from dialogue and action. The term "dialogue" here refers to utterance and response, word and counter-word. Friction between characters causes tension, which in turn prompts them to speak. Dialogue, in fact, is inseparable from action because dialogue is itself an action. By "action" here I mean simply the immediate acts or movements on stage such as gesturing, singing, or speaking. But, clearly, the term "action" denotes much more than that. It includes plot, that pattern of the larger events or conflicts that occupy an audience's interest at any given moment. It is in this last sense, of course, that a play's action is pregnant with tensions--tensions due to emotion, irony, and the deployment of conflicts. The playwright plants a seed of significance in the opening scene of his play. Thereafter, every sound and sign strikes the audience as being consequential and ominous; every moment impresses them as being unstable and ticklish. Drama is as complex as a game of chess or, in Susanne Langer's words, "an enacted poem" (314). It is a staged fiction whose elements change in individual significance as they combine to produce the final meaning of the performance. Working together, then, dialogue and action create characters in conflict.⁵³

So far, we may take "dramatic" to refer to a technique of presenting human beings in a way that resembles actual drama, as characters acting on and speaking to each other under circumstances of extreme tension between them. Put simply, the term "dramatic" implies spoken sentiments that are not attributable to the poet, and a speaker reacting with the emotional intensity appropriate to a play. And to the extent that a first-person lyric of Hardy's exploits the elements essential to drama--character, action, dialogue, and emotional conflict--we may call that lyric dramatic.⁵⁴

However, as soon as we attempt to read Hardy's first-person lyrics as dramatic poems, we run into a couple of difficulties. One, the absence of action, is relatively minor; the other, the absence of dialogue, is considerable, ramifying as it does into the issue of genre (which is the main article of chapter 3). But if we mean our discussion to remain continuous--and I certainly do--it is our duty to deal immediately with those

The peculiar pleasure of the theatre, then, is the spectacle of a life in which, it is true, we do not interfere but over which we exercise the control of knowledge. And this spectacle, when it pleases or holds us, we do not view with the "swelling or pride" of superiority but with a sort of paradoxical sympathy; for, though it is *sympathy*, it is likewise *detached*. Such a fusion of knowledge and detachment and fellow-feeling is the gift of the spectator to a play which he likes. . . . *The whole attitude of the interested spectator is ironic*; by the very fact that he is such a spectator, he is an ironist.

(32-33)

See also Muecke 66-85.

⁵² Ronald Peacock lists four elements of drama that he regards as essential: compelling and climactic action, characterisation, actability, and human significance (158).

⁵³ According to Charles Cooper, drama imitates and displays human tensions and conflict so as to reflect the meaning and values of human life (7).

⁵⁴ Scholes and Klaus state that "the essential quality of drama is interaction" (18), and they list as "the indispensable elements of drama" character, dialogue, and plot (55).

two difficulties in order to forestall any question-begging. Of course, dealing with them will take us away from Hardy's lyrics, but only spatially; logically, it will bring us straight to them.

To take the minor difficulty first, it might well be asked: What grounds can there be for our using the term "dramatic," when a lyric is an "isolated 'peak-moment'" (Cluysenaar 109) and quite evidently lacks what Aristotle called the "life-blood" of tragic drama (40), an action? The answer is, to repeat, that the term refers to an analogy (necessarily imperfect) not an identity (quite impossible), so that the very difference between lyric and drama is instructive. If drama, let us say, works through human beings who move about on a stage using words, then lyric works through words alone. Moreover, since the words in a play are significant only if their speakers are coherent in character and true to human nature (Ricks 313-14), the more human a lyric speaker the more dramatic the lyric. Accordingly, as Brooks and Heilman demonstrate, a lyric can be dramatic in at least three ways: in the emotional conflict it presents, in the concrete situation that occasions the conflict, and in the philosophical and moral framework that controls the emotion (19-24, esp. 22). A lyric, then, is dramatic in the sense that it is a response, the verbal reaction that a particular situation, scene, or idea provokes in a fictive person, whose words, although addressed to himself, primarily express an attitude rather than anything else (see Brooks and Warren, 1st ed., 23; 4th ed., 13-14). By using the term "dramatic" to describe most of Hardy's first-person lyrics, we are merely extending the concept of drama as characters in conflict to emotions in conflict.

Furthermore, we can justify our use of the term by showing what in a lyric is continuous with and compensates for the action in a play. First there is the philosophical parallel of speech itself. Although it may comprise only a single speech-act, a lyric nevertheless contains verbal action, since speech itself is an action and capable of performing many different functions depending on its context.⁵⁵ Equally tenable is the stylistic link, and Hardy's use of enallage (coining words through grammatical transference) is a prime instance: that is, he fairly frequently uses verbs as nouns or adjectives and vice versa (Hynes, *Pattern* 68; Elliott, *English* 211-16). Hardy also makes odd dictional choices that cause friction between registers (see above, n18). Finally, there is the structural correspondence between the development of a play and the inward action of a lyric.⁵⁶ Here again, Hardy's lyrics afford a material instance, for he habitually uses a structure of tension to manipulate the reader's responses.⁵⁷ True, Hardy's lyric "plots" tend to deteriorate into a drama of stereotypes, and at times achieve little more than a mechanical and an inert association of form and content. For example, as R. P. Blackmur brilliantly shows, the "crossed fidelities"-formula outrages "the texture of the feelings" in a lyric, and nearly always reduces its value as a poem to mediocrity (56-67, esp. 65).⁵⁸ Nevertheless, a structure of tension (defined as emotional and moral conflict) is fundamental to Hardy's lyric mode.⁵⁹ And, as William Rueckert explains, even though a "dramatic" lyric lacks teleological impetus,

it does have progressive form in so far as it charts the spiritual movement of the self in conflict. Though the self may perform no external act in a lyric poem, it does react by

⁵⁵ As Cooper remarks, "Speech may serve as one form of action—think of the verbal combats, the quarrels, the imperatives, the curses, the insults, the fighting words, the asking of forgiveness, the wooing, the consenting, etc." (41). But see also Austin, *Words* esp. 99; and his "Utterances."

⁵⁶ Arguing that it is a literary technique, Dawson defines dramatic structure as "the identifiable means by which a dramatist relates the parts of the play to each other and to the whole, and keeps before our attention what is most central to the action" (89).

⁵⁷ For a fairly complete treatment of formal patterns of thought and feeling in Hardy's short poems, see Hogan.

⁵⁸ Blackmur analyses "The Telegram," "The Moth-Signal," "Seen by the Waits," "In the Days of Crinoline," and "The Workbox" (*CPW* 2: 110-19).

⁵⁹ On the more general relationship between drama and lyric in Hardy's poetry, see Cavanaugh 82-89.

lamenting, praising, meditating, praying, and coming to knowledge, and these movements of the self constitute the progressive form necessary to drama. The implicit or explicit opposition of terms constitutes the conflict necessary to drama and the self of the poet provides the necessary human agent.

(87)

At first glance, the second difficulty we have to deal with--a lyric's lack of dialogue--looks easier to surmount than the first. Since dialogue determines character, one solution might be to think of a first-person lyric as a dramatic monologue, a genre whose sole purport is to create character. And in the case of Hardy, he himself urges the reader of *Time's Laughingstocks* to regard even his first-person lyrics as "dramatic monologues by different characters" (*CPW* 1: [235]). The trouble is that very few of Hardy's first-person lyrics meet the conditions of the traditional genre.

As executed by Browning, arguably its finest exponent, the genre has three main conditions: above all, a first-person speaker who is not the poet; second, a specific and immediate dramatic situation including a keen listener; and lastly, dramatic irony at the speaker's expense (Sinfield, *Monologue* 7). The last condition is important because the "principle controlling the selection and organization of what the speaker says is the *unintentional* revelation of his temperament and character" (Abrams, *Glossary* 45; emphasis mine). Furthermore, a dramatic monologue is successful to the extent that it divorces the reader's human sympathy from his moral judgement. For instance, in Browning's "My Last Duchess," the Duke simultaneously compels our delight and invites our condemnation (Langbaum 77-80; cf. Hobsbaum, "Monologue" 234). Finally, there is also the small but cogent detail of the length of a dramatic monologue. For the salient feature of any monologue is that it is, as Henry Wells observes, a "prolonged utterance" (529, col. 1). The dramatic monologues of Browning and Tennyson, for example, range from fifty to two hundred lines or more in length.

Clearly, on the point of length alone, it would be feeble to maintain that nearly all of Hardy's first-person lyrics qualify as dramatic monologues. Even the most conservative and orthodox definition of a lyric--namely, any short poem marked by subjectivity (Brooks and Warren, 1st ed., 637)⁶⁰--prohibits that classification. Conversely, we could test Hardy's injunction at its strongest link, so to speak, by examining those first-person poems that seem to offer themselves unequivocally as dramatic monologues; I mean his monologues. Yet even Hardy's most clear-cut monologues fail to fit the dramatic genre. As a representative illustration, of the ten truly prolonged first-person utterances in *Time's Laughingstocks* (each having fifty lines or more), only one, "Panthera" (*CPW* 1: 337), appears to be a legitimate dramatic monologue.⁶¹ I say "appears" because, although it is partly in blank verse and evokes a specific situation, the controlling technique in the poem is not a characterising irony but metafictional structure. The old Roman narrator's

⁶⁰ Two recent elementary definitions of the term "lyric" may serve to corroborate the orthodoxy: "any fairly short, nonnarrative poem presenting a single speaker who expresses a state of mind or a process of thought and feeling" (Abrams, *Glossary* 99); "any fairly short poem in the voice of a single speaker, although that speaker may sometimes quote others" (Stallworthy, "Versification" 1403).

⁶¹ The remaining nine monologues (including five ballads) all lack the unwitting disclosure of character: "The Revisitation," "A Trampwoman's Tragedy," "The Two Rosalinds," "A Sunday Morning Tragedy" (*CPW* 1:237-55), "The Flirt's Tragedy" (*CPW* 1: 258), "The Rash Bride" (*CPW* 1: 306), "A Wife and Another" (*CPW* 1: 318), "The Vampirine Fair" (*CPW* 1: 321), and "The Pine Planters" (*CPW* 1:328). Albert Guerard argues that in "The Vampirine Fair" we get a combination of "the pure ballad's directness" and "the dramatic monologue's interest in self-characterization and self-betrayal" ("Illusion" 171). Yes, but the poem declares itself to be first and foremost a ballad, so that we never think of condemning the honest manipulateness of the simple-minded wife, because to do that would be to outrage the poem's inherent qualities. Guerard might have been on safer ground had he quoted the last two quatrains of "The Flirt's Tragedy," for the lines have the extra evidence of a direct appeal to an implied listener.

rhyiming monologue serves to frame and relay Panthera's blank-verse claim to be the father of a crucified criminal. And the effect of the embedded monologue is historical not psychological, giving the reader nothing more than a mild thrill of a circumstantial and temporal discrepancy between himself and the two speakers. In other words, the whole method of the poem subordinates the characterisation of the two Romans to the palpable but freakish irony of Christ's having had a human father. Nothing in the poem foregrounds character, compels the reader to make a moral assessment of the speakers, or requires him to complete its meaning. Similarly, the last three quatrains of "The Revisitation" (*CPW* 1: 237) present an explicit (and anti-climactic) self-analysis by the speaker that makes redundant any contribution from the reader; and self-analysis, according to Robert Langbaum, counteracts the effect of a dramatic monologue (141). What the poem leaves us with is a trite moral ("Love is lame at fifty years," which implies the larger idea that ageing is like a fatal disease that everyone must one day contract and that is best borne with dignity: "I cherished her reproach like physic-wine, / For I saw in that emaciate shape of bitterness and bleakness / A nobler soul than mine." Not only, then, do Hardy's monologues lack the central dramatic mechanism, what Langbaum calls a "disequilibrium between the speaker's utterance and the meaning of the poem" (66); but, even when Hardy's monologues possess something of that irony, they also default on the crucial property of the genre, indirect characterisation. In short, the focus of interest in Hardy's monologues is not on the revelation of character in a clearly defined action in the present (see Sessions 508). Rather, the main concern of Hardy's monologues is exclusively with incidents, past events, or ideas;⁶² that is to say, the mode that typifies most of Hardy's monologues is narrative.

My point is, to sum up, that, if in his monologues Hardy avoided following Browning's practice, it seems still more obvious that Hardy would have avoided doing so in his shorter, first-person lyrics. Consequently, although Hardy himself has advocated our taking most of his first-person lyrics as dramatic monologues, that authorisation is insufficient to warrant such a strained classification of the lyrics.

In fact, the speakers in Hardy's first-person lyrics behave much like most other lyric speakers: they address no dramatically defined listener, but simply muse to themselves in solitude (Abrams, *Glossary* 99). Langbaum's differentiation is crucial here:

it is the incidental nature of the self-revelation that distinguishes the dramatic monologue from the form which is most often confused with it, the soliloquy. The difference is that the soliloquist's subject is himself, while the speaker of the dramatic monologue directs his attention outward.

(141)

To some extent, of course, every lyric reveals character. But in a soliloquy the speaker privately evaluates his thoughts and feelings as well as the world about him, and it is his perspective or commentary that is paramount. Indeed, the focus of interest in a soliloquy is on the purely private mental processes of reflection and meditation. Sharing what is prominent in a soliloquy--inward agitation and self-scrutiny--Hardy's first-person lyrics border more closely on soliloquies than dramatic monologues (but see Miller, "History" 224-25).

There is of lyric another view that corroborates the closer connection. I mean Elder Olson's idea that a lyric is primarily an expression of mental activity, such as perceiving, recollecting, recognising, inferring, expecting, and imagining ("Lyric" 61). As Olson says, the speaker in a lyric of mental activity is "a single

⁶² As Samuel Hynes observes, "Hardy differs from most [other Victorian poets] in that his monologues are less concerned with the creation of character than with the presentation of a view of the world" (*Pattern* 27). According to Jean Brooks, by dwelling on the past in his monologues, Hardy forfeits any dramatic effect from conflicting perspectives (*Structure* 108).

character acting in a single closed situation," where neither context nor any other agency affects or complicates the activity ("Outline" 560; see too "Lyric" 65). In other words, the speaker in an expressive lyric addresses himself, not someone else (as in a dramatic monologue), and the utterance is an autonomous poem. The important point to notice is that the principle of the soliloquy indicates a further, albeit limited, way in which we take a first-person lyric to be dramatic: when it expresses an "interaction of the mind with itself" (Scholes and Klaus 29).

And yet, perhaps we do not have to strain after such an analogical resolution. For both the initial difficulties of approaching Hardy's first-person lyrics as dramatic poems--namely, the lack of dialogue and action in a lyric--we can resolve by defining the dramatic according to the element of setting. Neither a structure of tensions nor dialogue is more basic to drama than a specific physical setting; and setting I shall consider as the primary and essential criterion of the dramatic.⁶³

Setting, of course, as a purely dramatic element, is something quite primitive--the décor or particular physical environment in which an action occurs: that is, places and objects. For although characters seldom describe their immediate surroundings directly, places and objects provide a sense of locale, without which an audience finds it difficult to imagine what exactly is being performed. And the more mimetic the setting of a play, the more convincing is the speech. Take once again the artificial convention of soliloquy. The very thing that makes it plausible and natural on stage is the "physical and psychological situation in which it is a logical mode of expression" (Brooks and Heilman 31). Irresistibly, the immediacy, sensuous presence, and verisimilitude of places and objects direct the audience's attention towards the state of mind of the protagonist, carrying them far into his private world. Modestly defined as places and objects, then, setting is the dramatic datum, the starting-point or precondition of both speech and characterisation.⁶⁴

These fundamental principles of dramatic setting extend quite easily to the main concern of this thesis: Hardy's use of dramatic speakers in his first-person lyrics. For one cannot fully discuss the state of mind of a dramatic speaker without referring to that speaker's perception of his physical environment. And only a concept of setting as rudimentary as the one just proposed befits, I think, the often stern, stark treatment of the physical universe in many of Hardy's first-person lyrics. I shall examine setting in Hardy's lyrics presently (in the next chapter) and attempt to explain how setting can endow a lyric with the force of drama. But first I want to offer a working definition of a dramatic lyric.

At this stage, however, the definition can be no more than provisional. To arrive at a surer, more exact definition we shall in due course have to resume this question of genre (in ch. 3). For the time being, then, a dramatic lyric is a short (anything up to fifty lines, say) first-person poem in which the speaker probes his mind and heart within a physical setting or landscape. What a dramatic lyric presents, though, is neither a disembodied consciousness nor a background landscape, but the interflow between speaker and setting.

⁶³ An equally valid alternative solution follows from regarding lyric as the very *opposite* of drama, as an action purposefully held still--in suspension. Whereas the stasis of a soliloquy affords the dramatist "a means of providing a point of view on the action of the play" (Scholes and Klaus 30), Kenneth Burke says that the stasis of a lyric "is to be understood as a state that sums up an action in the form of an attitude"--by which he means "a state of emotion, or a moment of stasis, in which an act is arrested, summed up, made permanent and total" (475-76). Moreover, through the use of imagery this stasis or "event" becomes the objective equivalent of the speaker's state of mind (481n). Actually, Burke's idea of lyric event and mine of dramatic setting coincide, as the next chapter will reveal.

⁶⁴ Interestingly, the *OED* cites 1885 as the earliest date for the specialised use of *setting* to refer to the staging of a play. "Detailed attention to setting," say Wellek and Warren, "whether in drama or the novel, is Romantic or Realistic (i.e. nineteenth-century) rather than universal" (220).

Putting it more simply, I shall regard as dramatic any lyric that includes these two factors: the pronoun "I" and a reference to places and objects that makes the speaker's utterance plausible and reveals his or her state of mind.

Chapter 2

**POETRY OF PLACE:
SYMBOLIC SETTINGS IN HARDY'S FIRST-PERSON LYRICS**

Concentrating attention on natural setting in Hardy's work is nothing new, of course. Hardy impressed his earliest, urban readers with his ability to depict rural life and landscape (*B* 110, 134, 137; *CL* 2: 220), and his treatment of Nature has been considered his forte as a novelist ever since.¹ More recently, critics have recognised the sophistication of his use of setting in *The Dynasts* (Garrison 173-85, 233) and the short stories (Brady 1-50). Only the short poems--and the first-person lyrics in particular--still lack the sustained and thorough appreciation of their settings that has been denied them since the beginning of Hardy's public career as a poet. Instead of Hardy's "profound faculty for realising landscape," an accepted hallmark of his novels, the only trace of Nature one contemporary reviewer found in his poems was "nothing but a few decorative touches" (Gibson and Johnson 69). Today, the relative neglect of Hardy's lyric settings is all the more astonishing in view of the critical attention paid to settings in the lyrics of other nineteenth- and twentieth-century poets such as Shelley, Tennyson, Frost, and Eliot.² My aim in this chapter, then, is first to argue that the few critics who have applied themselves to Hardy's lyric settings are handicapped by inadequate ideas of literary setting, and then to explain how setting gives Hardy's first-person lyrics the force of drama.

I

Although they regret that Hardy's description of setting is often limited to the churchyard (Marsden 147; Porter 12) and winter landscape (anonymous reviewer, in Cox, *Heritage* 330-31; Hynes, *Pattern* 112, 116), many critics share Auden's admiration for Hardy's "strongly visual imagination" (qtd in Davie, *Poetry* 117), and praise Hardy's gift for faithful observation and descriptive specificity (Blunden 242). Indeed, a "realistic fidelity" and an "obsessive attention to the whole context of experience" (Perkins 268) characterise Hardy's best reflective poems (Teets 183). No doubt, as James Southworth suggests, Hardy's architectural training and his regular inspection of great paintings yielded him the ability to cull physical details that are both essential and startling (202-03; see also Hynes, *Pattern* 129). So critical opinion runs in favour of a hallmark for Hardy's lyrics too: the concrete, pregnant depiction of visual details (see Barton 271; Grundy 11).³

Moreover, critics have been virtually unanimous in asserting the dramatic quality of the very "concreteness of the situations" Hardy describes (Baker 143). According to Howard Baker, Hardy is "not so

¹ See, e.g., McDowall 146, Beach, *Concept* 62-68, and Alcorn 1. Unfortunately, interest in Hardy's undeniable descriptive achievement has too often led to the mere tracking down of autobiographical and geographical references in the Wessex settings of his novels: e.g., Lea; Kay-Robinson; Maxwell; Sherren; and Windle. On the other hand, that historical detection can indeed be integrated with the critical interpretation and evaluation of Wessex as a fictive construct Enstice and Wing have shown admirably.

² See, e.g., Reiman 35-46; Sinfield, *Language* 123-32; Lynen 140-61; and Hargrove 3-35. For a comprehensive study of landscape in 19th-century poetry, see Fletcher. Interestingly, setting is a common denominator in all six lyrics made pre-eminent by Leavis (*Bearings* 55).

³ Disparaging Wordsworthian dilution and Victorian confection, one reviewer maintained that because Hardy saw things with his own eyes, he possessed the "power to make Nature do his will, so that she . . . appears at the right moment to heighten, charm, or terrify" (*Times Literary Supplement* 26 May 1921: 331), a compliment which Hardy recorded (*PN* 48).

much interested immediately in theme, but preoccupied with savoring the incident itself and then inducing the theme from it" (142). What excites another critic is precisely this expressiveness of Hardy's realism:

Few poets are able in a few words so to vivify a landscape as to harmonize or contrast with the mood of the protagonists of the poem. He has written some pure nature poems, it is true, but his usual use of natural setting is as a background against which the dramatic action of the poem shapes itself. The background is definitely localized.
(159)

Southworth's excitement here at discovering in Hardy's poetry a use of setting that is functional chafes concessively ("it is true") against the stereotyped view that Hardy's lyric settings should be superficial and ornamental. So vehemently, in fact, does Southworth later reaffirm Hardy's "drenching of external things with what we might call the personal or dramatic essence" (196) that he forgets to acknowledge the source of his metaphor--J. E. Barton's emphatic defence of Hardy's innate ability to "drench external things with a subjective and personal essence" (272). Arthur McDowall, a critic far ahead of his time, also finds a symbolic overtone in Hardy's realistic settings:

But in Hardy's poetry almost every object or circumstance is, actually or possibly, a symbol for his own kind of significance. This omnipresence of symbols, of a tangible and human kind, mirrors time and beyond-time. The contrast of the permanent and fleeting, the sharp or vanished traces of endurance and mutation in a surrounding vastness, can be felt in them all. Things are themselves, and witnesses to more . . . [and] live with their own reality and with an aura distilled in them from human passions and affections.

(247-48)

McDowall here delineates two kinds of setting--the realistic and the symbolic--and he predicates two uses of symbolic setting: to moralise and to capture a mood.⁴ Even a reading as truculently positivistic as Tom Paulin's allows that "there are times when [Hardy] breaks out of Hume's imaginative universe and achieves a visionary freedom" (211).

And yet, as late as 1978, all a leading critic can propose, as the dominant procedure of Hardy's poetic art, is the "merging of an emotion with its setting," the "integration between setting and mood" (Butler, *Hardy* 171).⁵ Although Butler recognises the possibility that Hardy's lyric settings "reveal an attitude towards [Nature] that implies a whole picture of the universe" (173), he nowhere attempts to demonstrate the subtlety with which Hardy sometimes achieves that revelation. So it is that Butler's proposal, which creates two misconceptions--that there is little tension, disjunction, or interaction between speaker and setting (cf. Zabel 25-26; Bayley, *Essay* 76; Poole 194); and that the imaginative force of Hardy's settings derives purely from the pathetic fallacy (cf. Carpenter 167 and Brooks, *Structure* 53, on Hardy's incidental use of the objective correlative)--seems retrogressive if not a little obtuse.

⁴ Delmore Schwartz too, in his fine centenary essay, describes "Hardy's ability to see particulars as significant of Life in general": the function of Hardy's beliefs was "to generalize his experience into something neither merely particular, which is the historian's concern; nor merely general, which is the philosopher's; but into symbols which possess the qualitative richness . . . of any particular thing and yet have that generality which makes them significant beyond their moment of existence, or the passing context in which they are located" (132, 131).

⁵ It is only fair to mention that Butler recognises that Hardy sometimes "feels he must contradict" this "tendency towards integration" (*Hardy* 171), as when in "On the Way" (*CPW* 2: 397), the hopeful lover perceives the weather, though it is actually wretched, to be "sweet." The irony here, however, is a mere yawn of trite psychology, and light years away from the kind of psychological complexity many of Hardy's lyrics explore.

This is not to imply that all of Hardy's lyric settings are necessarily symbolic, but only that they have yet to be adequately entertained as symbols. Indeed, none of the previous studies of Hardy's lyric settings can do justice to, say, the Roman ruins in *Poems of Pilgrimage*, which are at once remarkably visual and remarkably visionary; they are not just concretely realistic. What, too, of the Cornish coast in *Poems of 1912-13*? The undertone of supernatural romantic fable suggests that the coast embodies an emotional-moral quality; yet the only way to define that quality analytically is to relate the coast to the process of mourning dramatised in the sequence as a whole. Again, places and objects such as the pool in "At Rushy-Pond" (*CPW* 3: 21) and the fallen leaves in "Neutral Tones" (*CPW* 1: 13), for instance, obviously represent a psychological state; yet in order to characterise the disillusionment precisely, one still has to examine the peculiar function of those images in each poem. However deeply buried in the human psyche, the convention by which winter landscape automatically reflects grief (see Hynes, *Pattern* 116-19) provides the reader with merely a starting-point, no more than tentative and provisional. Then again, the bird that symbolises the afflicted human spirit in "The Darkling Thrush" (*CPW* 1: 187) differs from both the personified bird in "The Caged Thrush Freed and Home Again" (*CPW* 1: 184) and the broken bird in "The Impercipient" (*CPW* 1: 87).⁶ In other words, although critics readily connect a setting with a state of mind, they fail to say how Hardy distinguishes poetically between the emotions and attitudes that compose that state.

The cause of that failure is, I think, fairly clear. What if some of Hardy's lyric settings are more than just vividly realistic descriptions or adventitious symbols? What if there is more to the settings than meets the eye? No one has pursued the question, and so no one has proposed an approach that deals with what most critics seem to have missed--the scope of Hardy's use of symbolic setting. Only Donald Davie comes anywhere near the kind of systematic approach to setting I have in mind, with his ladder of poetic artifice: description, presentation, Imagist equation, phantasmagoria, and myth (*Poetry* 47-52). Davie, mainly as practising poet, grades Hardy's settings on a scale of increasing technical skill and mounting imaginative action. What I, solely as critical reader, mean to do is systematically analyse and individualise Hardy's structural and thematic use of setting within a given first-person lyric. That is to say, I am going to treat Hardy's lyric settings as concrete symbols, rich in meaning, and attempt to define that quality of Hardyan setting that meets the mind.

Moreover, the hypothesis that Hardy's lyric settings are symbolic is far from arbitrary. That Hardy's inclination for concrete description is inseparable from a special interest in the symbolic loudly declares itself in his novels, where the device of setting pushes the pathetic fallacy "to such an extreme that it is no longer a fallacy but an artistic integer" (Andersen 203).⁷ Nor is this analogy with the novels wild or fanciful, if one accepts that it is, as Robert Schweik argues, simplistic and "untenable" to divorce Hardy's technique in the poems from that in the novels (133); or if one believes that Davie makes a crucial point about the Hardyan imagination when he says that

what most insistently strikes the reader of Hardy's prose is not this charting of historical time, but a mapping of physical space. What the reader of Hardy first needs--and this is as true of the poems as of the stories--is not a history of nineteenth-century England, but a map. . . . And it will be noticed too that location matters so much, and it changes into

⁶ Even "The Impercipient," ostensibly simple, is controversial. David Perkins argues that Hardy presents the speaker's desolation tentatively and "very indirectly," using the image of a maimed bird to suggest a pathetic nostalgia for the capacity to share the joyous beliefs of his peers (266-67). In contrast, Leonard Smith traces a tonal modulation from a "confrontation" that is "direct and clear, with a cutting edge of bitterness" to a quiet but passionate retreat in the bird-image ("Appreciation" 223).

⁷ See, e.g., Hazen, "Imagery"; Scott; Squires 122; Millgate, *Career* esp. 91, 170, 250, 333; and Bollman.

phantasmagoria, only for a man who is on the move; on the move, for instance, between *cultures*, mobile in more than a physical sense.

(*Poetry* 52)

Even Davie (his disaffection notwithstanding) recognises the capacity of Hardy's lyric landscapes to symbolise a whole emotional, intellectual, and social life--to embody an entire world-view. So that while there is no need to claim any absolute correlation between the novels and first-person lyrics, it does seem reasonable enough to credit the mind that produced Norcombe Hill, Egdon Heath, and the Vale of Blackmoor with the equally significant Roman buildings in *Poems of Pilgrimage* and the Cornish coast in *Poems of 1912-13*. The symbolic landscapes in Hardy's novels, then, have at least a counterpart in the settings of his first-person lyrics. The novels and the lyrics are two aspects of the same "poetry of place" (*CPW* 1: 418; see also *A Laodicean* bk 1, ch. 12).

But the assumption that Hardy's lyric settings are structurally and thematically important has to be refined, of course, because a lyric syncopates description of places and objects. His lyrics certainly accommodate no extended purple "image-passages" of the sort Day Lewis prizes so highly in the novels, for instance (161). Demanding immediate consideration, then, is the way in which setting functions in the structure and meaning of a literary work--in the context, that is, of a wider purpose. In particular, we need to develop a definition of setting that will enable us to gauge, sensitively and systematically, the symbolic force of Hardy's lyric settings.

II

Literary theorists usually recognise three general functions of setting. Setting, at its simplest level, may be mimetic: that is, as we have seen, represent places and objects. Laurent Stern puts the case for the illusory quality of all imaginative literature, when he says:

What is talked about in the literary work of art is an imaginary world and even if there are sentences in the literary work of art that if asserted in another context would be true or false statements, these same sentences serve here merely as a vehicle to permit and facilitate our understanding of the imaginary world. We judge them not as true or false statements, but as facilitating or obstructing the creation of the imaginary world.

(214)

The speaker in "An August Midnight" (*CPW* 1: 184), for example, locates a "scene" simply by enumerating its components:

A shaded lamp and a waving blind,
And the beat of a clock from a distant floor:
On this scene enter--winged, horned, and spined--
A longlegs, a moth, and a dumbledore.

Secondly, setting may be non-mimetic,⁸ operating on a figurative level, such as the personification animating the next six lines of the same poem:

While 'mid my page there idly stands
A sleepy fly, that rubs its hands . . .

Thus meet we five, in this still place,
At this point of time, at this point in space.

⁸ Clearly, any attempt to separate the two modes of setting is artificial, since in reality, a fictional setting works in both modes at once (Booth, *Rhetoric* 23). But it is important, for a full response to a literary work, that one's conception of setting be broad enough to admit the figurative use of physical setting.

--My guests besmear my new-penned line,
Or bang at the lamp and fall supine.

Setting, in other words, can do at least two things for an event and a character: give them a position in the physical universe and predicate something of them. The simple, summery scene, for instance, suggests a lowly speaker who uses his solitude creatively, to fulfil philosophic, and not only poetic, aspirations.⁹ Thirdly, setting in its broadest sense may be environmental: the entire intellectual-cultural context of an action (Guerin 327) or its social-historical circumstances (Abrams, *Glossary* 175).¹⁰ The lines that conclude "An August Midnight" make explicit what the setting already implies--the speaker's wry, defiant sarcasm at the limited, mortal consciousness possessed by the ostensibly supreme creature on this planet, man:

'God's humblest, they!' I muse. Yet why?
They know Earth-secrets that know not I.

Kenneth Burke's concept of setting usefully encompasses all three functions in a single theory:

Using "scene" in the sense of setting, or background, and "act" in the sense of action, one could say that "the scene contains the act." And using "agents" in the sense of actors, or acters, one could say that "the scene contains the agents."

It is a principle of drama that the nature of acts and agents should be consistent with the nature of the scene. . . . the scene is a fit "container" for the act, expressing in fixed properties the same quality that the action expresses. . . .

(3)

In this view, the quality of a setting aptly contains the quality of the action performed within that setting (Burke 474); that is, the setting is consonant with the action and symbolises it.¹¹ Burke's "scene-act ratio," or setting-action congruity, is simple enough; yet before we can use the concept we must qualify it.

Although simple in concept, setting-action congruity is complex in significance. For if setting is the expressive mould of all action, then it follows that a lyric setting may be doubly symbolic. A lyric setting may symbolise the self-analysis performed by the speaker; and it may also symbolise an action beyond the insulated "fictional world"¹² of the lyric: the creative judgement exercised by the poet. Of course, to make adequate and appropriate sense of any poem the critic is obliged to try to place it in an external context relevant to the poem's creation. But attempting is one thing, succeeding another. In his analysis of lyric action, Burke tends to cloud a poem's literal value-system and smother a poem's symbols by connecting them directly to intimate details of the "action" of the poet's personal life (see Friedman 299-300). No conceptual

⁹ Hepburn perhaps exaggerates the ordinariness of the occasion and the experience (63-64). Hardy's poem participates in a literary tradition: e.g., Milton's "Il Penseroso" lines 85-92.

¹⁰ Wellek and Warren also identify three aspects of setting--as ethical emblem, psychological projection, and cultural "determinant" (221).

¹¹ As a couple of simplistic, negative examples of this phenomenon, take the singing of hymns in church (as in, say, "The Impercipient" *CPW* 1: 87) and the attending of a banquet ("At a Fashionable Dinner" *CPW* 3: 18); then consider the effect of swapping the two actions from their respective venues. The very incongruity of dining in a church or singing hymns while seated at a formal dinner reinforces Burke's principle. Or take Hardy's example of the vicar who, unaware he is being observed, "re-enact[s] at the vestry-glass / Each pulpit gesture in deft dumb-show / That had moved the congregation so" (*CPW* 2: 141). Genre too, of course, implies an underlying decorum. "In fact," says Fowler, "it may well be that the majority of generic features operate unconsciously, until, perhaps, some gross *infringement* of rule draws them to our attention" (*Kinds* 60; emphasis mine). See also ch. 3, pt V below.

¹² Stern's phrase (209). But see Nelson Smith, "Dynamics," who describes four sides of a fictional world--the ontological (its characters, settings, events), the epistemological (what and how characters know about

highway runs straight from lyric setting to poet's biography; a lyric setting plots but a point in a poet's philosophy and psychology (see above, ch. 1, pt IV; the knotty issue of whether or not Hardy's first-person lyrics are pure self-expression comes up for attention in the next chapter). Hence the golden criterion--which is that outside data must enhance, not reduce, the unique force of a setting in the context of the lyric itself--remains intact. Still, with that qualification in mind, it is important that we acknowledge a poet's thought and feeling as a possible context, because the possibility justifies, on dramatic grounds, the notion of a master theme controlling and informing Hardy's first-person lyrics.

If Burke's idea of lyric action buttresses the qualified use of the poet's experiences as an external frame of reference, so too does Burke's idea of lyric setting. For as William Rueckert points out, Burke's idea of setting extends even to a poet's era and milieu (75). Nevertheless, as was said in the previous chapter (pt III), admissible and relevant as historical and biographical facts may seem to a reading of a dramatic lyric, they are best included only with frugality and discretion. Consequently, for the purpose of the ensuing analyses, I intend to limit setting exclusively to the specific physical location in which an event occurs or in which a speaker takes a conscious interest. In a nutshell, setting will be places and objects *within* a lyric.¹³

Now, there is an approach to setting that treats it precisely as a function of places and objects. There is an approach to setting that is father to the ensuing analyses. It is a far-reaching approach sufficiently delicate to trace the filaments of implication in a symbolic setting, and to gauge its ethical, psychological, and intellectual qualities. And the approach is this: to focus on *spatial* images--places or objects that take up space in the fictional world of a literary work and that depend on space or spatial distance for their proper functioning in that world.¹⁴

The approach springs from Eugene Timpe's compact discussion of how man's innate sense of space works in literature. The following digest fairly indicates, I think, the key principles of his essay. To begin with, a sense of space comes from two sources: directly, from a knowledge of places and objects, and indirectly, from a knowledge of motion, time, and abstractions expressed figuratively:

spatial conceptualization is intrinsic in human thought and therefore commonly present in the literary expression of that thought. Scarcely any mode of man's existence can be divorced from the spatial dimension. His sensory perceptions, his quantitative thinking, and even his temporal sense, are all basically related to his spatial awareness. Without space, motion cannot exist; if motion is a function of time, then time cannot exist either. Only some intellectual and emotional abstractions seem exempt from a relationship with space; yet even they must exist somewhere, and their expression is often dependent upon the use of spatial ideas.

(179)

Putting it another way, space is the very perception of places and objects and their relationships, since according to Timpe,

their world), the logical (causal relations between characters, settings, and events), and the axiological (the values by which characters act).

¹³ In the only other critical study I know of that enlists Burke's concept of setting, Calder restricts setting to "background landscape within a specific work"(19). The concept of background, however, destroys the often extremely delicate interrelation between objective and subjective reality which characterises many of Hardy's lyric speakers.

¹⁴ By the term *image* itself I mean simply any concrete detail, thing, physical sensation, or sense perception literally or figuratively referred to in the fictional world of a work of literary art. See also Furbank, *Reflections* 68-81.

there is no usable distinction between space and place. "Place," as a matter of fact, exists only to create space, which it does through the establishment of loci in coordinate relationships. Space, then, becomes the function of lesser spaces or "places," all of which exist in respect to others. So every "place" is really a space and every one of these spaces exists *relatively in reference to others* of its kind and the total space which it partially defines.

(182; emphasis mine)

The "loci" (places and objects) are so intimately connected with the idea of space that when they take up space, they simultaneously make up space. Places and objects constitute space and organise it; they fill it and form it. These two excerpts from Timpe's essay serve to clinch the emphasis on places and objects in my definition of setting. They also sanction my future use of the adjective *spatial* to imply not only places and objects, but also direction of movement, dimensions of space, and details of landscape such as marks--"An object or mark raised or made by man on a scene is worth ten times any such formed by unconscious Nature" (*L&W* 120)--weather, season, and animals. (It seems sensible to include these items since Hardy uses them in the same way as he uses other details that are quite evidently parts of the setting.) Furthermore, the second excerpt from Timpe's essay heralds the all-important polarity of absoluteness and relativity, an idea that assists my argument materially.

A fine illustration of the idea occurs in book 8 of *Paradise Lost*. Assuming the Ptolemaic view of the universe, Adam asks Raphael whether there can be any husbandry in heaven when the celestial bodies, so noble in their multiplicity and speed, are subservient to the puny planet of Earth:

this earth a spot, a grain,
An atom, with the firmament compared
And all her numbered stars, that seem to roll
Spaces incomprehensible (for such
Their distance argues and their swift return
Diurnal) merely to officiate light
Round this opacous earth, this punctual spot,
One day and night; in all their vast survey
Useless besides.

(17-25)

Without committing himself, the archangel replies along these lines: On the contrary, Earth may actually be one of seven planets that "roll" or "dance" (line 125) about the sun; but whether the universe be geocentric or heliocentric, this planet is a "fruitful" and habitable place in its own right, not merely an uneconomically heated and lighted dot (lines 90-99). Raphael's twofold answer is, in Timpe's terms, an application of the absoluteness-relativity principle. Each planet is subsidiary to the sun and has its own sphere, which is relative to the six other concentric spheres. Nevertheless, any of the concentric spheres may be regarded as an absolute and self-sufficient setting for a single state of being. Raphael therefore urges Adam to enjoy this planet because Paradise and Eve make it an absolute space, a world in itself: "Think only what concerns thee and thy being; / Dream not of other worlds" (lines 174-75).

The significance of a setting, then, derives from the relative positions of the places and objects embodying that setting. According to Timpe, places and objects may be related in at least four ways: (1) to one another (e.g., the Ptolemaic spheres); (2) to the larger space to which each belongs (e.g., the cosmos); (3) to an onlooker (e.g., Adam); and (4) to the relation between the perceptions of two or more onlookers: e.g., to Adam, Earth means a minute point in the universe lying far below the fixed stars; to Raphael, Earth means Paradise; and to Milton, Earth means the "paradise within" (12.587)--that is, the heart of man. Of course, Timpe's absoluteness-relativity polarity has much more to recommend it than this telegraphic commentary

might lead one to expect. And having described what space is and how it means, he goes on to classify a variety of functions and effects of space: how it works and what it can achieve.

Chief among these functions and effects is static space and dynamic space. Static space consists of either a single, vague space (e.g., the setting in *Everyman*) or a fixed sequence of discrete spaces (e.g., the river-stations in *Heart of Darkness*). In other words, static space may be either absolute or relative. By contrast, dynamic space is always mobile and relative, consisting of "a conflict between a force and that which resists it" (Timpe 187): e.g., a fantasy world at odds with reality; a prison made meaningful by the world outside its walls; and so on.

Other polarities that Timpe teaches follow from this idea of static and dynamic space. Space may be enclosed or extended, circumscribed or unlimited; it may also shrink or stretch. And each new state may have the force of a metaphor. For instance, images of expansion, circularity, and constriction can subtly reflect the movements in a character's mind. Hence qualities of space may function symbolically to various effects: to suggest and develop character (through movement between settings or association with settings), to impute a moral value to a character or action (through association), to create a critical perspective (through juxtaposition of settings), to define a complex theme (through multiple perspectives), and to reveal the subconscious (through representation of a fantasy world). And from such a field of possibilities the poet makes his selections.

III

Turning now from Burke's and Timpe's views on setting in general, we find that Hardy's first-person lyrics occur on a scale of figurative uses of setting that climbs from zero (or literal description) to infinity (mystical Symbolism). Lyrics composed to mark and glamorise a "martial" occasion depict a purely realistic, historical setting (*CL* 2: 232, 238). Southampton Docks, for instance, is no more than a naturalistic backdrop for the departing British troops in "Embarcation," "Departure," and "The Colonel's Soliloquy" (*CPW* 1: 116-17)--useful to the historian but not to the literary critic. And the reader soon realises that Hardy's occasional lyrics celebrating war and patriotism lack any real symbolic substance. Many lyrics depicting rural life, too, amass vivid, pictorial minutiae which, however sensitively and specifically observed, seldom transcend naturalistic description. Hardy packs with physical particulars "A Sheep Fair" (*CPW* 3: 41), "A Light Snow-Fall after Frost" (*CPW* 3: 43), and "An Unkindly May" (*CPW* 3: 174), but apart from appending or implying a "non-descriptive conclusion or moral" (Marsden 208), makes little effort to invest the settings with symbolic overtones or psychological values.

On the other hand, some descriptive lyrics have an impact sensuous and emotive. The cider-maker in "Shortening Days at the Homestead" (*CPW* 3: 133), for instance, brings a superior order to the scene simply by virtue of his distinctive human faculty for "pondering." Similarly, the phrase "she who" in the penultimate line of "On Sturminster Foot-Bridge" (*CPW* 2: 225) transforms the entire scene, inasmuch as merely a metonymic light represents human significance in an inhospitable, "decaying" (Taylor, *Poetry* 165n10) environment. Then again, the intensified details in "Night-Time in Mid-Fall" (*CPW* 3: 41) and "The Sheep-Boy" (*CPW* 3: 109) create a pervasive atmosphere of ominous menace. And the settings in ghost-poems such as "Copying Architecture in an Old Minster" (*CPW* 2: 171) and "A Spellbound Palace" (*CPW* 3: 28) also conjure up an air of mystery. However, even though atmospheric settings may easily become symbolic--as the ghost lyrics in *Poems of 1912-13* abundantly demonstrate--so long as they have no wider thematic role to play, and so long as the deployment of their details generates no extra meaning, atmospheric settings are unable to attain intellectual or philosophical significance (see Quinn 13).

It is, of course, a commonly held view of Hardy's lyrics that their vivid, concrete detail wanes with the increase in explicit intellectual speculation or philosophical abstraction (see, e.g., Blackmur 51; Carpenter 158). And it is true enough that such lyrics as "To Life," "Doom and She," and "God-Forgotten" (*CPW* 1: 152, 157) contain scant setting. Yet it is, I think, partly setting--defined now as *spatial* imagery--that accounts for Paul Zietlow's calling even so patently abstract a lyric as "God-Forgotten," for instance, "Hardy's most fully realized and humanized statement of an indifferent divinity" (*Moments* 140). Surely what objectifies and enforces our sense of the speaker's disillusion is not just the personification of the Deity but the interplay between the spatial images of vertical elevation/descent, contraction/expansion, enclosure/extension, and darkness/light. (In the poem, light registers heaven as a source of radiance, like a beacon.) Driven to despair by the suffering of his fellow-men, the speaker mystically ascends to the imposing "presence of the Lord Most High" and diplomatically appeals for help. Reminiscent of Milton's Adam, the creator describes the earth as "Some tiny sphere . . . Mid millions of such shapes," thereby apparently justifying his venial slip in memory. Man's religious faith he considers, in any event, to have been mere "threads" of communication; if man now dwells in the "Dark" on a "tainted ball," it is his own fault for having presumptuously severed those links with heaven. Nevertheless, to repair the damage and restore "light" to men, "the Lord" despatches his angels. What little sympathy he expresses, however, is stultified by his ineffectualness, as the speaker ultimately discovers:

Homing at dawn, I thought to see
 One of the Messengers standing by.
 --O childish thought! . . . Yet still it comes to me
 When trouble hovers nigh.

The matutinal realisation that God is, yet again, oblivious of men subverts two thoroughly traditional images of security and relief: home and dawn, human shelter and divine deliverance (e.g., Psalm 18.2; 30.5).¹⁵ And the bathetic implication is, on the one hand, that human experience takes no priority whatever in the business affairs of heaven, and, on the other, that terrestrial gloom is caused and exacerbated by divine forgetfulness. This rude awakening is the effect of no simple opposition, but of a dynamic interrelationship of spatial images that reflects an unresolved tension between two presuppositions: a reliable remedy for human "trouble" and the harrowing tenuousness of any such "answer." The inevitability of the second comes in to pour salt on the possibility of the first. The poem leaves us with a clinging taste of moral outrage.

The use of "childish" in the quatrain just quoted illustrates to a nicety Hardy's ambivalence towards the visionary imagination. The epithet derives from the primary symbol of the Romantic perspective--the child (Perkins 267-68; Knoepflmacher, "Mutations")--and implies that while the speaker regrets the dubiousness and ultimate futility of that perspective, he concedes that he still finds it magnetic. The wishful pause (" . . . Yet") effectively stakes a claim to a vague middle-ground of experience between fantasy and reality, and makes the ambivalence all the more poignant and significant. As Perkins argues, what Hardy is too honest to accept, he is too humble to reject (270; see also Taylor, *Poetry* 159n3); so Hardy responds with a celebratory-elegiac synthesis (Simpson 50).

As the complexity of Hardy's use of this Romantic symbol indicates, the strength of the involuntary attraction towards a dreamlike, visionary world inevitably aligns Hardy's sensibility with the Romantic idea of symbolism. And, of course, evidence for this Romantic-Victorian alignment is fairly bountiful. Ian Watt,

¹⁵ Interestingly, Donald Stone argues that in his novels, Hardy "reveals his affinity with Victorian poets," who present sad, alienating, or unstable homes (304), rather than with Victorian novelists, who see home as a cheerful, communal, and "protective enclosure" (294).

for instance, characterises Romantic and Victorian theories of symbolism by a visionary, almost sacramental quality. The Romantic poets and their nineteenth-century successors, he writes,

found their literary subjects in particular individual experiences, but they sought to go beyond what a mechanistic psychology could deduce, and make us imagine their particular subject as representative of more universal human meanings or spiritual states . . . Romantic symbolism in general moves from the particular and the transitory towards that larger world of meanings and values which in earlier periods had been ordered and enriched by a common religious, mythological, social, moral, and aesthetic order.

(182)

Coleridge's definition of a symbol includes much the same emphasis. The supreme characteristic of a symbol is "the translucence of the Eternal through and in the Temporal. [A symbol] always partakes of the Reality which it renders intelligible; and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part in that Unity, of which it is the representative" (*Manual* 30).¹⁶ And by "translucence" Coleridge presumably means transmission or carrying across (Prickett 189n2). In other words, a symbol transmits or reveals the whole to which it belongs and to which, existing in its own right, it contributes.¹⁷

In 1889, we find Hardy thinking in similar images when he says of Turner's water-colours:

each is a landscape *plus* a man's soul. . . . What he paints chiefly is *light as modified by objects*. He first recognizes the impossibility of really reproducing on canvas all that is in a landscape; then gives for that which cannot be reproduced a something else which shall have upon the spectator an approximate effect to that of the real. He said, in his maddest and greatest days: 'What pictorial drug can I dose man with, which shall affect his eyes somewhat in the manner of this reality which I cannot carry to him?'

(*L&W* 225-26)

In keeping with the Romantic use of natural imagery, Hardy promotes not only a fusion of human subject and natural setting, but also a blurring of the literal and figurative (see Wimsatt, "Structure" 113-14). For Hardy, a landscape or setting should act as a means of transcending physical, quantifiable reality. As Brigitte Peucker puts it, "in poems celebrating the imagination, the landscape is reborn in the individual" (912). The objective, external world merges into a subjective reality situated within the speaker's imagination, creating a dynamic interrelation between that external world and the speaker's inner life. The mental habit of associating a person with a particular setting illustrates very well this imaginative, often ironic, Hardyian tension. For instance, Elfride Swancourt's singing at the candle-lit pianoforte in Endelstow Rectory "seems [to Stephen Smith] ordained to be her special form of manifestation throughout the pages of his memory" (*Blue Eyes* ch. 3, 22), or, in Burke's terms Smith's imagination decrees that that particular setting will most poignantly contain her

¹⁶ Coleridge goes on to rephrase his definition: "and by symbol I mean, not a metaphor or allegory or any other figure of speech or form of fancy, but an actual and essential part of that, the whole of which it represents" (*Manual* 79).

¹⁷ By the term *symbol*, in its broadest sense, I understand *that which means* something beyond itself, an implicit meaning which the observer has to infer for himself (see Wheelwright 18). Hardy provides some simple examples of synecdochic symbols: "at home, in a soldier you see the British Army, in a bishop at your club, the Church of England" (*L&W* 262). More particularly, a symbol that is literary "evokes" or embodies, in the form of an image, a meaning which the reader is left to infer (Friedman 291-93; see also Tindall 10). In other words, the meaning that a literary symbol represents or objectifies is an intangible reality, such as a concept, a value, an experience, or an attitude (see Wimsatt, "Meanings" 53; Burke 506-09). It is in this sense, of course, that symbolic expression ties in with drama, since the stage is that which "converts the real into a signifier for itself and beyond itself, pointing into areas of meaning transcending itself" (Esslin 10). Peacock in fact sees drama as a symbolic process, a subtle "interfusion of speech, gesture, and scene" (48-50, 231-34, 118).

Hardy never leaves the familiar and the concrete behind. The familiar and the concrete cannot be left behind, because of themselves, they generate the underlying abstraction and remain continuous with it. Hardy continues into the mental interior of a lyric speaker only so long as the lines of mundane communication remain intact.

Standing therefore in stark contrast to Hardy's lyric settings are the settings of mystical Symbolism. For Hardy never progresses to that arbitrary and obscure use of setting, never seeks to represent some mystical "reality" transcending the quotidian actualities of human existence, or to describe "a vast and general ideal world of which the real world is merely an imperfect representation" (Chadwick 3). Hardy makes no attempt to place us in a "superior" world, "a world that is truer and more real than the world we know from statistics or scientific induction or common sense" (Davie, *Poetry* 61). The only kind of reality that Hardy confronts us with is "the tragical mysteries of life," those shattering moments in individual experience that demand a bold, original response if any meaning is to be regained. To render objective reality more intensely, more truly, is Hardy's avowed intention: "My art is to intensify the expression of things . . . so that the heart and inner meaning is made vividly visible" (*L&W* 183). Hardy certainly aims at depicting the visible world objectively--that is, at imitating its fleeting shifts in light and colour--but in such a way that the depiction suggests the fluid and complex patterns of human experience.²⁰ Consequently, Hardy's use of setting deliberately exercises our organs of sensuous perception and through them, prompts us to consider the traumatic meaninglessness of individual human existence. His lyric settings enhance our grasp of both non-human and human reality. Far from favouring the Symbolist distortion of the natural world, then, Hardy's ideal of landscape in art actually demands that the reading of his lyric use of setting be concretely symbolic.

The difference between Hardy's lyric settings and Symbolist settings goes somewhat deeper than that, though. The difference amounts to one of attitude towards the space that a setting occupies and towards the moral, social, and psychological value attached to that space. Space in *The Waste Land*, for instance, is distorted and disjointed, shifting haphazardly from one setting to the next. This surrealistic space suggests the decay and fragmentation in the milieu Eliot depicts, and corresponds to the disintegration of the secure Victorian world-view, to the disturbance of an entire cultural universe. Eliot's phantasmagoric settings register both the collapse into chaos of Western civilization and the critical need for "something which might restore the springs of human goodness and vitality" (Holloway 81). In terms of Timpe's categories, Eliot's settings move from dynamic to static space, from "a heap of broken images" (line 22) towards the immovable mountain of wisdom perpetually uttered by the Thunder (lines 433-34). Hardy's lyric settings, on the other hand, maintain a dual perspective in the individual consciousness by conflating visionary and quotidian reality. Artistically detached from the mind presented, Hardy uses space for staging a speaker's private, inner struggle with contemporary convictions and conventions. In Timpe's terms, this means that Hardy's settings range from static to dynamic space, remaining juxtaposed and interacting.²¹

powers of the mind are completely suspended" and "the images have a negative reality" (*Shakespeare* 52, 95, 223). Langer's name for this intermediary experience is "virtual life" or "virtual history" (211, 256-57, 259). In his observation that the tacit purpose of fiction is to please the reader, Hardy uses an especially apt verb: "This is done all the more perfectly in proportion as the reader is *illuded* to believe the personages true and real like himself" (*L&W* 154; emphasis mine). But see *L&W* 157 and 225-26.

²⁰ Although Hardy was well aware that "analogies between the arts are apt to be misleading" ("Rejoinder" 143), it was, as Michael Millgate remarks, "characteristic of Hardy's visualizing imagination" to use painting as a working analogy for literature (*B* 285). On Hardy's preoccupation with the rendering of reality, see Millgate, *Career* 254-55.

²¹ It comes as no surprise to learn that spatial interaction (i.e., juxtaposition and symbolic contrast) is the most distinctive quality of the Gothic art-principle (Muscatine 167-69; Beatty 33-34), a principle of

Such an interrelation of thoughts, feelings, and moral values makes Hardy's settings more essentially dramatic than Eliot's. For however fragmentary or figurative, Hardy's lyric settings usually grow from imagery that is familiar, concrete, and above all, human--an organic relationship that secures their dramatic force. As Christopher Ricks explains, a symbol in a play is convincing only if it pulsates with human experience:

The truly symbolic effect, then, would be distinguished not by being more indubitably symbolic, but by being in a true relationship with the non-symbolic. . . . It is not a derogation from symbolic effect that a symbol has reasons over and above its symbolizing for being present at all; on the contrary, it is only by having too a non-symbolic *raison d'être* that a symbol can fully achieve its symbolic *raison d'être*--can protect itself (as everything in an imaginative work rightly has to do) against the suspicion that it is merely made up.

(309-10)

Where the symbolic meaning of naturalistic spatial images is unobtrusive, and "is seen to be latent in them by the spiritual eye" alone (*L&W* 118)--in those lyrics where Hardy succeeds in concealing his art--there we shall find settings whose effect is truly dramatic.

IV

There are, of course, two criteria by which we decide whether or not an element in a poem is symbolic: repetition (Wellek and Warren 189, 300) and context (Knights, "Idea" 136). An element becomes symbolic when its recurrence gains it a significance that transcends its first meaning in a poem, or, alternatively, when the other elements of the poem concertedly induce a wider range of meaning in that element. In other words, it is a matter of referring the element to the theme and structure of the poem. The second criterion of intrinsic context applies equally when a poet uses a conventional, universally intelligible symbol (e.g., "O *Rose!* thou art sick!" or "Two *roads* diverged in a yellow wood"), for the poem itself dictates how far a critic may press the symbol's wider, extrinsic associations. Local, intrinsic context, therefore, will always determine the presence and scope of a symbol. These two criteria--repetition and context--will enable us to assess the element of setting in Hardy's first-person lyrics. They will, in fact, force us to analyse a setting's thematic and structural function in a lyric as a whole. In this way a setting that is symbolic will take us deep into the central issues of a lyric (see Friedman 296-98).

On the other hand, we would do well to qualify these criteria a little in the case of Hardy. For despite his prosodic versatility, literary development in his short poems is either undemonstrable or non-existent

spontaneous asymmetry that Hardy publicly embraced (*L&W* 323-24). But, as Donald Davie points out, the asymmetry is rarely on the surface of a poem, so that one must "look through apparent symmetry to the real asymmetry beneath," to "the rhythmic shape of the stanza--the pattern of line lengths supplemented by the metrical, syntactical and phonetic rhythms--and its relationship to the poem's substantive or emotional pattern" (*Poetry* 53; see Woolley). Hardy himself affirmed at the level of individual poem three "principles that make for permanence": "organic form and symmetry, the force of reserve, and the emphasis of understatement"; consequently, the aesthetic basis of his distaste for free verse was its "structureless and conglomerate character" (*L&W* 391). For effective deviation relies on and exploits a notion of regularity; there must, in the first place, be a "rule" to violate; in order to have "strayed" an element of a poem must first have "bounds"--hence Hardy's esteem for "cunning irregularity" (*L&W* 323). At the level of the total output of his poems over sixty years, there beckons the further avenue of examining Hardy's prosody as the major form of evidence of his development as a poet. Building on the findings of Hickson, Marsden, and Woolley, the inquiry might take Genette for a model and thereby obviate the problem mentioned in n22 below.

(Marsden 210; Hynes, *Pattern* 130; Butler, *Hardy* 161-62);²² and despite the ostensible miscellaneousness of the *Complete Poetical Works*, the imagery strikes the reader as consistent and having a sameness about it (Page, *Hardy* 163, 165)--in short, Hardy's poems create an overall effect of "homogeneous miscellaneity" (Millgate, *B* 560), of a "wholeness" which is "precarious" (Clements, "Order" 139). It seems reasonable, therefore, to supplement any image that is important in a lyric with thematically related images from Hardy's other short poems. Of course, one jibs at the transfer of values from one poem to another, because everyone knows that a poem is successful, strictly speaking, only to the extent that it is autonomous, and because distortion of the poem is practically inevitable. The moment, however, one recalls that Hardy hotly maintained the principle of judging a poet's work as a whole or not at all (*L&W* 325, 439), that he advocated the analogous practice of looking for a pattern in human experience (*L&W* 158), that he admired "the well-knit interdependence of parts" ("Reading" 121; *Woodlanders* ch. 8, 8, line 28), that he favoured images of visual patterns (Taylor, *Poetry* 40), and that he delighted in systematic poetical structures (Blackmur 39), the existence of a comprehensive (albeit rough) pattern of images becomes a distinct possibility. Samuel Hynes stresses the cumulative effect of Hardy's imagery when he says that "the sum of the imagery is Hardy's view of the world . . . one could infer the whole pattern of Hardy's thought simply from his image-picture of the world" (*Pattern* 110; see also 123). A recent critic, in fact, believes that Hardy had a deliberate pattern for his entire poetic canon, that "at some all-enveloping level Hardy was weaving a whole imaginative cloth" (Buckler, *Poetry* 19). Consequently, I am going to extend the criterion of repetition to apply to all eight volumes of Hardy's short poems. And my aim is to adumbrate--no more than that--an anatomy of lyric settings, since spatial imagery is by far the most significant type of imagery in those volumes.²³

Settings, of course, embody and complement the theme of a poem; that is, they shape and inform the theme by co-operating with other images in the poem as well as with elements such as metrics, diction, and syntax. However, if those spatial images are to achieve their fullest potential within a framework of settings, they have to complement a theme more fundamental than a local one, a theme which several poems articulate. Like repetition, then, the criterion of local, intrinsic context also seems too narrow. Already, it is customary to assume that a single vein of thought and feeling runs through the eight volumes. Dennis Taylor calls it an underlying "consistency of vision and coherence of sensibility" (39). Creighton refers to it as "an intuitive framework" (of which Hardy himself was not fully aware) according to which "All the poems illuminate each other, casting reciprocal light backwards and forwards, so that quite small pieces attain a glow which might otherwise be imperceptible . . ." (*Poems* xiii, xiv).

But might one not extend this idea of an "underthought" beyond the short poems in order to cover more of Hardy's work?²⁴ Indeed, some of Hardy's short poems have explicit affinities with his novels, for instance. Here the titles "In a Wood" (*CPW* 1: 83), "The Well-Beloved" (*CPW* 1: 168), "Tess's Lament" (*CPW* 1: 216), "We Field-Women" (*CPW* 3: 218); and the poems "Friends Beyond" (*CPW* 1: 78), "The Bullfinches" (*CPW* 1: 156), "The Pine Planters" (*CPW* 1: 328), "The Moth-Signal" (*CPW* 2: 111), "Midnight on the Great Western" (*CPW* 2: 262) come to mind. But there are other, less superficial, affinities between

²² The discrepancy between many of their dates of composition and publication makes it extremely difficult to establish any essentially poetic development (see, e.g., King), and recent attempts to do so have been unconvincing: see, e.g., Buckler's rev. of Taylor, and his own *Poetry* 197.

²³ For a first-rate demonstration of this approach, see Stallworthy, "Moonlight."

²⁴ The term belongs to Hopkins, who discovered "in any lyric passage of the tragic [Greek] poets" a submerged current of thought counterpointing the paraphrasable content and "conveyed chiefly in the choice of metaphors etc [sic] used and often only half realised by the poet himself, not necessarily having any connection with the subject in hand but usually having a connection and suggested by some circumstance of the scene or of the story . . . commonly an echo or shadow of the [paraphrasable content]" (*Letters* 252-53).

what speakers in the poems and characters in the novels know and value, affinities that operate at the level of theme.²⁵ And one could go still deeper, beyond these epistemological and axiological levels (Smith, "Dynamics" 39), to the shared ideology of lyric speaker and poet. After all, the elements in a literary work hardly select and arrange themselves at random or at will; the critic has to assume that there is a shaping consciousness behind those elements. Consequently, it is a genuinely critical question to ask how, for instance, a lyric setting functions within the larger context of a poet's consciousness. This is not, in any way, to advocate the psychic empathy practised by Hillis Miller in his *Distance and Desire*, a study of Hardy's novels and poems concocted expressly to conjure up a private hypothetical personage named Thomas Hardy. Nevertheless, it seems needlessly wilful and wayward to deal with Hardy's first-person lyrics in isolation from everything else he wrote. To focus on the quality of a lyric setting as substantially expressing Hardy's creative impulse may well enrich one's appreciation of that lyric. Provided one remembers how knotty the relation is between lyric and lyricist, one may usefully--in that it helps one judge a lyric--treat spatial imagery as a reflex of a poet's view of life, art, and the physical universe. So I intend to bring in, as one possible informing context for discussing the attitudes of lyric speakers, the perspective offered by what I believe is a major, and perhaps even primary, theme of Hardy's. It is a theme that permeates all Hardy's work, but is most explicitly set forth in his prose writings, most powerfully in the major novels. This controlling, master theme, a subject calling for considerable discussion, I shall introduce soon (in the next chapter) and fully account for and delineate later (in ch. 4).

My claim, then, is that the entire body of Hardy's short poems, in all its ostensible disconnectedness, expresses an inner or ultimate, governing organisation, a conceptual pattern that crystallises out most beautifully in the spatial imagery of the first-person lyrics--expresses, in a word, Hardy's heart: "The ultimate aim of the poet should be to touch our hearts by showing his own" (*L&W* 131; see also 179-80 and *LN* 1: 365, item 1217).

If we now appear to be returning to the biographical extreme, let us note two things about this idea of a thematic context. One is that such a context stands on the solid, positive evidence of Hardy's own prose, both public and private, not on the conjecture of zealous biographical critics. The other thing is that there are, as we shall see, many different aspects to Hardy's master theme. It is neither a system of thought nor a rigid scheme that will "explain" the lyrics by racking and distorting their poetry. The theme I have isolated is a complex, flexible (but not flaccid) pattern that is continuous with Hardy's imagination. For instance, Hardy endorsed, as "The first & noblest aim of imag[inative] liter[ature]," the rendering of "a coherent view of life's apparent incoherence, to give shape to the amorphous, to discover beauty wh[ich] was hidden, to . . . reveal essential truth" (*LN* 2: 101-02). And in his 1887-note on late-Turner (quoted above in pt III), Hardy's thought shifts from visible object ("the scenic") to spiritual reality ("abstract imaginings"). In other words, his artistic impulse is a creatively symbolic one, not a mechanically and reductively allegorical one (cf. Davie, *Poetry* 61-62); and it rightly leaves open and richly indeterminate the meaning of his art.²⁶ Perhaps, then, we may similarly expect the symbolic settings in Hardy's lyrics to prompt the reader towards some immanent ("half hidden") spiritual truth in the universe. As Samuel Hynes says, "There are no literal landscapes in Hardy's poems" (*Pattern* 112). What I have in mind is nothing so exegetical and stifling as that may sound. But I

²⁵ Rosemary Eakins has found "a whole intricate web" of glossarial relations between the poems and the two novels, *Under the Greenwood Tree* and *Tess* (52).

²⁶ Commenting on a note Coleridge wrote on 11 Mar. 1819, Kathleen Coburn distinguishes between allegory, which works like the fancy, substituting for "one object one idea," and a symbol which, "like the imagination, works in a more fugitive and indirect way, uniting sense, emotion and intellect in one not completely definable operation. Allegory is literal, mechanical, material, and therefore inferior, as talismans and icons are inferior to Platonic ideas" (Notes 3: 4498, par. 3).

suggest that we should try to remember something of those "tragical mysteries of life" that Hardy was developing in his novels and elsewhere at the same time that he was writing his first-person lyrics. *The Woodlanders*, for example, he finished only days after making his statement about the mysteries of life (*L&W* 192).

In reading Hardy's lyrics, I believe, one should bring the perspective of Hardy's master theme to bear on the interpretation of a first-person lyric by analysing its setting. Such a setting, linked thematically to settings in other first-person lyrics, should activate overtones and feelings that enrich our response to the lyric in hand. Indeed, considering a first-person lyric in the light of associations that are both germane to that lyric and centrally Hardyan, will help us to find the appropriate emphasis in each lyric--to catch, that is, the "right" note ("Apology" *CPW* 2: 322).

To sum up, Hardy's first-person lyrics gain the force of drama from the symbolism of their settings. I shall regard a lyric setting symbolic if it meets at least two of these three requirements: (1) the lines in which it lodges--their import (whether conveyed by syntax, diction, or rhythm)--must suggest that the setting signifies something beyond its purely literal meaning; (2) it must play an essential role in a lyric's theme and structure, a role that in turn has a further field of reference; and (3) it must belong within a framework of thematically linked settings occurring throughout the eight volumes of Hardy's short poems. What kind of space does the setting occupy: physical, emotional, intellectual, or a combination of these? What human concern has been projected into the setting? Is the setting an integral part of the theme and structure of the lyric? What is the full import of the lyric's setting with reference to its thematic and structural role in the lyric as a whole? Does the setting belong to a wider framework of Hardy's spatial images? If so, what connotations peculiar to the framework, and what distinctive attributes of its own, does the setting bring into the lyric? And in what ways do those spatial images combine or conflict with *other* images in the lyric? Answers to preliminary questions like these should determine whether or not a given setting is symbolic. Finally, as the source of a lyric's dramatic power, a symbolic setting may be defined as an arrangement of spatial images that embodies a meaning beyond itself in relation not only to the lyric's theme and structure, but also to Hardy's controlling, master theme.

Chapter 3

THE SPATIAL GAUGE OF PASSION'S SHOW: HARDY'S USE OF THE DRAMATIC LYRIC

Moving on now to refine the definition of a dramatic lyric stated at the end of the first chapter, we discover a helpful corollary in Kenneth Burke's idea of setting-action congruity: namely, a setting symbolises the action conventionally imitated by the genre in which it occurs. As Daniel Calder correctly infers from Burke's idea, "the kinds of actors and the kinds of acts in a given genre are bound to share some common qualities; thus the settings follow as fit containers for those acts" (26). As a general principle, to associate setting with genre means that one may roughly assign various types of setting to certain poetic genres according to the action that is distinctive in each genre. In the present study, the focus of attention is on one specific genre: the first-person lyric of Thomas Hardy. Hence, in order to appreciate how Hardy uses setting symbolically in his first-person lyrics--to describe how the lyrics work dramatically--our initial step must be towards establishing the generic action (or object of imitation) fundamental and peculiar to those lyrics.

The word "towards" is necessary here, because like all generic classifications, the definition of that generic action has to be preliminary, provisional, and flexible. For in relating genre and the use of setting, one inevitably runs into what Allan Rodway calls "the parts-whole dilemma: the fact that we often cannot interpret the parts properly without knowing what sort of whole they are parts of, but can only build up that idea of the whole bit by bit from the parts" (*Craft* 181). The only way to quit the circle and make logical progress is "by edging out, tacking from evidence to hypothesis to further evidence to renewed hypothesis" (Rodway, "Criticism" 94). Happily, enough good critics have commented on Hardy's first-person lyrics to enable us to identify at least some properties that are essential to the generic action in his lyrics. And using those properties as specifications and checking them against some theories of lyric, we may then go on to a more precise definition of the dramatic lyric of Thomas Hardy than we reached earlier. Having already stipulated that in their "outer form" Hardy's dramatic lyrics must be short (say, at most, fifty lines), we must now, to complete our definition, decide what we want his dramatic lyrics to have in their "inner form" (Wellek and Warren 231).

I

What generic action, then, characterises the first-person lyrics of Thomas Hardy? From the outset of Hardy's public career as a poet, critics both friendly and hostile took his lyrics for direct self-expression, "personal utterances, voicing a matured and deliberate judgment on life" (Chambers 326). The underlying Romantic tenet here--that the poet's individual emotions and experiences endow his poem with special value--was, of course, an assumption that provoked T. S. Eliot's counter-definition of poetry as "an escape from personality" and his assertion that a poet must consciously embargo all "Impressions and experiences which are important for" himself personally ("Tradition" 21, 20). Not surprisingly, therefore, in view of the revolution in literary taste and theory between the publication of *Wessex Poems* (1898) and *After Strange Gods* (1934), Eliot stigmatises Hardy's work as the glorification of a self both autonomous and debased. To Eliot, Hardy seemed

to have written as nearly for the sake of 'self-expression' as a man well can; and the self which he had to express does not strike me as a particularly wholesome or edifying matter of communication. . . . an author who is interested not at all in men's minds, but

only in their emotions; and perhaps only in men as vehicles for emotions. It is only, indeed, in their emotional paroxysms that most of Hardy's characters come alive. This extreme emotionalism seems to me a symptom of decadence; it is a cardinal point of faith in a romantic age, to believe that there is something admirable in violent emotion for its own sake, whatever the emotion or whatever its object.

(54-55)

What Eliot says here about Hardy the novelist applies equally to Hardy the poet (Lewis 156). But I have not brought in this modernist impeachment of Hardy in order to indulge in a cheap laugh at Eliot's supercilious polemicism. On the contrary, the double imputation of diabolic self-aggrandisement and emotionalism is a serious charge levelled by a serious critic, and therefore requires--and promises to require--serious attention.¹ Indeed, in the process of answering it, we shall advance all the quicker to a final definition of a dramatic lyric.

Taking the latter part of Eliot's remarks, one has first to concede, of course, that Hardy himself certainly regarded a poem as a "product" of the poet's "idiosyncrasy" and emotional response to life (e.g., *L&W* 158, 239); but then immediately add that Hardy also regarded a poem as a social artefact, as a catalyst prompting readers to perceive for themselves a "latent" truth and beauty in human life (*L&W* 118). In other words, Hardy distinguished carefully between a poet's experience and expression (*L&W* 334), between the emotion felt and the emotion shaped, when he endorsed J. A. Symonds's view that although an "artist cannot avoid modifying his imitation of the chosen object by the infusion of his own subjective quality," he nevertheless can and "is at liberty to reduce this subjective element to a minimum, or, on the other hand, to regard it as his chief concern" (*LN* 2: 36).² Hardy's lyric speakers, then, may be extremely passionate, but his own conduct as an artist, the creator of those speakers, is reasonable and balanced. He was fully aware that the poet's thought and feeling modify each other in a poem--a reciprocity which, oddly enough, Eliot himself mentions when he says that poetry "can only create a variety of wholes composed of intellectual and emotional constituents, justifying the emotion by the thought and the thought by the emotion" ("Propaganda" 602). Eliot, however, is much more concerned with the "matter" of the self that Hardy communicated. Eliot has in mind Hardy's "mechanistic philosophy" which Hardy (so Eliot maintains) exploited "to extract his esthetic values from the contemplation of a world in which values do not count" ("Propaganda" 596; see Creighton, *Poems* xv). What Eliot objects to is Hardy's inflicting of that "*personal view of life*" on the reader (*Gods* 53, emphasis his). Yet the truth is that although acknowledged as a thinker by his contemporaries, Hardy has no cut-and-dried doctrine to impart, let alone impose, but only philosophical proclivities--nothing coherent and pointed and glowing that might hypnotise his reader. As we shall see, Hardy's whole attitude to his poetry is one of open-mindedness and tentative exploration. Hardy's motive is not indoctrination. So the lop-sided, morbid, materialist self which Eliot unfairly ascribes to Hardy simply does not exist or, if it does, is made of straw. Indeed, Hardy's poetic self is complex, combining with the reality of "unbending laws" the "mystery" of the universe (McDowall 159).

Actually, it is curious that Eliot should so vehemently traduce Hardy's Romanticism, since Eliot's own poetics have themselves decidedly Romantic roots. For instance, Eliot may well have got his principle of impersonality from Shelley, who held that "The poet & the man are two different natures: though they exist together they may be unconscious of each other" (*Letters* 2: 310), and to whom self-revelation was quite

¹ Cf. Penelope Vigar, who believes that Eliot's statement is "incisively true" (23). Interestingly, although he clearly scouted Hardy as thinker (e.g., "Propaganda" 596 and "*Memoriam*" 336), Eliot never reprinted *After Strange Gods*, a fact that suggests his dissatisfaction with a book marked by a totalitarian, almost "pathological" indignation (Cox, *Heritage* xlvii; Spurr 117-19).

² On the intellectual, aesthetic, and moral affinity between Hardy and Symonds, see *LN* 1: 267, 2: 500, and *Thomas Hardy Annual* 1 (1982) 129-33.

secondary and incidental (Matthews 682). Maintaining that early Romantic poems are impersonal artifice, Matthews points out that the late-Victorian sense (and praise) of the term "self-expression"--"the idea that an artist wants to express his own 'individuality' in art"--would have eluded Shelley (681-82; see also Webb 48-49, 53). Similarly, in Eliot's poetic theory, the artistic process of creation subsumes the poet's individuality, exorcises the subjective limitations of his personality, and offers in dramatic illusion a refuge from emotional pressures. However, recent critics argue that Eliot's dramatic monologues are, in effect, "mask" lyrics--self-expression in disguise. Ralph Rader, who coined the term *mask lyric*, meaning "a kind of indirect lyric" or "personal lyric" ("Forms" 140, 142), regards "Prufrock" as Eliot's "sophisticated attempt to express, while at the same time objectifying and limiting, an aspect of his own subjective situation" ("Notes" 105). According to Carol Christ, Eliot usually projects his own "most immediate psychological concerns" onto an isolated, introspective speaker, and then sets up an ironic perspective to seal off that pathetically limited state of being. In other words, the Eliotic persona has the force of an objective equivalent for the poet's own emotion which is "inwardly real to him" (218, 219). Consequently, Eliot's own practice of indirectly inflicting his personal emotions on his reader sadly undercuts the position of finger-pointing superiority he chooses to adopt against Hardy. It is certainly ironical that Eliot should refuse to give Hardy any credit at all for artistic detachment and breadth of humanity (see Howe 26n2).

Compounding this irony is the little fact that Hardy's adolescent muse and lifelong inspiration was Shelley--"a type of the artist as hero," says Michael Millgate (*B* 374; see also Pinion, *Companion* 213).³ But still more significant is Hardy's own concept of self-expression, tucked near the end of the preface to his selection of poems by Barnes:

Even if he often used the dramatic form of peasant speakers as a pretext for the expression of his own mind and experiences--which cannot be doubted--yet he did not always do this, and the assumed character of husbandman or hamleteer enabled him to elude in his verse those dreams and speculations that cannot leave alone the mystery of things,--possibly an unworthy mystery and disappointing if solved, though one that has a harrowing fascination for many poets,--and helped him to fall back on dramatic truth, by making his personages express the notions of life prevalent in their sphere.

(xi-xii)

The syntax of this shrewd sentence tells all. Hardy first frankly concedes that Barnes's bent for self-expression is a major defect, then quickly limits the concession and drives home his own criterion of literary excellence: "dramatic truth," a standard Hardy derived from his practice as a novelist (Zietlow, *Moments* 44). Hardy's criticism of Barnes's use of dialect depends on the idea of a creative self-effacement that eliminates self-projection and permits the poet to explore the speaker's own independent consciousness. As far as Hardy is concerned, the emotions dramatised should arise from conditions prevailing in the speaker's "sphere," not directly from what Eliot calls "an action or struggle for harmony in the soul of the poet" ("Ford" 196). For Hardy, then, a first-person speaker should dramatise neither the poet's philosophical professions nor his neurotic confessions (however ironically presented), but actual mentalities that instance particular views of life usually (but not always) quite different from the poet's own.

Ralph Rader's classification of first-person lyrics helps to explain the relation between poet and poem. Going by Rader's terms, one can see that Hardy's use of the first-person singular pronoun presses towards a dramatic form that is more introspective than the dramatic monologue and yet more impersonal than the mask

³ Hardy once announced this to Mrs Henniker: "I have been thinking that of all men dead whom I should like to meet in the Elysian fields I would choose Shelley, not only for his unearthly, weird, wild appearance & genius, but for his genuineness, earnestness, & enthusiasms on behalf of the oppressed" (24 Jan. 1897; *CL* 2: 144). See also Bartlett 15 and Pinion, *Art* 148-57.

lyric. That is, Hardy's first-person speaker represents no public personage whom the reader can picture on a stage; nor does Hardy project himself through a surrogate speaker. Indeed, the Hardyan lyric speaker exists as an autonomous fiction (not as a satellite of Hardy), communes with himself (not with the reader), and expresses a Victorian mentality (not necessarily Hardy's). Now, such a form of dramatic lyric would augment Rader's four categories reflecting the relation between poet and speaker: expressive lyric, dramatic lyric, dramatic monologue, and mask lyric. For missing from this scale is the polarity one might designate "non-expressive." The term *mask lyric* cannot occupy this position since it is too inherently personal to qualify, as we saw in Rader's definition quoted earlier. Moreover, Rader's *dramatic lyric* is a misnomer: it might more accurately be called an *image lyric* or a *memory lyric*, because it simply images in the present an experience of the poet's past ("Forms" 149-50; "Notes" 104-05). Consequently, I shall reserve the term *dramatic lyric* to refer to Hardy's impersonal, "non-expressive," first-person lyrics.

My claim is that like Rader's "image" lyrics, let us call them then, Hardy's dramatic lyrics represent "the cognitive act of a dramatic actor"; and like image lyrics use setting to symbolise a speaker's experience ("Forms" 144, 146), to image "a visually objective scene which is yet perceived as instinct with discovered subjective meaning" ("Notes" 114). But unlike image lyrics, Hardy's dramatic lyrics do not, I think, always revive or reconstruct an "experience of the real world which is in its origin a memory" of Hardy's own (150). That Hardy's dramatic lyrics invariably rehearse his own actual cognitive experience "at a real point in space/time beyond the poem[s]" (105) is only an attractive theory--possibly true but necessarily unproven; that Hardy did create lyric experiences that are (as Rader himself concedes) "manifestly artificial constructions" (105) is incontrovertible, demonstrable fact.

No one denies that some personal incident or feeling may well be the principle or cherished seed of a lyric. But the stimulating question "How much, and of how much significance, is memory and how much invention?" remains unanswerable. Many of the experiences which Hardy dramatises are imagined or completely re-created, not simply remembered; that is, they are human and actual in their realisation, but not merely personal and historical. Hardy's technical definition of a character or scene in one of his novels applies equally to a speaker in one of his lyrics--a "shadowy" composite of various real-life "originals" (*CL* 2: 200, 255; see also *CL* 6: 110, 132; *L&W* 76) and hence "impossible to dissect for facts" (22 Feb. 1919; *CL* 5: 297). Hardy once informed Amy Lowell that some English critics were "such geese" because "in my case [they] devoutly believe that everything written in the first person has been done personally" (6 Dec. 1914; *CL* 5: 67).

More tentative and judicious is Michael Millgate's opinion that "numerous poems on autobiographical themes" were written or, more precisely, "evolved upon the basis of vividly recollected moments from the past, brought to mind either spontaneously, by some memory-triggering accident of sight, sound, touch, or smell, or deliberately" (*B* 515). Nevertheless, I should want to resist any suggestion that Hardy was obsessed with "fidelity of representation" (*B* 362). For it is worth emphasising here that whatever the intensity of Hardy's "autobiographical recovery" (*B* 516) or the richness of "autobiographical experiences" running through his novels and poems (*B* 519), his avowed aesthetic principle was his ability to exhume an "emotion," "feeling," or "sentiment"--he did not say an event, person, or place (*L&W* 408). As local historian, perhaps, Hardy might on occasion attempt to substantiate an incident in a poem (as he does in *CL* 5: 199, 246, 295, 341 for instance). Yet even then, he was acutely aware that, if left to itself, the memory would "insensibly formalize the fresh originality of living fact" (*Wessex Tales*, pref., 10-11). And it is this very tendency of memory to reshape experience that Hardy exploits in his ostensibly autobiographical first-person lyrics. He may well use the material of his own personal life, but he converts it into an archetypal myth, "a fictive configuration of representative human experience" (Buckler, *Poetry* 100).

Indeed, as composer of dramatic lyrics, Hardy does not strive for factual accuracy; on the contrary, his primary aim is to express controversial and frank judgements "unfettered" (*CL* 5: 156, 245). If anything, Hardy is a highly accomplished pastmaster at disguising and deflecting personal implications, which "would be creatively transformed by their passage through 'the gates of the imagination'" (*B* 279; see also 174, 201). One has but to think of those first-person lyrics in which the speaker is obviously female--for example, "The Seasons of Her Year," "The Farm-Woman's Winter," "Bereft," "She Hears the Storm," "Autumn in King's Hintock Park," or "News for Her Mother" (*CPW* 1: 195, 262-64, 299)--to credit this imaginative transformation. Similarly, Hardy often invents places and things, so that his lyric settings may be realistic but not necessarily "in the real world" (Rader, "Forms" 146). As Michael Millgate cautions, "to juxtapose the Salisbury references of 'Wessex Heights' with those of 'In a Cathedral City' is immediately to suggest the danger of reading the verse, for all its deep autobiographical roots, as too literal a transcription from life, or of attributing permanence and definitiveness to the mood of any particular poem" (*B* 388).⁴ Even explicit, hard signs such as dates or names of persons and places are not necessarily factual anchors fluked into Hardy's private life; rather, they are artfully-achieved historical mirages, forfeiting their purely referential status the moment Hardy worked them into an imaginative pattern, no doubt felt by the reader as true to human experience but no longer biographically Hardy's. For instance, the date Hardy appended to "The Darkling Thrush" (*CPW* 1: 187) does not necessarily refer to a specific occasion when Hardy the man "heard the thrush," as Rader supposes it must ("Forms" 143).⁵ When the poem first appeared, it bore no date at all. Hardy's inclusion and subsequent alterations of the date suggest that he contrived it as an economic stratagem for contextualising the speaker's response to the setting and eliminating repetition from the holographic title, "The Century's End, 1899" (*CPW* 1: 188n). A real, accurate, historical date stubbornly resists such fiddling (see Lock 121). My point is, to repeat, that poems ostensibly "confessional," "sincere," or literally true⁶ refer neither wholly nor directly to Hardy's personal life, and seldom if ever provide reliable historical data. For poetic truth, as Robert Elliott reminds us, allows for the making up and alteration of facts precisely in order to convince the reader that he is "getting another kind of truth--the *real* [poet]" (*Persona* 58).⁷ When a London playwright based a play on one of Hardy's *Wessex Tales*, Hardy felt obliged to explain to a sceptical friend the absence of any historical evidence:

What you may be sure of is that I never heard of any such tradition. It may be that my having, with the licence of a storyteller to tell lies, *pretended* there was such an account in being, led people to think there was. Of course I did it to give verisimilitude to *my* story.⁸

⁴ H. L. Weatherby voices a similar general caveat when he remarks that, however thinly veiled, the autobiographical approach to any author is "dangerous, and the risk is especially great in Hardy's case because despite the recent rash of biographical and autobiographical publication he has succeeded in remaining anonymous" ("Little" 314).

⁵ Replying to Gosse on the question of the chronological arrangement of poems in *Moments of Vision*, Hardy wrote: "To arrange them was beyond me. Speaking generally the dates at the beginning are when the event or experience happened; at the end when the writing was done" (30 Dec. 1917; *CL* 5: 237).

⁶ Of the poems in *Moments of Vision* (published 30 Nov. 1917) Hardy may have liked "those best which are literally true" (7 Feb. 1918; *CL* 5: 250), but here his stated taste was partly a defensive reaction to "a fashion for obscurity" that was then "rag[ing] among young poets" (4 Aug. 1918; *CL* 5: 275).

⁷ Elliott also observes that if a poet were deliberately to study historical truth, the poet would have to acknowledge, "if he is honest, how elusive that truth is" (*Persona* 76). See also below, n22.

⁸ 12 Oct. 1919; *CL* 5: 326. Similarly, it must have secretly gratified Hardy that although they were "pure inventions," mere "figments," having "no foundation either in Hardy's beliefs or his experience," some of the detailed, circumstantial descriptions in *The Poor Man and the Lady* were credited as first-hand observation of social reality (*L&W* 63).

Hence, however much Hardy's dramatic lyrics may ultimately reflect or transmute his own personal experience, their generic principle is neither mere re-creation nor pure self-expression, but artistic invention. And their object of imitation is the thinking and feeling of an autonomous, fictional speaker that Hardy's use of spatial imagery makes intense with life and sensuously real.

II

These historical and theoretical objections to the charge of self-expression levelled at Hardy are sufficient, I think, to establish the possibility that the self in Hardy's first-person lyrics is an artifice. So we may with some confidence pursue the assumption that Hardy meant something like a fictional lyric when he called his first-person lyrics "personative." Our task now is to describe the lyric self that is characteristically Hardyan in mode as well as matter. Naturally, this is an artificial, theoretical division, merely an expository convenience, and does not dissolve the marriage of the two; in fact, later in this section, my definition of a dramatic lyric will sustain their interrelationship. "Mode" here refers to those stylistic and structural procedures a poet uses to convey "a particular man's artistic interpretation of life" (*L&W* 413), the human significance of an action (see Winters 60-61).

Turning first to the mode of Hardy's lyric self, we discover considerable critical confusion. Several critics recognise the technique of a characteristic "voice" or "poetic personality"--created through significant syntax, diction, metre, and imagery--that unifies the entire collection of short poems (Howe 162; Marsden 214; but see also Guerard, "Illusion" 188; Southerington, *Vision* 153; Miller, "History" 224; and Neuman 34). The notion of a single, pervasive voice, however, other critics either dispute or dismiss. For instance, although Paul Zietlow accepts that "One of the dominant images emerging from Hardy's poetry is that of an old man, living with memory, meditating on the personal past and searching for its meaning" (*Moments* 151), he insists on "an acknowledgement of the distinctiveness of each poem," the variety of voices, and the range of emotions (58, 62). So does Shelagh Hunter, who in corroborating Clements and Grindle's assumption that Hardy's poems are "multiply personative" (*Poetry* vii), suggests that "The constant critical task is to determine the status of the recurring patterns which can be found behind the multiplicity of voices" (337; see also Smith, "'Voices'"). Another critic, again, detects two competing voices--one is angular and ironical, the other is natural and directly personal (Hornback, "Search" 55-63; see Weatherby's corresponding observation of a modernist-Arnoldian voice that subserves a richer, because wiser, old-fashioned one: "Two Hardys" 163, 169). Clearly, as a distinctive stylistic feature, the "voice" of Hardy's lyric self needs to be clarified.

Similarly, as a fundamental aesthetic principle, the structure of that self is also somewhat ill-defined. Samuel Hynes stoutly claims the basic structural element in all Hardy's short poems to be an "antinomial pattern" that expresses the ambiguity and unresolved irony inherent in Hardy's world-view, usually taking the form of a contrast between appearance and reality, past and present, desire and disappointment (*Pattern* 44-45, 49-51). By and large, critics tend to endorse Hynes's idea of a pervasive antithetical pattern, but realistically limit its applicability to about seventy per cent of the collection (mainly the lyrics), to their "diction and (especially) imagery," and to explicit juxtaposition of ideas (Carpenter 162; Taylor, "Guide" 255; Marsden 107-08). Marsden puts his finger on what Hynes misses in his zeal to spread the antinomial pattern over all Hardy's poems: the possibility of "varying degrees of the pattern" (107). Other critics link Hynes's idea to "the basic conflict implied in much of Hardy's poetry," track down its source in the tensions within Hardy himself, and call it the "self-division" of Hardy's imagination (Brooks, *Structure* 29; Miller, *Distance* 10). At the opposite extreme, ostensibly demonstrating Hardy's unique aesthetic of using the picture of a pattern to express the relation between reality and his artist's mind, Dennis Taylor manages to lose at times the poems he discusses--and at times the reader too--in a plethora of images and concepts. Still, Taylor

helpfully frames, even if he fails to answer satisfactorily, a key question for his fellow critics: "how can we describe the cohesion of Hardy's achievement while . . . being true to the wide variety of experience Hardy expresses?" (40).

In devising an appropriate description of structure, then, we have little enough to go on. On the one hand, there is, to sum up, Hynes's idea of an antinomial pattern, which leads us to a hesitant, didymous-minded Thomas Hardy, his ego cleft by reality; on the other, Taylor's idea of a visual pattern, which leads us to a developing, quixotic-minded Hardy, his ego fragmented by reverie. About all we can say at this stage is that these critical observations add up to, not an absolute dichotomy, but a relation of interdependence and mutual definition--a broad framework of images that includes contrasts. In other words, the mode of Hardy's lyric self consists in something like a spectrum of colours or a differentiated range of tones. Such a description at least approximates, and to some extent accommodates, the diverse and manifold qualities in both voice and structure outlined so far. To confirm that this inference of variety in unity is appropriately Hardyian,⁹ we now turn from the mode of Hardy's lyric self to its matter.

The matter of Hardy's lyric self has also been imperfectly understood, although this dimension of the self has been generally recognised as complex to a degree. Hardy suffered the fate of all indefatigable realists; he refused to evade with a veil of fustian optimism the disagreeable facts of human nature and the universe (see Houghton 413-14). Accordingly, early and later reviewers monotonously ticketed Hardy's poems with the dusty label, "the same perennial inscription": that is, "pessimistic" (pref., *Winter Words*; *CPW* 3: [165]). But Hardy himself maintained his right to believe human consciousness "a sort of unanticipated accident" (*CL* 3: 329) and the universe wretched and meaningless (*B* 417). He protested strenuously and rancorously against the crude rejection of his verse on philosophical grounds or any grounds other than poetic: "As to reviewing: Apart from a few brilliant exceptions, poetry is not at bottom criticized as such, that is, as a particular man's artistic interpretation of life, but with a secret eye on its theological and political propriety" (*L&W* 413).¹⁰ Gosse, on the other hand, openly accepts the attribution, but argues that Hardy has no choice, his gloomy view of life being "involuntary, forced from him by his experience and his constitution." Gosse then sympathetically attempts to turn the alleged philosophical bias into a virtue by praising its defiant objectivity (455-58). Subsequent apologists have also conceded what has now become a critical prejudice; indeed, Hardy's "old-fashioned" pessimism is a received opinion that still persists (as Hoffpauir finds: 521). But the assumption that the only way to rebut the stigma of pessimism is by asserting Hardy's optimism severely restricts discussion and appreciation of Hardy's poetic achievement. Even without invoking the hypothesis of dramatic speakers, one could, like Hoffpauir, regard Hardy as a realistic, steady moralist (541). Generally speaking, however, critics on both sides of the issue seem to have determined either to sympathise blindly with Hardy's philosophical position (e.g., Marsden 25-26) or to carp at it narrowly,¹¹ so that they have

⁹ Evans speaks of "the general uniformity" of outlook and "a variety of mood" in Hardy's poems (185). Marginalia and markings in books read by the young Hardy suggest his having been "an habitual eclectic" who aimed at a philosophy as "loose and flexible" as Greek mythology (Millgate, *B* 132; Wright, *Shaping* 6).

¹⁰ In response to the reception of *Wessex Poems*, Hardy made a note on pessimism: "Was there ever any great poetry which was not pessimistic?" (*PN* 27). Hardy also told Mrs Henniker that he regarded the reviewers' "complaints of pessimism" as "absurdly conventional, & of the nature of cant." Earlier, with uncharacteristic bombast, he had declared to her that "Whatever England may not be great in, she is the greatest nation in cant that the world has ever seen" (15 Feb. and 30 Jan. 1899; *CL* 2: 215, 212). And yet, what of Florence Hardy's appalled response to *Satires of Circumstance*? See *B* 499-501.

¹¹ In a comparison with Meredith that is outrageously damaging to Hardy, J. I. M. Stewart (acknowledged as an advocate of Hardy in Lewis 156) dismisses the complex feelings Hardy painstakingly dramatises in his lyrics: "In the last analysis there is something a little thin about Hardy. He knows that the purblind doomsters are at work on us, and that's that" ("Concealment").

become deadlocked, with neither side able to convince the other. And ironically, with their attention thus preoccupied, they have missed the vital emphases in Hardy's own counter-argument.

Throughout his literary career, in statements made publicly and privately, and applying both to his novels and to his poems, Hardy asseverated that he was no philosophical "propagandist" (*L&W* 327), for he never subscribed to any particular ism: "I have no philosophy--merely what I have often explained to be only a confused heap of impressions, like those of a bewildered child at a conjuring show" (*L&W* 441).¹² With open-mindedness and intense involvement in the flow of experience, Hardy spent his life striving to articulate no more than a modest, provisional coherence--"till somebody produces better theories of the universe" (*L&W* 406). On the last day of 1901, Hardy came to this conclusion:

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

(*L&W* 333)

Hardy was far too astute and pragmatic an artist to enslave himself to any single view of life--paradoxically excepting, of course, his own tacit dogma that it is philosophically untenable and morally wrong-headed to be dogmatic. And in keeping with his consistent position of flexible "tentativeness" and variability (*L&W* 160, 432), with his being ever a philosophical smatterer (Wright, *Shaping* 25, 53), with his readiness to consider other people's impressions of life and reluctance to consolidate his own (*B* 220), Hardy's lyric subject-matter consists in nothing less than the full flux of reality itself.

In August 1901, Hardy justified his protean treatment of reality like this: "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" (pref., *Poems of the Past and the Present*; *CPW* 1: [113]). Hardy uses *road* in the sense of way, approach, or route. Close scrutiny of the prefaces to later volumes of poems reveals that the metaphor of progression persists. In *Time's Laughingstocks*, Hardy hopes that the lyrics will "take the reader forward, even if not far, rather than backward" (*CPW* 1: 235). And in that arch document of self-defensive revaluation, the preface to *Late Lyrics*, Hardy confers unique importance to, and strategically embosses, a line from "In Tenebris II" that reiterates the journey-metaphor: "If way to the Better there be, it exacts a full look at the Worst." As far as Hardy is concerned, his so-called pessimism is indispensable for taking "the first step t[ow]ards the soul's betterment, and the body's also"; indeed, honest doubt marks the start of "the exploration of reality," a reality which the explorer must face in a spirit of "frank recognition stage by stage along the survey, with an eye to the best consummation possible:

¹² Both Harold Orel and William Buckler argue that the Great War made Hardy despair of the gradual improvement of mankind ("War" 91; *Poetry* 56). But Hardy's feeling of futility ("Desine fata Deum flecti sperare precando": *L&W* 398) was a purely temporary reaction to the war and was largely due to circumstances of a personal, not philosophical, nature. For he admitted to Mrs Henniker that the death of Frank George, his dearest cousin and heir designate of Max Gate (*B* 504-05), had "rudely shaken" his "faith in the good there is in humankind" (2 Sept. 1915; *CL* 5: 121). Hardy in fact continued to hope that the world might be a better place, especially if it acquired an atmosphere of universal patriotism (see, e.g., *L&W* 417 and 441). Michael Millgate's contingent, portmanteau description of Hardy brilliantly conveys that embattled hopefulness. Accepting Hardy's claim (in Feb. 1901) that his "practical philosophy is distinctly meliorist," Millgate gives Hardy the title of "pessimistic meliorist" (*B* 410)--a characterisation that is more apt than Hoffpauir's label ("realistic pessimist": 539), because it indicates where Hardy's sympathies lie: with evolutionary, Darwinian meliorism.

briefly, evolutionary meliorism" (*CPW* 2: 318-19). Each of Hardy's first-person lyrics, then, registers one (or more) of many actual impressions of the meaning of human existence in the cosmos, impressions that (it is implied) will lead to the spiritual and physical enrichment of mankind. In other words, the impressions Hardy records are continuous--"really a *series* of fugitive impressions" (*CPW* 2: 319, emphasis mine)--and somehow related to the same end: an ideal philosophy of life (see Wickens, "Spirits" 108).

With the open-mindedness, courageous honesty, and humility required for a scientific experiment, Hardy calls these impressions of life's meaning and purpose "diverse readings," because by *readings* he intends to suggest the indications of a graduated instrument--measurements from which Hardy is as personally detached as is humanly possible (*L&W* 327). Hardy's stance is one of scholarly "indifference," habitually placing himself in the background, and keeping a cool, critical distance from the context and conventions that produced a particular experience or belief (see Houghton 15). Pursuing no scientific theory, Hardy does not presume or even attempt to interpret those measurements; nor is it his business to do so; interpretation, he suggests, is the province of the reader alone. Hardy knew well enough, of course, that for all his artistic detachment from the impressions he records, the very selection of poetic form and content must, inevitably, reflect his personal attitudes. Hardy acknowledged that from a poet's personality springs his style, his "idiosyncratic mode of regard," since "A writer who is not a mere imitator looks upon the world with his personal eyes, and in his peculiar moods" (*L&W* 235; "Reading" 122). Nevertheless, in his first-person lyrics, Hardy means the reader to attend at all times to the "impressions" themselves, not to the person recording those impressions--to trust the poem, not the poet. Hardy seems in no doubt or dilemma about this (cf. Zietlow, *Moments* 37). He clearly implies that his personal investment in these poems is philosophically negligible, so that for the practical purpose of interpreting them, the reader may safely regard the poems as, on the whole, imaginative: that is, "the expression of fancy," not "the expression of belief" (*L&W* 439). The main motive behind Hardy's repeated qualification that the first-person lyrics are objective "even where they are not obviously so" or "explicitly so" (*CPW* 1: [5]n, [113]) is his concern that the reader should possess and concentrate on objective data. He aims at steering the reader's attention firmly away from the unavoidable element of the poet's obvious stylistic presence. If one accepts, in the first place, Hardy's opinion that "the mission of poetry is to record impressions, not convictions" (*L&W* 408) and in the second, his prefatory insistence that his poems are "personative," not personal, it follows that the convictions they affirm are to be attributed to the speakers, not to Hardy.

So far, then, we may describe the subject-matter of Hardy's lyric self as the disinterested exploration of reality by candidly and unflinchingly recording provisional impressions of human experience. And the exploration starts from the assumption that although such impressions cannot yield an ultimate truth, they may well expand human awareness, suggest patterns within experience, and provide guidelines for living.

III

However, the action of exploring reality and presenting findings is really secondary to a more comprehensive action to which Hardy refers in his general preface to the Wessex Edition of the novels and poems: the "exhibition of human nature" (*PW* 45, 48). This is not to say that Hardy's exploration of reality is less important than his exhibition of human nature. Both are essential to the matter of Hardy's lyric self, for they are inseparable. What is important, of course, is the area or aspect of their relationship Hardy emphasises. He invoked this primary action of exhibiting human nature as a criterion of literary excellence, when he advised Mrs Henniker in 1893 that the most publicity one could expect to receive for "what is called a good play" would be "a column's notice in the morning papers," which effectively certified it "distinctly in point of artistic feeling & exhibition of human nature no higher than a third rate novel" (*CL* 2: 43). Hardy's

sole aim as an imaginative writer was in fact "to be simply artistic and delineative" (*L&W* 327).¹³ According to "A Jingle on the Times" (*CPW* 3: 299), a poem bemoaning the wartime dispensability of artists (*H&C* 659), the social function of a poet is to "'set in view / Life and its secrets / Old and new.'" Furthermore, Hardy associates the word *exhibition* with *picturing*, *depiction*, *representation*, and *delineation* ("Reading" 113-15); and he seems to regard all these terms as synonymous and interchangeable. Was Hardy not also paraphrasing the idea of art as an exhibition of man when he entitled his penultimate volume of poems *Human Shows*?¹⁴

So dominant in Hardy's aesthetic is this idea of "showing" that two further connotations of *exhibition* may be seen to be active. One connotation comes from its historical use to suggest celebration, solemnity, and sensational drama, as in the opening paragraph of "The Fiddler of the Reels":

'Talking of Exhibitions, World's Fairs, and what not,' said the old gentleman, 'I would not go round the corner to see a dozen of them nowadays. The only exhibition that ever made, or ever will make, any impression upon my imagination was the first of the series, the parent of them all, and now a thing of old times--the Great Exhibition of 1851, in Hyde Park, London. None of the younger generation can realize the sense of novelty it produced in us who were then in our prime. A noun substantive went so far as to become an adjective in honour of the occasion. It was "exhibition" hat, "exhibition" razor-strop, "exhibition" watch; nay, even "exhibition" weather, "exhibition" spirits, sweethearts, babies, wives--for the time.

(*Life's Little Ironies* 123)

Hardy's use of the word, then, evokes all the impressiveness of the prototypical Great Exhibition itself, in the context of artistic creation and superb technical accomplishment (see Houghton 40-41, 269).¹⁵

The idea of pride in human technology may seem overingenious, but the second connotation substantiates it. In the context of mimesis, *exhibition* also has a distinctly Augustan overtone: "In pursuance of his quest for a true exhibition of man, the reader will naturally consider whether he feels himself under the guidance of a mind who sees further into life than he himself has seen"--that is, life "with its sublimities, its beauties, its uglinesses, as the case may be" ("Reading" 115, 114). The more a poet follows his imagination, by showing rather than by stating--consider that the words *diction* ("choice of phraseology") and *indite* ("compose," especially poetry) share the same Greek root as the adjective *deictic* which means "showing directly" (Onions 266, 470, 252)--the more he is able to prompt the reader towards an assessment of "the views of life prevalent in [the poet's] time" ("Candour" 126)--including "a full look at the Worst." For as Hardy saw it, "The business of the poet and novelist is to show the sorriness underlying the grandest things, and the grandeur underlying the sorriest things" (*L&W* 178). The moral tenor and criss-cross shape of Hardy's pronouncement recall Dr Johnson's famous account of Shakespeare's plays as "compositions of a distinct kind; exhibiting the real state of sublunary nature, which partakes of good and evil, joy and sorrow, mingled with endless variety of proportion and innumerable modes of combination"; and it seems worth noting that,

¹³ Declining, as was his wont, an invitation from an editor to contribute a literary essay, this time on George Eliot, Hardy asserted that the special volume on her ought to include a technical appreciation of "her powers as a storyteller, an exhibitor of life, which have been too little regarded beside the perception of her genius as a philosopher" (9 Sept. 1901; *CL* 2: 299). On another occasion, declining a request for an article on the marriage laws, Hardy wrote: "I am compelled by disposition, habit, & limitations to confine my writing to mere delineations of what I see, or fancy I see, in life, leaving to others the expression of views on such spectacles" (21 Mar. 1897; *CL* 2: 154).

¹⁴ Conversely, Michael Millgate notices Hardy's "obsession with visualisation" (*Career* 255).

¹⁵ The Great Exhibition for the year 1862 opened in the spring, triggered off Hardy's crucial "migration" from Dorset (*L&W* 40), and continued to influence his life for the next few months. In the earliest extant letter, Hardy wrote to his favourite sister, Mary: "I generally run down to the Exhibition for an hour in the evening two or three times a week . . ." (*L&W* 503; *CL* 1: 1; see *B* 17, 507).

for Johnson, the essential action of drama is exhibition (1765-pref., *Shakespeare* 62, 71). Hardy subscribes to the artistic ideal of holding a mirror up to Nature, or as he himself puts it, "glassing nature" ("A Jingle on the Times" *CPW* 3: 299); and he uses the word *exhibition* to suggest the moral complexity of human experience--the myriad interconnections between its darkness and light, its surfaces and depths.

Humbly and honestly to record (according to his poetic insight) and idiosyncratically and critically to reflect (according to his poetic skill) the reality of contemporary human life on this planet was Hardy's artistic purpose in his first-person lyrics. That poetry should judge human life by contemporary ideas is, of course, the doctrine of Matthew Arnold. Hardy noted Arnold's views that Byron and Shelley applied "modern ideas to life," and that "the criticism which the men of genius pass upon human life is permanently acceptable to mankind" (*LN* 1: 134, 135). Hardy certainly incorporates this opinion in his own broad view of literary excellence when he states that the great Periclean and Elizabethan dramatists "reflected life, revealed life, criticised life" ("Candour" 127). And in his preface to *Late Lyrics*, Hardy identifies "the real function of poetry" as "the application of ideas to life" and his own poems as "adumbrations" embodying "conceptions" of life (*CPW* 2: 320). Yet Hardy's aesthetic can be called Arnoldian only up to a point, as several critics--notably David De Laura (380-82), Michael Millgate (*Career* 176-77, 334), and Lennart Björk (*LN* 1: 221-23; also Björk's "Reading" 119-23)--have abundantly and convincingly argued. Arnold's aesthetic and moral dicta Hardy never "unambiguously endorsed" (Millgate, *B* 246).

Only William Buckler, maintaining that "thought per se, thought in and of itself, is given little or no primacy in Hardy's aesthetic" (*Poetry* 50), has attempted to forge a definite artistic identity between Hardy and Arnold. Buckler proposes that "the Hardy critic should make ample provision for the subordination of thought to imagination in speaking of his poems" (51). However, one of the five displaced comments on which Buckler bases his argument (49-50)¹⁶ actually gives us one of Hardy's clearest statements of his artistic position:

My opinion is that a poet should express the emotion of all the ages and the thought of his own.

The context, which Buckler ignores, is crucial for understanding this dictum. The first carbon-copy of the typescript of the *Life*, "which served as a record of the revisions and insertions to which Hardy had given his approval," culminates in this very sentence (Millgate, *L&W* xxxi; xxxii, 542). At the same time, the statement also concludes a chapter entitled "Reflections on Poetry" (*L&W* ch. 34, 417), and derives from Hardy's observation which immediately precedes it:

The people in Shakespeare act as if they were not quite closely thinking of what they are doing, but were great philosophers giving the main of their mind to the general human situation.

I agree with Tennyson, who said he could form no idea how Shakespeare came to write his plays.

While sharing Tennyson's admiration for this Shakespearian quality, Hardy wishes to register his own inference and to distance it from Tennyson; so he introduces it first with a paragraphic indentation, then with the phrase "My opinion is that." In other words, as far as Hardy is concerned, the view is his own personal invention, not, as Buckler has it, "a classical poetic perspective" that he is merely "reaffirming"; nor does Hardy's statement imply that all honour goes to emotion, "thought being more or less appropriate according to its organic relationship to the emotion" (*Poetry* 50-51).

¹⁶ Buckler also misconstrues Hardy's response to reviews of *Wessex Poems* (in *L&W* 319-24) to which we shall turn in a moment.

On the contrary, the carefully poised, co-ordinated syntax of Hardy's climactic statement emphasises an aesthetic equality and reciprocity between "emotion" and "thought," feelings and ideas. What is more, he accords no superior status to the emotional content of his poems, whether the emotions concerned be individual or universal. Hardy does not promote "permanent racial feelings" exclusively (Buckler, *Poetry* 65); he in fact controverts Arnold on this very point:

Arnold is wrong about provincialism, if he means anything more than a provincialism of style and manner in exposition. A certain provincialism of feeling is invaluable. It is of the essence of individuality, and is largely made up of that crude enthusiasm without which no great thoughts are thought, no great deeds done.

(L&W 151)

In other words, for Hardy, a modern poem's essential poetry inheres in the balanced imaginative fusion of both ancient, archetypal emotion and contemporary, individual thought. In 1896, a year after the publication of *Jude*, Hardy resumed writing poetry in earnest, expressly to vent the modern sensibility--thought as well as emotion--pursuing, as Michael Millgate compassionately puts it, "the possibility of ultimate artistic fulfilment" (B 382):

Poetry. Perhaps I can express more fully in verse ideas and emotions which run counter to the inert crystallized opinion--hard as a rock--which the vast body of men have vested interests in supporting. To cry out in a passionate poem that (for instance) the Supreme Mover or Movers, the Prime Force or Forces, must be either limited in power, unknowing, or cruel--which is obvious enough, and has been for centuries--will cause them merely a shake of the head; but to put it in argumentative prose will make them sneer, or foam, and set all the literary contortionists jumping upon me, a harmless agnostic, as if I were a clamorous atheist, which in their crass illiteracy they seem to think is the same thing. . . . If Galileo had said in verse that the world moved, the Inquisition might have let him alone.

(L&W 302)

His ideas--mere impressions though they be--Hardy took as seriously and responsibly as his imaginings, all the time balancing thought against emotion in order to satisfy his intellectual demands and religious intuition.

His references and allusions to Arnold do not, then, mean that Hardy subscribed exclusively to or espoused blindly an Arnoldian ideal of poetry. Appealing as Hardy quite evidently found Arnold's notion of inspired realism or "the imaginative reason" (e.g., L&W 151), a total poetic dependence on Arnold is more than the evidence of Hardy's biography, aesthetics, and temperament will warrant. In the preface to *Late Lyrics*, octogenarian Hardy nearly generalises Arnold's influence out of existence with a passing, tongue-in-cheek reference to "the famous writer" who seems to "have overlooked the cold-shouldering results upon an enthusiastic disciple" who dares "putting the high aim in practice" and honestly applies ideas to life--Arnold seems to "have forgotten the disconcerting experience of Gil Blas with the Archbishop" (CPW 2: 321).¹⁷ The following year (1923), when Ernest Brennecke visited Max Gate, Hardy corrected the unofficial biographer's description of him as "an ardent meliorist": "No,--I am not. And really, you must never call me 'ardent' about *anything*. I am not. I am as indifferent as I find it possible to be" (11; emphasis mine). Moreover, having no time for either Arnold's poetic idealism or his mediating, trimming--Hardy's own word is "hair-splitting" (L&W 224)--theology (De Laura 381; see also Millgate, B 246), Hardy developed a pragmatic aesthetic, a concept that was, according to George Watson, alien to the Victorian mind generally (159). For Hardy did not

¹⁷ Weatherby questions Buckler's use of this preface to weld his Hardy-Arnold analogy: "Buckler relies heavily on the 'Apology' and speaks of Hardy's 'thoroughgoing subscription to Arnold's' views. That is an exaggeration. Buckler overlooks altogether Hardy's earlier and thoroughgoing rejection of Arnold in *Tess* and

share Arnold's conviction that ideas are *more* real than the physical world; rather, Hardy believed that both the "real" world of material things and the "ideal" world of mental things exist interdependently as appearances. Admittedly, Hardy says that "the material is not the real." But he does not thereby mean that the ideal is the only reality; he means that the real is imperfectly perceived ("invisible optically") because human life is "a somnambulistic hallucination" (*L&W* 192; see also 190). Unlike Arnold, then, Hardy favours neither the ideal nor the real; nor does Hardy attempt to hold them side-by-side simultaneously. Instead, as Norman Arkans says, "Preferring not to choose, Hardy aims at the area of the unexplored and unknowable, the uncharted corners of human experience where the ideal and the real, the visionary and the mundane, mix in unpredictable and measureless proportions" (57).

Again, unlike Arnold, Hardy had no mid-Victorian "rage for certainty" (John Carey's phrase, 102) to satisfy. What Hardy the autodidact did have was his own view of life, his own ideas, and his own method of applying them (see *L&W* 344), even if he seldom voiced these in public (Millgate, *Career* 40). This is not to deny Hardy's patent debt to Arnold. Hardy had learned from Arnold where to find the "best" contemporary ideas ("in the air--to be seized by the finest spirits," qtd in *LN* 1: 135), and that poetic greatness comes from the original application of individual ideas "on man, on nature, & on human life" (*LN* 1: 122). Nevertheless, Hardy's distinctive method of application was to keep his eye "consistently on the *painful* exigencies of modernism, its human cost" (De Laura 396) and to present the human consequences from "a modern outlook" (pref., *Dynasts* 5). A note buried deep in his "Trumpet-Major Notebook" implies that, for Hardy, a poet is an artist who keeps pace with leading, current ideas ("moves with the general march of the human mind") in order to transform them into "ideal & imaginative shapes" (*PN* 175).¹⁸ But to confront the new reality as Hardy proposed his reader should--this was not Arnoldian, not Victorian.

Hardy also deliberately shunned what he called in a letter to Gosse "the art of saying nothing with mellifluous preciosity" (27 Dec. 1898; *CL* 2: 208), the superficial, conventional, elegant rhetoric of Victorian poesy; instead he "dedicated his craft to the search for a new idiom that would reflect the emotional realities of the post-Darwinian world" (Siemens 47). In the same letter, he said he put meaning before music, "regarding form as second to content." Nine years later, when Gosse was composing his essay for the *Edinburgh Review* on Hardy's lyric verse, Hardy confirmed that he had, from as early as the 1860s, deliberately avoided "the jewelled line . . . as being effeminate," aiming rather at a finish that was "bold" and "rough" (4 Feb. 1918; *CL* 5: 249), and thinking literary form of less importance to poetry than "vision" (18 Feb. 1918; *CL* 5: 253).¹⁹

Jude . . . To ignore Hardy's skepticism about easy modern solutions to the problem of unbelief is to miss him" ("Two Hardys" 169).

¹⁸ Hardy made the note during the second half of 1879 from an article by John Morley. Morley was the man who, having read and reported on the first three manuscripts Hardy submitted to Macmillan in 1868-71, recognised "stuff and purpose" in the young author and also "power--at present of a violent and undisciplined kind" (Morley's reports, qtd in *L&W* 60 and Millgate, *Career* 30). (Morgan quotes the first phrase as "stuff and promise": *House* 88.) Morley praised Hardy's craftsmanship in *Under the Greenwood Tree* and encouraged him to ignore foolish critics (*L&W* 89). Hardy first met Morley in 1869, and again ten years later--about the time Hardy made the note--so that by 1885, Hardy felt free to inform Morley that his public utterances on political "or any other subject have for me not only the attraction they must always exercise by their intellectual power, but (what delights me still more) that interest of personality by which the image of the speaker is beheld behind the printed words" (*L&W* 61 and 131; 20 Nov. 1885; *CL* 1: 136). On Morley's prestige as literary critic, see Morgan, *House* 101-18, 191-92, 220-26.

¹⁹ It piqued Hardy that critics considered it "more damning to show absence of 'poetic diction' in a poem of which it can be said 'This is Life', than to show 'This is not Life' in a poem which can boast of poetic diction" (*CL* 5: 253).

But some critics have misunderstood this principle. To Ezra Pound, the arrangement indicated a "gap" between Hardy and the poets of the nineties--Hardy's "absorption in *subject* as contrasted with [the] aesthetes' preoccupation with 'treatment'" (8 July 1922; *Letters* 245). In 1933, when proposing the way a new poet might take, Pound named two: Hardy's way, "The old man's road . . . CONTENT, the INSIDES, the subject matter"; or "Music" (332). Now, although it is true that "the greatest ideas or strongest emotions of the century" mattered more to Hardy than diction or versification (*L&W* 324), and although Hardy remarked to Mrs Henniker that he seemed to "see nothing in many modern writers [such as Bridges and Swinburne (*PN* 31)] but *form*--good form, certainly" (12 Aug. 1895; *CL* 2: 84), Hardy never divorced content and form as severely as Pound does here. Hardy told Gosse that he found it "paralyzing" the way reviewers misrepresented "features, subjects, forms, & methods" which he had "adopted advisedly" (17 Sept. 1901; *CL* 2: 300). Hardy quite evidently believed that poetry should engage the ear as well as the mind. For instance, when in 1919 Hardy himself offered a young poet some characteristically gentle but knowing advice on what to write, he devoted as much space to "the mechanical part" of verse as to "manner and views" (*CL* 5: 345), suggesting that content and form are co-operating components rather than opposed alternatives. Indeed, William Buckler asserts that "Hardy was keenly sensitive to every nuance of sound within the provenance of movement, employing onomatopoeia organically, practicing many conventional prosodic effects, and searching both theory and out-of-the-way practice for original or adaptive measures" (*Poetry* 52). Be that as it may, Buckler somewhat overstates the case for the priority of form. Fallaciously extending Hardy's "reflections on poetry and criticism" (really little more than jottings and rough drafts of his critical opinion) after the appearance of *Wessex Poems* (*L&W* 319), Buckler ignores their immediate context--Hardy's defence of his ability to write poems. Assuming that "an author who has published prose first and that largely, must necessarily express himself badly in verse," and consequently presupposing Hardy to be a mere "apprentice at verse," the sceptical early reviewers of his poems called in question his formal competence (*L&W* 319-20, 324).²⁰ So Hardy concentrates his defence on poetic form; but his emphasis does not necessarily imply that he himself believes thought any less important than technique. Wishing to justify his decision as an artist to change from prose to verse, Hardy presents his credentials. But he at no time says that expression is more important to his poetry than emotion, form more than content. Hardy's professed position is in fact closer to Pound's view than Buckler's:

Poetry.--There is a latent music in the sincere utterance of deep emotion, however expressed, which fills the place of the actual word-music in rhythmic phraseology on thinner emotive subjects, or on subjects with next to none at all. And supposing a total poetic effect to be represented by a unit, its component fractions may be either, say:

Emotion three-quarters, plus Expression one quarter, or
Emotion one quarter plus Expression three-quarters.

(*L&W* 334)

Although Hardy knew well enough that modern critics judged a poet "by his value as an artificer, not as an innovator, a shaper not as a creator" (*PN* 94), he referred to his composing of poems as the "shaping" of "dreams" (13 Aug. 1900; *CL* 2: 266), which suggests a species of marriage of equal opposites--the conscious patterning and management of intractable ideas, images, and emotions.

With hypersensitivity to the "latent" movements of the modern spirit, then, Hardy attempts to express, not his own views, but what the world would be "thinking & saying" in the next generation (*CL* 2: 33). To

²⁰ Hardy is himself partly to blame for the scepticism and scoffing: some of the thirty-one sketches he made to accompany *Wessex Poems* are unquestionably crude, amateurish, and self-indulgent. He publicly depreciated their "intrinsic qualities," and privately assured his dearest friend that they were "quite unimportant" (pref., *CPW* 1: [5]; Mrs Henniker, 13 Nov. 1898; *CL* 2: 205). Cf. Bullen 293.

treat modern ideas in such a way as to illuminate human life, Hardy knew he had to get them down right and keep from distorting them in his presentation of them. That is to say, a poem must capture the illumination that current ideas give off, and then reflect it onto the surrounding conditions of sublunary life. What this means is that the gifted or "great" poet is he who can "carry the flame on further" (*L&W* 322); that is detect, acquire, and notate new patterns of experience. Such a faculty would make a poet as sensitive as a scientific instrument. Precision, efficiency, intensity, and economy--these are in fact the essentially modern qualities in Hardy's poetry of which Pound remarked "Now *there* is a clarity" (Apr. 1937; *Letters* 386).²¹ Although language (the poet's medium) and personality (the poet's style) constantly threaten to distort his presentation of what he has sensed in the world about him, Hardy resolutely processes the best ideas currently available; and although he imaginatively transforms and critically subordinates those ideas to his "very own" way of thinking (*LN* 1: 122), Hardy always presents them in the context of the issues of his time. Like a cultural seismograph--or an antenna of the race (Pound, *ABC* 81)--Hardy undertakes to receive and record the slightest intellectual and emotional disturbance in the Victorian-Edwardian mind.

IV

My scientific analogy, of course, in no way endorses Donald Davie's disparaging misconstruction of Hardy's attitude towards science and poetry. Erroneously, Davie assumes that Hardy accepts "scientific humanism as the only respectable working ethic for the poet," and that Hardy subscribes to an aesthetic involving the programmatic application of modern technology to human experience (*Poetry* 10-11). Nothing, as I mean to show, could be more remote from the complex attitude to science that informs Hardy's exhibition of human nature in his first-person lyrics. Davie goes wrong from the start, when he launches his thesis with a chapter bearing the somewhat belittling title "Hardy the Technician." Hardy, however, described his role very precisely when he coined the word *technicist*. Citing the word's earliest known occurrence--in Hardy's *A Laodicean* (bk 3, ch. 11, 253)--the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines a technicist as "one who has technical knowledge" or simply a technician. But Hardy himself defines the term more fully in a later work, "The Science of Fiction" (1891):

The most devoted apostle of realism, the sheerest naturalist, cannot escape, any more than the withered old gossip over her fire, the exercise of Art in his labour or pleasure of telling a tale. Not until he becomes an automatic reproducer of all impressions whatsoever can he be called purely scientific, or even a manufacturer on scientific principles. If in the exercise of his reason he select or omit, with an eye to being more truthful than truth (the just aim of Art), he transforms himself into a technicist at a move.

(134)

Because Hardy's aim is not self-expression but a record that is true to human experience, he readily grants the presence of personal participation; in fact, he implies that it is the personal coefficient, "the mental element" (*LN* 2: 36), that "transforms" the naturalistic record into art.²² Hence when Hardy insists that his poems are "in a *large* degree dramatic or personative" and "of the subject-matter . . . *much* is dramatic or impersonative," he is acknowledging that small, inescapable degree of personal participation; he is being

²¹ The good writer, according to Pound, "says just what he means . . . with complete clarity and simplicity" ("Artist" 50). In similarly affable and magisterial vein, Hardy advised Lady Agnes Grove to "see that [every sentence she writes] contains a rounded & complete thought" (21 Mar. 1897; *CL* 2: 153).

²² Although the poet, to paraphrase Elliott, may not express the scientific truth as exactly as the pure scientist might wish, "he may in compensation create another kind of truth of transcendent validity" (*Persona* 71).

scrupulously precise.²³ At the same time, he is perpetuating the crucial distance between reality and art.²⁴ "All art," wrote Hardy, "is only approximative--not exact" (*L&W* 169). A technician, then, is no mere specialist or technical barbarian; he is the ideal creator in any art form, because he combines technical expertise with a critical, artistic imagination (see Cox, "Poet" 58; Elliott, *English* 347). And what saves Hardy from being stamped a technician and qualifies him rather as a literary technician is his humanity, his "sympathetic appreciativeness of life in all of its manifestations" ("Science" 137), his conviction that the material, "animal side of human nature should never be dwelt on except as a contrast or foil to its spiritual side" (31 Mar. 1897; *CL* 2: 157), his indefatigable concern to shape artistically the texture of human life--its transitoriness and tensions. True, nineteenth-century positivism stimulated Hardy and, for a time, won his attention; but it also exercised his complex insight (Pinion, *Art* 50). Hardy knew rightly enough that scientific humanism could be baleful as well as beneficial. Hardy's ambivalent attitude to church restoration is a representative case in point.²⁵

First as Hicks's apprentice, then Blomfield's draughtsman, and finally Crickmay's assistant, Hardy specialised in the reconstruction and renovation of old churches (*L&W* 31, 42, 65; *B* 54-55). But in later life he deeply regretted what he had done, confessing his complicity, albeit as a merely passive and involuntary instrument (*L&W* 35, 82). He deplored the obliteration of antiquities, and dissociated himself from all ill-considered and obtrusive restoration-work (Beatty 22, 26-27, 31; see *Jude* bk 1, ch. 1). Indeed, his remorse, even as a reluctant accessory, pricked him into giving active allegiance to the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings until the end of his life (Beatty 22).²⁶ In an address delivered in 1906 to the SPAB Hardy described the antiquarian architect's dilemma. To restore a church entails demolishing the original fabric of the building while preserving the essential idea that informs the structure. But the antiquarian architect is divided between his concern for the abstract idea and reverence for the building itself, between the boundaries of a solid and the solid itself ("Memories" 213-16). Ten years earlier, Hardy had dolefully confessed to Mrs Henniker that "Nobody but those who have had to carry them out knows the difficulties of such problems--whether to preserve the venerable *lines*, or the venerable *substance*, when you cannot do both" (30 Dec. 1896; *CL* 2: 141).

Although he realises that these opposing forces cannot be satisfactorily reconciled, Hardy nevertheless mentions two definite solutions. One would be for the dilapidated church to be "enclosed in a crystal palace . . . and a new church be built alongside for services" ("Memories" 205). Giving free rein to both tendencies--

²³ Pref., *Wessex Poems* (*CPW* 1: [5]); pref., *Poems of the Past and the Present* (*CPW* 1: [113]); emphases mine. Similarly, a few months before *Satires of Circumstances* was published, Hardy informed Mrs Henniker that the bulk of the volume would consist of "poems mostly dramatic or personative" (17 July 1914; *CL* 5: 37). Buckler maintains that Hardy "refused to be dogmatic on either side of the [impersonal/personal] issues but suspended them, for both himself and the reader, in a medium of inconclusiveness" (*Poetry* 42n6). But Hardy's word "large" necessarily implies a countering "small," not merely a vague "some."

²⁴ William Buckler, on the other hand, rather strenuously aligns Hardy's claim to general impersonality with the Arnoldian principle "that the very selection of a subject capable of imaginatively disclosing the presence and movement of 'elementary feelings that subsist permanently in the race' cannot be entirely exclusive of the poet's feelings and that, therefore, artistic objectivity, however beautifully managed, can never be quite complete" (*Poetry* 65). Buckler's extrapolation from Hardy's qualifying phrase ("in a large degree") seems gratuitous and grandiose.

²⁵ Another relevant and interesting illustration is Hardy's low regard for Zola as a novelist, "believing him no artist, but at bottom a man of affairs, who would just as soon have written twenty volumes of, say, the statistics of crime, or commerce, as of fiction--a passionate reformer" (letter to Gosse, 1 Oct. 1899; *CL* 2: 231).

to exhibit technology and to create new forms--this is for Hardy the "ideal" way to resolve the dilemma. But the whimsical humour of the solution directs us to the amusingly ambiguous closing remark of *A Laodicean*. When George Somerset suggests that the gutted Stancy Castle be preserved "beautiful in its decay," and that Paula Power should follow in her father's modern, scientific footsteps, he justifies his proposal by saying that "since it is rather in your line you may as well keep straight on."²⁷ Paula replies: "Very well, I'll keep straight on; and we'll build a new house beside the ruin, and show the modern spirit for evermore." Paula's recalcitrant velleity, however, flippantly blurs the concluding image of harmony between art and science:

'. . . But, George, I wish--' And Paula repressed a sigh.
'Well?'
'I wish my castle wasn't burnt; and I wish you were a de Stancy!'

Michael Millgate draws attention to Hardy's adept exploitation of architectural-moral analogues and his developing ability "to incorporate architecture more or less systematically as an element in an overall value-system" (*Career* 114). So the quoted dramatisation of the clash between intellectual advance and emotional regression, between innovation and tradition, clearly deflates Arnold's idea of "the modern spirit," to which Hardy here alludes. The symbolic juxtaposition of mediaeval and modern ironically implies that Arnold's secular humanism, for all its Hellenistic intellectual freedom, is flawed and warped by a morality that relies ultimately on custom and convention.

Hardy's second way out of the architect's dilemma is to ignore the embodiment altogether, on the grounds that "the essence and soul of an architectural monument does not lie in the particular blocks of stone or timber that compose it, but in the mere forms to which those materials have been shaped" ("Memories" 213). Adhering to a pristine cultural ideal, the architect could feel justified in destroying the material. The sacrifice, however, of the decaying substance to the "aesthetic phantom" (214) corresponds to another destructive idealism, namely that which causes Angel to reject Tess, whom earlier he had sentimentally perceived as "a fresh and virginal daughter of Nature" (ch. 18, 172). For what really drives Angel is "the will to subdue the grosser to the subtler emotion, the substance to the conception, the flesh to the spirit" (ch. 36, 345). Hence, epitomising the Arnoldian position of religious compromise, Angel's rejection of Tess is "humanly execrable in its moral inconsistency" (De Laura 391). Like his attitude to the ideal architectural solution, then, Hardy's attitude to the second solution implies an ambivalence towards Arnold's notion of the modern spirit.

In fact, it is because Hardy feels strongly that late-Victorian institutions are morally inadequate to meet the demands of modern life and the inevitable human cost, that he recoils from the second solution, which one might call the "natural" solution, since its method, as Hardy told fellow members of the SPAB, "is the actual process of organic nature herself, which is one continuous substitution. She is always discarding the matter, while retaining the form" ("Memories" 214). Physical matter, in its ineluctable flux, is indifferent to humanity.²⁸ So is the aesthetic architect who uses his technology to secure the survival of an old shape with

²⁶ Beatty argues that Hardy's conscience actually stirred him in 1893-94 to take complete charge of (and full responsibility for) the discreet and moderate renovation of St Peter's, West Knighton, rather than risk someone else's spoiling the little church (31-33; see also *B* 345).

²⁷ Earlier, as a prelude to inspecting her celebrated father's railway-tunnel ("a triumph of science"), Somerset suggests that Paula represents "science rather than art . . . the march of mind--the steamship, and the railway, and the thoughts that shake mankind" (bk 1, ch. 11, 112 and 111-12).

²⁸ Hardy never altered his conclusion (reached on 9 May 1881, a week after finishing *A Laodicean*) that the physical and the emotional are "interdestructive": "The emotions have no place in a world of defect, and it is a cruel injustice that they should have developed in it. If Law itself had consciousness, how the aspect of its creatures would terrify it, fill it with remorse!" (*L&W* 153). According to Beatty, Hardy realised that

little compunction or concern about the human associations clinging to the material he replaces or destroys. As a result, Hardy went on,

the damage done to this sentiment of association by replacement, by the rupture of continuity, is mainly what makes the enormous loss this country has sustained from its seventy years of church restoration so tragic and deplorable.

(215)

Hardy appreciates that the architect's sole motive is artistic, but life means more to Hardy than art:

The protection of an ancient edifice against renewal in fresh materials is, in fact, even more of a social--I may say a humane--duty than an aesthetic one. It is the preservation of memories, history, fellowship, fraternities.

(215)²⁹

These human associations load "by-gone Gothic artistry" (214) with vital significance; these experiences represent for Hardy a treasure worth preserving.

That, for Hardy, Gothic architecture should reverberate with meaning is hardly surprising. Retaining after more than thirty years "a strong feeling of comradeship" with the Royal Institute of British Architects,³⁰ Hardy's enthusiasm for architecture was always "great," and owing to his early training, he still had a "vivid interest" in English cathedrals especially, as he told the Bishop of Durham (3 Dec. 1913; *CL* 4: 326). Furthermore, the pervasive influence on Hardy's imagination of the Gothic art-principle he himself attests to, when he claims as the heart of his aesthetics the "curious parallel" between poetry and architecture (*L&W* 323). The analogy itself, of course, has a long tradition, is powerfully figurative and suggestive (Frank 249-59), and Hardy could scarcely avoid assimilating it thoroughly, both during his apprenticeship to Arthur Blomfield and from his acquaintance with Raphael Brandon--co-author of *Analysis of Gothic Architecture and Open Timber Roofs of the Middle Ages*--a man whom Hardy called a "literary architect" (*L&W* 79-80).³¹ Moreover, when Hardy maintains that "inexact rhymes and rhythms now and then are far more pleasing than correct ones," and that "too regular a beat [is] bad art" (*L&W* 108, 323),³² he evinces a Ruskinian delight in Gothic architecture (see Cox, "Poet" 50, 53; Paulin 107), for he practically restates two of Ruskin's criteria of great art: variety and novelty ("Gothic" 206).

Complementing this positive evidence of the influence of the Gothic art-principle, there is a negative inference to be drawn, daringly perhaps but with validity, from the rhetorical use Hardy made of the analogy

restoration implied conformity and exact replication, principles Hardy refused to "apply to the living in whom uniformity tends to mean the death of original thought, the quenching of the spirit" (34).

²⁹ Thirty years earlier, Hardy cast in the same polarity his dismissal of Clym's Arnoldian idealism:

A man who advocates *aesthetic* effort and deprecates *social* effort is only likely to be understood by a class to which social effort has become a stale matter. To argue upon the possibility of culture before luxury to the bucolic world may be to argue truly, but it is an attempt to disturb a sequence to which humanity has been long accustomed.

(*Native* bk 3, ch. 2, 231; emphases mine)

³⁰ Letter to W. J. Locke, Secretary of RIBA, 27 Nov. 1897; *CL* 2: 182. The Institute had awarded Hardy "the prize medal for his essay in 1863" (*L&W* 433; see also 44 and 393, and *B* 79-80).

³¹ For a rewarding discussion of the concept of literary architecture, see Frank 17-28, esp. 25-26. Oddly enough, she finds no place for Hardy anywhere in her book--e.g., his obituary tribute to Victor Hugo: "His works are the cathedrals of literary architecture . . ." (*L&W* 334).

³² In a letter written towards the end of 1919, Hardy tells "an unnamed young poet" how to "escape the satire and censure" of dully conservative reviewers--by giving them what they expect and avoiding those "dissonances, and other irregularities, [that] can be produced advisedly, as art, and worked as to give more charm than strict conformities, to the mind and ear of those trained and steeped in poetry" (*CL* 5: 345).

when he adduced it in defence of *Wessex Poems*. Ostensibly, he used it to illustrate the art of concealing art. In so earnestly spelling out, however, that poetry and architecture are similar in each art's "having to carry a rational content inside its artistic form" (*L&W* 323), Hardy rather gives the impression that he is struggling, from a position of insecurity, to explain his subtle use of expressive form. Indeed, there are two obvious fallacies in Hardy's invoking of the analogy. He indignantly implies, for instance, that adopting Gothic architecture as a procedural model automatically and absolutely guarantees a poet's expertise, excellence, and success in his own medium; and secondly, that a poem is subject to exactly the same process of material decay as a building. On the other hand, Hardy does seem to have been aware that merely adducing the analogy would not, in itself, suffice to prove his poetic ability. For he soon steers the discussion away from the analogy to (what he regards as) the hard, irrefragable signs of his craftsmanship: the experimental "verse skeletons" themselves (*L&W* 324). And five years later, in a letter to the *Times Literary Supplement* (5 Feb. 1904), he concedes that "analogies between the arts are apt to be misleading" ("Rejoinder" 143).³³ Nevertheless, his instinctive recourse to the Gothic analogy certainly indicates the strength of his faith in it as an aesthetic principle and, more importantly, the depth of its influence on his entire artistic technique--not just on rhythm and texture, but also on imagery and structure (see Taylor, *Poetry* 48-67). Hardy never forgot the combined "value of organic form *and* symmetry" (*L&W* 392; emphasis mine; see Marsden 103-04).

But if the spirit of Gothic architecture so infiltrated Hardy's literary sensibility that it dominated his poetic imagination, does not the influence appear in subject-matter as well as style? If, that is, Hardy's poetic form corresponds to the aesthetic abstraction so beloved of the architect, does not Hardy's poetic content correspond in some way to the human associations in the safe-keeping of the antiquarian? I think it does. In that carefully considered preface to the fifth edition of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Hardy regards ideological "matter" and aesthetic "rendering" as inseparable ([4], lines 26-27; see Björk, *LN* 1: xxii), so that a lyric's "rational content" means, on the architectural analogy, considerably more than its mere paraphrasable substance, more than the speaker's assumptions, discriminations, and predictions. We must add the emotional content--memories, hopes, dreams, sympathies, needs, impulses, currents of feeling, connotations, overtones, and so on. Hardy is intensely preoccupied with human problems. As Donald Davidson puts it, Hardy's chief literary purpose is "to tell about human life in the terms that would present it as most recognizably, and validly, and completely human" (23). Two consecutive notebook-entries, quoting Disraeli's *The Young Duke* (1831), reveal what Hardy took those terms to be: "Knowledge of mankind is a knowledge of their passions" and "To mingle with mankind without being too deeply involved in the play of their passions" (*LN* 1: 124-25). Confirmation that Hardy regarded the passions as the key to understanding human nature comes in the general preface to the Wessex Edition of his novels and poems, for there Hardy claims universality for his treatment of human nature especially "in respect of the elementary passions" or "the domestic emotions" (45). Ultimately, so Hardy consistently affirmed, it is the passions--the non-rational and "the involuntary inter-social emotions"--that govern human behaviour and give to life its substance (e.g., *L&W* 54, 89, 107, 332, 432; "Postscript" 146). And the spirit of Gothic architecture--characterised by spontaneity (which he called the "principle" of Gothic art) and irregularity (which he called its "genius")--unfailingly inspired Hardy's depiction of those passions (*L&W* 323; Beatty 33).

That the subject of the passions is a staple element in Hardy's imagination is, I think, even more decisively corroborated, if not clinched, by his deliberately preserving a sheet of schemes and sketches he made in 1863. These diagrams summarise Charles Fourier's analysis of human nature in a treatise entitled *The Passions of the Human Soul and Their Influence on Society and Civilization*. Hardy kept the sheet for thirteen

³³ Nevertheless, defending his cross-genre practice in *The Dynasts*, Hardy cogently substantiates the broad principle of any art's borrowing "the methods of a neighbour art" ("Rejoinder" 141).

years and then pasted it into one of his literary notebooks, thereby ensuring its perpetual priority and prominence. (For a reproduction of both sides of the inserted leaf and my interpretation of the drawings, see appendix A below.) The Fourier-diagrams are among the most curious Hardy ever made, and are pertinent to the present study, since we have here, in Hardy's own hand at the eager and earnest age of twenty-three, his considered depiction of a concept of human nature he quite evidently cherished. Naturally, no one can say how far, or even whether, Fourier's definition of the passions directly influenced Hardy's literary work; and it would, in any event, be palpably hazardous to base an argument or analysis on a conjectural influence. Nevertheless, Lennart Björk's claim seems reasonably circumspect when he suggests that "Fourier may have played a significant role in that complex cluster of intellectual and emotional forces that reinforced those idiosyncrasies and concerns which Hardy's own nature and environment had made him particularly susceptible to" ("Vision" 87; see also Björk, "Reading" 107-08).³⁴ My own interest in Hardy's drawings is equally truistic--that the graphic way in which Hardy processes Fourier's ideas does at least indicate an approach to those works in which Hardy concentrates on expression of the passions: the first-person lyrics. Moreover, in tentatively examining that truism, I shall introduce some of the terms of Hardy's master theme. This, of course, is neither to claim that Hardy's first-person lyrics expressly dramatise Fourier's ideas on how the human mind works, nor to deny other intellectual influences and sources. Certainly, it seems temperamentally improbable for Hardy to have tolerated Fourier's arithmetical system, which is hopelessly arbitrary and analogical to boot (Doherty xxxvi). But a definite rationale emerges from the organic tree-diagrams: namely, that the relation between the three elemental human faculties--passion, intellect, and will--determines the quality of individual character.

Over and above this three-way relation, there is, in Björk's opinion, the polarity of emotion and intellect, of heart and head, that permeates the novels, articulating as it does Hardy's anti-rationalist view of human nature. That polarity, Björk concludes, is not only "the basic psychological framework for Hardy's dramatization of the human situation," but also "an essential element in Hardy's social criticism in which the intellect becomes the agent of those norms and attitudes of civilization which eventually chasten, distort, or destroy the natural human emotions" ("Vision" 104). Putting it another way, within the psychological triumvirate, the driving force is the passions, aided and abetted by the will (or physical energy); while the formative, guiding factor is the intellect, "constantly supported by the economic, social, moral, and religious principles of modern civilization" (Björk, "Vision" 98).

However elementary, this conflation of Hardy's psychological and social criticism seems entirely valid, although the account offered by Björk needs to be qualified in two small ways. First, the polarity between passion and intellect is by no means limited to antagonism. After all, it is possible to be passionately intellectual, as are Fitzpiers, Clym, Angel, and Jude, to varying degrees. Might passion and intellect never, for instance, be reconciled--"amalgamated" in a "moral harmony" (see appendix A)? On the evidence of the Fourier-diagrams alone, a happy compromise of sorts between passion and intellect--to take but one other relation--would seem a clear possibility. Secondly, if the intellect plays a merely subsidiary role, acting on behalf of (as it were) civilised society, then the true antagonist of the passions is the entire system of civilised standards, which includes the curbing of passions. And the human equivalent or moral-psychological reflex of that system I shall call *character*; more specifically, I mean that stable aggregate of distinct and definite conventions and ethical norms upholding a society--or as Hardy himself put it, that state of mind produced by the "irritating necessity of conforming to rules which in themselves have no virtue" (*L&W* 114). (I do not

³⁴ In his "Trumpet-Major Notebook," Hardy mentions Fourier's analysis twice--first in a note on Fourier's reduction of all that exists to three universal constituents: Nature (or matter), God (or spirit), and Justice (or mathematics); and again in a bibliographical reference on the last page of the notebook (*PN* 176 and 186).

mean character as personal destiny, as in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* ch. 17.) Individual character, of course, may flout or follow those conventions; it may fulfil or fall short of those norms; the real point, however, is that in constantly threatening to disrupt the intellect, the passions threaten to subvert the whole character.

And here, paradoxically and profoundly, re-enters Nature--but not in its impassive, destructive aspect as external flux, indifferent to human feelings. As early in his career as *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873), Hardy had resolved and effectively inverted the opposition between Nature and the passions by setting the action of the novel in one of

the remotest nooks of western England, where the wild and tragic features of the coast had long combined in perfect harmony with the crude Gothic Art of the ecclesiastical buildings scattered along it, throwing into extraordinary discord all architectural attempts at newness there. To restore the grey carcasses of a mediaevalism whose spirit had fled seemed a not less incongruous act than to set about renovating the adjoining crags themselves.

Hence it happened that an imaginary history of three human hearts, *whose emotions were not without correspondence with these material circumstances*, found in the ordinary incidents of such church-renovations a fitting frame for its presentation.

(pref., 1895, [3]; emphasis mine)

This simple but startling "correspondence"--the fate of Gothic artistry in a world created by Victorian technology paralleling the fate of natural emotions in a society created by Victorian morality--persists in *Jude the Obscure* (1895). Hardy brilliantly (and acridly) exploits the analogy to convey the misery of Jude and Sue, when he refers to "the forced adaptation of human instincts to rusty and irksome moulds that do not fit them" (postscript, 7). What has happened is that Hardy has enlisted a second aspect of Nature--Nature as internal source of individual energy warring with social (and especially Christian) custom and law, or, defining it in Hardy's own terms, "the law-lacking passions of life" ("Family Portraits" *CPW* 3: 264), "primitive [emotions]" kept under rigorous and obsessive cultivation by "modern nerves" (*Woodlanders* ch. 40, 276, lines 24-25n14). Nineteenth-century Christian civilization indeed appalled Fourier, too, since he saw in modern society's suppression of natural drives the mainspring of human wretchedness (Björk, "Vision" 90). A helpful remark of David De Laura's lights up Hardy's paradoxical position:

For all his expressed contempt for a Wordsworthian benevolence and theism in *Tess*, a theism which often enough in the nineteenth century supported Christian feeling and morality, Hardy's deep feeling for the rightness of man in his "natural" environment and folkways is supported by a stubborn and sentimental residue of the Wordsworthianism he intellectually rejected. The Wordsworthian "feeling-tone" becomes a shadow-providentialism suffusing the novels almost against Hardy's will.

(398-99)

Unavoidably, then, partly because Hardy (like Arnold) recoiled from any systematic philosophy, and partly because the views he embraced or endorsed are inconsistent, eclectic, controversial, or abstruse, the substance of Hardy's lyric self is complex. Nevertheless, it is a fairly straightforward matter to outline its main elements. In the most general terms, Hardy's first-person lyrics artistically present miscellaneous ways in which the human passions may assert themselves. More particularly, Hardy considers Victorian-Edwardian philosophical responses to (1) the wretched lot of the human passions contending with the fact of mortality, the impersonality, and the myriad incoherent transformations of the material universe, and (2) the conflict between cosmic energies and ethical constraints, between the passions and character in an artificially regulated society. Since Hardy's literary aim is critical as well as artistic, the lyrics imply a judgement of those philosophical responses; yet he neither rejects any of them nor disputes their validity. Rather, Hardy impartially, but artistically, demonstrates a range of actual philosophical positions which may be

differentiated according to the sense of meaning and joy that activates them. Hardy himself, of course, does not necessarily subscribe to any one of those responses, though the range obviously reflects to some extent what he discovered within his own humanity. That granted, the self that Hardy dramatises in his lyrics comprises a spectrum of human dimensions, but cannot be reduced to any one of them, since each dimension registers a mere fraction of the complexity that is Hardy the artist. Hardy's frank "exploration of reality" and "exhibitions of human nature," then, are metaphysical and social concerns, but are felt as psychological problems, for while they have the profound import of universal, human issues, they also have the emotional urgency of personal convictions.

But whatever we make of Hardy's account of human nature, we should expect any definition of a dramatic lyric of his to be flexible enough to accommodate the object of imitation or generic action in his first-person lyrics. Considering the mode and matter of Hardy's "lyric self" discussed so far--that it is fictive and protean, yet springs from a single philosophical purpose; that it is essentially antinomial, yet comprises a multitude of attitudes and perspectives; and that it is concerned with the plight of the human passions in an indifferent and irrational universe, yet condemns rigidly-ordered Victorian-Edwardian society for thwarting individual passions--we can see that if Hardy's first-person lyrics are anything like as complex, focused, and critical as this characterisation suggests, a precise definition of them ought to include those qualities. And the final definition of a Hardyian dramatic lyric I would offer, and intend to use, stipulates them all: a short poem (of not more than fifty lines); the pronoun "I" representing a self-communing, autonomous thinker; a symbolic setting (as defined at the end of the previous chapter); and one of a gamut of philosophical responses to the disruptive manifestations of Nature, either as a non-human force in the universe or as the source of unruly individual passions in regulated society.

V

Having fitted the mode and matter of Hardy's first-person lyrics into this final definition, we need to ensure that the definition accords plausibly with lyric theory in general. That is, the definition will stand if we can find a relevant theory to substantiate it. Fortunately, James Kinneavy's account provides the necessary support. Examining modern theories of lyric in the light of Aristotle's analysis of action in the *Poetics* and *Nicomachean Ethics*, Kinneavy pursues the question, "What corresponds, in the lyric, to Aristotle's concept of action as an object of imitation?" Kinneavy discovers that the lyric imitates the three-stage mental process preparatory and complementary to external action: desire, deliberation, and decision (54-55, 101). Coordinate with poetry of action, then, is poetry of pure emotion, of inner unresolved conflict, and of moral choice (159). Furthermore, since conflict is merely a momentary "waving between contrary impulses" (102), the essential subjects of the lyric reduce to choice and emotion, or "character and passion" (158).

Without attempting to divide Hardy's poetry neatly between these categories, one can see that they not only corroborate the importance of passion in Hardy's dramatic lyrics, but also square with their antinomial quality. More importantly, Kinneavy's model of lyric helps to explain the effect of tragedy in many of Hardy's first-person lyrics. For Kinneavy's model reflects a conflict between two nineteenth-century ideas of dramatic character. Kinneavy intends character in the Aristotelian sense of indicating moral choice (56)--that is, the internal action that reflects a speaker's adherence to or divergence from a shared, "objective moral system" or "an absolutist world-view" (Langbaum 155, 157). But, as Robert Langbaum argues, a Romantic feeling for character, sponsored by Hegel, subverted and virtually destroyed traditional drama of moral choice (163, 175-77). Hegel's definition of character as "particular, self-subsistent (unique), and inward (an expression of 'the innermost of soul-life')" made private, subjective experience the gauge of an action's meaning and value

(Haefner 663).³⁵ However, unlike his Victorian contemporaries, Hardy did not altogether abjure the traditional idea of dramatic character. In fact, as we shall see, although Hardy favoured poetic drama and tended to avoid its fashionable substitute--the Browningsque dramatic monologue (Langbaum 155)--Hardy often dramatised both kinds of character in the same lyric or in neighbouring lyrics--the individual and passionate overlapping, interacting, or competing with the public and codified, as they form a single philosophical response to Nature's disruptive process.³⁶

My final definition of a Hardyan dramatic lyric, then, serves our purpose admirably. For although the definition represents only a segment of Hardy's lyric programme--his projected "round of emotional experiences of some completeness" ("General Preface" 50)--it enables us to catalogue types of symbolic setting in his dramatic first-person lyric. Such a typology of lyric settings follows logically from the corollary to Burke's setting-action ratio, stated at the beginning of the present chapter: that, to some extent, setting may be said to symbolise generic action. And applied to Hardy's dramatic lyrics as now defined, this principle means that distinct philosophical responses by fictive speakers to physical and social woe generally determine and correlate with different spatial images.

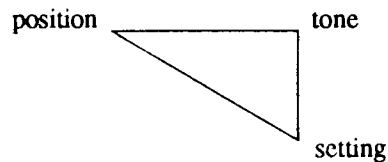
Two theories explain why the philosophical response comes first and conditions the type of spatial imagery used. Firstly, a tenet of nineteenth-century architectural theory was that the building an architect designs and constructs embodies his mind (Frank 238-39). As Ruskin puts it, "Gothic architecture has external forms and internal elements. Its elements are certain mental tendencies of the builders, legibly expressed in it" (183). When one remembers the earnestness with which Hardy resorted to the Gothic analogy to defend his poetic skills, it seems fair to say that no aesthetic principle satisfied his temperament or pervaded his poetic imagination more thoroughly than that of Gothic architecture. So it is distinctly in accord with that analogy that Hardy should select and deploy the spatial imagery in his dramatic lyrics to express the speaker's "mental tendencies." We may regard the setting of a lyric as mapping the movements of the speaker's mind, as the speaker reckons with an inner conflict, a conflict that develops in spatial imagery rather than through character (see Rueckert 87). But the poetic ambience, the arrangement of spatial images to enforce the main effect of the lyric, is due entirely to Hardy. Hardy controls and creatively exploits the details of setting. Hardy inscribes the dramatic speaker's mind in the setting. As a result, each setting, revealing as it does the individuality of the perceiving speaker, is distinctive and its significance relative, since "The poetry of a scene varies with the minds of the perceivers" (*L&W* 52).

Secondly, all generic theory stems from a concept of Aristotelian decorum: "certain subjects require appropriate forms and styles" (Dubrow 48; see above, ch. 2n11). One distinguishes a genre by its "unique repertoire" or range of peculiar, more or less regular features of form and content (Fowler, *Kinds* 55, 58). Indeed, the genre of a poem determines the technical and thematic possibilities open to the poet, for as Wellek and Warren postulate, a genre is "a 'regulative' concept, some underlying pattern, a convention which is real, i.e. effective because it actually moulds the writing of concrete works" (261-62). In Hardy's dramatic lyrics, the gamut of philosophical responses to Nature's organic process affords a broad rationale of meaning or scheme of reference regulating and informing the type of spatial imagery used.

³⁵ So did Hegelian reinterpretation of Aristotelian character, i.e., as a law unto itself, beyond all limitations of individuality (Turner 348).

³⁶ Interestingly, starting from the same Aristotelian premise that in action lies the essence of drama, Kenneth Burke finds that the essence of lyric is dialectically opposed to action: namely, a pregnant pause, a state of mind that crowns and "sums up an action in the form of an attitude" (476). See above, ch. 1n63.

One might, for convenience' sake (and as a pictorial point of reference for my reader), picture the correlation of philosophical position to spatial imagery as a triangle. One might begin analysis by attempting to describe the dramatic speaker's implied (or stated) judgement of his own direct sensory experience and psychological reaction to that experience. What would help one to describe the speaker's judgement is to have some idea of the philosophical framework in terms of which the speaker views his experience of the world and makes assertions about it. So presuppose for a moment that, before beginning analysis, one has a broad and flexible grasp of the philosophical framework governing a given dramatic lyric. This general philosophical position will then enable one to decide on the dramatic speaker's individual perception or interpretation of his subject and himself: his attitude sets the dominant tone of the lyric.



Then, by closely examining the relation between tone and setting, one can assess and ascertain the appropriateness of Hardy's use of that setting to the tone. And to the extent that it is appropriate to the tone, the setting will also be representative of the philosophical position from which that tone derives. Consequently, when the symbolic value of a setting comports with the dominant tone of a lyric, one may assign the accredited type of spatial imagery to the original philosophical position. The setting works, in other words, as reflex or "embodiment" (Rodney Edgecombe's useful term) of theme.

Analysis of the relation between setting and theme in a miscellany of Hardy's dramatic lyrics will show that of Timpe's categories of spatial imagery (examined in the previous chapter), the one which is crucial to an appreciation of Hardy's dramatic lyric settings is the imagery of enclosed space; in fact, a network of images of enclosure spans all eight volumes of Hardy's verse. Furthermore, Hardy also uses two other salient types of spatial imagery: images of extension and of dimension. And corresponding to these three images are specific philosophical positions. How these three spatial images co-operate with other images as well as with one another, how they articulate and enforce a particular philosophical response, how they crystallise aspects of Hardy's master theme, providing, to adapt a phrase from "At a Lunar Eclipse" (*CPW* 1: 149), a spatial gauge of passion's show--all this the final chapter will demonstrate.

But in order to be able to specify those philosophical responses, we must first define the provocation as precisely as Hardy's exploration of it permits. We need, as Philip Larkin proposed twenty years ago, "to determine what element is peculiarly [Hardy's], which imaginative note he strikes most plangently . . ." ("Critic" 178).

Chapter 4

THE PEARL OF PITY: THE TEMPER AND ETHOS OF HARDY'S MASTER THEME

Nature, in her most dazzling aspects or stupendous parts, is but the background & theatre of the tragedy of man.

John Morley, *Critical Miscellanies* (qtd in *PN* 78)

Any study of Hardy that professes to define his master theme begs a pair of big questions. This chapter is no exception; therefore it is only fair to look into the two fallacies at the outset. Does such a thing as a peculiarly Hardyan "theme" even exist? And if so, can it be at all defined? (The term "theme," as I propose to use it here, refers simply and conservatively to a specific concept, attitude, value, issue, or question which a writer is concerned to probe and present through literature.¹) Hardy earnestly and persistently disavowed any attempt on his part at harmony of thought in his writings. And, of course, no claim is being made here that the master theme constitutes a consciously systematic philosophy. Nevertheless, we have seen already (in ch. 3, pt II) that lack of system does not necessarily mean lack of centrality or organic unity. Hardy may have insisted on the tentative spirit of his thought, but that tentativeness cannot be appreciated unless the unifying purpose of his intellectual experiments be grasped.

Collectively, Hardy's first-person lyrics do seem to dramatise something more deliberate than merely "a direction of effort, a yearning," as Samuel Hynes puts it (*Pattern* 55). Hardy himself, for instance, finding that *The Dynasts* needed "some philosophy of life," used what he had "shaped out"² in his first two "volumes of verse (and to some extent prose), as being a generalized form of what the thinking world had gradually come to adopt, myself included" (2 June 1907; *CL* 3: 255). One early critic found in Hardy's lyrics, if not a philosophical unity, then an artistic one that so consummately wrought human experience as to deepen the reader's awareness of life's richness:

He is the master of the fundamental theme; it enters into, echoes in, modulates and modifies all his particular emotions, and the individual poems of which they are the substance. Each work of his is a fragment of a whole--not a detached and arbitrarily severed fragment, but a unity which implies, calls for and in a profound sense creates a vaster and complete comprehensive whole. His reaction to an episode has behind and within it a reaction to the universe. . . . As the lines of a diagram may be produced in imagination to contain within themselves all space, one of Mr Hardy's most characteristic poems may expand and embrace all human experience. In it we may hear the sombre, ruthless rhythm of life itself--the dominant theme that gives individuation to the ripple of fragmentary joys and sorrows.

(Murry, "Poetry" 86-87)

However, even allowing the existence of such a key, controlling theme, we still have to do justice to Hardy's vast and varied literary corpus. From 1871 to 1928, he published two poetic dramas (one an epic), fourteen

¹ But see Abrams, *Glossary*, 4th ed., 111; Brooks and Warren, *Poetry*, 4th ed., 267; and Rodway, *Craft* 190. Hardy regarded "the intense interests, passions, and strategy that throb through the commonest lives" to be an "ample theme" (*L&W* 158).

² When Hardy included this letter in the *Life and Work*, he replaced this phrase with the verb "denoted" (360).

novels, over three dozen short stories, and almost a thousand short poems.³ Consequently, to formulate Hardy's focal concern, the human experience at the centre of his work, is bound to be, in large measure, an oversimplification, as the attempts of other critics reveal.

Most formulations of the theme in Hardy's work that dominates all other elements fall under four distinct, but integrated headings: love, the past, suffering, and metaphysical conflict. Miller and Björk maintain that Hardy's favourite theme is the force and feeling of sexual love, defined as the emotional need to find meaning in life by worshipping another person ("Art" 460 and *Distance* xii, 114-43; "Vision" 86). Evans, Blackmur, and Guerard, however, would tinge that love with frustration, infidelity, or sorrow (183; 42-43; "Illusion" 175-80). While Howe, Casagrande, and Weatherby argue for a keynote theme of nostalgia, thwarted though the renewal of the past (rural or personal) may be (2; *Unity* 2, 11; "Little" 314), J. I. M. Stewart believes that Hardy repeatedly implies the potential superiority of "modern enlightenment" over the "tyranny, penury, and superstition" of the past ("Novels" 57).⁴ Quoting the Pities, Rutland suggests that Hardy's dominant theme centres rather on the enormity of human misery (338), a view both Baker and Larkin endorse (140; "Critic" 177-78). As is well known, Hardy's most recent editor, Samuel Hynes, emphasises a basic antinomial structure in the poems (see above, ch. 3, pt II). Michael Millgate, Hardy's latest biographer, also (and with more tact) discerns a fundamental antithesis, a lifelong obsession with "the struggle between soul and body" (*B* 295),⁵ and describes succinctly the pessimistic "central tenets" of Hardy's world-view--"God is 'unknowing', Nature blind or asleep, controlling Doom indifferent to human suffering" (*B* 416). Venturing into yet deeper abstraction, Southerington states: "the evolution of consciousness against an unconscious background is as much the theme of *The Dynasts* as of the novels--indeed, it is *the* theme" (*Vision* 160).⁶ Finally, for Patricia Clements, the theme that persists throughout Hardy's work, but especially in the last three novels and the short poems is "the relation of the mind to the world it inhabits" ("Order" 137).

Undeniably, then, Hardy's master theme is an open question. Nevertheless, if one accepts that any formulation of the theme can be little more than contingent or, at best, empirical, a working definition becomes feasible. I claim no more than that for the definition of a single, controlling theme in his first-person lyrics that I shall set out thoroughly and at length in the present chapter. But I will try to gain some small status for my definition by locating it to some extent within the wider scientific and philosophical context of Victorian thought, but more especially within the literary context of Hardy's entire corpus of prose writings. My definition of Hardy's master theme colligates various isolated, but logically linked, instances of a chain of concern that persists throughout those writings--his notebooks, letters, autobiography, essays, prefaces, novels, and short stories--but mainly in the novels. Convinced though I am of Hardy's multifaceted poetic achievement, I shall nevertheless attempt to survey and substantiate a single perspective on his lyrics, in order to stress that which will bring us to the best and most characteristic qualities of his lyricism--or, to borrow

³ Hardy in fact promoted the idea that his "*essential* writings" were his poetry, not his prose, which he wrote "only because [he] was obliged to." He told Clement Shorter that the "verse [was] written first (1864 to 1870): then, for practical reasons, novels" (*CL* 5: 94, 76).

⁴ According to Ford, Hardy emphasises the mental stagnation and darkness of waning cottage life ("Space" 37).

⁵ Statements in Hardy's novels, letters, and notebooks bear out Millgate's view: e.g., *Crowd* ch. 51, 414 ("the soul is the slave of the body"); *CL* 2: 157 ("the animal side of human nature should never be dwelt on except as a contrast or foil to its spiritual side"); *LN* 1: 74, item 731 ("Thought depends on Sensation").

⁶ Southerington later augments his definition of Hardy's world-view: "Consciousness and unconsciousness united in one creation, and the result a process of decay--that is our central theme" (*Vision* 164).

Hardy's modest appraisal of his own work, "a single thread of a rich tapestry hanging in the gloom, whose complete pattern will never be shown by mortal hand" (early June, 1899; *CL* 2: 220).

What I believe I have discovered is part of a pattern of thinking and feeling that is coherent and wholesome. There are, naturally enough, other parts as indeed there are other patterns, to be perceived. But the theme that I mean to trace offers to prompt the reader towards a firmer grasp of the questions and answers with which Hardy grappled in his bold attempt to make sense of his own humanity. To the extent that the theme is essentially Hardyian, it evinces his habitual frame of mind and idiosyncratic spirit.

This chapter, then, will define two primary properties of Hardy's master theme--its temper and its ethos. The chapter will, through quotation and discussion, inevitably rehearse such crucial Hardyian topics as the Immanent Will and evolutionary meliorism which have already received fair critical coverage. But these well-handled topics will give my definition of Hardy's master theme (which is in no way meant to be a compendium of his philosophical ideas) a proper inclusiveness. My emphases will, moreover, give the familiar material an unprecedented edge.

I

From the first, reviewers of Hardy's novels appreciated and applauded him as an exponent of traditional pastoral--not just his "sensitiveness to scenic and atmospheric effects," but specifically "that vein of his genius which yields the best produce," namely the "graphic pictures of rustic life somewhere in the West Country" (from two unsigned reviews in 1871 and 1872, rpt. in Cox, *Heritage* 5, 9). Oddly enough, the sheer vivacity and impressiveness of Hardy's portrayal of an idyllic world sometimes provoked scepticism and scorn. While another contemporary reviewer, R. H. Hutton, whole-heartedly praised "the physical forms of nature and the external features of the farm-work" in *Far from the Madding Crowd*, he aspersed with absurdity Hardy's idealising of rural intelligence (21-22).⁷ Reviewing the same novel on Christmas Eve 1874, Henry James patronisingly described Hardy as "evidently very much at home among rural phenomena" and his characters as "children of the soil" (30).⁸ Furthermore, to their reviewers, Hardy's early novels breathed the clean, fresh air of south-west England, with a coastal fragrance able "to neutralise the glare and noise of the hot London street. . . ."⁹ The contrast between invigorating countryside and corrosive metropolis ran through Hardy's novels, giving them the hallmark of traditional pastoralism (Squires 10-11; see also Beach, *Technique* 68-72).

Yet, obviously, such an impression of Hardy's version of pastoral would be superficial and misleading. Recent critics have revealed a feature of his pastoralism that is stronger, more integral than the rural-urban contrast--or any other element of conventional pastoral, if it comes to that, be it honest simplicity, nostalgia

⁷ There is something in Hutton's objection. Recent critics point out that Hardy's novels primarily record the tragic demise not of English agriculture, but of social values and a way of life; indeed, what Hardy emphasises is the loss of the tradesman, lifeholding class into which he had been born (see Williams, *Novel* 82-83; Millgate, *Career* 210-12). Squires argues that Hardy pragmatically idealised the daily life of farm-labourers in order to "charm the reader" into self-analysis; that is, to enable the city-dweller to judge his ethics by humanity at its simplest and most natural (12-13).

⁸ Believing Tess of noble birth, Angel Clare upbraids his mother for stamping her "a mere child of the soil" (ch. 53, 500).

⁹ Paul; see also Cox, *Heritage* 8, 14. Hardy often voiced his distaste for the air in London. If in summer the urban weather affected one of his eyes (*CL* 3: 8), in winter it invariably caught and "ulcerated" his "weak throat" (*CL* 5: 60, 62). His remark to Sir Hamo Thornycroft is typical of Hardy's lifelong attitude: "But London in the winter is not for me. If there are a dozen germs of influenza in the whole city they go for us

for a Golden Age, criticism of modern life, or creation of a world remote in time and space¹⁰--and that feature is realism. For instance, although Hardy depicts sheep and shepherds inhabiting a beautiful rural scene, neither animals nor people have a perpetual summer fling. Carefully selected realistic details invariably overlay and modify the nostalgic vision he evokes.

There are also personal reasons why realism should eventually have modified Hardy's version of traditional pastoral. Hardy's early novels may have created "an immediate conviction of place" (McDowall 147), mitigated rural life, and conveyed his obvious intimacy with his material--rural manners, speech, convictions, and conventions. With the advertency (if not knowledge) of a naturalist and the spiritual attachment of a native of Dorset, he may have wooed and won a London readership (see *B* 31). But what choice did Hardy have, as he took his first, independent steps towards his destiny? Beginning his career as a young novelist, he was insecure and timid, informing Malcolm Macmillan that "on the whole a pastoral story would be the *safest* venture" (17 Aug. 1871; *CL* 1: 12); and intending to enter into marriage with Emma, he was impecunious and reckless, imprudently offering William Tinsley "the copyright of *Under the Greenwood Tree* for the sum of thirty pounds" (22 Aug. 1872; *CL* 1: 18; see also *L&W* 102 and *B* 137, 140-42, 161).

Yet, even while he pragmatically acknowledged that his career depended on "town" readers (*B* 265), once Hardy had gained a foothold in the literary world, his desire to pander to escapist urban readers waned. Hardy was genuinely more at home on the uncouth heath than before the aulic hearth (see *Squires* 108). For Hardy, moral and philosophical integrity inexorably outweighed technical and material advantage. His very intimacy with the countryside, that had enabled him to use natural setting so remarkably as a psychological analogue, soon embargoed¹¹ the Wordsworthian concept of Nature as a benign and encouraging cosmic power.¹² About Wordsworth's early pastoralism Hardy could at times be as satirical as Byron (see Lovell 49-66) or as sceptical as Tennyson (see Fertel 337-39); so that towards the end of his career as a novelist, Hardy could accept nothing more than a mock- or semi-pastoralism: "Some people would like to know whence the poet whose philosophy is in these days deemed as profound and trustworthy as his song is breezy and pure, gets his authority for speaking of 'Nature's holy plan'" (*Tess* ch. 3, 33).¹³ Furthermore, had Angel Clare (like

people who come from fresh air, though they leave immune the people who live there" (23 Nov. 1919; *CL* 5: 343). See also *CL* 2: 231; 3: 2; 5: 309, 340.

¹⁰ *Squires* 18. Controverting Howe (2), *Squires* argues that Hardy's nostalgia is not critically detached, but intense and morally committed (13-14). Cf. Millgate who claims that Hardy is "by no means the impassioned advocate of a return to a Golden Age" (*Career* 220).

¹¹ I use the word "embargoed" deliberately to convey Hardy's qualified prohibition of Wordsworth's poetry. Both Casagrande and Keith make the point that though he rejected Wordsworth's philosophy and role as a teacher, Hardy admired and adapted Wordsworth's poetic theory and practice ("Record" 211, 219; 95-98). According to De Laura, "Hardy's complex and inconsistent treatment of 'Nature' deserves a closer examination than it has yet received" (399n31).

¹² Although he observes that the pastoral life Hardy depicts is "modified and imperfect," *Squires* goes on to argue that Gabriel Oak and Giles Winterborne, for instance, are "nature's sons, children of the earth who are in harmony with the seasons and cycles of the natural world"; and by "harmony" *Squires* means both organic unity and mutual sympathy (13-15, 136). The first meaning is not at issue. The second meaning, however, is untenable; for, although both men can intuit and interpret Nature, this in no way makes it favour them, share their feelings, or behave any less impersonally and violently--as the loss of Oak's sheep and Winterborne's life proves. To call either of these events "the *harmonious* interaction of man and nature" (*Squires* 15; emphasis mine) would be a semantic distortion.

¹³ Lorsch argues that while Nature is literally a spent spiritual force, Hardy still alludes to it emotively, exploiting it as a narrative device and poetic symbol: "The forms and techniques Hardy embraces in relating to designated landscape imply--indeed faithfully reflect--Hardy's ambivalent 'philosophy' of nature" (101).

J. S. Mill¹⁴) disclaimed the possibility of finding in Nature an ethical ideal, he might not have impaled Tess on so sentimentally pastoral an *idée fixe* as "a fresh and virginal daughter of Nature" (ch. 18, 172). If some Victorians awoke one morning and found Wordsworth's morally palliative and supportive Nature gone, then Hardy had assisted responsibly and conscientiously at that deity's nocturnal exorcism.

Yet Hardy's realism, while certainly coloured by Byronic and Tennysonian attitudes, was scarcely framed out of them. It had, I believe, another, more direct source. Although no critic has demonstrated that Hardy's realism springs from a love of experience more radical, more instinctive, than the social, economic, or philosophical, it is my contention that another essential quality of Hardy's pastoralism has yet to be understood--a primitive, timeless irony, instilled by his own experience of Nature's awesome powers and proportions.

Hardy is a clear-headed traveller from an antique countryside, a flawed Eden, bringing fresh, first-hand impressions of Nature and orally transmitted lore of immemorial, elementary human woe--hence the presence in his fiction of a directness of heart, a concreteness of feeling, that sets him light years away from his contemporary novelists. But Hardy has also stopped to savour, reflect on, and interpret for himself that direct experience. This explains why Hardy's pastoralism, though rooted in the terrestrial conditions of rural existence--that is, in the concrete inevitabilities of time, death, pain, and isolation--audaciously embraces transience and travail as the essential prerequisites of a grasp of underlying, barely tangible reality.¹⁵ As Hardy told Mrs Henniker, he utterly rejected Emile Zola's realism for being "too material," since "the animal side of human nature should never be dwelt on except as a contrast or foil to its spiritual side" (31 Mar. 1897; *CL* 2: 157). Hardy's unsentimental account of Wessex cottages, for example, makes him kin with Crabbe and Macaulay, yet goes beyond the persistently dour, stern indignation of the former or arrogant sarcasm of the latter in their respective depictions of cottage-life.¹⁶ Indeed, as Ford points out, "What Hardy treasures in these structures is not beauty but age and the associations of age. . . . The English cottage had been lived in for centuries; it was a symbol of continuity" ("Space" 41; see also Millgate, *Career* 214, 219). Similarly, the shearing-barn in *Far from the Madding Crowd* affords the narrator "a satisfied sense of functional continuity throughout--a feeling almost of gratitude, and quite of pride, at the permanence of the idea which had heaped it up" (ch. 22, 195). In other words, the premise of Hardy's ironic pastoralism is twofold--a practical rural experience yielding a primordial, ritualistic apprehension that "The defence and salvation of the body by daily bread is still a study, a religion, and a desire" (196). What Hardy himself learned as he grew up in the country confirmed and continued the wisdom of his ancestors. Hardy's version of pastoral therefore emphasises and exploits the discrepancy between idealisation on the one hand and, on the other, ordinary experience and accumulated wisdom; or rather, Hardy's pastoralism represents dream sobered by reality, reverie by reflection.

Four years after the completion of *The Dynasts*, by which time Hardy had established himself as an author capable of producing a philosophical epic--a poem complete with the ironical perspective of celestial

¹⁴ According to Mill, for man "to make the spontaneous course of things the model of his voluntary actions, is equally irrational and immoral" (64).

¹⁵ Hardy's expressive realism is in keeping with his preference for late-Turner. See above, ch. 2, pt III; and Axton 284, 293.

¹⁶ E.g., Crabbe's *The Village*: "Go! if the peaceful cot your praises share, / Go, look within, and ask if peace be there: / If peace be his--that drooping weary sire" (lines 174-76); Macaulay's review of Southey's *Colloquies*: "We are told that our age has invented atrocities beyond the imagination of our fathers; that society has been brought into a state compared with which extermination would be a blessing; and all because the dwellings of cotton-spinners are naked and rectangular" (1634).

machinery¹⁷--he assured the reader of *Under the Greenwood Tree* that "the realities out of which it was spun were material for another kind of study. . . . But circumstances would have rendered any aim at a deeper, more essential, more transcendent handling unadvisable at the date of writing" (1912-pref., 5). And yet, in Howe's opinion of the novel, the concern for a fundamental, balladic irony is there in what is arguably "Hardy's finest pastoral" (102). For into the idyllic little world of Mellstock infiltrate some of the deepest, and most menacing mysteries of human existence--namely, man's biological and spiritual origins and potentialities--at precisely the same time as some of the darkest omens inhibit that peak of festive release in pastoral comedy, a wedding, with which the novel ends:

"Tippiwit! swe-e-et! ki-ki-ki! Come hither, come hither, come hither!"
"O, 'tis the nightingale," murmured she, and thought of a secret she would never tell.

The nightingale's song irrupts into a new, necessary (for the survival of the species) conjunction of man and woman, so that through Shakespearian and Keatsian echoes, Hardy imaginatively binds together all the tensions inherent in mating and mortality. The spritely notes first captivate the ear, and then tempt the hearer to become absorbed in Nature ("Come hither") and, through repetition, try to suspend the practical process of time. The reader suspects that although Dick Dewy's mind may now be at ease, he eventually must come to perceive his bride's lurking capacity for dissimulation.¹⁸ Presaged by the determination which the novel's concluding remark confidentially reveals, disillusionment awaits Fancy Day's husband--the awareness that temporal bliss itself is at once seductive and deceptive. Alluringly Arcadia beckons, but conceals painful knowledge. Hardy knows only too well that human beings have many an "enemy" other than "winter and rough weather" (*As You Like It* 2.5.7-8; see Millgate, *Career* 46, 49).

Overcombe mill-pond in *The Trumpet-Major* further illustrates this broadly ironic, counter-pastoral perspective. The tranquil, smooth water, slipping "like Time" (ch. 1, 39) imperceptibly away, subtly suggests "the stream of recorded history, within whose banks the littlest things are great, and outside which she [Anne Garland] and the general bulk of the human race were content to live on as an unreckoned, unheeded superfluity" (ch. 13, 121). Inexorably, however, battles summon her lovers and engulf her willy-nilly in international turmoil. In his account of the novel, Michael Millgate describes very well the origin and mechanism of this ironic pastoral of Hardy's:

The stimulation of his deepest creative instincts--in fiction, poetry, and drama--seems to have been inseparable from a profound brooding upon the past and upon the practical and philosophical implications of time's passage. That consciousness of mortality which gives unexpected emotional force to the conclusion of *The Trumpet-Major* also informs, less obviously but no less surely, all of Hardy's best work. . . . Hardy's Wessex was located somewhere in a vague, unspecifiable past, seeming all the more elusive of historical definition because of the very success with which it evoked a remote and almost timeless rural world.

(*Career* 247-48)

And so one could go on, of course, to discuss the harsh disillusionment that subverts pastoral life in Weatherbury, Little Hintock, Marlott, and Marygreen, where Nature is on the surface (that is, by urban convention) idyllic, but underneath (in reality) terrifying in what it exacts from its cultivators and imposes on

¹⁷ "Write a history of human automatism, or impulsions--viz., an account of human action in spite of human knowledge, showing how very far conduct lags behind the knowledge that should really guide it" (*L&W* 158).

¹⁸ In the "Ode to a Nightingale," we recall, Keats exposes the faculty of "fancy" as a "deceiving elf" (lines 73-74).

its inhabitants. But to pursue this topic through four of Hardy's major and most thoroughly analysed novels would be redundant to Hardy criticism and, to the present argument, tangential and otiose.¹⁹

To sum up, such a preoccupation in Hardy's fiction with ironic pastoralism suggests an inherited capacity for "double vision" (Zabel 33), a deeply antinomial temper, generally recognized as central to his poetic imagination. As we saw in the previous chapter, some critics have analysed the ironic effects Hardy achieves through structural juxtaposition in both form and content; other critics have attributed that contrastive technique to innate personal strains; and others have located the socio-psychological axis of Hardy's exhibition of human nature in a polarity between the rational and the emotional. Still other critics have set down the pessimistic complexion of his outlook to a predilection for showing "the sorriness underlying the grandest things, and the grandeur underlying the sorriest things" (*L&W* 178). A literary precedent for this antithetical vein in Hardy's imagination is surely the "sad muse" of George Crabbe, whose "cheerful Tales" inevitably accommodate "Woes" that yet are morally enriching. (Green 27).²⁰ But above all, Hardy's antinomial temper would seem to be a state of mind so inveterate and fundamental that it determined both his world-view and aesthetics. The Hardy temper is, in short, the disposition of a mind obsessed with the interrelation between human and natural orders. And, as observed earlier (in ch. 3, pt IV), there are two elementary kinds of relation we need to distinguish--man's place in Nature and Nature's place in man. Putting it another way, one may say that although man is a deliberate agent in the universe, powers exist in man that determine his involuntary, unintentional behaviour (see Mill 8).

II

Nature, as the great, objective, non-human reality, pervades Hardy's writings. Indeed, Victorian scientists had so demythologised and mathematicised Creation's vast proportions (Wilson 211, 215) and "unlimited power" (*L&W* 338) that whether he was in Dorchester or London, Nature shook Hardy. In 1902, after reading a biography of T. H. Huxley, Hardy confessed that the post-Victorian view of man evoked in him a feeling of tragic absurdity:

Well: what we gain by science is, after all, sadness, as the Preacher saith. The more we know of the laws and nature of the Universe the more ghastly a business we perceive it all to be--& the non-necessity of it. As some philosopher says, if nothing at all existed, it would be a completely natural thing; but that the world exists is a fact absolutely logicless & senseless.

(*CL* 3: 5)

Derived from the Anglo-Saxon verb *gæstan* ("to terrify")²¹ Hardy's "ghastly" registers the sullen terror that scientific advances in astronomy, biology, and geology aroused in many a thinking Victorian. The pressure of

¹⁹ After a brief but comprehensive discussion of the topic, May concludes that Hardy's protagonists act on "the illusion that there is solid value inherent in the world," and that therefore their suffering is absurd and grotesque ("Pastorals" 155). See also Casagrande, *Unity* 143-53.

²⁰ Hardy recognised the heroic exertion required for a positive outlook on the human condition, when he quoted Carlyle: "Mirth resting on earnestness & sadness, as the rainbow on black tempest: only a right valiant heart is capable of that" (*LN* 1: 179).

²¹ *OED*, s.v. *Gast*, v. 1. Consider also Chaucer, *The Knight's Tale*: "the entree / Was long and streit, and gastly for to see" (1983-84); Shakespeare, *Othello*: "Do you perceive the ghastness of her eye?" (5.1.108), *Lear*: "Or whether ghastr'd by the noise I made" (2.1.54).

new scientific knowledge impelled Hardy to push beyond the merely aesthetic thrill of sublimity,²² when writing about man's existence in the awesome vastness and obscure depths of space and time.

In 1881, Hardy made application to "view" the Royal Observatory at Greenwich in order to study "telescope-making" and so authenticate the astronomical content of *Two on a Tower* (L&W 156; CL 1: 96-97). There he discovered that the sky's innumerable constellations and stupendous dimensions are terrifying; and that "juxtaposed" to human affairs (as Swithin St Cleve tells Lady Constantine) the sky is a "nightmare" abounding as it does in "horrid monsters":

'Impersonal monsters, namely, Immensities. Until a person has thought out the stars and their interspaces, he has hardly learnt that there are things much more terrible than monsters of shape, namely, monsters of magnitude without known shape. Such monsters are the voids and waste places of the sky. . . .

'There is a size at which dignity begins,' he exclaimed; 'further on there is a size at which grandeur begins; further on there is a size at which solemnity begins; further on, a size at which awfulness begins; further on, a size at which ghastliness begins. That size faintly approaches the size of the stellar universe. So am I not right in saying that those minds who exert their imaginative powers to bury themselves in the depths of that universe merely strain their faculties to gain a new horror?'

(ch. 4, 57-58)²³

Similarly, although the earth's infinitesimal dimensions fascinated him aesthetically²⁴ and philosophically²⁵--one thinks immediately perhaps of the "independent worlds of ephemerons" that Mrs Yeobright sees "passing their time in mad carousal . . . heaving and wallowing with enjoyment" (*Native* bk 4,

²² For the influence on *The Return of the Native* of Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, see S. F. Johnson. Without attempting to make a sampler of Burkean sublimity, one realises that Hardy often uses devices that evoke in the reader "an apprehension of pain or death" (Burke, *Enquiry* 131), i.e., the fear of whatever threatens to harm or kill beast or man. Darwin himself saw "grandeur" in the evolutionary "view of life" (the concluding sentence of the *Origin*, 459). One recalls also Elfride Swancourt's remark about the "countenance" of the near-fatal Cliff with no Name: "I cannot bear to look at that cliff," said Elfride. 'It has a horrid personality, and makes me shudder'" (*Blue Eyes* ch. 21, 202). On Hardy's use of "the sublime" in *The Dynasts*, see also Orel, *Study* 50-65.

²³ Stargazing at the Royal Observatory outside Cape Town, Swithin feels that the southern sky is even emptier and more alien:

There were gloomy deserts in those southern skies such as the north shows scarcely an example of; sites set apart for the position of suns which for some unfathomable reason were left uncreated, their places remaining ever since conspicuous by their emptiness. . . . This was an even more unknown tract of the unknown. Space here, being less the historic haunt of human thought than overhead at home, seemed to be pervaded with a more lonely loneliness. (*Tower* ch. 41, 280).

On the way to Casterbridge at two in the morning, Tess's brother looks up at the stars, "whose cold pulses were beating amid the black hollows above, in serene dissociation from these two wisps of human life" (ch. 4, 42). In chapter 35, the narrator calls stars "the vastest things of the universe" (328). To Jude, "planets" are "inaccessible" (bk 6, ch. 1, 259).

²⁴ True to Victorian taste, Hardy admired Crabbe's "novel, good, microscopic touch" in creating an architectural image of a church tower, "telling *the colour of the lichens*" covering it (L&W 302; see Paulin 38). Suspecting that the pied minutiae of Nature held sacramental potency, the Victorian artist sought to achieve a spiritual effect and edify the beholder, by including in his painting as much literal detail as possible (Creese 63). In the forest at Baden ("a perfect reservoir of insect life"), Paula Power's disfigured uncle declares: "nature's powers in the multiplication of one type strike me as much as the grandeur of the mass" (*Laodicean* bk 5, ch. 2, 318-19).

²⁵ Hardy wrote on 28 Nov. 1875: "I sit under a tree, and feel alone: I think of certain insects around me as magnified by the microscope: creatures like elephants, flying dragons, etc. And I feel I am by no means alone" (L&W 110).

ch. 5, 338)²⁶--Hardy recognised the puniness of men and the forbidding harshness obtaining at the microscopic level of the organic world. For instance, Hardy learned from John Tyndall that bacteria exist as "the agents of all putrefaction," inhabit "A world of life within ours" (Hardy's emphatic phrase), and by participating in both "'virulently infective diseases' and 'the fermentation of beer'" achieve (what Hardy labels) organic "Brotherhood" (LN 1: 86).²⁷ In addition, he noted the irony of ants having their slaves, caterpillars their parasites, and beetles their "Noisome [sic] food"; indeed, he regarded the life of one beetle, having only the sense of touch, "Wretched isolation" (LN 1: 32-33).

But human isolation in the cosmos is only another degree of wretchedness, as the knowledgeable essayist in *A Pair of Blue Eyes* discovers. Clinging desperately by a mere tuft of grass to the precipitous and perpendicular face of the "ugliest" of all the "Haggard cliffs" (ch. 22, 208) along the Cornwall coast, Henry Knight scrutinises a fossil embedded in one of countless geological formations:

It was a creature with eyes. The eyes, dead and turned to stone, were even now regarding him. It was one of the early crustaceans called Trilobites. Separated by millions of years in their lives, Knight and this underling seemed to have met their place of death. . . . The immense lapses of time each formation represented had known nothing of the dignity of man. They were grand times, but they were mean times too, and mean were their relics. He was to be with the small in his death. . . .

Time closed up like a fan before him. He saw himself at one extremity of the years, face to face with the beginning and all the intermediate centuries simultaneously.

(209)

While "in the presence of a personalized loneliness," the amateur geologist measures man against the time-scale of Nature and sees him no more permanent than any other organism (ch. 21, 207). Scientific doctrine that prehistoric creatures, unspeakably bigger and stronger than human mammals, once trod the planet when no man was, carries a simple implication: that mankind too will become extinct and form merely another stratum of development on the earth's surface (see Dean 129-30). Nature, however, will endure.

If Nature's spatial and temporal vastness dismayed Hardy, so did its colossal power to destroy and to go its own way. A sonnet (by Emily Pfeiffer) pasted in one of Hardy's notebooks and addressing Nature as "Dread force," sums up much of his view of impersonal natural forces:

Thou art not calm, but restless as the ocean,
Filling with aimless toil the endless years,
Stumbling on thought & throwing off the spheres,
Churning the Universe with mindless motion

Dull fount of joy, unhallowed source of tears,
Cold motor of our fervid faith & song,
Dead, but engendering life, love, pangs, & fears
Thou crownedst thy wild work with foulest wrong
When first thou lightedst on a seeming goal,
And darkly blundered on man's suffering soul.

(LN 2: 102)

²⁶ One might also recall Aeneas Manston peering into the rainwater-butt, where "Hundreds of thousands of minute living creature sported and tumbled in its depth with every contortion that gaiety could suggest; perfectly happy, though consisting only of a head, or a tail, or at most a head and a tail, and all doomed to die within the twenty-four hours" (*Remedies* ch. 12, pt 3, 244).

²⁷ On that crucial moment in the chimney, when Eustacia hears of Clym's return from Paris, the narrator comments: "She could never have believed in the morning that her colourless inner world would before night become as animated as water under a microscope" (*Native* bk 2, ch. 1, 164). For Hardy, the word *ferment* seems to have had ominous connotations: see below, n46.

Storms most obviously exemplify Nature's energy for senseless, rampant destruction, and especially its capacity for injuring mankind. Hardy's fiction often includes a significant storm--not only in the sustained descriptions of *Far from the Madding Crowd* (chs 36-38) and *The Return of the Native* (bk 5, chs 7-11), but also in the briefer (though no less structural) descriptions of, say, *Under the Greenwood Tree* and *The Woodlanders*. For instance, the afternoon that Fancy Day visits the witch,

The trees of the fields and plantations writhed like miserable men as the air wound its way swiftly among them: the lowest portions of their trunks, that had hardly ever been known to move, were visibly rocked by the fiercer gusts, distressing the mind by its painful unwontedness, as when a strong man is seen to shed tears.

(pt 4, ch. 3, 155)

We conceive the "distressing" ferocity of the tempest as we conceive the "painful" movement of the trees, not merely because we see (and hear) them writhing and "rocked," but because Hardy's analogy makes us see (and hear) a rare and lamentable thing: "a strong man" broken. In the dénouement of *The Woodlanders*, the violent storm torments Grace into imagining Giles's doom out of doors: "Sometimes a bough from an adjoining tree was swayed so low as to smite the roof in the manner of a gigantic hand smiting the mouth of an adversary, to be followed by a trickle of rain, as blood from the wound" (ch. 41, 285-86). In a single sentence, Hardy describes man's fragility by giving Nature's savagery a human analogue.²⁸

But other horrifying manifestations of Byronic Nature also seized Hardy's imagination.²⁹ No object better illustrates the spatial, temporal, and destructive magnitude of Nature than a comet, such as the one whose sudden appearance restores Swithin St Cleeve to physical health: it has a tail "so large" as to be "visible in broad day," an orbital period of "thousands of years" (*Tower* ch. 15, 122), and "the sinister suspicion attaching to [all comets] of being possibly the ultimate destroyers of the human race" (ch. 10, 96).

To Hardy's mind, adventurers, mountaineers, and explorers met Nature at its wildest and most inhospitable. In the limitless interior of South America, ferocious "weathers" soon reduce Angel Clare in body and mind to a pathetic shadow (*Tess* chs 41, 49, and 53). On the other side of the world, the climate in Calcutta (wrote Macaulay in a published letter) "'destroys all the works of man with scarcely one exception'" (*LN* 1: 110). Yet to any devotee of Shelley, Europe's highest peak, the summit of Mont Blanc, symbolised the ultimate seat of Nature's indomitable and destructive power:

The glaciers creep
Like snakes that watch their prey, from their far fountains,
Slow rolling on; there, many a precipice,

²⁸ There is a striking sentence in *Far from the Madding Crowd*: "They [the sheep] had now a terror of something greater than their terror of man" (ch. 36, 301). See also the scene in which Clym goes to find a house for his bride (*Native* bk 3, ch. 6, 268-69: "The wet young beeches" etc.).

²⁹ Hardy noted, for instance, that "Goethe's religion was all taken out of him by the Lisbon earthquake" (*LN* 1: 14). Curiously, given his celebrated advertency, particularly to atmospheric, Turner-esque effects (e.g., *L&W* 56, 115, 194; or *PN* 5, 11, 14, 15), Hardy seems indifferent to or silent about the Krakatoa eruption and associated sunsets. Admittedly, he may well have made notes about the phenomenon which have not survived. According to Millgate, although there is "nothing of any relevance [to Krakatoa] whatsoever either in Hardy's now-published notebooks or in those which remain unpublished. . . he *must* have made some record of his impressions of the Krakatoa sunsets, but he would almost certainly have done so in one of his pocket diary/notebooks, and it would appear that all of these were destroyed after his death" (letter; see also *B* 518n). Indeed, the absence of *any* mention at all of so spectacular and exotic an event as the eruption strikes me as odd; especially when other, contemporary poets, including Swinburne and Tennyson, responded artistically to what Altick calls "the most stupendous natural explosion in recorded history" (250). See also Zaniello; and *CL* 2: 281.

Frost and the Sun in scorn of mortal power
 Have piled. . . . The race
 Of man flies far in dread; his work and dwelling
 Vanish, like smoke before the tempest's stream,
 And their place is not known.

("Mont Blanc" lines 100-04, 117-20)

Though Hardy's literary mentor, Leslie Stephen (a sometime president of the Alpine Club) viewed the "eternal Alps" with mystical, neo-Ruskinian ardour and nostalgia for "the space and the height and the glory" (*L&W* 102, 108-09; Robertson 120, 125-26, 136; Levine, "Ruskin" 140-41), Hardy's own view of the Alps was indelibly coloured at an early age by the "catastrophe" on the Matterhorn in 1865, the sole survivor of which, Edward Whymper, Hardy especially liked and admired as "a character of nerve & resolution" (*L&W* 280; *CL* 2: 168-69, 4: 81, 175). The "inexorable faces" of the Alpine range confronted Hardy himself on his European tour in 1897, and one starlight night the "black silhouette" of the Matterhorn, obtruding on "the pattern of the constellation," gave him a "strange feeling" (*L&W* 313), presumably of horror and desolation.

No place, however, could be more horrific and desolate than the polar world, which combined enormous power with immense and inscrutable space, wherein the ice seemed to extend interminably--altogether a place of Nature's relentlessness and man's wretchedness. In *Tess*, Arctic birds ferry southwards their grim experience;

gaunt spectral creatures with tragical eyes--eyes which had witnessed scenes of cataclysmal horror in inaccessible polar regions, of a magnitude such as no human being had ever conceived, in curdling temperatures that no man could endure; which had beheld the crash of icebergs and the slide of snow-hills by the shooting light of the Aurora; been half blinded by the whirl of colossal storms and terraqueous distortions; and retained the expression of feature that such scenes had engendered.

(ch. 43, 397)

The effect of such knowledge is to trivialise and threaten to abase all human endeavour, as this list of experiences in the everyday life of a bird newly-arrived from "regions unknown to man" subtly suggests:

Glacial catastrophes, snowstorm episodes, glittering auroral effects, Polaris in the zenith, Franklin underfoot--the category of his commonplaces was wonderful.

(*Native* bk 1, ch. 10, 141)

Naïvely adjudging these incidents marvellous, the narrator (oblivious of the human loss) plainly accepts the destruction of the Franklin Expedition of 1845 as merely another item in the impressive array of Arctic phenomena. Moreover, the sensational multiplicity and the regularity of polar events, combined with the syntactic momentum of the plural nouns in the first half of the catalogue, make the single sign of organic life--the solitary leader of the expedition--representative of all mankind. Then, in the heart of the sentence, parallelism and antithesis mingle the metonymic effect with a disconcerting, deflationary irony. The explorer's name, in alignment with the North Star, suffers an abrupt contextual shift from a human to a natural order, so that the name's heroic glamour evanesces with the humiliating word "underfoot," which answers "in the zenith." Finally, the alliteration intensifies the shock of the juxtaposition of "Franklin" and "underfoot" by creating the image of a conqueror conquered and his unmarked grave unwittingly trodden upon by common creatures.³⁰ All these effects add up to the implication that Nature has subdued proud man and exposed his pretentiousness.³¹

³⁰ On Sir John Franklin's cenotaph, unveiled in Westminster Abbey on 31 July 1875, appear lines composed by Tennyson (see *Poems* 1233). At the time, Hardy was serialising *The Hand of Ethelberta* in

Hardy, however, never deluded himself. He knew that what little physical control man has over Nature's elemental forces is uncertain and faint, his "pigmy appliances" no match for them (*Laodicean* bk 6, ch. 5, 436). Influenced perhaps by his reading of Aeschylus's *Persians*, in which "the *streams* of the sea" (*LN* 2: 478; Hardy's emphasis) destroy the entire army of Xerxes who arrogantly perverted Nature by "Yoking the sea's neck in a bridge of boats" (124), or by his builder-father's relaxed and unassuming approach to life (*B* 19), Hardy resisted the technological hubris to which many of his Victorian contemporaries were prone. For he never doubted Nature's enduring potential to reassert itself and undo "human industry," whether men attempted to finish a natural harbour, say, or to reclaim arable land from the heath.³² Hardy could record the ambitious proposals "to make a seaport of Timbuctoo; & to connect the Caspian with the Black Sea by a channel" as "*Achievements in marine engineering*" (*LN* 1: 32; emphasis his), and yet also write a poem about the loss of the *Titanic* as a disaster in which natural forces not only check and chastise human presumption, but also exacerbate the transitoriness of human existence and futility of human enterprise ("The Convergence of the Twain" *CPW* 2: 11; see also *CL* 4: 211). Again, although Hardy often acknowledges, even bemoans, the industrial invasion of the Dorsetshire countryside (e.g., the "steam feeler" of modern urban life in *Tess* ch. 30, 268),³³ he makes it clear that Wildeve's engineering knowledge is quite useless on Egdon Heath (*Native* bk 1, ch. 3, 73; ch. 5, 92; see too Millgate, *Career* 382n11). Indeed, of all Hardy's evocations of Nature's intractability, the most representative, the most microcosmic, is surely "Haggard Egdon" in the opening chapter of *The Return of the Native*:

The great inviolate place had an ancient permanence which the sea cannot claim. Who can say of a particular sea that it is old? Distilled by the sun, kneaded by the moon, it is renewed in a year, in a day, or in an hour. The sea changed, the fields changed, the rivers, the villages, and the people changed, yet Egdon remained. Those surfaces were neither so steep as to be destructible by weather, nor so flat as to be the victims of floods and deposits. With the exception of an aged highway, and a still more aged barrow presently to be referred to--themselves almost crystallized to natural products by long continuance--even the trifling irregularities were not caused by pickaxe, plough, or spade, but remained as the very finger-touches of the last geological change.

This description of the heath usefully brings to a focus the emphasis in the foregoing survey of Hardy's assumptions about Nature's vast proportions and indomitable powers ranged against man. The description also serves to introduce the last side of Nature that I mean to treat--its conduct, which for Hardy, is motivated by "an indifferent and unconscious force," by "the merely unconscious push of life . . . that propels growth and development" (*L&W* 364, 489). Believing that Nature "keeps up" an invariable "character" (3 Jan. 1893; *CL* 2: 1), Hardy would have endorsed Hopkins's generalisation that Nature has "only one way" regardless of

which Alfred Neigh expresses his moulted ambition to be a famous author by saying: "I thought of going in for Westminster Abbey myself" (ch. 7, 76).

³¹ Indeed, in 1854 and 1859, reports of the Franklin disaster outrageously disillusioned alike patriotic Victorians and chauvinistic continentals, who had dreamt that (in the words of an essay in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*) "To the European alone is allotted the master quality of energy; and by that gift he drives the world before him" (qtd in Loomis 106). Loomis himself reminds us:

Although national pride was involved in the Franklin Expedition, the symbolic value of the expedition went beyond mere patriotism, partly because the popular image of the Arctic had become so awesome. The Franklin Expedition was not simply carrying the Union Jack into the Arctic; it was carrying Western man's faith in his power to prevail on earth. If Franklin could find and navigate a Northwest Passage after almost three centuries of failures, Western man would seem somehow to demonstrate his capacity to conquer Nature at its most mysterious and intimidating. (104, 106)

³² See "Fellow-Townsmen" (pt 4, *Wessex Tales* 97) and *Native* bk 1, ch. 4, 87 ("Wildeve's Patch").

³³ But see Brown 29-44 for a discussion of the erosion of agricultural life. Cf. Millgate, *Career* 206-20.

different human representations of it (*Letters* 202). That is to say, in its operation, Nature leaves human beings quite out of account--"neglects us," says Hardy (*L&W* 50); or, in the words of Swithin St Cleeve, "nothing is made for man" (*Tower* ch. 4, 56). Indeed, Hardy wryly considered it a philosophical fallacy to assume that "the world must somehow have been made to be a comfortable place for man" (*L&W* 185), since man finds himself situated in a world not only impervious to his earnest efforts to cultivate it, but equally indifferent to his painful attempts to endure it. As Hardy explained to Henry Newbolt and Edward Clodd soon after the publication of the first part of *The Dynasts* in 1904, "the forces of Nature" with which man must come to terms are "reflex," instinctive," "involuntary," and "unconscious" energies, which man can neither suspend nor withhold (*CL* 3: 113, 116). Consequently, Nature, impersonal and indifferent, kindling life, quelling life, goes its automatic, "undesirable" (*CL* 7: 154) way grossly unaware of man's wretched lot.

Three major thematic filaments emerge from Hardy's concern with external Nature's automatic and insensitive behaviour. Hardy draws our attention to them in *Desperate Remedies*, for instance, when Aeneas Manston, mistakenly believing his wife crushed to death and incinerated, pours out his soul in open gratitude "to some Being or Personality, who in frigid moments is dismissed with the title of Chance, or at most Law" (ch. 10, pt 7, 214); and again, in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, when Henchard's fatigued and pensive wife has "the hard, half-apatetic expression of one who deems anything possible at the hands of Time and Chance except, perhaps, fair play" (ch. 1, 70).

A central aspect of Nature's unconscious action is chance--the obstructiveness and randomness of Nature's ways. From an early age, as Howe reminds us, Hardy "saw human experience largely as a chain of disaster and mischance" (7). Jude, Tess, and Giles are chiefly victims of aleatory, makeshift circumstance, of "blind Chance" (*L&W* 467).³⁴ In a letter to Mrs Henniker, Hardy praises Shelley's defiant account of chance--"The sightless tyrants of our fate," *Epipsychidion* line 240--a verse (Hardy finds) that eases one's helpless subjection to "blind circumstances beating upon one, without any feeling, for or against" (18 July 1893; *CL* 2: 25). Nature's chill antagonism, its "slow and sickening" attrition, and its "stolid, inexorable hand of indifference" (*Blue Eyes* ch. 22, 211), colour the whole cast of Hardy's thought. Life's senseless and sorrowful contingencies constantly vexed and grieved him, an attitude which Hardy has a chagrined Swithin vent after bumping the lens for his new telescope over a parapet: "It is I against the world; and when the world has accidents on its side in addition to its natural strength, what chance for me!" (*Tower* ch. 5, 65). Swithin's response epitomises Hardy's view. Compelled by circumstance and bullied by vicissitudes, man fails to fulfil his dreams and desires, or to receive love from and return it to another. Man is unable to escape Nature's "predilections for certain deeds at certain times, without any apparent law to govern or season to account for them," its "lawless caprice" (*Blue Eyes* ch. 22, 210).

At the opposite pole from chance stands a premise of Victorian natural philosophy, indeed the basis of the physical and mathematical laws of an inanimate Newtonian universe (such as those of friction and gravity): causation.³⁵ The inviolable sequence of cause and effect in Nature, Hardy thought, conditions man's existence, because man's every action fits into a deterministic system like a cog in a machine or, to use a comparison Hardy borrowed from J. A. Symonds, a "web" that is "ever weaving": "*Our actions*--Each act, as it has had immeasurable antecedents, will be fruitful of immeasurable consequents" (*LN* 1: 66; see Pinion, *Art* 43). In other words, Hardy believed what his acquaintances Morley and Clodd, as well as people like Tyndall, Huxley, Clifford, and Dowden, asserted: that Nature's built-in ordering principle, its regular active process, or

³⁴ By contrast, Michael Henchard and Mr Barnet (in "Fellow-Townsmen") owe their suffering to their faulty characters rather than to "the whimsical god" known as "blind Circumstance" (pt 8, *Wessex Tales* 114).

³⁵ By the turn of the century, of course, physicists and mathematicians were using the idea of causation for making merely rough estimates (Wilson 213-14).

scientific "law," applied precisely to the impersonal workings of morality (Cosslett 15-17). Indeed, for Hardy, the metaphor of design in cloth or web suggested the fixed interrelations of individuals within both a cosmic and a social context. Hence in his poetry, Hardy intended "The human race to be shown as one great network or tissue which quivers in every part when one point is shaken, like a spider's web if touched" (*L&W* 183).

Finally, somewhere between blind chance and rigid causation is regular organic change, the third thematic filament.³⁶ Hardy was aware of the eventual death of material bodies in the course of astronomical time:

For all the wonder of these everlasting stars, eternal spheres, and what not, they are not everlasting, they are not eternal; they burn out like candles. . . . The senses may become terrified by plunging among them as they are, but there is a pitifulness even in their glory. Imagine them all extinguished, and your mind feeling its way through a heaven of total darkness, occasionally striking against the black, invisible cinders of those stars.

(*Tower* ch. 4, 58)

But the instance of change in Nature that distressed Hardy was the march of biological time--the creative succession of the seasons, certainly; but more particularly the destructive process of ageing and decay. Awareness of human frailty and ephemerality starkly confronted Hardy in London once, when he saw that dissolution was "gnawing" at all the readers in the British Museum Library and found his city acquaintances "abraded, their hair disappearing; also their flesh, by degrees" (*L&W* 215). What, to Hardy's mind, makes time's erosion so grievously detrimental to men is its slow, ritual progress, aptly conveyed by those last three phrases just quoted. However comely a human body, the ineluctable, devastating advance of time renders it merely a "withering carcass" that encumbers its owner's life (*Well-Beloved* pt 3, ch. 4, 170).

Yet if man's inextricable enmeshment in the unstoppable processes of causality and time, in "the on-going--i.e. the 'becoming'" of Nature, saddened Hardy (*L&W* 210), the evolutionary conditions of man's existence he learned of from the Darwinian account of Nature's conduct appalled him. Of course, as his death-bed, Parthian lampooning of Chesterton indicates, Hardy consistently and vehemently supported "Darwin's theories" ("Epitaph" *CPW* 3: 308). To Hardy, "the evolution of species" was "but a minute process" in the wider development of the universe (*L&W* 114); and like J. A. Symonds whose views in *Essays Speculative and Suggestive* (1890) he admired and transcribed, Hardy became engrossed with the concept of evolution: for instance, Hardy noted that "All things are in process . . . the whole universe is literally in perpetual *Becoming*," so that "it is impossible for us to believe that any one creed or set of opinions possesses finality" (*LN* 2: 32). Quite evidently, that is, the hypothetical tentativeness of Darwin's whole approach to science appealed sufficiently to the young Hardy to put him "among the earliest acclaimers of *The Origin of Species*" (*L&W* 158). For Darwin, at variance with the two venerable British traditions in which he worked, natural philosophy and the natural theology it bolstered (Wilson 205), took a scientific law to be neither truer nor more real than a mental construct, a theoretical expedient; he was morally unable to reduce the intricate biological world to a few, simple, divinely ordained rules governing Nature.³⁷ All the same, the Darwinian account of Nature signalled a "law" (i.e., principle or mechanism) that because Hardy honestly credited and responded to it, darkened Hardy's entire world-view.

³⁶ In his essay on Nature, J. S. Mill takes the concept of scientific law to mean a regular natural phenomenon (5-6).

³⁷ Peckham 30-31. In the 4th ed. of the *Origin*, Darwin stated that by "Nature" he meant "only the aggregate action and product of many natural laws, and by laws the sequence of events *as ascertained by us* (qtd in Wickens, "Literature" 65; emphasis mine).

Darwin viewed Nature as a system of forces in motion, a world of constant change and diversification in which there operated a principle of preservation that he called *natural selection*--"a power incessantly ready for action, and . . . as immeasurably superior to man's feeble efforts, as the works of Nature are to those of Art" (*Origin* 50). Herbert Spencer's usual phrase, as Darwin himself concedes, describes the principle more accurately, and directs us to the brutal evolutionary conditions of life that staggered and distressed Hardy. For the phrase "Survival of the Fittest" implies that the chief cause of biological change is the interaction between several organisms (*Origin* 49; 130). In the struggle for existence, every organism will do its utmost to perpetuate itself; but only those that can adapt to their physical environment will survive the severe intraspecies-contest for space and nourishment. Hence a twofold process of continual adaptation and competition occurs, and ever-watchful Nature, "with unerring skill" (100) scrutinises, picks out, and favours each successful competitor, but rejects failures (115-18).³⁸ In addition, since competitors bequeath their "good" or "bad" qualities to their offspring, a remorseless force in this biological struggle is "the strong principle of inheritance" (85), which operates at a more intrinsic level than environment.

Tess, Jude, and Sue--all are doomed to fall victim, despite their respective resilience and self-assertion, to the evolutionary determinism of the inherited flaws in their exhausted ancestral "germ plasm" (a nineteenth-century equivalent of DNA), which "creates and passes through the bodies of generation after generation" (Morton 42).³⁹ The "fatality of heredity" (Vernon Lee's phrase) in fact became of prime concern to Hardy from about 1880 onward (*LN* 1: 165), assuming minor structural importance in *A Laodicean* (bk 1, chs. 3 and 11; bk 3, ch. 11), but later transforming *Tess* from the meretricious serial "Too Late, Beloved!" (*B* 301; see also *L&W* 223-24) into a major modern tragedy, and engendering the very flesh, bones, and spirit of *Jude*, a novel (so Hardy told Mrs Henniker) that "'makes for' humanity,"⁴⁰

really one about two persons who, by a hereditary curse of temperament, peculiar to their family, are rendered unfit for marriage, or think they are. The tragedy is really addressed to those into whose souls the iron of adversity has deeply entered at some time of their lives, and can hardly be congenial to self-indulgent persons of ease & affluence.

(10 Nov. 1895; *CL* 2: 95)

The human dimension of Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection reinforced what Hardy learned at Higher Bockhampton: that man's place in Nature is wretched and precarious. Of man's negligible and evanescent place in the vast void and relentless flux of the physical universe, of human vulnerability and impotence, and of mankind's forlorn and hopeless situation, Hardy had come young to an astonished and fearful perception, which his manhood repeatedly confirmed. Adult conversation, a spontaneous curiosity to search into his harsh, rural environment, and innovations in scientific theory soon made so delicate and

³⁸ Darwin wrote:

It may metaphorically be said that natural selection is daily and hourly scrutinising, throughout the world, the slightest variations; rejecting those that are bad, preserving and adding up all that are good; silently and insensibly working, *whenever and wherever opportunity offers*, at the improvement of each organic being in relation to its organic and inorganic conditions of life. We see nothing of these slow changes in progress, until the hand of time has marked the lapse of ages, and then so imperfect is our view into long-past geological ages, that we see only that the forms of life are now different from what they formerly were. (*Origin* ch. 4, 57)

³⁹ Morton's reductive cause for the genetic programming of Tess is judiciously corrected and tempered by Ebbatson's reply. Hardy seems never to have abandoned the Lamarckian notion of the continuous transmission of ancestral "qualities" (*L&W* 452).

⁴⁰ Hardy first wrote "morality" (*CL* 2: 95).

solitary a boy intensely conscious, not only of his body's frailty (*L&W* 19), but also of the tenuous thread by which any human life necessarily hangs. Biographers agree that the grim stories told him by his parents, maternal grandmother, and talented but embittered uncle (John Antell) schooled and soured permanently Hardy's thoughts about existence.⁴¹ Moreover, only the year before *The Origin of Species* appeared, Hardy's intellectual friend and mentor, Horace Moule, gave him a copy of G. A. Mantell's popular *The Wonders of Geology*, a work of putative hard-core impiety (*B* 68; *Dean* 118). And then within a few months of receiving the subversive gift, Hardy witnessed two phenomena that carried far into his mind the lesson of man's vulnerability and insecurity. One was a celestial event, the arrival of Encke's Comet, the sighting of which Hardy transmuted and included in *Two on a Tower* (quoted earlier; *H&C* 168). The other phenomenon was a social event and although it occurred a month before the comet came, seems to have made a deeper impact on Hardy:

One summer morning at Bockhampton, just before he sat down to breakfast, he remembered that a man was to be hanged at eight o'clock at Dorchester. He took up the big brass telescope that had been handed on in the family, and hastened to a hill on the heath a quarter of a mile from the house, whence he looked towards the town. . . . At the moment of his placing the glass to his eye the white figure dropped downwards, and the faint note of the town clock struck eight.

The whole thing had been so sudden that the glass nearly fell from Hardy's hands. He seemed alone on the heath with the hanged man; and he crept homeward wishing he had not been so curious.

(*L&W* 32-33)

In an instant, the powerful telescope--that spatial image of great symbolic (and ironic) force in Hardy's fiction⁴²--brings home palpably to an impressionable teenager (who, apparently, could not bear being touched: *L&W* 502, 531) his own mortality. At one level, the telescope physically involves and morally implicates Hardy in the hanging. At another level, when Hardy nearly drops the ancestral telescope, he is alone in the universe, it seems, oppressed by the regrettable knowledge that he belongs, after all, to a species given to mutual annihilation. Because the execution represents an instance of Nature's eliminating an "inferior" member of society, and because the deed for which the murderer is executed is itself one of cankered Nature's "every day performances" (J. S. Mill's phrase: "Nature" 28), the execution seizes Hardy's conscience and human dignity.⁴³ Like the chastised Jude, Hardy perceives the moral flaw in the terrestrial scheme: one really has only a choice of nightmares--to struggle perpetually, either against the "horrid," vicious "logic" of Darwinian Nature or against the hostility of one's fellow man (*Jude* bk 1, ch. 2, 17).⁴⁴

The universe as disclosed by Hardy's personal experience and response to Victorian science--not only biology, but also astronomy and geology--an amoral, non-human order in which energies of inconceivable main and magnitude stream, flare, and lash, an order in which chance, causation, mutability, and evolution

⁴¹ See Gittings, *Young* 25-26, 34-39, 44; *B* 18, 42, 107-08.

⁴² E.g., *Native* bk 1, ch. 6, 112; ch. 7, 124; bk 5, ch. 5, 402. See also Brooks, *Structure* 189; Hardy's *Blue Eyes* ch. 21; and Darwin's comparison of "the eye with a telescope" to suggest the superiority of the "living optical instrument" (*Origin* 100-01).

⁴³ On Hardy's lifelong abhorrence of hanging and capital punishment, see the short story "The Three Strangers" (*Wessex Tales*); *L&W* 341; and "On the Portrait of a Woman about to be Hanged" (*CPW* 3: 98); also *CL* 6: 75, 77n and 7: 46.

⁴⁴ Just before the time he started work on *Jude* (in August 1893), Hardy tactfully refused to speculate on the possibility, preferred by Sir James Crichton-Browne, that "The doctrines of Darwin require readjusting largely; for instance, the survival of the fittest in the struggle for life. There is an altruism and coalescence between cells as well as an antagonism. Certain cells destroy certain cells; but others assist and combine.--Well, I can't say" (*L&W* 275).

obtain, and in which necessity "governs" (*L&W* 364) both external Nature (i.e., every organic and inorganic element, object, creature, and physical phenomenon outside a human being) and internal Nature⁴⁵ (i.e., heredity, sexual instinct,⁴⁶ and emotions)--all this makes up a concept of the material conditions of man's life for which, to facilitate discussion, I propose to adopt the compound term *cosmic process*.

Sufficient evidence has been adduced, I think, to establish that this cosmic process is a regnant concern of Hardy's. One could, of course, go on to delineate a broader context drawn from, say, Victorian scientists and other poets and novelists, but that would not serve our purpose. Even were one to concur with Levine (as I do) that scholarly coverage of "the impact of science on the consciousness of Victorian writers" has been precursory and slight (rev. 232), still it is important and pertinent here to describe a second order of terrestrial existence, antithetical to the cosmic process. Two of Hardy's most emphatic responses to the cosmic process will help us to distinguish that second order of being--his disgust at the existence of serious pain and suffering (especially human) and his rejection of the creeds and tenets of orthodox Christianity, two responses we must now observe.

III

The moral imperfection of a world dominated by a gladiatorial struggle for existence from which no creature can escape, involving as it does plants in "depraved" murder, trees in "mutual rubbings and blows," animals in hierarchical preying, and people in "mutual butchery,"⁴⁷ hampered Hardy's quest for personal freedom, justice, and purpose in the universe,⁴⁸ and trenched heavily on his faith in the traditional God of Christianity, who (it was claimed) knows of the fall of a single sparrow (Matt. 10.29), whereas (according to Darwin) a mere "grain in the balance may determine which individuals shall live and which shall die" (*Origin* 115).

⁴⁵ In 1891, Hardy read Schopenhauer's *Studies in Pessimism* and noted that "Everything that is really fundamental in a man, & therefore genuine, works, as such, unconsciously; in this respect like the power of Nature" (*LN* 2: 29).

⁴⁶ To Darwin, sexual instinct is a subsidiary force of natural selection (*Origin* ch. 3, 59-61; see also Henkin 57). To the girls at Talbothays Dairy, their sexual drive is a "hopeless passion": "They writhed feverishly under the oppressiveness of an emotion thrust on them by cruel Nature's law--an emotion which they had neither expected nor desired" (*Tess* ch. 23, 207; on Nature's amorality, however, see Hugman 26). To Angel Clare, it seemed natural enough "to choose a mate from unconstrained Nature, and not from the abodes of Art" (ch. 27, 249). In "I Said to Love," the speaker refers to the "kindling coupling-vow" of love (*CPW* 1: 147). Hardy uses fermentation as a metaphor for sexual instinct in ch. 24 of *Tess* and bk 2, ch. 5 of *A Laodicean*; but see above, n27, and *H&C* 141-42.

⁴⁷ *Woodlanders* ch. 7, 53; ch. 42, 288; ch. 4; and *Jude* pt 5, ch. 6, 244.

⁴⁸ The primacy of the individual over the group always meant much to Hardy, who prescribed as an emotional tonic for himself, the third chapter of Mill's *On Liberty* (*L&W* 59). On geological evidence, Tennyson contrasted Nature's concern for the species with its neglect of the individual, "the single life" (*In Memoriam* st. 55), only to retract the idea of choice or any justice whatever: "'So careful of the type? . . . A thousand types are gone: / I care for nothing, all shall go'" (st. 56). Similarly, the impersonal nonchalance of Hardy's Nature comes out in his observation that "Nature's indifference to the advance of her species along what we are accustomed to call civilized lines makes the late war of no importance to her, except as a sort of geological fault in her continuity" (*L&W* 435).

But of all "the defects of natural laws" and grim, unfortunate conditions of existence (*Native* bk 3, ch. 1, 225) that offended Hardy, man's supreme susceptibility to physical pain and mental suffering was (to use Huxley's word) the most "baleful"⁴⁹:

We [human beings] have reached a degree of intelligence which Nature never contemplated when framing her laws, and for which she consequently has provided no adequate satisfactions.

...

A woeful fact--that the human race is too extremely developed for its corporeal conditions, the nerves being evolved to an activity abnormal in such an environment. Even the higher animals are in excess in this respect. It may be questioned if Nature, or what we call Nature, so far back as when she crossed the line from invertebrates to vertebrates, did not exceed her mission. This planet does not supply the materials for happiness to higher existences.

(*L&W* 169, 227)

Hardy deplores the "cruel injustice" of Nature's "blunder" in excessively developing nerves and emotions in "a world of defect" (*L&W* 153), a development which George Melbury's affectionate preserving of Grace's last footprint exemplifies:

Nature does not carry on her government with a view to such feelings, and when advancing years render the opened hearts of those that possess them less dexterous than formerly in shutting against the blast, they must inevitably, like Little Celandines, suffer "buffeting at will by rain and storm."

(*Woodlanders* ch. 3, 22)

That man is doomed to agonising pain and suffering is a point that recurs ten years later in *Jude the Obscure* where Hardy stresses that the unintentional but "direct antagonism" of the cosmic process renders possession of "emotional perceptiveness" a liability (pt 6, ch. 3, 270; see also pt 5, ch. 4 and pt 6, ch. 2), because it is a faculty totally incommensurate with the material conditions of existence, the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to. Venting his outrage at what he regards an indefensible and invidious error of evolution, Hardy reproachfully prosecutes the anomaly of a moral being's placement in an amoral environment:

Pain has been, and pain is: no new sort of morals in Nature can remove pain from the past and make it pleasure for those who are its infallible estimators, the bearers thereof. And no injustice, however slight, can be atoned for by her future generosity, however ample, so long as we consider Nature to be, or to stand for, unlimited power. The exoneration of an omnipotent Mother by her retrospective justice becomes an absurdity when we ask, what made the foregone injustice necessary to her Omnipotence?

(*L&W* 338; see also 489-90)

Here Hardy's refutative indictment of Nature implies that the sheer gratuitousness of intense physical pain makes life incomprehensible; that the very incomprehensibility, pervading life like some subtle toxic vapour, perplexes and galls the victims; and that their resentment merely exacerbates the pain they have to bear. A protest still more resentful comes from Hardy's exhausting failure to reconcile matter and feeling, an incompatibility that makes him curse the phenomenon of consciousness, which he equates with the capacity for suffering such mental agonies as hindsight, misconception, ignorance, frustration, mourning, despair, fear, and so on, and for receiving painful insights into the cosmic process:

⁴⁹ In his essay "Evolution and Ethics," Thomas Huxley writes: "This baleful product of evolution [i.e., pain] increases in quantity and in intensity, with advancing grades of animal organization, until it attains its highest level in man" (qtd in Wickens, "Literature" 70).

If Law itself had consciousness, how the aspect of its creatures would terrify it, fill it
with remorse!

(*L&W* 153)

Here the suppositional sensitivity of natural law compels Nature to respond honourably to the incriminating evidence of human suffering. But the brusque intensity of Hardy's rage melts the waxen anthropomorphism, inevitably drawing our attention to the steely impossibility of Nature's ever being roused to pity, or of consciousness ever yielding anything but bitter fruit. What incenses Hardy is Nature's colossal incompetence in imposing on its creatures a faculty--sentience--which it itself lacks and for which it makes no provision or allowance: "the Original Cause did not (apparently) foresee the pitch of intelligence to which humanity would arrive in the course of the ages, & therefore did not prepare a world adequate to it" (13 Mar. 1904; *CL* 3: 113).⁵⁰ For Hardy, consciousness is an absurd refinement of pain, grotesquely out of context in a world of unavoidable and unbearable disparity between expectation and experience, of "contrast between the ideal life a man wishe[s] to lead, & the squalid real life he [is] fated to lead," an idea which, as Hardy told Gosse, pervades *Jude* (10 Nov. 1895; *CL* 2: 93). Hardy, moreover, knowing of no scientific theory that satisfactorily accommodated human and non-human, spiritual and material, in an organic relationship, believed that as the texture of human experience was beyond the scope of scientific laws to fathom, so human suffering too lay beyond their remedy. For he regarded science merely as a function of reason and therefore "limited to the narrow region of pure mathematics"; in any event, human actions are neither "under the influence of reason" nor "ruled by reason in the last resort" (*L&W* 185, 160, 261, 432).

If Hardy doubted whether any rational, scientific solution could palliate or compensate for human consciousness, that "disease of flesh" (*Native* bk 2, ch. 6, 194), he certainly doubted whether any theological interpretation could assuage the pain and struggle inherent in Darwinian Nature. A troubled clergyman, perhaps with what was then Hardy's latest novel (*The Woodlanders*) in mind, once wrote with formal politeness to him: "Dr Grosart finds abundant evidence that the facts and mysteries of nature and human nature have come urgently before Mr Hardy's penetrative brain." The good reverend was anxious to reconcile the idea of an omnipotent, loving God with (as Hardy puts it) "the horrors of human and animal life, particularly parasitic" (*L&W* 213-14). Characteristically, Hardy presumed to have no resolution to the problem, referring the inquirer instead to some books on Darwin and the theory of evolution that might help him "to a provisional view of the universe." That tentative adjective, however, replacing as it does the word "true" in Hardy's draft of his reply (Feb. 1888; *CL* 1: 174), conceals his deep-seated conviction that man's physical existence in the natural world is instinct with brutality and suffering. Inverting the Browningsque optimism of the day, Angel Clare sardonically protests that since all is quite evidently "*wrong* with the world," it is just as plain that "God's *not* in his heaven" (*Tess* ch. 37, 356). Darwin's argument had long since persuaded Hardy that, not innocence, benison, and purpose, but appetite and accident hold sway in Nature, so that to Tess, Wordsworth's notion of "clouds of glory" is "ghastly satire"; indeed, to Hardy, Darwin's theory

⁵⁰ Another version of this criticism occurs in Hardy's notebook "Memoranda II," and was written (presumably) in mid-1922: "First Cause. omniscient, not omnipotent--limitations, difficulties & from being only able to work by Law. (His only failing is lack of foresight.)" (*PN* 59). Hardy articulates the tragic dissonance between impersonal will and human sentience in the closing lines of *The Dynasts*:

But O, the intolerable antilogy
Of making figments feel!

We notice the alliterative vehemence of "intol-" and "antil-" that impels the sense forward over the line-ending; the dictional clash of polysyllabic Latinate and simple Anglo-Saxon words that reflects the ontological contradiction; and the iambic emphasis that expresses rage and protest. Hardy looked up the word *sentience* in the *OED* (*PN* 61).

of evolution by natural selection implicitly exposed Christian Providence to be, like Time, a satirist (*Tess* ch. 51, 484; ch. 59, 542n).⁵¹

Of course, Hardy was not the only writer and thinker to reject Providence. Innumerable shades of doubt and disdain, of mistrust and miscreance, colour Victorian poetry, ranging from Tennyson's narrow escape from unbelief, through Arnold's resigned agnosticism, to Swinburne's gloating atheism; or, closer to Hardy, from the disquiet in Emily Dickinson's observation of a murderous process instituted and surveyed by a creator wearing an aloof and frigid smile:

Apparently with no surprise
To any happy flower
The frost beheads it at its play
In accidental power
The bland assassin passes on,
The sun proceeds unmoved
To measure off another day
For an approving God.⁵²

to the arrogant irreverence of FitzGerald's translation of the *Rubāiyāt of Omar Khayyām*, from which, only two or three hours before he died, Hardy had read to him a quatrain barbed with unorthodoxy:

Oh, Thou, who Man of baser Earth didst make,
And ev'n with Paradise devise the Snake:
For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man
Is blacken'd--Man's forgiveness give--and take!⁵³

Hardy noted that the most J. S. Mill was prepared to concede was the probable existence of a benevolent creator whose intellect ironically exceeded his power (*LN* 2: 248). But for a Providence unable to intervene and prevent or arrest "the cruelty of natural laws" (*Tower* ch. 41, 291) in a universe so hellish that it compromised hell, Hardy substituted a Prime Mover or ultimate Cause of Things that was both "loveless and hateless," knowing "neither good nor evil" (*L&W* 439). Indeed, although it is true, as Creighton says, that Hardy was a "reluctant disbeliever," whose logical humanism was haunted by Anglican tradition throughout his life ("Thoughts," 69, 72-75; see also *B* 247), and although his "instincts and emotions" were "churchy,"⁵⁴ Hardy, in company with many of his antecedent and contemporary cognoscenti, welcomed deliverance by scientific rationalism from the scepticism, superstition, and sycophancy fostered by entrenched Christian orthodoxy (Houghton 49). The Bishop of Wakefield's exhibitionist burning of *Jude* provoked Hardy's contempt for "that terrible, dogmatic ecclesiasticism--Christianity so called (but really Paulinism *plus* idolatry)" which was inimical not only to "morals" but, being remote from "the real teaching of Christ," also

⁵¹ Contrary to his first wife's devout conviction that "A strange unearthly brilliance shines around our path, penetrating and dispersing difficulties with its warmth and glow," Hardy shared his mother's opinion that "a figure stands in our van with arm uplifted, to knock us back from any pleasant prospect we indulge in as probable" (*L&W* 75; *PN* 6-7; see also *B* 21).

⁵² This is Hardy's transcription of the lines (*LN* 2: 175). The text in the *Norton Anthology* reads differently; in particular, it has "blonde" in line 5, an epithet that, attempting to beautify a passionless agent assigned to a specific, grim task, merely dissipates the chilling incongruity between the self-absorbed merriment of the unsuspecting flower and the stolid priggery of the resolute frost.

⁵³ In 1907, Hardy gave his secretary (and future wife), Florence Dugdale, a copy of this translation (*B* 453), a book that, published a few months before *The Origin of Species* and especially popular in the 1880s (Dean 124; Garrison 73n16), was presumably fairly familiar to him.

⁵⁴ *L&W* 407. One of Hardy's birthday notes reads: "We have visited two cathedrals during the last month [June 1920], and I could not help feeling that if men could get a little more of the reposefulness and peace of those buildings into their lives how much better it would be for them" (*L&W* 435).

to "true religion" (17 Jan. 1897; *CL* 2: 143). Carried by the current of intellectual disillusion and emotional disturbance that had already swelled in the decade before his birth (Dean 121), Hardy thoroughly repudiated "Theological lumber" because it discredited religion. Hardy promoted instead genuinely religious Christianity--Christianity "expressive of nobler feelings towards humanity and emotional goodness and greatness," making it "the religion of emotional morality and altruism that was taught by Jesus Christ" (*L&W* 358), devoid of inhibiting and inhuman dogma:

If the doctrines of the supernatural were quietly abandoned to-morrow by the Church, & "reverence & love for an ethical ideal" alone retained, not one in ten thousand would object to the readjustment, while the enormous bulk of thinkers excluded by the old teaching would be brought into the fold, & our venerable old churches & cathedrals would become the centres of emotional life that they once were.

(27 Feb. 1902; *CL* 3: 5)

We hear in this scheme for readjustment the reasoning of a "harmless" post-Victorian "agnostic," speaking on behalf of a transitional epoch, a period of casting off dusty, cramping institutions and certainties (see *L&W* 302), and of keeping alive both universally accepted moral virtues and socialising forces (see 20 Nov. 1885; *CL* 1: 136; *B* 539), as well as keeping open channels for emotional expression ("values of feeling") other than "the ordinances of Mother Church" (16 July 1893; *CL* 2: 24). Hardy wished to preserve all that was vital and virtuous in the old forms.

However, we hear in Hardy's theological proposal also the voice of a man severely deprived of what he had cherished. For in dissolving the ecclesiastical creeds and rites Hardy knew as a boy, the scientific account of the fell cosmic process of things simultaneously bereft him of inherited sources of moral value and spiritual comfort, a loss just as rough for him as for many fine-minded Victorians who groaned in their spiritual desolation (Houghton 85-86; cf. *B* 132). "Agnosticism," wrote Mark Pattison, "has taken away Providence as death takes away the mother from the child and leaves us forlorn of protection and love" (qtd in Gittings, *Young* 146). Morally outraged by a world of needless and endless suffering, Hardy faced the fact that mankind was beyond both the cure of scientific rationalism and the care of theological dogmatism, orphaned and adrift in a blank and silent chaos, where futility, degradation, and death are the only things certain.⁵⁵

Like many thinking Victorians, both literary and scientific, Hardy might well have concurred with Haeckel's assertion (as paraphrased in the *Daily Chronicle*) that man was "not the central point of the universe," nothing "more than a zoological species," and situated on "an unimportant planet of an unimportant sun, lost in the infinities of space" (*LN* 2: 98-99). However, Hardy was unlike Victorian agnostics, free-thinkers, and atheists in one crucial respect. Although Hardy viewed mankind as the insecure and wretched victim of the cosmic process--puny, feeble, sensitive to a fault, alone, evanescent⁵⁶ and waiflike among the secular ruins of traditional religious validations and categories--a view, indeed, that earned Hardy the unwelcome reputation for astringent pessimism, he nevertheless recognised that man's physical presence in the universe was inestimably significant. Hardy would have endorsed T. S. Eliot's impression of "the insignificance of vast space" ("Mind" 133). For if new knowledge and perspectives reduce human concerns to transient and ridiculous triviality, the cosmos itself loses all meaning without man.

⁵⁵ "Nothing is permanent but change" is a dictum of Karl Ludwig Börne's that Hardy often subscribed to (see *LN* 1: 392 and 132).

⁵⁶ In "Lectures on Evolution," Huxley writes: "With relation to this universe, man is, in extent, little more than a mathematical point; in duration but a fleeting shadow; he is a mere reed shaken in the winds of force" (qtd in Wickens, "Literature" 70).

The vast expanses of ancient Egdon Heath, luxuriant Froom Vale, and sterile Flintcomb-Ash, the gigantic arches of Stonehenge, the spectacular dusk outside Weydon Priors--all implicitly dramatise in their respective novels that "of these contrasting magnitudes the smaller [that is, the human] might be the greater" (*Tower*, pref., *PW* 16). As far as Hardy was concerned Nature acquires value and meaning only when man makes impressions on his environment, turning it into a treasury of human symbols and experience: "An object or mark raised or made by man on a scene is worth ten times any such formed by unconscious Nature. Hence clouds, mists, and mountains are unimportant beside the wear on a threshold, or the print of a hand" (*L&W* 120). Moreover, man alone pursues truth and beauty, consecrating the commonplace by extracting "a magic out of the familiar" (*PN* 72), whether a dusty road (*B* 439) or an old battered tankard; indeed, to discern "beauty in ugliness" and to charge the most prosaic people, objects, and events with emotion is Hardy's characteristic procedure for conferring significance on the phenomenal world, a Shelleyan pursuit that wins dignity for man.⁵⁷ The aesthetic faculty for divining associations and creating order and patterns substantiates J. A. Symonds's faith in the human mind to supplement and enhance Nature--a faith Hardy shared (*LN* 2: 36)--and subtly symbolises in Diggory Venn's perception of Eustacia's appearance on the summit of Rainbarrow:

There the form stood, motionless as the hill beneath. Above the plain rose the hill, above the hill rose the barrow, and above the barrow rose the figure. Above the figure was nothing that could be mapped elsewhere than on a celestial globe.

Such a perfect, delicate, and necessary finish did the figure give to the dark pile of hills that it seemed to be the only obvious justification of their outline. Without it, there was the dome without the lantern; with it the architectural demands of the mass were satisfied.

(*Native* bk 1, ch. 2, 63)

Syntactic progression enacts Venn's consciousness as he observes, measuredly and contemplatively, humanity's crowning of Nature; then through the balance and contrast of the architectural analogy, the narrator enforces "the imagination of the observer" (63).

But Hardy pushes this idea of man's natural supremacy much further, when at the end of the novel, he again symbolises the organic relation between conscious humanity and unconscious Nature. Atop Rainbarrow, Clym delivers "the first of a series of moral lectures or Sermons on the Mount, which were to be delivered from the same place every Sunday afternoon as long as the fine weather lasted" (bk 6, ch. 4, 473); and the informal setting, the spiritual labour on the Sabbath, and evangelical allusion conjointly suggest Clym's function in that place--not to convert rustic pagans by a programme of impersonal, dogmatic theology, but by preachment founded on "the opinions and actions common to all good men" (474), to bring unthinking "heathmen and women," who "abstractedly pulled heather, stripped ferns, or tossed pebbles down the slope" (473), to an awareness of the new morality of the post-Darwinian age. As Southerington puts it, *The Return of the Native* "dramatises the death of older forms of perception in the struggle for survival in the modern world. It dramatises the evolution of consciousness" (*Vision* 94). For Hardy, man must develop a modern consciousness--an awareness and acceptance of those facts about man's place in Nature that science has revealed--for only man's evolving consciousness can redeem the destructive will of unconscious Nature.

The precise link, however, between mind and Nature posed a problem for Hardy. No scientific theory satisfied him. W. B. Carpenter's proposal of a biological correlation, having a deistic premise, could not have

⁵⁷ *L&W* 123-24; see also 222. Consider the rhetorical question that ends Shelley's "Mount Blanc": "And what were thou [the mountain itself, as symbol of the First Cause or amoral Power], and earth, and stars, and sea, / If to the human mind's imaginings / Silence and solitude were vacancy?" (lines 142-44).

pleased Hardy much.⁵⁸ W. K. Clifford's theory that molecules of "mind-stuff" formed consciousness certainly appealed to Hardy for a time (*LN* 2: 108). That Hardy should find the material origin of consciousness "very attractive" (3 Apr. 1892; *CL* 1: 262) is no surprise, in view of the Romantic imagination of some leading Victorian scientists (Cosslett 26-27). But the dualistic problem remained: each person was, as far as scientists could tell, penned and isolated within his own body. Consequently, Hardy got more philosophical help from Spencer, who asserted in the face of Positivism, that behind phenomena lay a hidden, amorphous, indefinable consciousness, which was "a necessary datum alike of our thoughts & our words" (*LN* 1: 160); and sceptical though Hardy was of metaphysics--"a mere sorry attempt to reconcile theology and physics"⁵⁹--help too from Hartmann, who believed "unconscious ideas to be the bond wh. unites every being with all the rest of the universe" (*LN* 2: 109). In his notes from Hartmann, Hardy repeatedly emphasises this notion of a collective unconsciousness pervading all Nature, a coalition of blind forces, physical and psychic that, in the previous section, I designated the cosmic process. But Hardy claimed sole authorship for the key idea of representing that immanent, unconscious will as a continuum or chain between mind and matter. At one end of the "Will" stands humanity, sentient, purposeful, intelligent; at the other, Nature, insentient, vague, urgent. And Hardy saw "the unconscious force as gradually *becoming* conscious" by virtue of consciousness "creeping further & further back towards the origin of force" (21 Dec. 1914; *CL* 5: 70).⁶⁰ Hardy dramatised in *The Dynasts* this piecemeal growth of the Will to a self-consciousness that he hoped would ultimately turn out "moral" (Wright, *Shaping* 54), "sympathetic" (2 June 1907; *CL* 3: 255), and restorative--a hope

That 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!
(after scene, 707)

Hardy had a deep sense that consciousness was the seed of a new quality of fellow feeling that might sensitise the entire cosmic process. Yet for consciousness to prevail throughout the universe, Hardy realised that consciousness must first overcome the experience of limitation and loneliness in the human world; that is, at the sentient end of the continuum of the Immanent Will. Curiously enough, another great problem, the existence of serious pain, suggested an answer. Hardy identified the link (the only true one, as far as he was concerned) between one form of consciousness and another as "Altruism, or The Golden Rule, or whatever 'Love your Neighbour as Yourself' may be called"--the capacity for responding sensitively to suffering, to

the pain we see in others reacting on ourselves, as if we and they were a part of one body. Mankind, in fact, may be, and possibly will be, viewed as members of one corporeal frame.

(*L&W* 235)

⁵⁸ According to Carpenter, all physical phenomena embodied the will of God; therefore the conscious human will, which reflects the divine, was translatable through the nerves into natural forces (Smith, "Significance" 220, 227-28).

⁵⁹ *L&W* 185. Hardy once explained his "mistrust of metaphysic": "My shyness arises from my consciousness of its paternity--that it is a sort of bastard, begotten of science upon theology--or, in another form, a halfway house between Deism & Materialism. It ultimately comes to this--such & such things *may* be. But they will ever be improbable: & since infinitely other things may also be, with equal probability, why select any one bundle of suppositions in preference to another? I prefer to relegate such thoughts to the domain of fancy, & to recognize them as pure imagination" (3 Apr. 1892; *CL* 1: 261).

⁶⁰ Although Hardy also claimed originality for the idea of the "Unconscious Will becoming conscious with flux of time" (20 Feb. 1908; *CL* 3: 298), he may well have first met with it in his reading of Schelling's *Philosophy of Nature*, in which Nature embodies "a process by which Spirit tends to rise to a consciousness of itself" (*LN* 2: 95). See also *L&W* 363.

Convinced, moreover, by Darwin's theory of evolution that "all organic creatures are of one family" (*L&W* 373), and innately sensitive to the lot of animals, whether house-cat or war-horse,⁶¹ Hardy thought altruism should not be anthropocentric, but extended to "the whole conscious world collectively," including animals (*L&W* 373). As Hardy observed to the Secretary of the Humanitarian League, "Few people seem to perceive fully as yet that the most far-reaching consequence of the establishment of the common origin of all species is ethical" (*L&W* 376). Hardy's preoccupation with sharing another's pain also emerged clearly during one of his conversations on "abstract subjects" with William Archer (15 Feb. 1901; *CL* 2: 280): "What are my books but one plea against 'man's inhumanity to man'--to woman--and to the lower animals?" (*B* 410; see also 450-51). For Hardy, then, spontaneous awareness of pain and shared life prompted sympathetic participation in the conditions of another's existence.

So man's chief liability, the distinctive flaw that exposes him to torments unknown to other creatures, his consciousness, turns out to be Nature's sole asset. Out of man's innate susceptibility to pain comes an altruistic consciousness which Hardy hopes will spread to and influence all Nature. In other words, Hardy postulates, not one, but two processes at work simultaneously in human experience: the struggle for existence, which is Nature's essential mechanism, inflicts enormous pain on man; while man informs Nature with a capacity for feeling that pain. Infiltrating what I have proposed to call the cosmic process, then, is an *ethical* process, whereby sentient and sensitive humanity might gradually induce morality and sympathy into the force that blindly thrusts through man and Nature.

IV

Precisely "how to instruct nature" in justice and sympathy was, Hardy fully realised, "rather a large problem" (18 May 1910; *CL* 4: 90). But Hardy insisted that social feeling had to be more than merely an emotional ideal or impulse; it had also to be purposeful and practical. Similarly, Hardy thought that, to be effective, the ethical process had to mean more than the mere advance of consciousness through time (see above, n60; *LN* 2: 111); it needed a life-affirming direction. In other words, Schopenhauer's and Hartmann's nihilistic metaphysics stimulated but never dominated Hardy's thinking, for while he certainly gave broad assent to their ideas of an immanent, unconscious Will, he also, as Walter Wright observes, gave the ethical process a positive goal: the high value Hardy set on "the life of the human spirit" determined his attitude to consciousness "creeping" into the Will (*Shaping* 52-53; see also *CPW* 2: 325).

Hardy gave this metaphor of ethical infiltration a dramatic concreteness and modernity in *A Laodicean*, where George Somerset, in search of a country village, follows a newly installed telegraph-wire to the tower of a delapidated Norman castle into which it vanishes through an arrow-slit:

There was a certain unexpectedness in the fact that the hoary memorial of a stolid antagonism to the interchange of ideas, the monument of hard distinctions in blood and race, of deadly mistrust of one's neighbour in spite of the Church's teaching, and of a sublime unconsciousness of any other force than a brute one, should be the goal of a

⁶¹ Hardy told Sir George Douglas of the mutilation of a favourite cat by a train: "The violent death of [a] dumb creature always makes me revile the contingencies of a world in which animals are in the best of cases pitiable for their limitations" (3 Apr. 1901; *CL* 2: 282-83). To Mrs Henniker, he wrote of "the human side" of the Boer War: "Possibly you know by this time the result of the attack on Cronje, which I do not. How horrible it all is: they say that his wife & other women are in that river-bed with his unfortunate army: & the mangled animals too, who must have terror superadded to their physical sufferings" (25 Feb. 1900; *CL* 2: 248). See also *CL* 2: 232; 5: 321, 340; Pinion, *Companion* 182-83.

machine which beyond everything may be said to symbolize cosmopolitan views and the intellectual and moral kinship of all mankind.

(bk 1, ch. 2, 52)

Here, by symbolic implication, industrial democracy penetrates agrarian feudalism. The cultural juxtaposition of egoistic tyranny and communal tolerance matches, respectively, the theological and the Positivist stages in Comte's historical analysis of the evolution of human thought and social morality. Indeed, the narrator's comment reads like a parable of Positivism, which taught the eventual "triumph of social feeling (altruism) over self-love" (Willey 207). The Comtean perspective suggests that Hardy approved to some extent of the scientific treatment of social and moral phenomena. Like Darwin's theory of biological evolution, Comte's theory of social progress was an intimate and lifelong influence on Hardy's view of the ethical process.⁶² Hardy in fact quoted from an essay entitled "Evolution and Positivism," heading the note "Comte's Discovery": "To the moral world of man, with its complicating passions and aspirings, must be applied that search for natural laws, for uniformities amidst diversities, which had already led men to such wonderful results in physics & astronomy" (*LN* 1: 113-14).⁶³ Hardy accepted that in the absence of divine control, man himself must create a social and moral order of his own. Only such an order, dictated by human needs and dependent solely on human responsibility and resources,⁶⁴ could make Nature a tolerable place for people to live together.

On the other hand, Hardy seriously doubted the validity of systematising human experiences, emotions, and relationships along Comtean lines. Hardy's commitment to Positivism, as to all scientific innovations except Darwinism, was judiciously pragmatic and provisional. As Hardy confided to Lady Grove, "I am not a Positivist, as you know, but . . . no person of serious thought in these times could be said to stand aloof from Positivist teaching & ideals" (25 Feb. 1903; *CL* 3: 53). Hardy thought that Positivism oversimplified human nature and society (*LN* 1: 115), and hence was altogether too positive, too easily optimistic, about scientific progress. The continuation of the passage from *A Laodicean* accordingly reveals quite another side of the symbolism of the telegraph-wire:

But the modern fever and fret which consumes people before they can grow old was also signified by the wire; and this aspect of to-day did not contrast well with the fairer side of feudalism--leisure, light-hearted generosity, intense friendships, hawks, hounds, revels, healthy complexions, freedom from care, and such a living power in architectural art as the world may never again see.

(52)

Contemporary civilisation, for all its material advancement, wastes the human soul. What, then, will put heart into modern, industrial society and keep intact its moral life--what, that is, will unite the new (but shaky) beliefs about human existence and society with the old (but stalwart) structures? To this question Hardy addressed himself forty years later in the preface to *Late Lyrics and Earlier* (1922). The answer he gave was poetry, an answer that provides us indirectly with what Hardy saw as the immediate, practical goal of the ethical process.

⁶² Interestingly, while dictating *A Laodicean* from a sick-bed in 1880-81, Hardy absorbed quantities of Comte's Positivism and made a diagram of Comte's theory of modern history (*L&W* 150; *CL* 2: 23; *LN* 1: 133).

⁶³ Hardy summarised a point from Leslie Stephen's essay "An Attempted Philosophy of History" that "Darwinism is as fruitful in its . . . bearing upon sociology as in its bearing upon natural history" (*LN* 1: 132).

⁶⁴ Next to Swinburne's line "Save his own soul he hath no star" (from the "Prelude" to *Songs before Sunrise*), a line which Hardy quoted on the flyleaf of his personal copy of Swinburne and also alludes to in the *Life and Work* (372), Hardy inscribed this verse from Isaiah: "Mine own arm brought salvation unto me" (63.5), a verse he apparently underlined in his 1861 Bible (Seidel 31, 70n36).

V

The 270-line, prose "Apology" is, as Hynes notes, the "longest critical defence of his poems" Hardy ever made (*CPW* 2: 509)--presumably because Hardy suspected, as he approached eighty-two in the discomfort of a "traumatic" sick-bed (Millgate, *B* 542), that the publication of a new volume of poems might well be his last opportunity to validate, once and for all, his verse as poetry. As a definitive case, however, the preface is an unprepossessing statement--often cynical in content, angular in expression, and more than half of it unfortunately made disingenuous by a lame and transparent stalking-horse that vainly attempts to conceal an old man's rancorous diffidence about publishing yet another volume of his verse.⁶⁵

In order to define the function of this crucial preface in relation to the ethical process, we may begin with the latter part of the preface (lines 214-65). These closing, general paragraphs conjure up the judicial solemnity of an expiring prophet. Hardy thereby succeeds in forcing the reader to attend to his wholesome prescription for the post-war world of international slaughter, social disintegration, and amoral scientific progress--"an alliance between religion . . . and complete rationality . . . by means of the interfusing effect of poetry" (lines 245-49). This pronouncement, of course, maintaining that poetry will preserve human nature and society, emphatically aligns Hardy with Wordsworth, whose preface to *Lyrical Ballads* he alludes to (lines 249-50). Poetry, for Hardy, is the life-blood of civilisation, since poetry alone can temper and humanise scientific knowledge, keep alive man's spiritual being--his sense of wonder--and help religion⁶⁶ keep pace and subtly unite with "material & scientific"⁶⁷ development. At the same time, Hardy's pronouncement calls for the implementation of altruism (as defined at the end of pt III above) or applied sympathy, in a hybrid of mediaeval (or Christian) and modern (or Comtean) ideals (see Willey 206):

whether the human and kindred animal races survive till the exhaustion or destruction of the globe, or whether these races perish and are succeeded by others before that conclusion comes, pain to all upon it, tongued or dumb, shall be kept down to a minimum by loving-kindness, operating through scientific knowledge. . . .
(lines 80-85)

In other words, Hardy indirectly defines the immediate, practical goal of the ethical process as universal compassion or, more particularly, individual involvement in one's fellow-creatures, human and animal (see Bailey, "Meliorism" 586 and *H&C* 358).

The specific question of how a poet can marry feeling and fact, how he can foster a Wordsworthian league, and ethically improve modern society, Hardy deals with directly in the first, more personal, part of his

⁶⁵ See also Davie, *Poetry* 6-7. Cf. Millgate, *B* 542, 544; Buckler, *Poetry* 54, 78n20. Some two years before writing his "Apology," Hardy self-effacingly regarded himself "merely a dusty figure on a shelf," "a cracked old pot at the best," and "piping but a feeble reed now & then" (Oct. 1919; *CL* 5: 328, 329).

⁶⁶ Hardy means religion "in its essential and undogmatic sense" (*CPW* 2: 323, line 215).

⁶⁷ From a letter to Mrs Henniker (5 June 1919; *CL* 5: 309). See also *L&W* 435. As Wordsworth puts it in his preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* (1805):

If the labours of men of science should ever create any material revolution, direct or indirect, in our condition and in the impressions which we habitually receive, the poet will sleep then no more than at present, but he will be ready to follow the steps of the man of science, not only in those general indirect effects, but he will be at his side, carrying sensation into the midst of the objects of the science itself. (35-36)

"Apology." Hardy's melioristic, albeit dimly hopeful, position was nothing new;⁶⁸ it was a very present idea to him for the greater part of his life:

If I may be forgiven for quoting my own old words, let me repeat what I printed in this relation more than twenty years ago, and wrote much earlier [in 1895-96], in a poem entitled 'In Tenebris':

If way to the Better there be, it exacts a full look at the Worst:

that is to say, by the exploration of reality, and its frank recognition stage by stage along the survey, with an eye to the best consummation possible: briefly, evolutionary meliorism. But it is called pessimism nevertheless; under which word, expressed with condemnatory emphasis, it is regarded by many as some pernicious new thing (though so old as to underlie the Gospel scheme, and even to permeate the Greek drama).

(lines 61-71)

Here Hardy ostensibly refutes the charge of pessimism levelled at him so persistently and absolutely; but his argument carries two significant implications: that he is a morally responsible poet by virtue of his having faithfully prosecuted "evolutionary meliorism" for decades; and that the latest ("perhaps the last," lines 29-30) volume of his poems has a seriousness that makes for the improvement of human nature and society. In other words, Hardy's real concern is to be accredited as an authentic, life-affirming poet who, because he has at heart the interests of his fellow man, is entitled to propound ideas about life that clash with "what is customary and expected" (lines 112-13), and even startle and offend most readers. Hardy willingly takes on this role of dissentient poet, because, for him, the poet's real function is to voice his individual insights, even though these, like the ideas of the scientist, must inevitably be provocative.⁶⁹ Hence the purpose of *Late Lyrics* is to present the outcome of looking where often no one else dares or cares to look. What the volume offers is poems of a particular kind--"delineations" that are "grave" and "stark," yet "positive"; "adumbrations" that are "strange and disrespectful," yet also "serious and truly literary"; and above all, "questionings" that challenge sacrosanct philosophical views, yet also take "the first step towards the soul's betterment, and the body's also" (lines 58-60).

One now sees how the personal part of the "Apology" fits in with this conception of the true function of poetry. Hardy's preface serves not so much to "apologise" for his poetry as to assert the contribution of *Late Lyrics* towards the survival of Western civilisation. By publishing poetry that exercises heart and mind, Hardy hoped to stir the intellectual and moral stagnation that suffocated the "mental and emotional life" (lines 218-19) of post-war English society. As a thinking poet, true to his own epoch yet feeling responsible for posterity's, Hardy thought that the conditions of "existence in this universe" (line 48), especially the presence of cruelty and the unjust suffering of the innocent--Hardy passionately hated "injustice and barbarity" (*L&W* 458)--made such intellectual probing of life imperative for the world's "amendment" (line 78) as well as for

⁶⁸ Nor does it postdate his novels, as Bailey owns ("Meliorism" 569n1). In 1901, Hardy told William Archer that his practical philosophy was "distinctly meliorist" and his "books" merely "one plea against 'man's inhumanity to man'" (*B* 410). The war, of course, at its outbreak no less than in its immediate aftermath, left Hardy confused. With its "coldly scientific" manoeuvrings, the war "completely shattered" Hardy's most cherished hope that human nature was becoming altruistic (*L&W* 395). After Versailles, Hardy told Clodd that the "outlook" for a peace that would last another generation was not "encouraging," and that he had "visions ahead of ignorance overruling intelligence, & reducing us to another Dark Age. Absit omen!" (29 July 1919; *CL* 5: 314-15). On the other hand, towards the end of the First World War, Hardy reaffirmed that he thought "better of the world, as a meliorist (not a pessimist as they say)" (to Arnold Bennett, 8 Sept 1918; *CL* 5: 278; see also *CL* 3: 231 and *CL* 5: 247). Furthermore, asked by *The Times* for a Christmas message in 1921, Hardy wrote: "Though my faith in the bettering of nations was shattered by the brutal unreason of the Continental instigators of the war, the omens now seem favourable" (*PW* 253).

⁶⁹ Editors of Victorian scientific journals accepted contributions from poets (Zaniello, esp. 252, 258).

the restoration of what Wordsworth called the "ancient English dower / Of inward happiness" ("London, 1802").⁷⁰

Hardy's specific method, then, for marrying religion and science, and thereby ameliorating human nature and society, rests firmly on Darwin's theory of evolution by modification and adaptation. Hardy's "way" (line 64) is to keep institutionalised religion "moving, becoming" (line 219)--that is, evolving, by means of a poetry that candidly and flexibly explores reality. What Hardy rejects is a poetry of rigidly hypocritical platitudes, confected to appease "stereotyped tastes" (lines 44-45); what he exposes is habitual self-delusion, a tacit conspiracy of optimistic "dismissal" (line 75) of unpleasant realities that pervades the Victorian intelligentsia from Roman Catholic to Positivist (line 102). He insists on keeping contemporary assumptions about terrestrial existence publicly on trial.

Hardy terms the reality to be thus explored "the Worst" (line 64), by which he means two cases resulting from "the mighty necessitating forces" (lines 86-87) of Nature, from its spatial and temporal magnitude, destructive and intractable strength, and unconscious and violent conduct. One case is, quite evidently, the ghastly experiences and effects of those external forces of the cosmic process--man's physical vulnerability, his consciousness of distress and death (that to die is to "pass into nothing," 15 Feb. 1901; *CL* 2: 280), and his loss of faith in Providence.⁷¹

The other, grimmer case springs, less obviously but for Hardy more importantly, from the metaphysical clash between the *internal* forces of the cosmic process--such as heredity, sexuality, aggression, and the impulse to dominate--and the ethical process. On Spencer's view that there is no relation between cosmic and ethical processes because they are simply at odds ("the greater part of the forces present in man . . . defy the mental force absolutely"), Hardy rightly commented: "But this may be the very relation; accounting for evil, pains &c, as the *rebel* forces" (*LN* 2: 109; emphasis mine). The immense strength of the external forces of Nature made Hardy aware of the power of its pressures *within* man. Hardy fully appreciated, on the one hand, the cruelty that occurs when the ethical process thwarts the cosmic, as in social laws that discriminate against the poor and women, or that disallow divorce; and on the other hand, the brutality that occurs when the cosmic process breaks free from ethical influence and manifests itself in social customs like blood sports and war.

The metaphysical clash between man's natural and social instincts is the more grievous because its woeful effects are felt at the deepest level of man's being. Indeed, sometimes the strength and strictures of man's policy to govern his natural energies outran its psychological benefit in Hardy's eyes. In keeping with his moderate principle of political change--that "the opposite of error is error still" (*PN* 94n450; Millgate, *Career* 179)--Hardy attributed social-psychological woes to the excessive workings of the ethical process, to man's overcompensation for Nature's "blunder of overdoing" in the creation of sentience (*L&W* 153). As we saw in chapter 3 (part IV), Hardy found support in Fourier for the view that the cause of social suffering was codes and conventions (especially modern-Christian) which inhibited the wholesome forces of Nature within man. Hardy's study of Comte augmented and scientifically corroborated Fourier's "affective" psychology, and among Hardy's extensive quotations from Comte, we find a typical emphasis on the emotional and instinctual: "*Feeling*--the great motor force of human life" (*LN* 1: 68). Although Hardy acknowledged the need for some

⁷⁰ Hardy copied out Huxley's point on the scientific spirit: "The struggle for existence holds as much in the intellectual as in the physical world. A theory is a species of thinking, & its right to exist is co-extensive with its power of resisting extinction by its rivals" (*LN* 1: 146).

⁷¹ Hynes defines "the Worst" both as "suffering, mortality, change, death--all meaningless in a meaningless, indifferent universe" and as "the actual phenomenal world, the way things are" (*Pattern* 61).

sort of social organisation and control--"I would have society divided into *groups of temperaments*, with a different code of observances for each group" (*L&W* 274)--he recoiled from those late-Victorian laws that inadequately catered for or failed to cope with man's wholesome passions. Such laws he regarded as manacles forged by the ethical process. Like Sue Bridehead, Hardy thought civilisation too often thwarted natural instincts (*Jude* bk 6, ch. 2, 268); or like Ella Marchmill, the "Imaginative Woman," who feels that "In the natural way of passion under the too practical conditions which civilization has devised for its fruition, her husband's love for her had not survived, except in the form of fitful friendship" (*Life's Little Ironies* 17).

Marriage, of course, was for Hardy a particularly cruel and senseless social institution, one of the grossest failures of civilisation, the product of a barbaric and superstitious age (*PW* 252; see also *CL* 2: 92). The inflexible legal contract made it virtually impossible for the personal union to be what he called a "homely thing, a satisfactory scheme for the conjunction of the sexes" ("Tree" 119; see also *CL* 2: 122 and 4: 177).⁷²

To Hardy's mind, the strict divorce laws must have suppressed "the emotional ferment that could lie beneath the apparent placidity of familiar domestic appearances" (Millgate, *B* 192; see also *L&W* 274) and destroyed the humanity of husband and wife (*B* 331). Equally imperious were unwritten laws that imposed on the individual a psychologically damaging "duty to society" and threatened to remove the right to indulge one's "own single self," as Cytherea discovers when she confesses her love for Edward Springrove (*Remedies* ch. 13, pt 4, 272). One Sunday, accusing Mrs Henniker of having capitulated to "ritualistic ecclesiasticism," Hardy patronisingly chided her (as he did fairly frequently):

You feel the need of emotional expression of some sort, and being surrounded by the conventional society form of such expression you have mechanically adopted it. . . . Depend upon it there are other values for feeling than the ordinances of Mother Church--my Mother Church no less than yours.

(16 July 1893; *CL* 2: 23-24)

In 1911, Hardy was to remind her of his view that when a marriage thwarts Nature, "it is no real marriage, & the legal contract should therefore be as speedily cancelled as possible. Half the misery of human life would I think disappear if this were made easy" (3 Oct.; *CL* 4: 177).

But there were also other "civilised" forms of cruelty that preoccupied Hardy, such as the unequal treatment of women. For in the matter of emancipating women, he detected the crucial political dilemma--the moral conflict between principle and self-interest: "I am by no means sure," Hardy told Lady Grove, "that it is not one of those many questions wherein justice & policy are opposed to each other--cat-&-mouse questions, where the unalterable laws of nature are based upon a wrong--much to the discomfort of the optimistic Christian's theories."⁷³ A related controversial issue was sexual relationship outside marriage. To make the moral responsibility for the expression of sexuality all the woman's was, Hardy thought, quite unjust,

⁷² Attitudes to marriage in *Jude the Obscure* are represented by such descriptions as an incapacitating "social ritual" (bk 1, ch. 9, 52), "an iron contract" (bk 5, ch. 1, 204), "only a clumsy contract" (bk 6, ch. 3, 278), and "this meretricious contract" (bk 6, ch. 8, 308). As Ralph Elliott has observed, Hardy's obsession with the social and legal obligations of marriage reveals itself in his frequent use in *Jude* of words such as "contract", "laws", "ordinances," "decree," "bonded," and "licensed" (*English* 317). A recent critic believes that the overall effect of *Jude* is "tragic frustration" and "inevitable cosmic doom"; therefore, he argues, Hardy's attack on legally institutionalised marriage paradoxically reaffirms the conventional social premise that human sexuality is intrinsically flawed and wretched (Boone 377, 386n9).

⁷³ To Lady Grove, 21 Mar. 1897; *CL* 2: 153. See also *CL* 2: 270; *L&W* 185, 249; Millgate, *Career* 180. True, Hardy (like D. H. Lawrence after him) had misgivings about women getting the vote (*B* 356; Lawrence,

especially if she had been physically or emotionally victimised, an injustice acutely compounded by lack of social sophistication and that "terror" of Hardy's childhood, poverty (Millgate, *B* 21-22). In Tess Durbeyfield, for example, he embodied the physical, moral, and social helplessness and handicap of being a working-class female. To the exploitative Alec d'Urberville, Tess is merely "a cottage girl" (ch. 8, 73), one of the "workfolk" (ch. 10, 93). But Hardy felt strongly that despite her moral error, Tess was

essentially pure--purer than many a so-called unsullied virgin: therefore I called her so. That was my impression of her--nothing more. But the parochial British understanding knocks itself against this word like a humblebee against a wall, not seeing that "paradoxical morality" may have a very great deal to say for itself, especially in a work of fiction.

(17 May 1892; *CL* 1: 267)

And by his defiantly assertive epithet ("pure"), Hardy meant not only to redefine a moral or religious category, but also to affirm natural female sexuality. For Hardy had implicit faith in the force of a novel to make the reader ponder a balance of ironies and to prompt the reader towards an imaginatively civilising experience. And if Alec d'Urberville's predatory concept of "peasant girls" (ch. 11, 103), that they are fair game (see Marcus 128-40), receives the satiric indignation of Hardy's procedure as a novelist, *Jude the Obscure* represents Hardy's more comprehensive and unwearying condemnation of sexual, economic, and educational injustices rooted in Victorian society. Indeed, with a vehemence provoked by the way aristocratic expedience and outmoded prejudices, especially in education, obstructed the rural worker, Hardy's last novel gives vent to the rancour that had erupted in his first, *The Poor Man and the Lady* (see *L&W* 63, 467).

As to the insurgence of man's base instincts, those for slaughter and domination, Hardy thought that certain social attitudes and customs made civilisation itself tyrannical. He implied as much when he confided in Mrs Henniker that he had hoped the symbolic pig-killing scene in *Jude* "might serve a humane end in showing people the cruelty that goes on unheeded under the barbarous régime we call civilization" (10 Nov. 1895; *CL* 2: 94). Hardy's lifelong revulsion at the traditional slaughter of pigs for food (7 Nov. 1919; *CL* 5: 340) and Emma's protests against the standard exploitation of horses for work constituted their sole common emotional interest: a passionate love of animals (*B* 235, 391). Although he condoned scientific vivisection (*B* 380), Hardy saw animals as belonging to the same family as human beings and therefore deserving better treatment than sprang from the (now "exploded") Christian view of animals as man's inferior (17 Oct. 1906; *CL* 3: 231). But the social custom that appalled Hardy most was the "wholesale" (*B* 235) shooting of animals for sport, the pleasure men took "in compassing the death of our weaker and simpler fellow-creatures by cunning, instead of learning to regard their destruction, if a necessity, as an odious task, akin to that, say, of the common hangman" (qtd in *B* 412). To Hardy, recreational hunting was thoroughly "cruel," "immoral and unmanly" (*PW* 254; *B* 412).

War, traditionally the most "manly" of social conventions, also occasioned an abuse of animals to which, as we saw earlier (at the end of pt III) Hardy strongly objected. But much more serious to him was war's cultural and spiritual effect. That people should still resort to violence to resolve a moral issue proved to him that the twentieth century was an insane era, its Christian foundation notwithstanding (26 June 1911; *CL* 4: 161). "It seems a justification of the extremest pessimism," he wrote to Mrs Henniker on the eve of the Boer War, "that at the end of the 19th Cent[ur]y we settle an argument by the Sword, just as they w[oul]d have done in the 19th cent[ur]y B.C." (17 Sept 1899; *CL* 2: 229). To Hardy, war in general seemed a political contest, invented by governments for their own amusement, but at tragic cost to entire human societies (30

Study ch. 2). Nevertheless, Hardy's ideal was a man's "altruistic regard of woman as a fellow-creature" (*B* 357).

July 1918; *CL* 5: 274; see also 5: 42) as well as to the ordinary man: "If only there were no monarchies in the world, what a chance for its amelioration!" (4 Mar. 1917; *CL* 5: 204; see also 5: 67). For despite the aristocratic or courtly impetus behind the war, there was nothing remotely chivalric about its flagrant "butchery" (*CL* 5: 45, 214). And even more than he deplored the degenerate way civilised people settled disputes (*CL* 2: 139, 232), Hardy abhorred the practical methods of modern warfare: "The machine-made horrors of the present war make one's blood run cold rather than warm as a rule" (25 Nov. 1917; *CL* 5: 233). He found the hideousness, destructiveness, ferocity, and protractedness of the "convulsion that is tearing Europe to pieces" thoroughly demoralising (*CL* 5: 67, 117, 191, 353, 142) and artistically paralysing, since Hardy was, "like other people, obsessed by the war, which destroys spontaneity for ideas disconnected from it, especially in those who have lost friends or relatives" (29 Oct. 1915; *CL* 5: 129). Indeed, as Hardy told Frederic Harrison, his Positivist friend, "the cold scientific slaughter of hundreds of thousands" was "fiendish" and showed that mankind had "retrograded in civilization" (20 June 1918; *CL* 5: 270). Hardy seems to have found it almost impossible to refer to the present condition of mankind without levelling satire at the "unctuous" smugness of his contemporaries, an apathy at which his seventy-seven years qualified him to sneer (*CL* 5: 216, 217):

So much for 20th century civilization. . . . Better let Western "Civilization" perish, & the black or yellow races have a chance. . . . I almost think that people were less pitiless towards their fellow-creatures--human & animal--under the Roman Empire than they are now: so why does not Christianity throw up the sponge & say I am beaten, & let another religion take its place.⁷⁴

The form which war, the most baneful of social conventions, took in the twentieth century convinced Hardy that a disaster had occurred in the institutionalised evolution of the human race, an ethical setback that might be remedied only after many gruelling years, as his analogy suggests: "It is a gloomy time, in which the world, having like a spider climbed to a certain height, seems slipping back to where it was long ago" (5 Dec. 1915; *CL* 5: 135).

For Hardy, then, the reality at which he is chiefly concerned to take a "full look" ("Apology" line 64) is the pain due to failure of man's moral and social schemes either (being too strict) to accommodate or (being too flabby) to contain his natural instincts. The very presence of this psychological pain shows the deficiencies in the ethical process. In his writings, therefore, Hardy deliberately concentrated his attention on the causes of this pain; he dared to hope that the woeful experiences and effects of the ethical process lay, to however small an extent, within man's power to reduce or eliminate. He put the case to William Archer:

What are my books but one plea against 'man's inhumanity to man'--to woman--and to the lower animals? . . . Whatever may be the inherent good or evil of life, it is certain

⁷⁴ *CL* 5: 42, 278, 309. The third extract is from a letter to Mrs Henniker, to whom, some twenty years earlier, he had written: "I met a religious man on Friday . . . & I said, We the civilized world have given Christianity a fair trial for nearly 2000 years, & it has not yet taught countries the rudimentary virtue of keeping peace: so why not throw it over, & try, say, Buddhism?" (25 Feb. 1900; *CL* 2: 248). Hardy told Siegfried Sassoon that he himself would not be able to "stand the suspense of this evil time if it were not for the sustaining power of poetry" (18 May 1917; *CL* 5: 213). From this confession, Millgate infers that "concentration on his own verse kept [Hardy] from brooding on external events" (*B* 512). My own view is that writing and reading poetry enabled Hardy to endure and bear up against the sadness, cruelty, and disappointment of the war. To him, poetry gave fortifying moral support, not enfeebling psychological refuge; to him, poetry meant alert engagement of the soul, not escapist relief for the nerves. Indeed, as he once noted, "life would be an endless bleeding were it not for Poetry" (*LN* 1: 179).

that men make it much worse than it need be. When we have got rid of a thousand remediable ills, it will be time enough to determine whether the ill that is irremediable outweighs the good.

(B 410)

Hardy's characteristic approach is accordingly realistic, empirical, and prophetic:⁷⁵ "first correctly diagnose the complaint--in this case human ills--and ascertain the cause: then set about finding a remedy if one exists" (L&W 413). For Hardy, it is only by cross-examining the morality of established institutions and values, by exposing the sterility and obsolescence of orthodox Christianity (see Björk, "Reading" 110-11), that anyone concerned with "where the world stands . . . in these disordered years of our prematurely afflicted century" ("Apology," lines 76-78) can hope to improve human nature and society. Hardy implies that only a mind fully cognisant of the "ills" of civilisation, the painful truths about the world, can possibly discover grounds sufficiently vital and genuine to make life worth living. Not surprisingly, the very reason Hardy's works, particularly the products of his late-Victorian and Edwardian period, were stigmatised as pessimistic was that by unremittingly scrutinising "the Worst" in a tone of brooding anguish,⁷⁶ they disquieted "people who thrive on conventions" (L&W 344). For, as Hardy remarked to Galsworthy, "in England one must not look things in the face: yet my experience has been that nothing leads to success like doing so" (25 Aug. 1915; CL 5: 119).

Again and again, justification for the public stigma of pessimism seems to come from Hardy's own private pen. If the ethical process is locked in a running battle with the cosmic process, then in Hardy's writings, the ethical process usually looks as though it is not quite winning and that human control is either indirect, incompetent, or futile:

The fact is that when you get to the bottom of things you find no bed-rock of righteousness to rest on--nature is *unmoral*--& our puny efforts are those of people who try to keep their leaky house dry by wiping off the waterdrops from the ceiling.

(B 450)

Then again, what about Hardy's preference for death as an escape or relief from life (CL 1: 235; CL 2: 269)? What of his self-confessed ambivalence towards warfare (see CL 2: 248, 277; B 401; Millgate, *Career* 157; Orel, *Study* 86-89)? Or his dismal prophecy on his seventy-sixth birthday that the First World War would overcloud mankind "for half a century after its end--if it ever ends" (3 June 1916; CL 5: 163)? And then his "misgivings" about the Treaty of Versailles, expecting "both sides [would be] sullenly picking up the pieces & mending them as well as they can for another smash some day" (CL 5: 311, 189)? Or his woebegone verdict that the world had made scant progress in altruism (5 June 1919; CL 5: 309) and that though times change, inhumanity abides and even increases (L&W 435)? Or his doubt whether men could restore a civilisation that might not be worth saving (CL 5: 45, 278)? Or his wry concession that "Possibly in the year 4000 we shall be nearly as barbarous as we are now in belligerency, marriage, treatment of animals, &c" (26 June 1911; CL 4: 162)? All these responses of Hardy's seem to suggest the supremacy of the cosmic process in "the evolution of morals" (31 Dec. 1915, CL 5: 139).

And yet Hardy insisted that it is "from superficial aspect only" ("Apology," lines 132-33) that the ethical process appears to be losing ground, or that there seems no way of coping with the cosmic process in

⁷⁵ Hardy told Archer that *Jude* was "almost the first book of mine of which I feared that the Job-cum-Ezekiel moralist loomed too largely behind the would-be artist. I suppose the times are still too barbarous to allow one to strike a blow--however indirectly, for humanity towards man, woman, or the lower animals" (14 Nov. 1895; CL 2: 96).

⁷⁶ Hardy regarded Mowbray Morris's review of *Tess* (see Cox, *Heritage* 214-21) as mendacious: "The fact is he says *inartistic* when he means *unorthodox*, & *uncleanly* when he means *unfavourable to the vested interests by which he thrives*" (22 Apr. 1892; CL 1: 265).

society. For although Hardy regarded most moral systems (including institutionalised religion) as hopelessly fallible (Orel, "Christianity" 189-90), he implied that Nature's subversive rebellions, traumatic though they be, are actually blessings in disguise for mankind. For although defeats of man's control of his natural drives may grievously expose defects in the ethical process, they thereby enable him to locate a social ill, examine it "stage by stage along the survey," and make adjustments as he goes, "with an eye to the best consummation possible" ("Apology," lines 66-67), which is to take altruism a little further forward. In effect, then, each recrudescence of the cosmic process means a fresh opportunity for advancing the ethical process. That is to say, woeful experiences caused by Nature's "rebel forces" (to use Hardy's notebook phrase again) help man to improve civilisation. Such rebellions, such experiences, are essential if man is to exploit those rare moments of "equilibrium" ("Apology," line 88) or deadlock between cosmic and ethical processes, when the "Collective Will" is evenly distributed throughout the universe (21 Dec. 1914; *CL* 5: 69),⁷⁷ and individual men and women can exercise "the modicum of free will" they possess, decide rationally what the morally right course of action is, and so keep pain "down to a minimum by loving-kindness, operating through scientific knowledge."⁷⁸ Only so, Hardy believed, through the subversive, recalcitrant working of Nature against all codes and systems, such as social mores, expectations, and demands that debilitate human life, would the Will become awake to its own conduct and sympathetic to the victims of pain. Hardy in fact confided to his philosopher friend, J. McT. E. McTaggart, that he had longed to see civilisation's "harmful conventions shaken--in this country at least--by lucid argument and, what is more, human emotions" (23 May 1906; *CL* 3: 207). For Hardy believed, to repeat, that only "by the pain we see in others reacting on ourselves" would an altruistic consciousness come into being (*L&W* 235), a conviction which brings us to the central Hardy paradox--that the moderate good of which man is capable would be achieved, not in spite of, but because of his suffering. Indeed, what this rationale of beneficial rebellion means is that some trauma is necessary to advance the ethical process, that suffering itself is essential to eliminate suffering--in short, that only through pain is pain overcome.

Hardy concluded his "Apology" by registering his "hope," albeit a "forlorn" one (line 245), that this unfortunate paradox might amount to advancement, if not in "a straight line," then in Comte's "looped orbit,"⁷⁹ whereby seeming retrogression is actually a "drawing back for a spring" ahead (lines 252-55). In terms of Hardy's own metaphor of exploration, "the Worst" is an unavoidable point of departure and its "frank recognition" (lines 65-66) merely the end of the outset, merely "the first step" (line 59), implying a direction (a "way to") and a destination ("the Better," line 64). Hardy's "evolutionary meliorism" (line 67) modulates from Edgar's manly, sobering realisation that "The worst is not / So long as we can say 'This is the worst'" (*Lear* 4.1.27-28) to Ross's pitiful yet sanguine maxim: "Things at the worst will cease, or else climb upward / To what they were before" (*Macbeth* 4.2.24-25). For although Hardy's approach "exacts" a pause of resolute and unflinching focus ("a full look"), insists on biting the bullet, before that approach allows any alleviation ("If"), Hardy makes it clear that past the pitch of woe and despair lies the possibility of relief or renewal, however "clumsy" the "opportunities for amelioration by plodding compromises & contrivances" (26 Sept

⁷⁷ Hardy explains that "there is a proportion of the total will in each part of the whole, & each part has therefore, in strictness, *some* freedom, which would, in fact, be operative as such whenever the remaining great mass of will in the universe shd happen to be in equilibrium" (21 Dec. 1914; *CL* 5: 69-70).

⁷⁸ "Apology" lines 84-85. On Hardy's possible debt to Schopenhauer and Hartmann for the idea of consciousness as an individual's momentary freedom from the Unconscious Will, see Wright, *Shaping* 46, 49-54; Garrison 79-80; Pinion, *Companion* 106-07.

⁷⁹ Hardy recorded that Comte's idea of social progress is "like 'a looped orbit,' sometimes apparently backwards, but really always forwards"; and then Hardy sketched an arc comprising four small loops (see *LN* 1: 76). See also Dollar 293-94. See also below, ch. 5, pt III, sec. 5.

1914; *CL* 5: 50). Even while thinking it more than likely that a marriage between religious feeling and scientific rationality is unrealistic, Hardy opens up the prospect that the union may yet occur.⁸⁰

Hardy felt that it was because they could not bear so much as a glimpse of "reality" ("Apology," line 65)⁸¹ that many people glibly condemned his work as pessimistic; and because they refused to meet his verse half way--as "all poetry must be met" (14 Feb. 1899; *CL* 2: 214)--they missed the chance for "amendment" (line 78) lying beyond "the Worst." Hence (it is implied) they failed to take over the exploration of reality from the poet and forsook their part in fulfilling the social function of literature. Hardy, for his part, shrinking from the temptation to offer oracular guidance on, for instance, the marriage question, asserted instead his clearly-defined role as a literary artist:

I can only state (most imperfectly, alas!) cases in which natural & human laws create tragic dramas. The philanthropists must do the rest.

(10 Nov. 1895; *CL* 2: 92)

Hardy saw it as his responsibility to stress the cause and effect of woe and despair, but only so as to sting smug, optimistic readers into an honest realisation of their own condition and to stir them to react humanely to the wretched estate of others. Evolutionary meliorism meant, as far as Hardy was concerned, a policy for intellectually and culturally enriching society: by gradually educating people fossilised in their prejudices, emotions, and morals, and by evolving social institutions to harbour modern ideas. To call evolutionary meliorism "pessimism" ("Apology," line 68) was to admit intellectual paralysis and religious stagnation.

VI

Hardy's evolutionary view of reality most decidedly is not pessimistic; on the contrary, it is tragic--that is, as affirmative, liberating, and fortifying as the Greek and Shakespearian tragedies he so admired.⁸² One can well understand why, some three years after writing his "Apology," Hardy attempted to reassure himself arithmetically that not even half the verse in *Human Shows* was tragic or sad (*CPW* 3: 311). But he failed to realise, it seems, that a mere tally of poems in no way indicated their individual intensity and impact, or their combined effect, especially on ordinary readers at large, and that *ad hoc* statistics could not inhibit or nullify the temperamental impulse towards the tragic that he defended in his "General Preface" in 1912:

Some natures become vocal at tragedy, some are made vocal by comedy, and it seems to me that to whichever of these aspects of life a writer's instinct for expression the more readily responds, to that he should allow it to respond. That before a contrasting side of things he remains undemonstrative need not be assumed to mean that he remains unperceiving.

(49)

However deeply buried beneath the falsehood, escapism, or veneer of civilisation (see *Tess*, 1891-pref.; *L&W* 224, 474), tragedy exercised a magnetic pull on Hardy's imagination. For him, "the exploration of reality"

⁸⁰ Millgate's dualistic summary of Hardy's outlook for the future of mankind nicely reflects this ambivalence: "Abstractly, theoretically, generally he could see only an incomprehensible and probably meaningless universe; concretely, practically, specifically he cared deeply about the human condition, perceived value in individual lives, supported humanitarian causes, and thought that things could and indeed did get better" (*B* 411). See also Björk, *LN* 1: 323n749. Cf. Buckler, *Poetry* 56-57.

⁸¹ "The longer I live," Hardy told Gosse, "the more does B[rowning]'s character seem *the* literary puzzle of the 19th century. How could smug Christian optimism worthy of a dissenting grocer find a place inside a man who was so vast a seer & feeler when on neutral ground?" (6 Mar. 1899; *CL* 2: 216).

⁸² For documentation and discussion of Hardy's fondness for these tragedies, see *B* 53, 85, 132; Wright, *Shaping* 13; Hornback, *Metaphor* 145-46; Rutland 20-45.

("Apology," line 65) meant one thing--the exploration of that social state of an individual's life that must inevitably lead to the loss not only of human dignity (see *L&W* 265) but also a personal integrity, a "reduction to common measure . . . of the bold contours which the fine hand of Nature gave" (*Laodicean* bk 1, ch. 1, 40).

The element of tragedy that particularly seized Hardy's interest was the inescapable frustration and futility to which elementary passions and instincts were doomed by society's cerebral constructs (see *L&W* 123, 182). What roused Hardy's critical indignation was that the victims of social conventions were often good, innocent, thoroughly decent people. As a literary artist, Hardy felt compelled to exhibit the deplorable consequences of the clash between the natural and human orders, between Nature's unconscious workings and "those laws framed merely as social expedients by humanity, without a basis in the heart of things" ("Candour" 127). Hardy's "motives" (22 Apr. [1892]; *CL* 1: 265) in writing *Tess*, for instance, were to set forth the "collision between the individual and the general"--formerly worked out with such force by the Periclean and Elizabethan dramatists" ("Candour" 126-27). So it is that *Tess*, despite her moral and natural purity,⁸³ is "made to break an accepted social law, but no law known to the environment in which she fancied herself such an anomaly" (*Tess* ch. 14, 121). Later, when her environment itself changes constantly, and when fatigued in body and soul by the rigours of migratory farm-work and the encroachment of farm-machinery, *Tess* helplessly accepts Alec's protection, she surrenders her will to live.

Like Schopenhauer (though not completely possessed by him), Hardy accepted, as one--there are, of course, more than one--essential ingredient of tragedy, that the blameless individual's futile struggle against his or her cosmic and, more especially, ethical environment exhausted happiness and the will-to-live.⁸⁴ However, unlike Schopenhauer and inspired, rather, by the creative, progressive principle in Darwinism, Hardy resuscitated the will-to-live in both *Tess* and, yes, even *Jude*. Hardy thereby showed "the grandeur underlying the sorriest things," a saving heroism, which he regarded it as the proper "business of the poet and novelist" to reveal (*L&W* 178).

Tess's grand moment of fulfilment and renewal comes when she breaks free of her grim enslavement to Alec. Distraught at the sight and permanent loss of Angel, she knows that to destroy Alec is her only escape from her socially expedient "marriage" to him:

O you have torn my life all in pieces. . . . made me be what I prayed you in pity not to make me be again! [i.e., as Hardy wrote earlier, "a victim, a caged wretch"]. . . . My own true husband will never never--O God--I can't bear this! I cannot!

(ch. 56, 518)

By violently rejecting Alec's degrading version of her ("These clothes are what he's put upon me," ch. 55, 514), she reasserts the personal integrity Angel raised up in her at Talbothays. That is, when *Tess* kills Alec, she finally defies "the circumstantial will" that persistently counters her natural "inherent will to enjoy" (ch. 43, 395). Consequently, the week of paradisaal seclusion at Bramshurst Court, where she finds contentment in "affection, union, error forgiven," represents *Tess*'s repudiation of the "inexorable" outside world that has always meant "trouble" to her (ch. 48, 531). In killing her seducer and hiding with her truly beloved husband, *Tess* acts outside the set of assumptions Victorian society imposes on her. Hence at Stonehenge, she no longer feels trapped, but free as the wind playing about a place that is "all doors and pillars" (ch. 58, 535).

⁸³ Hardy regarded the subtitle of *Tess* as "words without which the aim & purpose of the novel cannot be understood" (18 Jan. 1892; *CL* 1: 253).

⁸⁴ See *L&W* 290. In May 1891, Hardy extracted a definition of tragedy from Schopenhauer's *Studies in Pessimism*: "Only when intellect rises to the point where the vanity of all effort is manifest, & the will proceeds to an act of self-annulment, is the drama tragic in the true sense" (*LN* 2: 29). See also Garwood 41-42; *B* 315; and Kelly 183, 197.

Tess creates a new identity for herself when she stage-manages the final scene of her life, flinging "herself upon an oblong slab" (535) and before her arrest, saying quietly "I am ready" (539)--Hardy here modulating Hamlet's "The readiness is all" (5.2.168) to suggest Tess's courageous defiance of her fate. By choosing to bide at Stonehenge and by deliberately striking a sacrificial posture, she defies social condemnation and certain death. This final gesture may reaffirm an early image of her as passive victim: for instance, when dressed up "so prettily by her mother," she goes to Trantridge for the well-being of her family and the discovery of her own "lamentable" fate (ch. 8, 72). But now Tess's self-assertion, maintained in the face of "the Worst," becomes her moment of personal freedom and exaltation.

In contrast, Jude's exalting self-assertion comes in three, unspectacular stages in part 6 of the novel. In the first place, although he himself is acutely grief-stricken by the death of his children, Jude stoutly exerts himself to "soothe" and console Sue in her more massive, maternal bereavement, "putting his face close to hers" (ch. 2, 267).⁸⁵ Secondly, ill as he is, Jude resolves to travel to Marygreen in "driving rain" that keeps everybody there indoors, to draw Sue into a mutual confession of love and a last, ecstatic embrace (ch. 8, 307, 309). Last of all, Jude resolutely whispers a death-bed soliloquy of protest and achieves a mock-liturgical in which Jobian complaint alternates with responsory jubilation, private rage with public gaiety (ch. 11, 320). Jude is as blameless as Job, and the noise of "good fun" (321) can neither affect that resounding fact nor muffle the resonance of Jude's final imprecatory-lamenting recitation. Jude's personal significance lies in the ironic way he frees himself from his obscurity, in the way his dying outburst gives him morally heroic stature.⁸⁶

In his novels that ended "his career as a novelist" (*L&W* 252), Hardy meant to force the complacently orthodox reader to face the atrocious truth of an innocent person's suffering alone in an indifferent world, and to move that reader to compassion. Hardy focused on "the fret and fever, derision and disaster" (*Jude*, 1895-pref.) precisely in order to stimulate his readers to apprehend the significance that such suffering held for civilisation. What especially impresses us in Hardy's last two major novels is, as Zabel observes,

the indestructible essence of human worth and dignity with which his characters manage to survive, Greek-like, their havoc of ruin and defeat. The role of man in the universe is, for Hardy, comparable to the role of will and intelligence themselves: it is a role of *emergent* exoneration and supremacy. . . . [Man's] dignity is arrived at by test, denial, humiliation, disillusion, and defeat--by every possible accident of fate, ironic mischance, and the apparently hostile action of nature. The vindication of man implies the vindication of purpose in the universe.

(37-38; emphasis mine)

Through his attitude of evolutionary meliorism, Hardy discovered a gleaming thread of hope and promise that was sufficient to redeem the gloom encompassing both Tess and Jude. After a lifetime of material woe, mental torment, and social insignificance, they both conclude their lives on their own terms, under extreme conditions, and without help. Therefore their final, stunningly affirmative acts leave us feeling strengthened and exhilarated.

⁸⁵ As Benvenuto observes, "Jude's capacity for love . . . is his commitment to the little that remains to humanity in the midst of the inhumane. . . . it affirms the independence of human value, if not the independence of man's fate, from natural law and cosmic scheme" ("Modes" 40).

⁸⁶ According Frye, "What makes tragedy tragic, and not simply ironic, is the presence in it of a counter-movement of being that we call the heroic, a capacity for action or passion, for doing or suffering, which is above ordinary human experience" (*Fools* 4-5). I should prefer, however, to define this essential ingredient of tragedy as a capacity for an ultimate stance of stupendous (but not superhuman) self-assertion, maintained in the face of (usually imminent) death.

This wholesome emotional fruit of tragic experience Dorothea Krook perceptively calls "the affirmation or reaffirmation of the dignity of man and the worthwhileness of human life, which in great tragedy issues from the spectacle of suffering itself and the knowledge the suffering yields" (14). Furthermore, says Krook, by accepting the rightness of the suffering and the need to atone for a shameful or horrible act, we acknowledge the supremacy of "an objective order of values which incorporates the human and transcends it" (16-17). Hardy's method of presenting individual integrity aligns itself with this notion of redemptive suffering and regenerative expiation. For just as without fully recognising "the coil of things" (*Native* bk 2, ch. 6, 194) there can be nothing eventually "fashion[ed] . . . fair" (*Dynasts* pt 3, after scene, 707), and just as without "a full look at the Worst" there can be no "way to the Better," so without extreme suffering there can be no complete expiation, and without a sacrifice, no exaltation--no cross, no crown (see Luke 9. 23; 2 Tim. 4.8). Hardy would have accepted the idea that tragedy springs from sacrifice, and because he celebrated "life's common way" (Wordsworth, "London 1802"), would also have insisted that ordinary human passions have heroic significance.⁸⁷

This life-affirming effect of expiatory suffering is in fact the lesson of the two prototypes of evolutionary meliorism that Hardy adduces in his "Apology"--"the Gospel scheme" and "the Greek drama" (lines 70-71). In the Christian model, the Passion and crucifixion of Jesus redeem the world from Adam's sin of disobedience, and reopen heaven to all mankind; in, say, the Sophoclean model, the mental torment and the physical blinding of Oedipus drive out the miasmatic guilt from his kingdom and restore the moral order to his fellow Thebans by appeasing the gods. Hardy alludes to this pattern of sacrifice and exaltation in *The Return of the Native*, for instance, where the characterisation of Clym to some extent combines both of those time-honoured paradigms of heroic suffering, Christian and Greek; indeed, Hardy takes his artistic transformation further by assimilating Aeschylean hopefulness in Clym's "altruistic Promethean aspirations."⁸⁸ On the other hand, Hardy exploits the traditional pattern of tragedy on a large scale in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*: we reconcile ourselves to the nemesis of Henchard's undoing, and feel renewed both by Elizabeth-Jane's marriage to Farfrae and by the optimism of her narrated testimony to the "unbroken tranquillity" of her adulthood (ch. 45, [411]). Even in those novels that make us reject the so-called "Justice" of the expiation, the same pattern is implicit: we recoil from the "joke" played on Tess (ch. 59, 542n) as we do from the "wrath . . . vented upon" Jude and Sue (bk 6, ch. 3, 271), and our revulsion inversely reaffirms a moral order appallingly absent from Victorian society. Far, then, from an attitude of pessimistic despair, it was a redemptive and life-enhancing idea of tragedy that enabled Hardy to explore and portray the reality of human suffering in such a way that he affirmed and authenticated the individual integrity of his protagonists.

* * *

In a way, that may be just where I should leave this definition of Hardy's master theme, before going on in the next chapter to demonstrate the major philosophical attitudes to "the Worst"--that is, to the physical and psychological suffering due to the apparent supremacy of the cosmic process over the ethical--that Hardy dramatises in his first-person lyrics. However, the main title of the present chapter still needs to be briefly accounted for. It is an allusion to one of Hardy's letters, a reply to John Galsworthy: "Your likening Pity to the pearl in the oyster is a very beautiful idea, and, I think, a very close parallel" (31 Mar. 1916; *CL* 5: 153).

⁸⁷ Frye writes: "The fact that an infinite energy is driving towards death in tragedy means that the impetus of tragedy is *sacrificial*. Sacrifice expresses the principle that in human life the infinite takes the same direction as the finite" (*Fools* 5).

⁸⁸ Brooks, *Structure* 184. See also Millgate, *Career* 143-44; Southerington, "Evolution" 43; and Fleishman 122.

Coming from Hardy, such emphasis is remarkable, and suggests that he held Galsworthy's definition of pity to be as morally inviolable as, say, Tess's purity or Jude's innocence. According to Galsworthy, man, in his spiritual quest for an ultimate reason for existence, developed an aspect of his self-consciousness, "a kind of excrescence, a pearl as it were on [sic] the oyster of Life. . . . The oyster became diseased, but the pearls thereof are the most beautiful things we know; and have become more precious than the oyster" (Marrot 750).

Hardy embraced this concept of pity, I believe, because the metaphor crisply epitomises something of his own anguished search for life's meaning and value. Hardy himself had devoted his first half-century to replacing the lost sources of significance in the universe: "I have been looking for God 50 years, and I think that if he had existed I should have discovered him. As an external personality, of course-the only true meaning of the word" (29 Jan. 1890; *L&W* 234). The nearest Hardy ever came personally to any sort of spiritual discovery he presented through the Chorus of the Pities at the hopeful conclusion of *The Dynasts* (quoted above), who express the "collective" and omniscient "personality" of humanity (*PN* 59), "with all its weaknesses" (22 Mar. 1904; *CL* 3: 117, 298). In letting the Pities have the last word, Hardy articulated man's hope for relief both from the atrocious suffering of life and from the absence of any "ultimate reason for existence" (*CL* 5: 153).

Using the moral radar of lovingkindness or altruism (as described earlier), Hardy sought life's meaning and value in the area of pain, especially human. Indeed, for Hardy, the pearl of pity was man's collective consciousness, evolving through the medium of pain towards a perfect union of fellow feeling and logical thinking. Hardy aimed at a marriage of religious feeling and scientific reasoning in which pain would be reduced to a minimum. And although he "frankly and honestly accepted" that such a marriage would always remain an unattainable ideal, Hardy believed that the ideal could be vitally inspiring "as an imaginative *solace* in the lack of any substantial solace to be found in life" (*L&W* 333; emphasis mine). The moral endeavour was everything.

Chapter 5

STRATEGIES OF SOLACE: ABSOLUTE KNOWLEDGE, NESCIENCE, AND RELATIVE KNOWLEDGE

An ample theme: the intense interests, passions, and strategy that throb through the commonest lives. (*L&W* 158)

The chief condition of human life, as Hardy saw it, is the clash between two processes--cosmic and ethical--two streams of energies and experience that cross, grapple, and modify each other incessantly and, for mankind, irksomely, woefully, a clash that is part of what he meant by "the Worst." And it is a battle, he told William Archer (*B* 410), which the ethical process seems always to be losing, so that there is little that makes life worth living. Life, to the Tess Durbeyfields of this world, for instance, does not seem to "justify, and at best c[an] only palliate," the "ordeal of degrading personal compulsion" called birth (ch. 51, 485). Consequently, as far as Hardy was concerned, any possibility of overcoming the effects of the cosmic process would be realised only by accurately gauging the extent of human suffering. Or, as he himself succinctly stated the problem, "If way to the Better there be, it exacts a full look at the Worst." In other words, evolutionary meliorism--the gradual betterment of man and society, and ultimately the cosmos--is a process that is both antinomial and affirmative; as much as to say: "If there is indeed a way to a better world for people to live in, then the only approach to anything worth having is through tragic experience," as we saw in the previous chapter (especially pts V and VI).

In chapter 4, Hardy's master theme was defined as a universal consciousness evolving through the medium of pain towards a union of fellow feeling and logical thinking. The question now is what particular form this master theme takes in Hardy's first-person lyrics--how *do* they represent his master theme? The answer is: by dramatising a range of rival, and hence interlocking, philosophical positions to which speakers resort and rely on in order to withstand the (apparent) supremacy of the cosmic process over the ethical. Consolatory responses to man's estate on this planet--how people respond to, and find meaning in the face of, the trauma of the inevitable cosmic disruptions and ethical deficiencies--are what Hardy's dramatic lyrics enact in a variety of individual speakers, as aspects of an evolving consciousness.

For Hardy roots in the mind of a first-person speaker the underlying metaphysical conflict: that between the unconscious force pervading the universe (and also man) and the human interpretation or construction of that universe, between Schopenhauer's *Wille* and *Vorstellung* (Rutland 93)--the "Will" that governs Napoleon in *The Dynasts* (3.7.9.698; see Pinion, *Companion* 105 and *Art* 46-47) and the "Idea" that haunts and bullies Tess (ch. 13, 121). By projecting into the individual soul the essence of the painful turbulence and tension between natural and human orders, Hardy makes each lyric speaker a microcosmic epitome of the wider metaphysical conflict. As a result, the individual psyche becomes a miniature battleground for the contest of the two forces that impel and determine Victorian-Edwardian civilisation--the congenital and the socially conditioned, the innate and the induced, the unique and the aggregated. Putting it another way, the war between cosmic and ethical processes comes down to a matter of, in scientific terms, the disjuncture between subjective and objective knowledge; in moral terms, the tension between passion and character (the terms used above, in ch. 3, pt V). In the face of this painfully paradoxical conflict, Hardy's abiding concern as man and writer is, as John Alcorn has perceived, with "the redress of an imbalance between the individual and society" (23), the reaffirmation of the self and personal integrity.

In his last two novels, Hardy probes and presents the traumatic reality we discussed in the previous chapter--phrased crudely, Nature's subversion of human constructs, of civilisation. In those novels, he aims at defining in social terms the problem of man's terrestrial existence, but without offering any facile solutions. Real solutions--real, that is, to those who rely on them--come in Hardy's volumes of poems, especially the dramatic lyrics. These poems, centred as they are in the individual psyche, often explore human reality in greater depth and diversity, and with much greater niceness, than can the novels. In his first-person lyrics, Hardy dramatises aspects of this psychomachia, from the traumatic clash between natural and social orders within the individual to the revitalising of values which are essentially personal. Hardy's dramatic lyrics present, through the pain of individual minds, the regeneration of society.

Furthermore, Hardy's dramatic lyrics variously present the moment at which the psychomachia has escalated to a pitch that the imaginary speaker finds intolerable and seeks somehow to assuage or resolve, either emotionally or rationally. Each lyric registers a way in which a person--not necessarily Hardy himself--might actually cope with the metaphysical conflict as it manifests itself within his or her mind. And the way in which a lyric speaker comes to terms with the traumatic struggle represents an individual and cultural orientation towards that conflict, a larger philosophical stance towards reality, a source of solace--"a sun of some sort for his soul" (*L&W* 222). As I mean to show, a major strength of Hardy's first-person lyrics is that they dramatise various kinds of "imaginative solace" (*L&W* 333)--not just comfort or happiness, but meaning and value--that is needed in the face of "the Worst." Hardy's dramatic lyrics are, in fact, a record of his persistent attempts as a literary artist to find coherence and worth in human life through an integration of objective and subjective dimensions of reality, the physical and the metaphysical, the material and the spiritual, body and soul.

Hardy's dramatic lyrics enact three interlocking, affirmative philosophical stances with which an individual may confront the traumatic antinomial reality unveiled by personal experience and Victorian science. The lyric settings symbolise a range of actual human attitudes to the (seemingly hopeless) conflict between human and non-human orders of being. Of course, although they obviously reflect aspects of Hardy's mind to varying degrees, the philosophical positions I am going to examine should not automatically be taken as or confused with Hardy's explicit personal view. On philosophical issues, Hardy would insist that he could "hardly" be said to "hold any views about anything whatever" (2 Feb. 1915; *CL* 5: 78). Again, the emotion in many of his dramatic lyrics is as strong as that of utterances we find in real life; but that does not mean we learn from a lyric precisely, directly, or necessarily what Hardy himself feels. Rather, we learn what sort of responses occurred all the time in Victorian and Edwardian society. As we saw in chapter 3, an imaginary first-person speaker is no more than a means by which Hardy could present and probe alternative philosophical positions, could poetically adumbrate and realise various "conceptions" (*CPW* 2: 320) of life, or ways of sanely enduring "the Worst," some of which he himself may or may not have held or pursued. To Hardy, as poetic artist, a lyric speaker was a philosophical expedient, not his personal mouthpiece. Hardy would surely have endorsed Huxley's point that a philosophical position, like a scientific theory, is merely "a species of thinking" (*LN* 1: 146), and hence in reality evolving and relative, not polished, final, and absolute. Consciously or unconsciously, Hardy's first-person speakers adopt mental stances that sustain their personalities and make their life worth living. Hardy dramatises his exploration of reality by creating imaginary speakers to be the bearers of orientations towards "the Worst." And in his dramatic lyrics, Hardy celebrates or repudiates, directly presents or merely alludes to, the philosophical grounds of individual psychological responses.

For Hardy, personally, no abstract or absolute propositions could be of any moral or spiritual benefit; inner conviction seems rather to have meant for Hardy "areas of feeling, intimately related to ways of living"

(Gregor 19). Mere impressions, instincts, feelings, attitudes, responses--all empirical, tentative, and provisional--these might be said to constitute the substance of what the man himself believed. Nevertheless, drawing on these, Hardy developed and dramatised at least three cardinal philosophical positions, not adhered to by him personally, but actual frameworks of assertion available to a human being in Victorian-Edwardian England. Hardy's own beliefs, of course, manifest themselves in various and shadowy ways, as we saw in chapter 3; but none of the three frameworks discussed below, nor any combination of them, should be taken as Hardy's own "system of philosophy" (*L&W* 406). Hardy, I think, was too vitally astute a poet not to cast on the beliefs of the speakers he dramatised an ironical perspective that kept him proof against any alluring delusions of finality and truth. Nor, for that matter, should the positions be taken as being as staunchly distinct or definite as the sub-headings might suggest; these are there simply to organise and clarify the discussion. I am well aware that where creeds and premises are concerned, emotional insulation is impossible; for, in fact, the three main positions set out below exist in tension with one another. Indeed, the existence of each philosophical position implies the criticism, qualification, and relativity of the other positions. Some critics have argued that because Hardy was incapable of resorting to realms of truth and being produced by the visionary imagination, his poetry is stark and limited--"monistic," as Samuel Hynes once put it (*Pattern* 40). But if one resists the temptation to confine Hardy himself to any single position, then one is free of prejudices that reduce the wide-ranging poetic achievement of his dramatic first-person lyrics.

I

Hardy's written output reveals an inquiring mind of which no single lyric speaker could conceivably be sole representative. For instance, in observing that Hardy's change in public career from novelist to poet was officially certified by the publication at the end of 1898 of *Wessex poems and Other Verses*, one tends to lose sight of his youthful career as an architect. Architecture was an enduring love of Hardy's, and near the end of his life, he voiced to Florence Hardy a nostalgic preference to have been "a small architect in a country town, like Mr Hicks at Dorchester, to whom he was articed" (*L&W* 478).

Significantly enough, it is to Hardy's bent for science and architecture that Donald Davie attributes the failure of the poetry.¹ Regarding Hardy's output as the work of the "laureate" of Victorian engineering (*Poetry* 17), who by applying the Gothic aesthetic of irregularity, achieves a formulaic abatement of the proper function of poetic creativity, Davie claims that "true" poets (like Yeats, Hopkins, and Eliot)

give us entry through their poems into a world that is truer and more real than the world we know from statistics or scientific induction or common sense. . . . In their poems, that quotidian reality is transformed, displaced, supplanted; the alternative reality which their poems create is offered to us as a superior reality, by which the reality of every day is to be judged and governed.

(*Poetry* 61)

Hardy's poems, on the other hand,

instead of transforming and displacing quantifiable reality or the reality of common sense, are on the contrary just so many glosses on that reality, which is conceived of as unchallengeably "given" and final. This is what makes it possible to say (once again) that he sold the vocation short, tacitly surrendering the proudest claims traditionally made for the act of the poetic imagination.

(62)

¹ This position seems somewhat retracted by Hardy's metaphysical association with Dante and Virgil in Davie's essay on *Poems of 1912-13*.

Davie's disparaging disqualification of Hardy betrays criteria incapable of accommodating Hardy's poetic readings of everyday human experience. What Davie fails to see is the extent to which Hardy's scientific rationalism has its complementary aspect in his poetic imagination, how Hardy relates poetic vision to social-psychological reality, a procedure Hardy himself explained in his preface to *Late Lyrics*, wherein he asserts that poetry and religion merge into each other and that unless the world is to perish, religion and rationality, poetry and science, would have to become allied (*CPW* 2: 324, 325; but see above, ch. 4, pt V).

Although in his seminal study, Samuel Hynes characterised Hardy as having been "in the main line of Victorian rationalism, and it was this rationalism that maimed his imagination and divided his mind" (*Pattern* 40), Hynes in his later work as essayist and editor has attempted to compensate Hardy criticism for that withering underestimate:

It is ironic that in the scientific attack on the religiousness of poetry, Hardy should have been claimed as a hero of the scientific view, when he was in fact a major figure on the other side. That he was is partly his own fault--he talked like a materialist, though he *felt* like a supernaturalist . . . a poet conscious of the [rationalist] pressures working against belief, but asserting against those pressures his instinctual and emotional convictions that the universe was informed by value, and that man and nature shared a relation to that value.

("Tradition" 184, 188)

Here, although he means to establish Hardy as a religious poet, a poet of feelings and eternal values rather than doctrine, Hynes implicitly adheres to his earlier notion that Hardy had a cleft imagination, a poetic sensibility split between, what I. A. Richards calls, "the Magical View of the world [and] the scientific" view (*Science* 44). As far as Hynes is concerned, Hardy's "Heart and mind may move on contrary tracks, but neither invalidates the other, both speak truths" ("Tradition" 187). True, Hynes allows that some of Hardy's poems are "exceptions, out of feeling and experience, to the general denial of metaphysical reality that [Hardy's] reading of positivist philosophy and science had forced upon him" ("Tradition" 179). However, the word "tracks" is unfortunate, suggesting the weakness in Hynes's idea; for to assume Hardy's poetic vision to be so severely discrete, to impute to it such an acute dichotomy, is to reduce the poetry to the level of the mechanical and the formulaic.

Tom Paulin, too, concedes reluctantly, and with conscious fallacy, that poems like "The Abbey Mason," "The Figure in the Scene," and "During Wind and Rain" (*CPW* 2: 124, 216, and 239), in which fact co-operates vitally with imagination, constitute Hardy's escape from the empiricist's universe of purely visual perception, an achievement of "a visionary freedom" (108, 211). Paulin senses an extra dimension of significance, neither quantifiable nor verifiable, that "transcends" mortality and mutability, a separate "reality of timeless vision" beyond the world of science and rationalism (211, 208). But, introduced in the closing paragraphs of his study, Paulin's reluctant concession to (and "unsubstantiated assertion" of) the visionary imagination as a source of comforting metaphysical truth (211) awkwardly subverts his positivistic argument.

However, what all three critics overlook is that the young Hardy seems to have had his heart set on a career other than architecture. The influence on Hardy of his orthodox Christian faith was so profound that at twenty-five he was still contemplating taking holy orders:

About this time Hardy nourished a scheme of a highly visionary character. He perceived from the impossibility of getting his verses accepted by magazines that he could not live by poetry, and (rather strangely) thought that architecture and poetry--particularly architecture in London--would not work well together. So he formed the

idea of combining poetry and the Church--towards which he had long had a leaning . . . his idea being that of a curate in a country village.

(*L&W* 52-53)

Ordination may have been the fulfilment of Hardy's childhood "dream" (*B* 39, 86), but it would also have imposed upon him a social role that by 1866 he was no longer prepared to live up to (*Millgate, B* 96). Though his desire for the Church, an emotional "imaginative adherence" to its music, service, and communality never faded (*Millgate, B* 91), he could not see himself as the perfect embodiment of a ready-made set of cultural values which were intellectually offensive to him. Hardy's honesty saved him from a clash between public profession and private behaviour. Consequently, I submit, instead of unconsciously or deliberately relying on a scheme of values external to his own convictions, Hardy resorted to internal sources of value; he chose to define himself as poet, even though this career was financially risky. It is my contention that his instinct for the transcendent in human experience drove the young Thomas Hardy towards the role of parish priest, but that, during a period of agonising intellectual exertion (see *B* 90-101; *Gittings, Young* chs 5-9), he found that role unacceptable, its assumptions untenable; and that without cultural validation, a perplexed, suffering mortal, he forged for himself a role that both satisfied his "persistent yearning to believe" (*Millgate, B* 388), and accommodated his position of "harmless agnostic[ism]" (*L&W* 302). Hardy grew into the role of poet, that is, of "artistic interpret[er] of life" (*L&W* 413), only after he had suffered and been stripped of the supporting context of Victorian values, only after he had intellectually negotiated the gap between his authentic being and conventional belief and behaviour by means of the scientific criticism of the Bible, Darwinism, and the controversy over adult baptism (*Gittings, Young* 76, 82). In other words, Hardy derived and authenticated his social identity as a poet through processes which lay outside religious control; in order to be able to express his genuine religious convictions, those "nobler feelings towards humanity and emotional goodness and greatness," as he put it (*L&W* 358), he had to transgress the traditional role of parson. Having embarked on the career of poet, Hardy would eventually be looked upon as a serious moral thinker (*Millgate, B* 437), a secular prophet or modern priest, "supplying the help and guidance, religious and moral, which the old priesthood could no longer provide" (*Houghton* 101). Impelled by "the inner voice which told him of his destiny as a prophetic creative writer" (*Gittings, Young* 161), Hardy's career as a poet accomplished his "visionary scheme" better than he had wished, for it succeeded in combining his deep enthusiasms for poetry, the Church, and Gothic architecture (see *L&W* 322-23). More and more, of course, the prevailing scientific rationalism made him question his religious (meaning transcendent and humane) beliefs (*Millgate, B* 91; *Gittings, Young* 146); tension between doubt and devotion, between rationality and religious promptings, was a condition of Hardy's mental life. Nevertheless, having defined himself without the direct help of external values, Hardy could, while critically drawing on material from those two epistemological poles of assumption, keep his poetic distance from both absolutes:

Rationalists err as far in one direction as Revelationists or Mystics in the other; as far in the direction of logicity as their opponents away from it.

(*L&W* 358)²

² Asked in 1919 to define his idea of political progress, Hardy replied with characteristic intelligence and humanity: "I favour social re-adjustments rather than social subversions--remembering that the opposite of error is error still" (*PN* 94n450), a dictum he seems to have absorbed in 1877, when he wrote in his notebook: "Error. The moment when we are suddenly made aware . . . of some cherished error is just the one when we are most likely to take up with its contrary. The opposite of error, it has well been said, is not truth, but another error" (*LN* 1: 113).

1. Revelation

behind the horizon smile serene
 The down, the cornland, and the stretching green--
 Space--the child's heaven: scenes which at least ensure
 Some palliative for ills they cannot cure.
 ("Lines" CPW 1: 105)

The easiest and most natural way of mollifying philosophical trauma is by escaping the cause--for instance, by negating its importance or even existence. Another, more positive, remedy is to reinforce a sense of personal identity and the value of life by resorting to the (assumed) security of an absolute truth, such as a mystical or providential world offers. Mystical thinking postulates a supersensible ideal realm accessible by intuition to the human reason, a transcendent reality of which the physical, historical world is merely the shadow. Similarly, a belief in Providence implies an acceptance of a deity who miraculously creates and benignly directs the affairs of individual human beings at all times. Both philosophical positions imply the exaltation of absolute truth in the form of revelation, the first philosophical source of psychological solace I shall consider in this survey.

What Hardy once said about a "poetical, intuitive, and human" (Gittings's words, *Older* 222) theory of evolution has a particular bearing on the validity of revelation or mystical experience as such a source of solace:

You must not think me a hard-headed rationalist for all this. Half my time (particularly when I write verse) I believe--in the modern use of the word--not only in things that Bergson does, but in spectres, mysterious voices, intuitions, omens, dreams, haunted places, &c., &c. But then, I do not believe in these in the old sense of belief any more for that; & in arguing against Berg[s]onism I have of course, meant belief in its old sense when I aver myself incredulous.

(2 Feb. 1915; *CL* 5: 79)

Judged by the strictly objective standards of scientific realism, such a conception of the visionary imagination might at first seem wishy-washy; but placed as it is within the intensely inward experience of a practising poet, and not in some impersonal, Newtonian clockwork cosmos, it rather testifies to Hardy's sane, balanced humanity, a judicious equilibrium of the imagination, whose fulcrum lies "at the indifference-point between rationality and irrationality" (*L&W* 332). Such qualified scepticism and apparent ambivalence--Hardy's mature moral poise³--permits one to relate the position of revelation to the attributes literary historians such as Abrams, Lovejoy, and Wellek associate with the major English Romantic poets: the assignment of value and organic life to Nature, and the assumption that the individual mind is the spring of true reality (Abrams, *Mirror* 310-12; Lovejoy 262-65, 316-26; Wellek, "Concept" 150-65). In particular, the imagination was the primary organ of truth, and afforded these poets "a peculiar insight into an unseen order behind visible things" and drove them "to penetrate to an abiding reality, to explore its mysteries, and by this to understand more clearly what life means and what it is worth. . . . to convey the mystery of things through individual manifestations and thereby show what it means" (Bowra 271, 9-10). In his last poem, in fact, Hardy acknowledged the existence of this reality of a "vision [that might] range beyond / The blinkered sight of souls in bond" ("He Resolves to Say No More" *CPW* 3: 274).

³ It is Hardy's "nagging honesty to his own experience" (Perkins 253) that in Norman Arkan's opinion "leads Hardy to establish visionary imagination in some definite relationship to actual experience. What Hardy rejects are exclusive and fixed extremes that focus too clearly the indistinct complexities of experience" (72n21).

To the revelationist speaker seeking spiritual release from "this wailful world" ("A Plaint to Man" *CPW* 2: 33), "a world so ancient and trouble-torn, / Of foiled intents, vain lovingkindness, / And ardours chilled and numb" ("Copying Architecture in an Old Minster" *CPW* 2: 173), the visionary imagination is a definite source of real knowledge and true insight. Consequently, when Hardy's first-person speakers reaffirm early nineteenth-century intimations of transcendent reality, they do so with a sense of welcome redemption and beatitude, for remote from gritty empirical knowledge, "the knowledge of a truth beyond surface appearances" promises to make their life on this planet a blessing (Perkins 269), a regaining of a private paradise, as it were.

For the most part, the "child's heaven" or transcendent solace presented in Hardy's first-person lyrics takes the form of symbols and intuitions. By means of symbols (which we discussed in chapter 2), Hardy embodies the revelationist view of the moral and spiritual character latent in the cosmic process; and by means of dramatised intuitions, those flashes of comprehension that bypass orderly reason, Hardy conveys a sense of a realm of timeless being. In short, Hardy dramatises revelation as the symbolic import of and the imaginative insight into the universe, as privileged knowledge that complements, fulfils, and enriches human life in the material, mundane world, and the revelationist mind as having an optimistic tone and a delicacy of feeling.

The three commonest qualities of revelation as a source of solace that Hardy dramatises in his first-person lyrics--spontaneous joy, fragile lightness, and dreamlike elusiveness--coincide in the scene in *The Return of the Native* depicting Eustacia's fantasy, the effect of Clym's first social greeting:

She was dancing to wondrous music, and her partner was the man in silver armour who had accompanied her through the previous fantastic changes, the visor of his helmet being closed. The mazes of the dance were ecstatic. Soft whispering came into her ear from under the radiant helmet, and she felt like a woman in Paradise. Suddenly these two wheeled out from the mass of dancers, dived into one of the pools of the heath, and came out somewhere beneath into an iridescent hollow, arched with rainbows. 'It must be here,' said the voice by her side, and blushing up she saw him removing his casque to kiss her. At that moment there was a cracking noise, and his figure fell into fragments like a pack of cards.

(bk 2, ch. 3, 174)

The anticlimax of the reverie serves only to intensify the impression of transcendent bliss, the very notion of the "ecstatic" suggesting the dreamer's situation is located outside the mundane world of the heath, her emotional being rendered distinct from her quotidian identity. Although belief in a metaphysical realm of being may seem a form of escapism, a defensive recourse to reverie or wishful thinking, Hardy carefully presents this spiritual manoeuvre by dramatising such noumenal knowledge as a joyful, vital, and valuable form of truth in several poems which idealise a woman.

Hardy assigns a high value to visionary ecstasy in "At a Seaside Town in 1869" (*CPW* 2: 244), through a variety of actual social recreations (reminiscent of the contrastive marquetry of secular pursuits in Donne's "The Canonisation"), from which the young speaker recoils back "inside" himself because "there, above / All, shone my Love, / That nothing matched the image of" (lines 6-8). The hyperbole maps the speaker's reverential commitment to the visionary imagination for gaining access to an ideal, eternal world in which he might receive the pleasure of beauty perceived:

This outside life
Shall not endure;
I'll seek the pure
Thought-world, and bask in her allure.

The speaker in "Her Definition" (*CPW* 1: 269), dissatisfied with his efforts to describe ("outfigure") his beloved in words, having toiled through the night, straining the limits of poetical language, has ostensibly to resign himself to a sonnet that, in Shakespearian gesture (e.g., sonnet 106), contrasts the poverty of his poetic resources with the inestimable beauty of her person. In effect, however, the visionary imagination supplies a simile that, by extending the possessive tenderness of the phrase ("That maiden mine") with which he has attempted to capture her, resolves the artistic problem:

I lingered through the night to break of day,
Nor once did sleep extend a wing to me,
Intently busied with a vast array
Of epithets that should outfigure thee.

Full-featured terms--all fitless--hastened by,
And this sole speech remained: 'That maiden mine!'
Debarred from due description then did I
Perceive the indefinite phrase could yet define.

As common chests encasing wares of price
Are borne with tenderness through halls of state,
For what they cover, so the poor device
Of homely wording I could tolerate,
Knowing its unadornment held as freight
The sweetest image outside Paradise.

Here the existence of the perfect description in a metaphysical realm allays the speaker's feeling of inadequacy, negates the insufficiency of "the indefinite phrase," and augments his paltry nocturnal achievement. For with the pun on "image" Hardy cleverly suggests both an exquisite poetic conception and an idealised embodiment of the beloved; at the same time, although vague in his evocation of physical details, the speaker implies that the sonnet itself is an image containing infinite riches in a little song. Finally, and even more suggestively, Hardy shrewdly modulates from the appreciative action in "tenderness" to the keen awareness in "sweetest," and so credits the poet-speaker with an implicit attempt at an allusion to the synaesthetic relish for taste, smell, and sound inherent in the "delicious Paradise" of Milton's *Paradise Lost* (see bk 4.132 and 9.200), a work with which Hardy was "unusually" familiar (Pinion, *Companion* 201). "Her Definition" celebrates the imagination as the primary organ of mystical truth. The octet seeks precise statement; the sestet prizes evocative intuition. Putting it another way, neo-classical style yields to Romantic insight, decorous artifice to creative experience, "epithets" to "image."

Again, to confirm the value and virtue of the imagination in securing intuitions of an eternal reality that provide consolation for the harsh realities of this transitory, material world, Hardy evokes a sense of a transcendent world of spontaneous bliss in "On Sturminster Hill at Midnight" (*CPW* 2: 366):

'What home is yours now?' then I said;
 'You seem to have no care.'
But the wild wavering tune went forth
 As if I had not been there.

'This world is dark, and where you are',
 I said, 'I cannot be!'
But still the happy one sang on,
 And had no need of me.

Whereas the delayed appearance of the "she" in "On Sturminster Foot-Bridge" (*CPW* 2: 225) creates undeniable relief and promise of human order and insight amid all the disintegration, putrefaction, and

ominous oppressiveness of "the dark world"--albeit a mere "lattice-gleam when midnight moans"--the female form in "On Stinsford Hill at Midnight" inhabits a visionary dimension incompatible with human experience. The switch from reported speech to reported action, from desire and desperation to disappointment and indifference, comes to signify a gulf between the two worlds that is absolute; one world is joyful and timeless, the other is sombre and transient. By imaging this difference, Hardy here dramatises the human need for achieving imaginative experience and insight if one is to endure sublunary existence. Communication with a female form in the moonlight, a kind of moon goddess who illuminates and stirs the revelationist speaker's soul (Stallworthy, "Moonlight" 185-86), is one of Hardy's characteristic modes of knowledge that is both precious and privileged. The rupture or lack of such communication indicates the delicacy and elusiveness of visionary knowledge when it is grasped and held by the imagination.

Revelation, as Hardy dramatises it, is knowledge not only priceless and privileged; it is also insight that must be treated with commensurate care and deftness or, as the crucial simile in "Her Definition" implies, with tenderness. Hardyan revelation is, in fact, a supra-rational truth that only the imagination can apprehend and interpret; and even then, revelation is often shy knowledge, insights or awareness requiring sensitive appreciation.

For instance, in "The Well-Beloved" (*CPW* 1: 168), Hardy traces the spiritual enrichment, albeit fugitive, involved in imaginatively equating a mortal woman and a cherished physical or moral quality, in a man's seeing in his beloved a Diana or a Venus (see *L&W* 251), the incarnation of chastity or of beauty. As the speaker travels at night towards Jordon where he intends to marry his beloved, he sings her praises:

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

With this ecstatic utterance, the speaker unwittingly conjures up a female "Shape" who represents all that the man has found attractive in his bride-to-be:

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

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

Here Hardy dramatises not only the reality of the revelationist speaker's transcendent source of solace, for the assertive "sprite" has a separate identity (imaged by her voice, perception, and logic), but also the potential futility of this form of idealism. For a chief danger, as Hardy seems to imply, inherent in the revelationist position, is the temptation to reduce the truly transcendent to the purely solipsistic, to believe what Edred Fitzpiers (following Shelley) tells Giles Winterborne in *The Woodlanders*, that "Human love is a subjective thing. . . . I am in love with something in my own head, and no thing-in-itself outside it at all" (ch. 16, 113-14; see Pinion, *Art* 154-55). What the Shape in "The Well-Beloved" implies is that Venus exists only in the metaphysical realm and cannot be fixed in any earthly location. On the contrary, the reality of a transcendent source of "truth" forever inspires and draws the revelationist speaker; desire for a fulfilling union with metaphysical reality encourages the speaker and endows his life with value. To allow revelation no separate existence, to possess revelation selfishly--as if fully and finally--would be (it is implied) a contradiction in

terms; intuitions or insights (mere "lattice-gleams") are the most one can expect. The visionary imagination, then, is a flexible organ neither too aggressive nor too passive; only, the proper use of the faculty in grasping transcendent insights demands the ability to subordinate one's reason and self-interest.

The precise relation between philosophical tentativeness and obsessiveness is a delicate one, amounting to an imaginative tact or a spiritual poise which Hardy personally valued as a way of accomplishing a modicum of contentment, if not solace, in his own life:

For my part, if there is any way of getting a melancholy satisfaction out of life it lies in dying, so to speak, before one is out of the flesh; by which I mean putting on the manners of ghosts, wandering in their haunts, and taking their views of surrounding things. To think of life as passing away is a sadness; to think of it as past is at least tolerable. Hence even when I enter into a room to pay a simple morning call I have unconsciously the habit of regarding the scene as if I were a spectre not solid enough to influence my environment, only fit to behold and say, as another spectre said: 'Peace be unto you'."

(L&W 218)

Such an aetherial translation into a social transparence and modesty accords very well with the urbane, mouse-like⁴ reserve of first-person speakers in several poems dramatising the revelationist assumption that consciousness survives death. Unlike the nescient speaker (discussed in sec. 2 below), the revelationist speaker is characteristically optimistic and naïve about death, and finds consolation, identity, and value in life by making assertions on the basis of visionary knowledge; he celebrates delicate intuitions of an eternal reality.

In dramatising the imaginative tact and spiritual poise which he associates with the revelationist position, Hardy gives serious consideration to both subjective and objective senses of the phrase "consciousness of the dead." For such poems as "Friends Beyond" (*CPW* 1: 78), "Channel Firing" (*CPW* 2: 9), "While Drawing in a Churchyard" (*CPW* 2: 287), and "Voices from Things Growing in a Churchyard" (*CPW* 2: 395), in which the revelationist speaker calmly accepts the perspective of the serenely conscious dead, Hardy allows the dead to testify to a realm of metaphysical bliss. In these poems Hardy uses death, the ultimate refuge from "the Worst," as a buoyant metaphoric context for describing the imaginative tact required to receive solace from revelation--an ideal context for Hardy's purposes, since the dead are perfect spokesmen for the transcendent, neither meditating on life's transience nor affecting their material surroundings. Similarly, the value of the revelationist speaker's spectral courtesy and self-effacement in relation to the dead becomes apparent in the final stanza of "While Drawing in a Churchyard," for instance, which delineates the speaker's adroit, unforced reception of metaphysical solace from the declaration of the personified yew-tree:

I listened to his strange tale
In the mood that stillness brings,
And I grew to accept as the day wore pale
That show of things.

The "mood" of Hardyan revelation--metaphysical knowledge which is truly consolatory--is the condition of mind that makes for communion with the transcendent, an absence of meditative intensity, and an equanimity that enables the speaker to learn patiently from the scene before him, consciously involved in his own spiritual education and development. The double meaning in "grew"--gradually changed by a natural process

⁴ "If I were a painter," Hardy said in the Gallery of the English Art Club in 1891, "I would paint a picture of a room as viewed by a mouse from a chink under the skirting" (*L&W* 246).

and consequently acquired an ability--conveys the transition to another dimension of imaginative experience, to belief in visionary knowledge as a source of assuaging ideas which help one endure suffering and loss with dignity, to an assured enlargement of consciousness, feelings, and humanity in the face of inevitable mutability, mortality, and misery.

This consolation the revelationist speaker has progressed to with imaginative deftness from the superficial perspective ("show") that the yew-tree attributes to the living at the outset of the poem:

'It is sad that so many of worth,
Still in the flesh,' soug'd the yew,
'Misjudge their lot whom kindly earth
Secludes from view.

What the living, those whose "worth" derives from their yet possessing physical solidity, fail to realise is that the dead inhabit a haven more durable than "flesh" and enjoy salutary privacy there. The syntax enforces the sense of secret sanctuary, as the nominative pronoun ("they") is concealed, its unobtrusive existence merely implied by the possessive adjective ("their"), while earth (normally cold and inanimate) acquires a new characteristic of benign warmth. An allusion to Wordsworth's "A slumber did my spirit seal," coming after the corrective commiseration of the opening stanza, substantiates the listener's attitude of tranquil optimism towards the condition of the dead:

They ride their diurnal round
Each day-span's sum of hours
In peerless ease, without jolt or bound
Or ache like ours.

The calm sanity with which both Wordsworth's elegy and Hardy's poem end derives from their respective speakers imaginatively seeing death in the wider context of an ordered universe, and intellectually accepting death as part of a larger design. Hardy's speaker sees the dead as comfortable passengers luxuriously accommodated in the efficient machinery of the majestic solar system; while the enjambements create a contrastive sense of the anticlimactic discomfort of living in a world of organic vicissitude. The verb "ride" conveys no sense of traumatic loss and finality, but rather one of perpetual, merry orbit. The yew-tree, in fact, cites evidence to affirm that the communal security of the dead is threatened only by the restrictive officiousness of divine surveillance:

If the living could but hear
What is heard by my roots as they creep
Round the restful flock, and the things said there,
No one would weep.'

"Now set among the wise,"
They say: "Enlarged in scope,
That no God trumpet us to rise
We truly hope."

The circumlocutory "the restful flock" is no mere ponderously funereal clerical euphemism. In "Friends Beyond" and "Channel Firing," two companion poems that treat humorously of the dead, Hardy dramatises the familiar notion of the dead being indifferent to, unobtrusive in, and unruffled by the world of the living, neither discerning nor demanding anything in particular, except that their repose should remain undisturbed. In "Jubilate" (*CPW* 2: 257), as here in "While Drawing in a Churchyard," the dead occupy a dimension that extends beyond the boundaries and barriers of material experience; so they can form a subterranean orchestra or, as Hardy first called it, a "merry underground dancing party" (*CPW* 2: 502), where necropolitan merriment

is no longer confined by fleshment, "in Little-Ease cramped no more!" (line 22). In touch with a larger field of experience, "an all-embracing fixed realm of eternity" (Miller, *Distance* 229), the dead in "While Drawing in a Churchyard" are carefree, joyful, and hale; they are happily detached from any narrow-minded religious system of control, of which an abraiding "trumpet" is symptomatic. At the cost of having "no God" to pray to, they are free and content; and their very freedom from suffering, fear, and all mortal deficiencies acts as a metaphor for the exhilarating solace that comes from transcendent knowledge.

Both the ascription of consciousness and speech to the dead and also a speaker's consciousness of the dead as being somehow alive are two fictions or (*pace* Miller, *Distance* 227) poetic conventions that Hardy enlists to dramatise the imaginative poise and tact required to apprehend a consoling visionary knowledge. For the supra-rational communication depends on a gossamer thread of debonair politeness. If, when the dead speak, the assiduous revelationist speaker listens, he gains a spectral view of things, a successful "antidote" ("Friends Beyond" lines 10-11) to his acute sensitivity to the frustration, fear, and tragedy of human life--but only if he is attentive, discreet, and receptive. On the other hand, since the speech of the dead is paradoxically "lively," it "Affords an interpreter much to teach, / As their murmurous accents seem to come / Thence hitheraround in a radiant hum" ("Voices from Things Growing in a Churchyard" *CPW* 2: 397); here a synaesthetic metaphor of far-reaching illumination and indistinct, but striking, sound suggests a transcendent significance. Consequently, the revelationist speaker's consciousness of the dead also demands of him dignity and emotional deftness when the chief speaker in the poem is himself.

"The Shadow on the Stone" (*CPW* 2: 280) is a fine instance of imaginative poise and tact, for in this dramatic lyric, Hardy brings together several strands of revelation as truly consoling knowledge, as well as the speaker's consciousness of the dead as being somehow alive and vocally accessible. Hardy takes great pains with the opening stanza, conducting the revelationist speaker's mind along the contours of quintessentially visionary experience--progression, arrest, insight:

I went by the Druid stone
That broods in the garden white and lone,
And I stopped and looked at the shifting shadows
That at some moments fall thereon
From the tree hard by with a rhythmic swing,
And they shaped in my imagining
To the shade that a well-known head and shoulders
Threw there when she was gardening.

Here the underlying structure of sensibility is Wordsworthian, much inured to and muted by, of course, the familiar, private setting of "*the* . . . stone" in "*the* garden" near "*the* tree," but still continuous with the process of keen observation in "The Daffodils": "I wandered . . . all at once I saw . . . I gazed--and gazed." Imaginative discovery and personal discovery have become one. The speaker's visionary imagination unifies evanescent, ephemeral, and intermittent things, shaping them into a recognisable pattern that has personal significance for him alone. The speaker's focus on "shadows" that are "shifting" eventually brings about the restoration of the relationship between "I" and "she." His mind comprehends the disparate landmarks ("they") in such a way that their intrinsic qualities work in concert. For instance, although the shadows "fall" on it, the stone is no blank, passive screen; the stone mysteriously asserts its own character. As though preoccupied with melancholic thought, some ritual of divination, the stone influences the speaker's perception of the shadows; the stone's very presence seems to induce him to pause, steady his scrutiny, and enable him to gain insights into the movement of the shadows. The presence of the ancient stone catalyses the speaker's assigning meaning and value to what that movement produces: the formation of a significant shadow, someone's "shade."

Although the parallelism between the three restrictive relative clauses blurs the ambiguity, the word "shade" here has several interlocking meanings, referring to the dead woman's silhouette, shadow, and also ghost which, as Tom Paulin remarks, "has been led from the underworld shades by [the speaker's] imagination and love" (59). But more than that, "shade" needs specific definition in a way that "stone" and "shadows" do not; without the assistance of an adjectival clause, a reader might well take "shade" to refer to cool darkness. But the syntactic reversal in the third relative clause enacts a shock of recognition; the syntactic switch registers the force of the speaker's emotional purchase on the experience. At first, following the model of the previous *that*-clauses, we read "shade" as antecedent subject of "that"; but all at once we have to reconstrue the relation when we discover that the true subject of the subordinate verb ("Threw") is "a well-known head and shoulders." The significance of the relative pronoun as a seam between present and past amounts to the syntax achieving a delicate interpenetration of metaphysical and physical, or "the ideal and the real, the visionary and the mundane," as Norman Arkanis puts it (57)--although I would add that the speaker most certainly accepts the entire imaginative experience as all the more real for its qualities of contingency and delicacy. In other words, the woman's silhouette both testifies to a potentially recurrent event in the present and represents an event (the woman's active presence in the garden) that no longer occurs although it once often used to. Simultaneously, the "shade" is concrete evidence of a present reality and cogent memory of a past reality. Having "shaped" the present to accommodate the past, this speaker is convinced that the past is no longer quite lost, and that he has regained her reality as an immediate physical experience.

Creating a space in the present for the past is the very opposite of dwelling in an idealised or insubstantial past; the progression from stone to shadows to silhouette implies that the "shade" exists within a relationship of concrete items.⁵ The stone is constantly there; it mysteriously possesses inward depth, and its origin ("Druid") establishes a time-scale for all that actually surrounds it. The shadows are visible and mobile, and although they continually come and go, their appearance is a natural outcome ("fall") of the collaboration between the neighbouring tree and the sunlight. By association, the dead woman's silhouette takes on a character that implies a corporeal presence. In addition, Hardy achieves a quality of material presence for the dead woman in two ways. First, he casts the opening stanza as a single sentence, in order to match the easy progression of the speaker's imagination from stone to shadow to silhouette. Second, Hardy forges a chain of consonants that culminates in the speaker's absolute identification of the dead woman ("she"). Syntax and metre concentrate our attention on the object of the speaker's deliberate scrutiny, so that we are all the more keenly aware of the alliteration in the trochaic doublet "shifting shadows." In due course the shadows take on not only shape, but also solidity ("shoulders") and human personality ("she [who] was gardening"), as the consonantal correlative evokes the speaker's optimistic assumption--that "she" is actually, substantially present:

I thought her behind my back,
 Yea, her I long had learned to lack,
 And I said: 'I am sure you are standing behind me,
 Though how do you get into this old track?'
 And there was no sound but the fall of a leaf
 As a sad response; and to keep down grief
 I would not turn my head to discover
 That there was nothing in my belief.

⁵ The speaker in "The Rambler" (*CPW* 1: 325), for instance, is so engrossed by lost opportunities that he forfeits any enriching engagement with the immediate sensuousness of the present; he merely wanders through the impinging countryside, indifferent to its exquisite minutiae. Unfortunately, too, his growing regrets separate him from his neighbours, whose "keen appraisal" of the objective world he cannot share.

The relaxed fluency of the lines, their straightforward syntax, the simple diction, the speaker's candour--all convey a naturalness and composure on his part, as he feels his former awareness of her being there behind him. He has "long since" come to terms with her absence, and his "grief" is already "down"; so the speaker, on the basis of his quiet conviction ("I am sure you *are* standing behind me"), can ask the real question: "*how* do you get into this old track?" That is, although the speaker experiences the woman's "shade" as a consolatory reappearance, he is not intensely grief-stricken. Nor, I submit, is his conviction a desperate, "last-ditch hope" (Cox and Dyson 83) or merely wishful thinking; there is on the word "sure" no colloquial emphasis which actually implies mere probability or doubt; there is no vehement strain in the speaker's voice, but only visionary certainty, a faith that enables him to express his delight in the continuity ("track") of their relationship. Hardy ensures that even the speaker's disappointment at her silence is marked by equanimity and understatement. Listening keenly for the merest whisper of a reply to his inquiry, the speaker is obligingly open to any "sound" that might come after his utterance, "And" registering his concomitant expectation. As a result, we conceive the speaker's disappointment as we conceive his sensitivity to his surroundings, not merely because we hear the "fall"--separation, descent, and landing--of a single leaf, but because, on account of the tree's almost imperceptible loss, we become aware of the woman's forfeiture of an opportunity for speech ("response"), her avoidance of an answer and her withdrawal into silence find a natural analogue in the corresponding disappearance of the shadows which the disappearance of the leaf must inevitably portend. The terminal placement of the image of the leaf completes the sense of the line, and suggests momentarily (that is, while the apparent caesura plumbs oblivion) a final detachment, subsidence, and diminution--an event that was natural yet unpredictable, unexpected. Speechlessness was all that came of his commitment to the reunion. At another level, the enjambement serves to emphasise the lack of response, by conferring on the "fall of a leaf" an emotional heaviness ("sad") and by making us feel that a "discover[y]" of emptiness, disillusionment, and desolation is impending.

Working against the revelationist speaker's faith in transcendent knowledge, then, is his tendency to embarrass his imagination by attaching to a natural phenomenon an emotional significance: the fall of a leaf brings on the upsurge of "grief." Awareness of the tree unleaving (in Hopkinsian idiom) renews awareness of mortality; also, it tempts the speaker to satisfy his curiosity and confirm his conviction that the woman is actually behind him in the garden. Such confirmatory satisfaction is also demanded, of course, by the speaker's empirical reasoning, not by his imagination, for which mere shadows are quite sufficient. His faculty for empirical reasoning prompts him to find ocular proof of something which material evidence can substantiate. Experience teaches him that a turn of the head will be followed, and unavoidably complemented by, the sight of what is materially present in the scene. The physical act of turning his head will automatically entail discovering either the absence or the presence of such evidence; the two events will occur in tandem, as surely as the fall of the leaf is instantly succeeded by the speaker's involuntary adjunctive interpretation, "As a sad response." Given this immediate, sequential relation between turning the head and observing the evidence, the speaker resists the temptation to risk finding a distressing vacancy, a "nothing" that would, to his reason, discredit and destroy his "belief," his assumption that she is indeed present. Paradoxically, therefore, the pressure of his empirical reasoning comes in aid of his conviction and warns the speaker that material knowledge will merely subvert his visionary knowledge:

Yet I wanted to look and see
That nobody stood at the back of me;
But I thought once more: 'Nay, I'll not unvision
A shape which, somehow, there may be.'

In short, neither emotion nor reason can discompose this revelationist speaker or invalidate his "belief": his imaginative tact is faultless; his intuition that the woman is there remains inviolable. And this decision is neither self-deception nor self-irony; the fact is simply that empirical proof is inappropriate to his mystical experience of her presence. To apply such proof to this experience would debase the supra-rational possibility ("somehow") of her being there, would allow reason to monopolise and stultify his imaginative perception of the scene, would dismiss her presence as unreal. Instead, even though the woman does not answer him in the way he expects and desires her to do, he respects her characteristic behaviour of suddenly appearing on the scene:

So I went on softly from the glade,
 And left her behind me throwing her shade,
 As she were indeed an apparition--
 My head unturned lest my dream should fade.

The speaker preserves his quiet joy by contentedly accepting her personal "otherness," believing she is present, and promoting the continuity of their relationship. It is precisely because he believes she is substantially present that he can regard her *as if* "she were indeed an apparition," and then can adroitly, lovingly, depart. Hardy carefully notates the grace with which the speaker resumes his walk--"My head unturned lest my dream should fade." This concluding line, lacking a finite verb, amplifies "softly" by suggesting the gentleness of the imagination's proprietorship. There is no action here comparable to the frustration and strenuous exertion expressed by the Orpheus myth to which Hardy tacitly alludes; the simple naturalness of "So I went on" creates no sense of strain, suspense, or imminent devastation. Free of any self-pitying compulsion to pursue and possess, the speaker manages to secure something of "the glory and the freshness" of the Wordsworthian dream of childhood innocence (in the "Immortality"-ode) that brings a poise, a sweetness, and flexible strength to the speaker's mind. By departing from the scene and not attempting to prolong the experience indefinitely, the speaker actually approaches the state of happiness which he is most capable of achieving in a world of material inevitabilities. He calls the experience a "dream"; but, as Jean Brooks reminds us, the vision is no mere illusion (*Structure* 104); the "dream" offers no blind happiness. For like Tennyson in *In Memoriam*, this revelationist speaker achieves an imaginative perception that puts him in communion with a transcendent reality:

So word by word, and line by line,
 The dead man touch'd me from the past,
 And all at once it seem'd at last
 The living soul was flash'd on mine,

 And mine in this was wound, and whirl'd
 About empyreal heights of thought,
 And came on that which is, and caught
 The deep pulsations of the world.
 (st. 95)

The paradigm of Wordsworthian discovery--progression ("word by word, line by line"), arrest ("all at once"), insight ("flashed")--corroborates and certifies the "belief" held by Hardy's speaker. The forceful authority of his visionary knowledge enables the speaker to maintain that belief optimistically. Instead of allowing his visual perception to impose a pattern of experience upon his mind that will falsify and diminish what his imagination has learned, Hardy's revelationist speaker affirms the value of his own immediate experience of a supra-rational world.

In other words, "The Shadow on the Stone" is a complex poem in that it reconciles two quite opposed systems of values that are related by the material fact of death. If indeed the woman is actually--that is, substantially felt by the speaker to be--present in the garden, then the visionary imagination is vindicated as a source of serenity, blessing, and solace, at least for the duration of that experience. But if she is not really *there*--not felt by the speaker to be existing in the outer world--then his so-called visionary knowledge is merely a blank and nugatory illusion. Hardy takes care, I think, to ensure that the reader responds to both systems of thought simultaneously, for the poem subsumes both sets of values, implying that both are valid for this revelationist speaker. The whole experience of revelation, in fact, is felt only when both opposites are possessed together, when outer conditions and inner state meet in one focus; and the feeling thus produced is one of immediacy and participation in the world of the objectively real. So in addition to imaginative tact, there is embedded in the revelationist position--in (what I call) "the child's heaven" (after the epigraph at the start of this section)--an integrated ambivalence, a twofold response which is creative and optimistic.

An ambivalent response more symmetrically integrated still can be found in a poem Hardy curtailed by means of a rhetorical ambiguity (but see Miller, *Distance* 233), "The Occultation" (*CPW* 2: 200), a poem based on the visual-psychological analogy between darkened sun and departed joy:

When the cloud shut down on the morning shine,
 And darkened the sun,
 I said, 'So ended that joy of mine
 Years back begun.'

But day continued its lustrous roll
 In upper air;
 And did my late irradiate soul
 Live on somewhere?

Yet in all these poems of revelationist ambivalence, Hardy's aim is not to cancel life's grimness but to overlay and qualify it by fusing the awareness of physical and metaphysical realms of being. And to achieve that fusion Hardy evidently found in auditory imagery a more appropriate metaphor for the consoling knowledge that comes from revelation. That, to be valid, revelationist solace involves a blended response to the physical and metaphysical may be inferred from "On a Midsummer Eve" (*CPW* 2: 177):

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.

5 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.

10 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.

By performing simple actions, the speaker unwittingly discovers the place of the miraculous within the real world; gradually, a soothing intimacy develops between the supernatural and the sensuous, a sense of the creative influence and the transforming pressure of visionary knowledge on the processes of the speaker's logical "thought" (line 3) and reflective "thought" (line 10). The immediacy of visionary solace is felt by the

revelationist speaker in "In a Whispering Gallery" (*CPW* 2: 271), who hears, but cannot see the source of, a sound that has potent significance for him:

That whisper takes the voice
Of a Spirit's compassionings,
Close, but invisible,
And throws me under a spell
At the kindling vision it brings;
And for a moment I rejoice,
And believe in transcendent things

Ecstatic and electrified, the speaker gladly attributes his consolation to a visionary realm, an act of assimilation on his part that not only creates for him the imaginative experience of "A spot for the splendid birth / Of everlasting lives" and "A tabernacle of worth," but also produces in him a conviction of a timeless realm of being and value, a belief in

transcendent things
That would mould from this muddy earth
A spot for the splendid birth
Of everlasting lives,
Whereto no night arrives;
And from this gaunt gallery
A tabernacle of worth
On this drab-aired afternoon,
When you can barely see
Across its hazed lacune
If opposite aught there be
Of fleshed humanity
Wherewith I may commune;
Or if the voice so near
Be a soul's voice floating here.

It is precisely by recording all those causes of ambivalence, all the inescapable physical details of his worthless, wretched, mortal existence--"this muddy earth," "this gaunt gallery," "this drab-aired afternoon," "fleshed humanity"--that Hardy anchors the momentary assertion of the revelationist speaker's imagination and ensures the engagement of the speaker's humanity at a deep level of being.

As the image of the whisper suggests, the revelationist speaker's capacity for putting his faith in imaginative experience is always available but reserved, or repressed, or rendered dubious by terrestrial conditions. Hillis Miller maintains that, in poems like "The Absolute Explains" (*CPW* 3: 68) and "A Kiss" (*CPW* 2: 205), Hardy postulates the persistence of human actions, experiences, and events in an "extraterrestrial reservoir" (*Distance* 232). Continued existence in a metaphysical realm of being where "Time's ancient regal claim" ("The Absolute Explains" line 77) is surmounted, in a sphere of experience in an eternal present that exposes transience as a fiction, is most decidedly the assumption of the speakers in these two poems. But Hardy's musical metaphors are Romantic images; they suggest not a scientifically theoretical dimension of being--not an Einsteinian fourth dimension of space in which "things and events always were, are, and will be (e.g. Emma, Mother and Father are living still in the past)" (*L&W* 453)--but a transcendent, timeless zone of human experience that is accessible only to a speaker's supra-rational intuition. Just as "Somewhere it [the kiss] pursues its flight, / One of a long procession of sounds" (lines 12-13), so too in "To Meet, or Otherwise" (*CPW* 2: 15), the speaker optimistically reinforces his and his beloved's sense of their identity as a couple:

So, to the one long-sweeping symphony
 From times remote
 Till now, of human tenderness, shall we
 Supply one note,
 Small and untraced, yet that will ever be
 Somewhere afloat
 Amid the spheres, as part of sick Life's antidote.

Within the terms of his intuition of another order of being, this revelationist speaker asserts the consoling thought that their union, their moment of mutual tenderness, no matter how brief, will remain an unalterable, indelible achievement against the "bondage" in which "things terrene / Groan (lines 20-21) and against the destructiveness of linear succession--irrevocably, the lovers' meeting "will have been" (line 16). What makes the "note" eternal is its continuous extension through space and time. Never static or inert, the couple's moment of love will always be "Somewhere afloat," their "note" be heard in cyclic procession, "blending / Mid visionless wilds of space . . . / In the full-fugued song of the universe unending" ("In a Museum" *CPW* 2: 163). Music is highly patterned yet expressive sound, and its deep inexplicitness conveys best perhaps the metaphoric fusion Hardy seeks to achieve between the outer conditions and inner states of revelation as a source of solace, "as part of sick Life's antidote."

Because the revelationist speaker in "The Shadow on the Stone" accepts visionary knowledge as a source of absolute, timeless truth transcending the empirical world, he is delivered from and enlarged by traumatic experience; but because he also accepts the common realities of his terrestrial condition, the solace he gains is balanced, calm, and affirmative. He possesses a faculty for trusting in the power of intuited truth to strengthen him for living in the real world. In contrast to poems such as "The Shadow on the Stone" and "On a Midsummer Eve," and also "The Ghost of the Past" and "The Year's Awakening" (*CPW* 2: 13, 44)--poems that register a soothing awareness of poetic truth, a self-authenticating transcendent truth which, as Wordsworth puts it, is "carried alive into the heart by passion" (pref., *Ballads* 33)--are poems in which revelation is not a heavenly, otherworldly gleam, but a deliberately held illusion. That is, in this sampling of poems, Hardy presents absolutist speakers who inhabit not a child's heaven, but a fool's paradise. Although Hardy himself was too honest to disguise, dilute, or dodge the truth, whatever its intensity, he could see some sense in subscribing to "ritualistic ecclesiasticism" (*CL* 2: 23), if only for the semblance of bliss it created:

One argument used by Catholic friends of mine . . . I always consider to have weight: the wisdom of accepting certain formulae without question, & of assuming them to be true, for the sake of the calm such a process affords; or, to put it brutally, (which of course they do not), a fool's paradise is better than none. This position is intelligible, & its advantages can be recognized. There is little doubt that to know the truth in some matters lessens happiness.

(24 Feb. 1904; *CL* 3: 157)

In secular poems such as "My Cicely" (*CPW* 1: 67), "To Life" (*CPW* 1: 152), "Let me believe" (*CPW* 3: 18), as well as in religious poems like "The Bedridden Peasant to an Unknowing God" (*CPW* 1: 159) and "On a Fine Morning" (*CPW* 1: 165), Hardy dramatises the conscious desire of revelationist speakers for self-delusive happiness regardless of cost; in each poem, the response to "the Worst" may be termed oblique or one-eyed ambivalence, a denial of something of the reality of things. For instance, the speaker in "To Life," oppressed by his awareness of the dreary futility of existence, the swollen syntactic co-ordination suggesting life's tedious monotony, arrant wretchedness, and pathetic sham--

O Life with the sad seared face,
 I weary of seeing thee,

And thy draggled cloak, and thy hobbling pace,
And thy too-forced pleasantry!

--and also irritated by the flagrant inevitability of his own doom, the syntactic ambiguity ("know too well") and emphatic enjambement of line 7 pointing up his resentment--

5 I know what thou would'st tell
Of Death, Time, Destiny--
I have known it long, and know, too, well
What it all means for me.

protests scornfully against the injurious burden of continuing without relief from the consequences of merely being alive:

But canst thou not array
Thyself in rare disguise,
And feign like truth, for one mad day,
That Earth is Paradise?

I'll tune me to the mood,
And mumm with thee till eve;
And maybe what as interlude
I feign, I shall believe!

The poem is couched in a mock-Elizabethan idiom (the vocative personification; the diction; the image of life as a tragic actor; and the theatrical conceit with its flippant yet profound paradox); and the speaker's tone flees from any patient resignation to, and mere endurance of, reality towards relief in the notion of the world being a fulfilling scene "for one mad day," for one brief instant of time and unreality. In all these poems, Hardy dramatises visionary knowledge as springing from a deep-seated faith in man's capacity for joy in the face of inexorable odds, but a faith that can come only from their inhibiting of the real. One speaker desires to see reality through one favouring eye only, "As just a dream--the merest," in order to possess in memory one unique moment of "frank, full-souled sweetness" ("Let me believe"); another absolutist speaker similarly depreciates his personal experience of the world in favour of a single moment or period, after he finds he cannot bear the disillusioning knowledge of his beloved's unsavoury present circumstances:

Frail-witted, illuded they call me;
I may be. Far better
To dream than to own the debasement
Of sweet Cicely.

Wilfully preferring to think of Cicely as dead, the speaker egotistically fudges reality by preserving his "choice vision" (line 117) of her in the past. While William Buckler regards as "simply and unequivocally absurd" the speaker's authority for his decision (*Poetry* 154), Paul Zietlow withholds condemnation of this speaker's absolutist position, because as a response to "the Worst," "to deny reality and insist on illusion . . . may be valid" (*Moments* 155, 159).

Indeed, the speakers in all these poems find meaning and value in the stance of oblique or one-eyed ambivalence, either by yearning or seeking deliberately to exclude or evade the common realities of the world and of human experience. Aware of competing kinds of knowledge, these absolutist speakers choose to inflate and glorify only one side of the picture and to denigrate or block the other. Hardy himself was too humane to condemn such self-delusion; its validity lay in the consoling equanimity or moment of joy it brought to the unquestioning believer, whether secular or religious.

Some of Hardy's absolutist speakers, however, readily accept meaning and value from an external source of knowledge, such as theological doctrine and orthodoxy, so as to alter their attitude towards the destructiveness of time and the harsh conditions of personal and social existence. The speaker in "On a Fine Morning," for instance, emphatically revels in the security that comes from uncritical religious faith:

I

Whence comes Solace?--Not from seeing
 What is doing, suffering, being,
 Not from noting Life's conditions,
 Nor from heeding Time's monitions;
 But in cleaving to the Dream,
 And in gazing at the gleam
 Whereby gray things golden seem.

II

Thus do I this heyday, holding
 Shadows but as lights unfolding,
 As no specious show this moment
 With its iriséd embowment;
 But as nothing other than
 Part of a benignant plan;
 Proof that earth was made for man.

The final triplet of each stanza puts an optimistic colouring on reality; and the rainbow-image, especially, affirms a consoling submission to external, formal orthodox authority in quest of meaning, order, value, and spiritual fulfilment. An acceptance more complex still occurs in "The Bedridden Peasant to an Unknowing God," where the ailing speaker's powers of logic, simple human goodness (suggested by the contrasting concern of a human father for his child) and sense of justice lead him to conclude that God seems remote, unresponsive, and ignorant of human misery:

Much wonder I--here long low-laid--
 That this dead wall should be
 Betwixt the Maker and the made,
 Between Thyself and me!

Inexplicably separated from his God by a "dead wall"--by the lack of physical, emotional, and personal relationship--the speaker perceives mankind to be in "helpless bondage" (line 10). In the second half of the poem, however, the speaker's sweetness of soul prompts him to assert the divine virtue of mercy; his assumption that God is "mild at heart" and well-intentioned exonerates the "Maker" of negligence. Without demanding that his God be both all-powerful and all-knowing, this revelationist speaker holds firmly to his belief in divine benevolence:

That some disaster cleft Thy scheme
 And tore it wide apart,
 So that no cry can cross, I deem;
 For Thou art mild of heart,

 And wouldst not shape and shut us in
 Where voice can not be heard:
 Plainly Thou meantest we should win
 Thy succour by a word.

...

Since, making not these things to be,
 These things Thou dost not know,
 I'll praise Thee as were shown to me
 The mercies Thou wouldst show!

Of course, the speaker's conviction that God is good consoles him successfully, and so he makes ample allowances for his Maker. In this poem, however, Hardy seems interested in the conflict between the speaker's sweet innocence and moral logic; more importantly, Hardy seems concerned to present the speaker's will to believe in an absolute external authority overriding a desire to question. Going counter to the evidence of his senses and his reasoning, the speaker's revelationist position is hence doubly supposititious, maintained desperately in order to evade the idea of a malignant or indifferent God, even sacrificing divine power to divine goodness (see *H&C* 150). Unable, after protracted puzzlement, to reconcile human wretchedness with doctrinal premises, the speaker rationalises divine culpability away and, simultaneously, also the very oppressive conditions that first prompt him to "wonder." His natural impulse to doubt and question is overruled and regulated by the authority of assimilated theological dogma about Providence.

Competition between these two sources of absolute knowledge--revelation and reason--presented Hardy himself with a searing fideistic dilemma; his own bent towards questioning vied ceaselessly with his innate desire to believe. Like Clough, Hardy could not morally, emotionally, and temperamentally--not, that is, in all rational honesty--be an intransigent, militant atheist (see Houghton 106-08). Hardy felt too deeply the need for absolute intellectual integrity and too keenly the loss of traditional religious assumptions, a loss (as far as Hardy was concerned) traumatic both to himself and to society at large. That is, Hardy was prepared to endure the inevitable sacrifice of solace that doubt entailed; but with the stakes so high, he was equally committed to questioning his own iconoclastic conclusions, so keeping the process of his thought alive and genuinely critical. The inward tension, that balance of forces that enabled many a Victorian thinker to be creative (see Jenkyns 69-70), was abnormally trying and pressing in Hardy. For instance, when Hardy advocated the logical vexing of religious orthodoxy, he made allowance for the psychological dynamics involved, as when he confessed to J. McT. E. McTaggart that he "rather despaired of seeing harmful conventions shaken--in this country at least--by lucid argument and, what is more, human emotions" (23 May 1906; *CL* 3: 207). Hardy would surely have understood why social-psychological distress provoked by religious doubt, and pessimism induced by gloomy scientific analysis (Levine, rev. 234-35), drove many people to seek relief in institutionalised or providential revelation enshrined in ecclesiastical doctrines, to "accept their creed," in W. E. H. Lecky's words,

as a working hypothesis of life; as a consolation in innumerable calamities; as the one supposition under which life is not a melancholy anticlimax; as the indispensable sanction of moral obligation; as the gratification and reflection of needs, instincts and longings which are planted in the deepest recesses of human nature; as one of the chief pillars on which society rests.

(qtd in Houghton 99)

Hence, for Hardy, the recognition of his own agnosticism would not have been as startling and refreshing as it was, say, for Leslie Stephen of his own; Hardy maintained his critical stance consciously and restlessly. That in 1875 Stephen asked Hardy to witness his legal renunciation of holy-orders, that afterwards the two men discussed "theologies decayed and defunct, the origin of things, the constitution of matter, the unreality of time, and kindred subjects" (*L&W* 109), and that there was some philosophical, especially Positivist (Gittings, *Young* 288), affinity between them, in no way certifies Hardy's absolute rejection of everything to do with Christianity. For one thing, although he was influenced by the Comtean doctrine of altruism and also by his longstanding friendship with the leader of the English Positivists, Frederic Harrison, Hardy could state in

1903: "I am not a Positivist" (25 Feb.; *CL* 3: 53; but see above, ch. 4, pt IV), and in 1919 deem as "totally at an end" his friendship with Harrison who had publicly attacked Hardy's pessimism (Millgate, *B* 529). For another thing, Hardy regarded religious scepticism as sterile and unsettling unless it was a genuinely transitional state, as his characterisation of Angel Clare attests (see Houghton 18 [esp. n66]-21 [esp. n77]; Wright, *Shaping* 33). Because he was "religious in feeling" and agnostic only "in reasoning" (Bailey, *H&C* 102), Hardy saw himself not as a stern, convinced, "clamorous atheist," but as a "harmless agnostic" (*L&W* 302).

Hardy was "harmless," because like most Victorian rationalist agnostics, he meant to pursue truth and the common good, not to "undermin[e] the moral foundations of society or depriv[e] people of their spiritual comforts" (Houghton 400); and an "agnostic," not an atheist, because although he found the Christian religion in many ways deficient, he could not live without it (see Arnold, *God* 378). To Hardy, if the apparent triumph of cosmic forces led to atheism, atheism itself threatened to disrupt and dissolve the moral sanctions on which civilised society stood.⁶ As Michael Millgate succinctly depicts Hardy's state of responsible unbelief:

Unbeliever though he was, Hardy retained to the end of his life not merely a personal attachment to the Anglican traditions with which he had grown up but a strong sense of the social--what might now be called the socializing--value of such traditions and of the rituals and observances in which they were outwardly embodied.

(*B* 247)

But what made his scepticism peculiarly innocuous was Hardy's honest awareness of the human race's "impulse to perfect itself," his sensitivity to "the deepest human experience" (both are Arnold's phrases for what I have been calling the ethical process: *Culture* 47), that might "underlie" religious orthodoxy ("Apology" *CPW* 2: 319, line 70)--in short, Hardy's attachment to a communal emotional heritage. For despite the scientific-rationalist stigma with which he is sometimes stamped, Hardy was, as Peter Mitchell observes, "self-consciously traditional" ("Churchy" 130-31). Or as Hardy himself put it, he was "churchy; not in an intellectual sense, but in so far as instincts and emotions ruled" (*L&W* 407). While it went against his intellectual grain to accept authority blind, Hardy was loathe to become spiritually bankrupt; his compulsion to question institutions coexisted and conflicted with his instinct for joy, resilience, and his reluctance to descend into despair. Even had he attempted to be singlemindedly rationalistic, or as objectivist as T. H. Huxley (see Knoepfelmacher and Tennyson xx-xxi), Hardy would, one feels, have been unable to divorce himself completely from the roots of his faith in the essential soul of man, from the rural and familial springs of his own poetic imagination. As late as 1922, he could still maintain his belief "in going to church. It is a moral drill, and people must have something. If there is no church in a country village, there is nothing" (*B* 539); "some form of Established ritual & discipline should be maintained in the interests of morality," he told Lady Agnes Grove that same year (*CL* 6: 162; see, too, Chapman 275-76, 293-94). The Christian religion, as he himself understood it, remained for Hardy a place of genuine and guaranteed feeling, the one home to which the native could keep returning.

⁶ See "The Problem" lines 6-10 (*CPW* 1: 154).

2. Rationalism

The thought is new to me.
 Forsooth, though I men's master be
 Theirs is the teaching mind!
 ("God's Education" *CPW* 1: 335)

The foregoing biographical correlative goes a long way towards accounting for the mentality of the speaker who puts his faith in the opposite absolute: reason. The dramatic lyrics in which Hardy presents scientific rationalism make it clear that this source of solace arrogantly repudiates all noumenal knowledge, all transcendent forms of consolation. In several groups of lyrics, Hardy dramatises the tension between revelationist and rationalist authority, between questing through the world of Nature for transcendent knowledge and fulfilment, and questioning reality for mundane, verifiable facts. The rationalist speaker assumes that the cosmos is a determinate system--fixed, knowable, predictable--and hence that Nature can be conquered and corrected by rational man with his scientific instruments. Victorian rationalism aims to bring about a drastic secularisation, with little awareness of the limits of logic, a reduction of social-psychological relationships to a positivist utopia, in which the cosmic process must serve the superior egotism of mankind. To doubt, dissect, discuss, decide, denounce traditional opinions of the established authority of Creation and Creator--this was a thinker's solemn duty. As T. H. Huxley put it, "The improver of natural knowledge absolutely refuses to acknowledge authority, as such. For him, scepticism is the highest of duties; blind faith the one unpardonable sin. . . . The man of science has learned to believe in justification, not by faith, but by verification" (qtd in Houghton 95). What Hardy gives us is poems in which the critical spirit of rationalism is itself an engine of consolation in the mind of an absolutist speaker whose tone evinces various degrees of scepticism.

In an age of intellectual insecurity and insincerity, when to question authority--traditional beliefs, ethical and social as well as religious--was thought not just sinful, but seriously indecorous (Houghton 11, 399, 106, 135), a desire to be resisted by obeying that authority, to speak out in protest against commonly held absolute values required passionate vehemence. Hardy dramatises a rationalist determination to question authority in "The Sleep-Worker" (*CPW* 1: 156) where the speaker oppugns Nature's deficiencies. Unlike the revelationist speaker in "The Bedridden Peasant to an Unknowing God" (*CPW* 1: 159), who despite his suffering, maintains a belief in a metaphysical source of mercy as an absolute virtue, the rationalist speaker in "The Sleep-Worker" inveighs caustically against Nature, the putative repository of absolute goodness:

When wilt thou wake, O Mother, wake and see--
 As one who, held in trance, has laboured long
 By vacant rote and prepossession strong--
 The coils that thou has wrought unwittingly.

Iambic stress on the verb of future projection, combined with emphatic repetition, enacts both desperate longing and a highly critical attitude--the repeated "wake," in fact, has the secondary effect of a command--then the use of damaging diction like "vacant rote," "foul cankers" (line 6), "victim-shriek" (line 7), and "wild shock of shame" (line 12) amounts to an act of scarifying invective, cross-examination, and moral indictment, hardly as Paul Zietlow claims, one of gentle "fondness, reverence, sympathy" (*Moments* 62). If this rationalist speaker's tone accommodates any note of charitableness, which Jean Brooks observes (*Structure* 26), then the note is due to the speaker's sense of his own moral superiority over the world he inhabits. The sonnet ends, in fact, with a hallmark of rationalist superciliousness: a positive suggestion based on the speaker's objective assessment of the predicament of human suffering, specifying that Nature should "patiently adjust, amend,

and heal" (line 14). The effect of this programme of reparation is to set the speaker within a moral and intellectual aristocracy by virtue of his superior faculty of rational consciousness.

At once more oblique and more scathing is the dramatic perspective Hardy presents in "Nature's Questioning" (*CPW* 1: 86), where the rationalist speaker's usual perception implies a criticism of the Creator:

When I look forth at dawning, pool,
Field, flock, and lonely tree,
All seem to gaze at me
Like chastened children sitting silent in a school;

Their faces dulled, constrained, and worn,
As though the master's way
Through the long teaching day
Had cowed them till their early zest was overborne.

The scholastic metaphor characterises the speaker's own aloof and didactic frame of mind; because he confidently assumes Nature to be in need of correction and mankind of instruction--both of which only his rationality makes him competent to offer--he looks on the world about him patronisingly. This implied hierarchy of knowledge gives him a sense of his own dignity ("No answerer I. . . ." line 25), a scientific detachment and superiority that not only itemises material objects, but also coolly "enumerate[s]"⁷ logical postulations about God and the nature of existence: "some Vast Imbecility," "an Automaton," and a good but moribund deity whose scheme has failed. As a result, any sympathy the reader might share with Nature is clearly not to be imputed to the dramatic speaker, who remains consistently stolid. Both "Nature's Questioning" and "The Sleep-Worker" dramatise the rationalist speaker's alienated position in terms of his capacity not just to suffer but to protest self-righteously against that suffering (see Perkins 257).

Other dramatic lyrics marked by a tone of protest and cocksure scepticism are those in which Hardy presents rationalist repudiation of noumenal knowledge, of visionary comfort from religious orthodoxy and social conformity. The questioning spirit inflates the ego of the human speaker in "God's Education" (*CPW* 1: 335), where Hardy once again characterises this objectivist scepticism indirectly by means of an educative metaphor that assigns to man "the teaching mind." Having placidly and helplessly witnessed the gradual waning of his beloved's vivacious beauty, until eventually "All her young sprightliness of soul / Next fell beneath [God's] cold control" (lines 8-9), the speaker discovers divine indifference, not providence or even envy, is the cause:

Said I: 'We call that cruelty--
We, your poor mortal kind.'
He mused. 'The thought is new to me.
Forsooth, though I men's master be
Theirs is the teaching mind!'

Here Hardy dramatises a complex tone of indignant self-righteousness, mock-condescension, and magisterial self-assurance in the face of a deity who is rationally conceived by the speaker to be non-moral, obtuse, indifferent, and incorrigibly unfeeling. In the companion lyric, "New Year's Eve" (*CPW* 1: 334), Hardy dramatises the rationalist assumption that the universe depends entirely on human consciousness for its moral workings, since man is the sole proprietor of logical and ethical faculties; without human "ordering" (line 22) and interpretation, Nature is futile: "'And what's the good of it?' I said. / 'What reasons made you call / From

⁷ Hardy's word is apt; but see his letter to Alfred Noyes (20 Dec. 1920; *CL* 6: 54).

formless void this earth we tread" (lines 6-8). Once again, the rationalist position includes man's wilful definition of the cosmos as inferior to him and needing human correction:

Then he: 'My labours--logicless--
 You may explain; not I:
 Sense-sealed I have wrought, without a guess
 That I evolved a Consciousness
 To ask for reasons why.

'Strange that ephemeral creatures who
 By my own ordering are,
 Should see the shortness of my view,
 Use ethic tests I never knew,
 Or made provision for!'

He sank to raptness as of yore,
 And opening New Year's Day
 Wove it by rote as theretofore,
 And went on working evermore
 In his unweeing way.

The speaker's closing commentary is meant implicitly to decry cosmic cruelty and experientially untenable beliefs in a transcendent beneficence; that is, the rationalist speaker makes assertions from within a framework of assumptions that is not only absolute, but also affirmative of human superiority. In short, although these rationalist lyrics offer "the appalling vision of a mechanistic universe devoid of spiritual life or moral value" (Houghton 97), a cosmos that operates "by rote," not by reason, their essential tone of scepticism is marked by indignant protest, moral superiority, and absolute confidence.

An anguished sense of moral injustice aggravated by the Creator's intellectual incompetence dominates the scepticism of the rationalist speakers in "The Lacking Sense" (*CPW* 1: 150) and "The Subalterns" (*CPW* 1: 155), who both demand explanations of God's motives and an account of man's estate in the order of things. In response, no doubt, to the speaker's stern, self-righteous accusation in "The Subalterns," four cosmic antagonists of man--overcast sky, north wind, sickness, and death--act as Nature's mouthpieces. Hardy designs the utterances of the "subalterns" to suit the idiom of the exposed wanderer's rational mind, so that they all give factual clarification that extenuates their baleful functioning and exonerates them. But since the wanderer receives no material comfort, the rationalisation they offer serves merely to quieten the conscience of each cowed agent: namely, that as it is in man's nature to suffer, so it is in theirs to wound him, their innate compulsions thwarting their kind intentions. The brief moment of an ostensibly "sympathetic relationship" (Brooks, *Structure* 36) with which the poem ends actually affirms the rationalist position in two ways:

We smiled upon each other then,
 And life to me had less
 Of that fell look it wore ere when
 They owned their passiveness.

First, the very achievement of rational comprehension of why and how things are *thus* provides a source of solace for the speaker; but second, and more importantly, that smile--enforced by the enjambed resolution--registers the triumphant release of vindication for the speaker, because the testimony of material existence indicts the Creator for producing an inflexible mechanism with programmed operations, conduct governed by an inherent and absolute law of necessity, from which rational man alone is free. Similarly, the protagonist in

"The Lacking Sense" questions the allegorical personage "Time" and demands rational explanations in a way that shows he has taken the full measure of Nature, the "moody" mother:

--'And how explains thy Ancient Mind her crimes upon her creatures,
 These fallings from her fair beginnings, woundings where she loves,
 Into her would-be perfect motions, modes, effects, and features
 Admitting cramps, black humours, wan decay, and baleful blights,
 Distress into delights?'

Here detailed assessment reflects the texture of human experience amid cosmic deterioration, disorder, and, apparently, deliberate malice ("woundings . . . Admitting"). However, the damaging, staccato rhythm of the speaker's sarcastic accusation is set off by the serene constancy with which "Time" characterises Nature's process of "mothering"--"pathetic strenuous slow endeavour" (line 21)--and by the revelation that Nature is blind, an extenuating circumstance corroborated by the paradoxical refrain of maternal affection occurring in the second line of all six stanzas. These contrasting rhythms are symptomatic of the rationalist speaker's conception of human existence: Nature is herself handicapped by necessity, has only blind "groping skill" (line 26), and is powerless to effect her good intentions. What soothes the rationalist speaker is the knowledge of the principle at work in Nature against him; he is so certain that he has correctly estimated Nature's character and abilities that he feels there is nothing more to say. Hardy dramatises this rationalist self-assurance and didactic, explanatory mode of thinking by allowing "Time" to occupy the last three stanzas of the poem, in which man's superiority due to his otherness is tacitly acknowledged by the injunction that he "Assist her [Nature] where thy creaturely dependence can or may, / For thou art of her clay" (lines 29-30). Man's "creaturely dependence" is, of course, the very thing the rationalist speaker resists, patiently attentive as he is to the limited perspective of human existence that "Time" has, and fully cognisant too of the Creator's indifference to his human plight. Indictment of Creation and its Creator elevates the poor, questioning creature and sets a high value on the joy, justice, and sympathy he himself has to supply, and on what makes him human: rationality, consciousness, and fellow-feeling--man's logical understanding of himself in the universe.

The indignant, but consciously dignified, scepticism which informs these and other "philosophical fantasies"--such as "God's Funeral" (*CPW* 2: 34) and "A Philosophical Fantasy" (*CPW* 3: 234)--establishes the supremacy of the rationalist position as a source of solace. Hence in these lyrics, the absolutist speaker takes it upon himself to explain, and in so doing expose, the deficient foundations of any visionary structures of thought and feeling. The goal of the superconfident rationalist is objective explanation that implicitly castigates the Victorian deity. Tacit censure, however, is only one side of this scepticism. Because the rationalist explanation of the conditions of existence rests on simplistic assumptions--for instance, that the universe is humanly comprehensible, reducible to mathematical terms, and that the mechanical model of the universe can be applied to human behaviour--the position is liable to produce disillusionment. What the rationalist claim to exclusive truth leaves out is whatever is spontaneous, unpredictable, and tentative. As Hardy himself, usually productive and efficient, remarked during a period of relaxed idleness in Paris in 1882:

"Since I discovered, several years ago, that I was living in a world where nothing bears out in practice what it promises incipiently, I have troubled myself very little about

theories. . . . Where development according to perfect reason is limited to the narrow region of pure mathematics, I am content with tentativeness from day to day."
(*L&W* 160)⁸

In "A Sign-Seeker" (*CPW* 1: 65) Hardy presents a speaker whose rationalist will to question eventually fatigues his anguished desire to believe in the reality of the visionary and the immortal:

I have seen the lightning-blade, the leaping star,
The cauldrons of the sea in storm,
Have felt the earthquake's lifting arm,
And trodden where abysmal fires and snow-cones are.

...

I have lain in dead men's beds, have walked
The tombs of those with whom I had talked,
Called many a gone and goodly one to shape a sign,

And panted for response. But none replies;
No warnings loom, nor whisperings
To open out my limitings,
And Nescience mutely muses: When a man falls he lies.

All the seeker's heroic efforts and expectations founder in the sublime absence of transcendent significance in the cosmic process, a thoroughgoing frustration and spiritual diminishment due to Nature's intransigent impassivity. Hardy presents two conflicting kinds of rationalist knowledge in the opening stanzas of this lyric: empirical knowledge, which arises only from sense impressions of the kind that come to the solitary observer in the opening stanza, for instance--

I mark the months in liveries dank and dry,
The noontides many-shaped and hued;
I see the nightfall shades subtrude,
And hear the monotonous hours clang negligently by.

--and mathematical knowledge, which (it is implied) provides the surest way to clarity and certainty:

I learn to prophesy the hid eclipse,
The coming of eccentric orbs;
To mete the dust the sky absorbs,
To weigh the sun, and fix the hour each planet dips.

But neither the delicate and intense observation of natural phenomena--and Hardy's neologism "subtrude" conveys precisely the stealthy penetration by the dark as the shadows of night glide in (see *CPW* 3: 368)--nor the oppressive consciousness of mechanical vicissitude (evoked by "clang"), nor the scientific computation of future events, nor the tension between the accumulation of empirical data and the rational interpretation and structuring of them, can generate the transcendent reality the desolate speaker "would wot of" (line 21). The futility of his knowledge is merely aggravated by the flagrant evidence of the futility of human life in a world presided over by the arbitrariness of death, where rational energies ceaselessly merge with the random and the volatile--in warfare, social organisations, or sexual intercourse: "I witness fellow earth-men surge and strive; / Assemblies meet, and throb, and part" (lines 17-18)--but achieve no sense of harmonious, lasting, and beneficent being. Indeed, in affirming his rationalist premises that scientific knowledge is absolute and final, and that reality consists of empirical data supplemented by mathematical reasoning, and of nothing else, the

⁸ Morton Zabel observes that Hardy's "reading of experience, whatever sense he conveys of implacable forces and blind principle, is groping, experimental, suspended, empirical" (34).

sign-seeker forfeits any visionary gloss on symbols ("tokens") of a transcendent realm. By contrast, there are, blessed with hopeful endurance, those who believe in the visionary imagination,

who, rapt to heights of trancelike trust,
 These tokens claim to feel and see,
 Read radiant hints of times to be--
 Of heart to heart returning after dust to dust.

Because he makes all his assertions within an objectivist framework, the rationalist speaker is debarred from feeling the assuaging hope which revokes the divine sentence passed on sinful Adam: "cursed is the ground for thy sake . . . dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. 3.17, 19). For the rationalist speaker, the promise of transcendent reprieve is merely delusory; but the obverse of the revelationist dream is spiritual deprivation: "Such scope is granted not to lives like mine" (line 41). The sign-seeker's intellectual inaccessibility, fideistic inhibition, and emotional incapacity carry their own penalty; or, as Robert McCarthy appraises the sign-seeker's position, "post-Romantic consciousness comes to the realization that its recovery from delusion is in fact an index of its own impoverishment, of its rationalist narrowing of intentionality experienced here as loss and regret" ("Visionary" 90). Where restoration of grace is precluded, nostalgia is inevitable.

The rationalist scepticism that Hardy dramatises in these "philosophical fantasies" is an absolute position. Paradoxically, the stance tends to be as unstable and anxiously defended as it is dogmatic, and only too readily tips from superconfidence into feelings of nostalgia, emptiness, alienation, meaninglessness, absurdity, and ultimately bitterness. Sometimes a rationalist speaker loses his emotional balance, as in "The Oxen" (*CPW* 2: 206), where two mental capacities coexist—one for the Christian interpretation of experience, the other for an objectivist view of phenomena:

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

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

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

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

The speaker's rationalist assumptions have had a corrosive effect on his religious belief, except when, for a crucial historical moment, the eclipsed capacity reasserts itself, not so much to compete with, as to complement the dominant capacity which then has to house the speaker's outmoded visionary impulse. The speaker feels his instinct for those spontaneous elements of human behaviour that scientific rationalism can neither detect nor account for--innocence, communality, humility, trust; he honestly acknowledges an inherited emotional bias towards the ritualistic and the miraculous. The familiar details of his "childhood" (usually a generalised abstraction) acquire an informed specificity through the action of communal

knowledge; that is, they "possess the qualitative richness," as Delmore Schwartz puts it, "of any particular thing and yet have that generality which makes them significant beyond their moment of existence, or the passing context in which they are located" (131). At the same time, however, for this rationalist speaker, the moment of midnight on the present Christmas-eve and those to come will always resonate with a feeling of "poignant regret" (Brooks, *Structure* 41) for the loss of the celebratory optimism that would sustain him "in the gloom," not only of that particular night but of the present ("these years") and human life in general.

In "A Drizzling Easter Morning" (*CPW* 2: 437), Hardy dramatises a rationalist scepticism that darkens into despondency and smouldering cynicism. The poem begins with the speaker responding to, presumably, the traditional Easter-morning preoccupation among believers: the Resurrection; but his response is an unexpectedly incredulous and unimpressed one, suggesting that he is in immediate possession of evidence to the contrary: "And he is *risen*? Well, be it so. . . ." (emphasis mine). The speaker observes that, since Christ's putative resurrection, terrestrial conditions are no less gruelling: life remains harsh, and a spirit of anguished questioning pervades the world, animating both the living ("the pensive lands") and the patient, graveyard dead, who

would know
What they are ransomed from, before
They pass again their sheltering door.

I stand amid them in the rain,
While blusters vex the yew and vane;
And on the road the weary wain
Plods forward, laden heavily;
And toilers with their aches are fain
For endless rest--though risen is he.

What makes these details moving is the speaker's empathy with those who have been worn down and devoutly wish for the sleep of utter exhaustion, deliberately emphasised by the enjambement protracting the sense of the penultimate line. Hardy dramatises the unattainability of such repose when the speaker instantly disturbs the culminating pause by appending a mock-solemn afterthought that is meant as a scoffing dismissal, the verbal echo and syntactic inversion of the opening line kindling the subversive irony. From the disgruntled speaker (who appears in the first syllable of the second stanza as "I") the celebrated referent of the third-person pronoun ("he" is reserved for the last syllable of stanza and poem) stands in disassociation, his divinity as well as his humanity in serious question. With tensions like these at work within the disaffected and self-pitying speaker, the drizzle becomes a symbol of cynicism on a cosmic scale.⁹

A cynicism more acrid still pricks the rationalist speaker's feelings of deprivation, emptiness, alienation, and futility in "The Impercipient" (*CPW* 1: 87). In this poem, Hardy presents a speaker whose feelings of philosophical superiority are complicated by his relationship to his Christian contemporaries:

That with this bright believing band
I have no claim to be,
That faiths by which my comrades stand
Seem fantasies to me,
And mirage-mists their Shining Land,
Is a strange destiny.

⁹ In a note he made in 1874, Hardy comments: "Snow on graves. A superfluous piece of cynicism in Nature" (*PN* 18).

Why thus my soul should be consigned
 To infelicity,
 Why always I must feel as blind
 To sights my brethren see,
 Why joys they have found I cannot find,
 Abides a mystery.

Here the speaker readily acknowledges that he has no rightful place among a worshipping congregation, a group knit closely by their joyful belief in divine grace and truth. Yet an undercurrent of scepticism seems to reduce and taint this idea of glorious blissfulness and cheerful cohesion: the combined alliterative stress on "bright" and "band" adds a hint of irony, "a slight edge of satire," as Leonard Smith says; "it is a bit too pat and complacent" ("Appreciation" 224). And the complacency belongs to the believers, who are unaware that the dazzling brightness of the "Shining Land" has made their faith a blindly visionary one; Hardy's holographic "Happy Land" conveys even more blatantly the speaker's satiric deflation of their unquestioning mindlessness and repugnantly simplistic view of paradise. Yet the speaker also acknowledges that following his will to question and developing a more discerning awareness has cost him dearly; his rationalist position has brought a dubious enlightenment and little satisfaction. This speaker has the honesty to doubt the value of his own position, like the agnostic speaker in "Afternoon Service at Mellstock" (*CPW* 2: 161):

So mindless were those outpourings!--
 Though I am not aware
 That I have gained by subtle thought on things
 Since we stood psalming there.

While the speaker in "The Impercipient" is aware of what he has lost, of his "lack" (line 17) of the encouragements of traditional Christian tenets--fellowship, hope, consolation--he is appalled by the faithful congregation's lack of "Christian charity" (line 18) for someone in the sad plight they believe he is in. (In an unpublished stanza, the speaker complains that they neither reciprocate his unassuming gentleness towards them nor accept his spiritual "incapacity" [line 18f].) The speaker's self-defence against false accusation ends with a startling image of the helplessness and deprivation his view of reality has brought him:

Yet I would bear my shortcomings
 With meet tranquillity,
 But for the charge that blessed things
 I'd liefer not have be.
 O, doth a bird beshorn of wings
 Go earth-bound wilfully!

This is no mere "tremor of self pity" (Gregor 31) nor "*crie-de-coeur*" from a heated, bitter, and unwilling agnostic (Smith, "Appreciation" 223), but an objective equivalent of all those feelings the speaker's rationalist scepticism has brought him: alienation, frustration, despair, and resentment at the injustice of it all. The closing lines are cooler and quieter, and have a universal perspective--

Enough. As yet disquiet clings
 About us. Rest shall we.

--but they leave the tension in the poem between revelation and reason unresolved. The agnostic speaker and the judgmental congregation both lack the ability to perceive the value in each other's position. Who can say which of them is the more impercipient or self-deceived? In this confused, uncertain state of things, where rationalist and revelationist knowledge leads to bitterness and meaninglessness, the logical and emotional outcome is nescience.

II

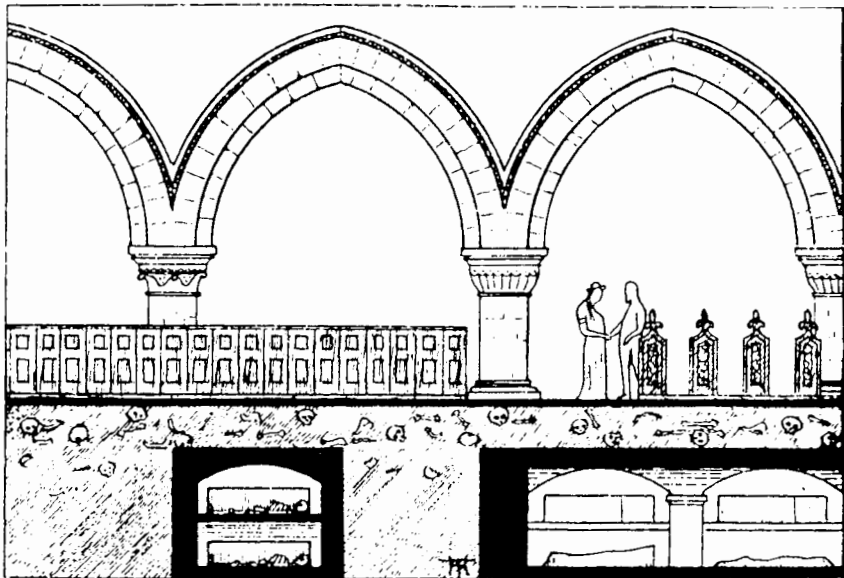
When a diligent country-parson, whose hobby is retrieving paintings from city slums in the hope of discovering "some worthy canvas" or "precious art-feat," toils past midnight on a Saturday, rubbing off the "grime-films" from his "latest capture," we wait for the crescent idolatry to be rebuked:

a first fresh spot, a high light, looked forth,
 Then another, like fair flesh, and another;
 Then a curve, a nostril, and next a finger,
 Tapering, shapely, significantly pointing slantwise.
 'Flemish?' I said. 'Nay, Spanish. . . . But, nay, Italian!'
 --Then meseemed it the guise of the ranker Venus,
 Named of some Astarte, of some Cotytto.
 Down I knelt before it and kissed the panel,
 Drunk with the lure of love's inhibited dreamings.

Till the dawn I rubbed, when there leered up at me
 A hag, that had slowly emerged from under my hands there,
 Pointing the slanted finger towards a bosom
 Eaten away of a rot from the lusts of a lifetime. . . .
 --I could have ended myself at the lashing lesson!
 Stunned I sat till roused by a clear-voiced bell-chime,
 Fresh and sweet as the dew-fleece under my luthern.
 It was the matin service calling to me
 From the adjacent steeple.

("The Collector Cleans His Picture" CPW 2: 388)

And when a woman, alone in an ancient church with a man she does not love, risks her soul by falsely admitting to loving him, merely because he is "soon to die"; and a sketch accompanying the poem shows a cross-section of what the couple stand on--a floor of "paving-stones"; below that a stratum of earth



(Hardy's sketch illustrating "Her Dilemma" CPW 1: 16; enlargement mine)

inlaid haphazardly with human skulls and bones; then, sealed in crypts, coffins containing human skeletons--we know that, in time, she too will die, the cosmic process consigning her to the subterranean world of degradation:

She would have given a world to breathe 'yes' truly,
 So much his life seemed hanging on her mind,
 And hence she lied, her heart persuaded thoroughly
 'Twas worth her soul to be a moment kind.

But the sad need thereof, his nearing death,
 So mocked humanity that she shamed to prize
 A world conditioned thus, or care for breath
 Where Nature such dilemmas could devise.

Both poems dramatise Hardy's artistic imagination penetrating beneath the conscious surface of things to an ironical underlayer of reality: the spiritual degeneration of the parson and the futility of the woman's gesture. As we saw in the discussion of symbolic setting (in ch. 3) and of tragedy (in ch. 4), Hardy deliberately applied his mind to revealing the "tragical mysteries of life," a task demanding from poet and novelist a penetrative faculty of "scenic" awareness (*L&W* 192); and by this faculty he meant the ability to see not only the significance in a landscape, but also the fragile and precarious structure of values on which civilised people base their daily life. He looked at society and the underlying reality of those cosmic forces that are beyond human control, and that therefore threaten to--and actually do--subvert, disrupt, or dissolve the work of the ethical process as embodied in certitudes of religion, science, and morality. A major philosophical stance towards "the Worst" that occurs within Hardy's aesthetic of scenic awareness is in keeping with this undermining perspective or "undervision,"¹⁰ sometimes focusing on repercussive ironies in social behaviour, sometimes desiring to escape from all such awareness and seek refuge in unconsciousness and even death itself. That is the stance of nescience.

3. Nescience

For Reason is rank in my temples,
 And Vision unruly.'

("The Mother Mourns" *CPW* 1: 147)

Whereas the first two sources of solace both exalt as absolute a transcendent truth--revelation and reason--be it in the form of intuitive and institutionalised or of philosophical and scientific knowledge, nescience seeks to assert the absence of such truth and knowledge. The first-person speaker who has assimilated the assumptions and attitudes of nescience, and makes assertions within the terms of that framework, scorns both noumenal and phenomenal knowledge. To the nescient speaker, proud claims for religion or science are equally ludicrous, for he regards visionary imagination and rational logic as mere constructs of the human mind, pathetic glorifications of consciousness which are always vulnerable to the immutable forces of cosmic unconsciousness, the Immanent Will. Hardy's comment on man's inhumanity to animals (discussed in the previous chapter, pt III)¹¹ applies with especial force to certitudes, sanctities, and proprieties of civilised life, for

¹⁰ The words "under-purpose" ("Lines" *CPW* 1: 104) and "undervoicings" ("A Commonplace Day" *CPW* 1: 148) act as lexical models for my own Hardyesque formation *undervision*, by which I mean awareness of "tragical mysteries" lying beneath everyday life (*L&W* 192); the perspective from which the ethical process seems constantly vulnerable and susceptible to cosmic forces; an ironical view of the external reality created and prized by "civilised," respectable mankind; the ability to discern the "hid riot" of a world at peace ("According to the Mighty Working" *CPW* 2: 336). In one of his letters, Hopkins uses the term "underthought," meaning a submerged current of thought counterpointing the paraphrasable content of a lyric passage in a Greek tragedy, "an echo or shadow" of that content (see above, ch. 2n24).

¹¹ On the (apparent) supremacy of the cosmic process, see above, ch. 4, pt V.

The fact is that when you get to the bottom of things you find no bed-rock of righteousness to rest on--nature is *unmoral*--& our puny efforts are those of people who try to keep their leaky house dry by wiping off the waterdrops from the ceiling.

(17 Oct. 1906; *CL* 3: 231)

Putting it another way, the nescient speaker shares Schopenhauer's sceptical derision of man-made order based on paltry attempts of the human mind to tame cosmic forces and strictly confine them in its concepts. As A. O. J. Cockshut suggests, Hardy, being merely an amateur philosopher, was deeply influenced by "the *tone* of his [Schopenhauer's] thinking" (144).

If the distinctive tone of nescience is Schopenhauerian, the device Hardy employs to dramatise an attitude of derision is a satirical and counter-Romantic one. Hardy had decidedly satirical tendencies, and these cover a fairly wide range of intensities and directions. The tonal scale in Hardy's satiric stance includes the topically critical, as in "Christmas: 1924" (*CPW* 3: 256)--

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

--where Hardy's contempt (apparent in the doggerel feminine rhyme of the first couplet) for the humanitarian failure of Christianity in the twentieth-century builds up, through the metaphor of collective progress, into an anticlimax of acrid indignation, with which he unmasks the folly of investing all one's faith in the ostensibly sanctifying power of the Church. Hardy's satire also includes the personally vicious, as in those two bitter epitaphs on Moore and Chesterton he dictated from his death-bed (*CPW* 3: 308-09). But integral to the tone of the nescient position is derisive, undercutting laughter; indeed, to avoid creating the impression of having "gratuitous[ly] belittl[ed]" some London cognoscenti, Hardy said he destroyed some "satirical notes" he had made on them (*L&W* 408). But Hardy's primary metaphor to present a negative undervision of the ordered human world is the child. Replying to an Anglican clergyman who had asked him to name the cruellest blood-sport, Hardy satirised human "barbarism" (his own angry word) by adopting an inhuman persona who professes compassion even while his language betrays aloof, logical detachment, a technique redolent of Swift's *A Modest Proposal*:

I can only say generally that the prevalence of those sports that consist in the pleasure of watching a fellow-creature, weaker & less favoured than ourselves, in its struggles to escape the death-agony we mean to inflict by a treacherous contrivance, seems to me one of the many convincing proofs that we have not yet emerged from barbarism.

In the present state of affairs there would appear to be no reason why the children, say, of overcrowded families should not be used for sporting purposes. There would be no difference in principle: moreover these children would often escape lives intrinsically less happy than those of wild birds & animals.

(2 Mar. 1904; *CL* 3: 110)

In the second paragraph, the dispassionate use of adverbs--especially the horrific, inverse implication of the ostensibly attractive "often"--is chilling. The substitution of child for animal at once enlarges the emotional scale and decisively evacuates the social practice of any moral value. In several poems, Hardy creates, through the eyes of a child, a negative undervision both of revelation, seeing it as moral hypocrisy, and of rationalism, seeing it as dogmatic egotism.

It is in the posturing confidence in maintained appearances and surfaces that nescience locates the inadequacy of revelation and rationalism as sources of solace. One irreverent exposure of moral pretension is

that in the second poem in the series entitled "Satires of Circumstance," which appears in the volume bearing the same name. Having delivered a cogent sermon that suffocates and embalms his gullible parishioners, not in doctrine, but in fragrant emotion,

the preacher glides to the vestry-door,
And shuts it, and thinks he is seen no more.

The door swings softly ajar meanwhile,
And a pupil of his in the Bible class,
Who adores him as one without gloss or guile,
Sees her idol stand with a satisfied smile
And re-enact at the vestry-glass
Each pulpit gesture in deft dumb-show
That had moved the congregation so.

("In Church" CPW 2: 141)

Here the pupil's disillusionment becomes the satiric vehicle for the nescient perspective of derision aimed at the formal trappings (the "circumstance") of institutionalised religion; against the preacher's self-assured, but narcissistically limited, vision of himself Hardy mischievously counterpoises the child's ingenuous perception of the scene. Similarly, with the concluding image in "The Children and Sir Nameless" (CPW 2: 399), Hardy achieves a sense of derisive iconoclasm by setting the child's world against the adult's. Hardy juxtaposes the obstreperous unruliness of the children ("romping," "Trample," "yap and yell") and the misopaedistic protestations of a puffed-up old crosspatch, who implements his demeaning prejudice against children by issuing a mean-spirited command, "Go keep them harnessed to their set routines" (line 5), and then tries to cut an unfeeling, aristocratic figure with a cynical, Baconian *sententia*: "For green remembrance there are better means / Than offspring, who but wish their sires away" (lines 7-8)--which in diction and syntax echoes, perhaps, "Of Parents and Children":

Children sweeten labours, but they make misfortunes more bitter: they increase the cares of life, but they mitigate the *remembrance* of death. The *perpetuity* by generation is common to beasts, but memory [i.e., being remembered], merit, and noble works are proper to men. And surely a man shall see the noblest works and foundations have proceeded from childless men, which have sought to express the *images* of their minds, where those of their bodies have failed.

(essay 7, 79; emphases mine)

But to such an incongruous juxtaposition, of volatile energy and calculating dignity, an ironical outcome is both inevitable and comic. Secure in his own egotism, "Sir Nameless" expedites the construction of his one and only "work"--a statue of himself--seeking to impose on the world his own personal image. But never has deliberate, fastidious self-exaltation been so humiliatingly guyed, for even in Shelley's "Ozymandias" (a poem which Hardy's theme of futile egotism recalls) it is at least the passing of vast stretches of time that diminishes human vanity, not the nonchalant sporting of several generations of listless schoolchildren. Indeed, the heart of the comedy in Hardy's poem lies in the way the language of shrewd rationality, which endeavours to outwit and transcend time, commits itself to an antique cast of poetic register that the blunt, juvenile diction of the concluding lines will travesty:

Sir Nameless of that mansion said anon:
'To be perpetuate for my mightiness
Sculpture must image me when I am gone.'
--He forthwith summoned carvers . . .

What might have been felt as tragic waste is rendered patently ridiculous vaingloriousness by "must image me"; and what provides the ironical crux of the satire is, on the one hand, the nobleman's actual¹² physical height, "stretching seven-odd feet / (For he was tall)" and, on the other hand, his very lack of immortalising "lineage" (line 18)--the nemesis of which occurs when the church-restorers consider the large alabaster effigy

Best fitted for the floor. There it was placed,
Under the seats for schoolchildren. And they
Kicked out his name, and hobnailed off his nose;
And, as they yawn through sermon-time, they say,
'Who was this old stone man beneath our toes?'

The schoolchildren (and all schoolchildren ever after, as the historic present tense suggests) are unimpressed by the statue (its impact gone, lying horizontal) and unwittingly mock the earnest heroics of the anonymous subject of the sculpture, whose absurdly ponderous self-approbation by means of the mimic-royal "my mightiness" finally collapses in that superbly hilarious rhyme of his arrogantly cultivated "nose" and their wantonly destructive "toes"--a rhyme made especially comic by means of crude monosyllabic diction, including the robust enallage of noun-playing-verb in "hobnailed," the nursery compound "sermon-time," and a pair of vigorously privative phrasal verbs using "out" and "off." No longer erect with dignity, nor in possession of a haughty nose, the nobleman lies at the mercy of those who "yawn" and who are vaguely conscious of him as merely a lifeless and unknown "old stone man." Hardy's spatial imagery--locating the statue beneath the seats and toes of those who used to "yap and yell"--implies a moral value in keeping with the destructive, degrading nonchalance of the cosmic process. Hardy means the eventual location and treatment of the anonymous nobleman to obliterate the aristocratic identity and pedigree, to trivialise the secure egotism the statue represents, and so to deride the putative moral grandeur and confident sophistication of (adult) society. Hardy achieves a similar effect of negative undervision in "The Child and the Sage" (*CPW* 2: 380), where the adult's acceptance of life's vicissitudes (piercing cold, debilitating disease, the heartache of love) recalls the Jobian response--patient, reasonable, and submissive to a scheme of things larger than the individual, as in "What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2.10). But however brief the adult may perceive an adversity to be, it remains, in the child's view, burdensome:

And thus you do not count upon
Continuance of joy;
But, when at ease, expect anon
A burden of annoy.

--where the rhyme succinctly describes the sophisticated economy inherent in the adult's religious-rational source of solace. The child's parting inquiry brings into view the fact that while it may be rational to accept woe as part of life, the existence of woe is not thereby justified:

But, Sage--this Earth--why not a place
Where no reprisals reign,
Where never a spell of pleasantness
Makes reasonable a pain?

Here interrupted speech suggests the pressure of an earnest and genuinely reasonable objection finally released, an interruption that allows the framework of the topic to gain universal significance. All that the sage's consolatory presuppositions and general outlook of glibly rationalistic optimism offer the child is a

¹² Vern Lentz and Douglas Short comment: "Hardy effectively denies us the possibility of interpreting the statue's size as an indication of grandeur by explaining that the sculptor was merely reflecting reality" (371-72).

world instinct with unavoidable "reprisals" and "pain"; therefore the child rejects the implied cosmic equilibrium, challenges the logical necessity for the existence of woe, without gradual evolution of painlessness in the world, and poses a final question as disturbing and as natural as that of Defoe's ingenuous Friday: "why God no kill the devil, so make him no more do wicked?" (220). Springing from a level of consciousness free from any blind conformity or pious attachment to absolute and rigid conceptualisations of social, moral, and spiritual order, the child's perspective, used by Hardy as a satiric metaphor for his negative undervision, implicitly slights the adult world of sophisticated consciousness.

In all these poems, Hardy's satiric metaphor of the child's unsophisticated perspective is extracted from and framed out of the central assumption of nescience: that, in a universe hopelessly equipped to accommodate highly developed, conscious beings (in Hardy's words, "This planet does not supply the materials for happiness to higher existences" *L&W* 227), consciousness makes life irksome and woeful; and hence it is better not to possess consciousness at all. Various vectors of disaffection and withdrawal from human consciousness occur in Hardy's concept of nescience, ranging from an intense longing for the death of consciousness to a resigned waiting for death itself. By means of delectory definition, the speaker in "Before Life and After" (*CPW* 1: 333) delineates a pastoral world where conditions were blissful, until "the birth of consciousness" transformed an Eden into a Golgotha; that is, although "all went well" once, a quality of awareness accidentally evolved that made the loss of physical life, pleasure, and beauty agonising:

But the disease of feeling germed,
And primal rightness took the tinct of wrong;
Ere nescience shall be reaffirmed
How long, how long?

Here we see that Hardy's nescience is remote indeed from soothing Victorian evasion of the disagreeable (Houghton 413); this nescient speaker can surmise a time of universal harmony of parts only because he has honestly confronted the awful, discordant miseries inherent in human existence, and concluded that "feeling" has a moral dimension. But when happiness is merely a matter of not regarding pain to be a physical or mental evil, then reflective consciousness becomes a cosmic plague, "a mistake of God's" ("I Travel as a Phantom Now" *CPW* 2: 194), provoking the anguished cry of the righteous man persecuted (see, for instance, Psalms 6.3, 13.1, and 94.3), desperate for relief from the unavoidable repercussions of moral and emotional sentience. Here, then, nescience means the desire to regress to a primordial condition of things, a retro-millennial wish expressed in the full knowledge of the clash between ethical and cosmic processes. The holographic versions of a poem published much later, "The Aërolite" (*CPW* 3: 87), provide us with a couple of glosses on "nescience": namely, "innocence" and "wise nonsense," to which Hardy ultimately preferred "ignorance." While the Immanent Will's restoration of universal insentience--of "Earth's old-established ignorance" and "Normal unawareness" ("The Aërolite")--remains vague and abstract, the waiting for personal extinction is precisely focused by Hardy. The speaker in "The Dead Man Walking" (*CPW* 1: 267), for instance, chronicles his encounter with a world totally incommensurate with his human faculties of apprehension, imagination, and creativity; he gives, in explanation of his present condition, an account of calamities that gradually deprived him, a passionate, romantic man, of an intense and conscious commitment to life through human enterprise, social relationship, and sexual love, until he

changed into the corpse-thing
I am to-day;

Yet is it that, though whiling
The time somehow

In walking, talking, smiling,
I live not now.

To this speaker, lost to the world about him, merely existing without genuine intellectual, moral, or emotional engagement, nothing really matters; and the bleached, flat diction registers that involuntary disembodiment as an indifference to life (see "I Am the One" *CPW* 3: 169). Between these two poles of being--desire for unconsciousness and waiting for death--several kinds of nescience exert pressure on one another. David Perkins, for instance, has drawn attention to a typical form of Hardyian nescience which he defines as simple-minded, unreflective awareness, possessed mainly by children, rustic persons, birds, animals, trees, "and other subhuman species" (254, 257).¹³ This is nescience in the sense of "the non-knowing, the antithesis of Science" (as Hardy himself puts it in *LN* 2: 226). Hillis Miller finds another nescient stance to the traumatic effect on mankind of the conflict between cosmic and ethical processes; that is, a deliberate withdrawal of the mind from external reality "to a position of detached watchfulness" (*Distance* 5). This observation, however, is reliable and valid only up to a point, because the idea of a timid spectator "quietly watching on the sidelines" and "from a safe distance" (as Miller claims, *Distance* 6-7) is alien to Hardy's dramatisation of nescience. True, Miller goes on to note such a spectator's tone of voice as having a "slightly acerbic flavour" (7), but I would want to insist on a more robust, caustic, and derisive tang, conveyed in a poem such as "Shut Out That Moon" (*CPW* 1: 265) for example, or, an even more severe negation of involvement with the external world, "Tess's Lament" (*CPW* 1: 216). All the depersonalising grotesqueness implied by that phrase "the corpse-thing" (quoted earlier from "The Dead Man Walking") is assimilated into and characterises the impulse behind Tess's self-revilement when she speaks for all who see themselves as victims of relentless cosmic forces, expressing her resentful desire for personal annihilation:

I cannot bear my fate as writ,
I'd have my life unbecome;
Would turn my memory to a blot,
Make every relic of me rot,
My doings be as they were not,
And leave no trace of me!

Finally, in another manifestation of the desire to remove consciousness from the Earth, in "The Mother Mourns" (*CPW* 1: 144), Hardy creates a dramatic monologue in which Nature, in conventional role of mother, unwittingly reveals her petulant vanity and incompetence when she is criticised by her "children," mankind. Or, to put it another way, this ironical line of nescience circles round, although the ends do not meet. We have seen that Hardy uses the deflationary perspective of the child to present a negative undervision of hypocrisy and egotism; now, he uses the trauma of someone spuriously revered and stupidly self-important, exposed and deflated by the unintended development of human perspicacity, to articulate another nescient wish--the degeneration (the "wane" line 80) of the whole bungled planet and, with it, the botch of consciousness into chaos ("distortions" line 82). Gone are the assumptions of unthinking men that enabled Mother Nature to disguise her mismanagement of Creation; but what she is accustomed to is blind acceptance by "crude," simple-minded creatures ("'Every best thing', said they, 'to best purpose / Her powers preordain.'" lines 71-72), not criticism from "keen" ones. Ironically, human consciousness is a cosmic contingency for which the cosmos did not bargain and cannot control:

¹³ Hardy dramatises the lack of insight and of sophisticated awareness in poems like "The Man He Killed" (*CPW* 1: 344), "Night in the Old Home" (*CPW* 1: 325), "The Bedridden Peasant to an Unknowing God" (*CPW* 1: 159), "An Unkindly May" (*CPW* 3: 174), "The Sheep-Boy" (*CPW* 3: 109), "Proud Songsters" (*CPW* 3: 167), "At Day-Close in November" (*CPW* 2: 43), and "An August Midnight" (*CPW* 1: 184).

'Man's mountings of mind-sight I checked not,
 Till range of his vision
 Now tops my intent, and finds blemish
 Throughout my domain.

'He holds as inept his own soul-shell--
 My deftest achievement--
 Contemns me for fitful inventions
 Ill-timed and inane.

But Mother Nature herself lacks the capacity to appreciate the significance of man's critical insight; grasping at more adulation than he can give, she loses all. Offended by the volatile energies of man's mind--reason, imagination, intellect, and their combinations--she disparages his brain, exalts his body. Consequently, the "keen" creatures seem driven to destroying their environment in disgust and frustration with its gross imperfections. This is the nescience of tragicomedy or, as Paul Zietlow argues, a blend of "sorriness and grandeur, tragedy and farce" (*Moments* 137); indeed, in locating another level of nescience, Hardy has made the poem a curious marriage of ridiculous egotism, catastrophic loss, and petty complaint.

But all these nescient positions may be subsumed under a view that defines nescience according to a complex of experiences in the face of "the Worst"; and this complex has been assembled by Robert McCarthy ("Void" 91-93) with terms culled from Perkins, Pinsky, and Miller--tragic sensitivity (or the lonely burden of consciousness) creates a "nostalgia for unconsciousness that reduces to a desire for invulnerability" (91) or "withdrawal from impinging reality" (92) and ultimately produces the experience of "death-in-life" (93). For all that, though, none of these critics mention the tone of derision that is crucial in the mind of Hardy, as are two further tones that spring from his negative undervision. A critic needs to appreciate how derision lives side-by-side, and often mingles, in Hardy's mind with defiance and despair--all three being normal and essential ingredients of the nescient stance towards "the Worst."

We catch a hint of defiance in "Childhood among the Ferns" (*CPW* 3: 199), where in addition to the comic-derisive vitality of Hardy's negative undervision, we get a sense of a withdrawal from full intimate engagement in the external world. Sheltered from the rain by a roof of ferns until the sun comes out, the little speaker wishes to resist the unremitting process of mutability, mortality, and impersonality of human existence:

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

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

However, the unflinching declaration of self-sufficiency ("thus") and the querulously defiant "should" imply a rejection of the cosmic process that is nihilistic and absurd--nihilistic, because the recalcitrant child desires absolute, and therefore absolutely self-destructive, freedom from external reality; and absurd, because the desire is irrational, subjective, and futile. So Hardy uses the child's perspective as a satiric metaphor not only to deride mankind's cultured, adult attempts to control the cosmic forces, but also to dramatise a defiant withdrawal from the moral-psychological arena created by those forces. As we have seen (in the previous chapter), Hardy's sense of the tragic and his sense of the comic were characteristically and profoundly

isomorphous and interlinked; as he said in 1888, "If you look beneath the surface of any farce you see a tragedy; and, on the contrary, if you blind yourself to the deeper issues of a tragedy you see a farce" (*L&W* 224).

All three "In Tenebris"-poems are, one might say, poems of nescience, exploring, as they do, self-protective withdrawal of the individual from external--where the emphasis is on social, moral, and material--reality. However, Hardy presents different aspects of nescience in each poem; and these variations are largely attributable to the distinctive tones of derision, defiance, and despair we have been looking at. For instance, although the first poem in the set ends on the word "unhope," the imagery, structure, and verse techniques suggest that the one predominant tone in that poem is one of defiance, not "numb despair" (Steele 73). A close comparison of the poetic mode in each of these remarkable poems of spiritual darkness will illustrate further how Hardy achieves a rich interplay between the three main nescient tones.

Hardy's use of dramatic voices is so subtle in these three poems that a differentiation of the main speakers or protagonists, as it were, seems in order. William Buckler credits the dramatic status of this trio of poems, insisting that "the profoundly personal ruminations of the speaker in the *In Tenebris* poems are [not Hardy's]" (*Poetry* 216; see also 220). But Buckler assumes that there is throughout only one protagonist, whose three utterances form a "carefully calculated artifice" (218), a metaphor for life. My own view is that the attitudes to life presented in each poem diverge markedly enough for the reader to take the poems as separate but related, and their speakers as three different protagonists. To take the most obvious divergence, the speaker in "In Tenebris II" not only satirises his contemporaries, but also spiritedly affirms the harsh reality rejected by the speakers in the first and third poems. Lodged in a mental state of nescience, withdrawn from external reality, annihilating all that is made to a black thought in a black shade (if I may muddy Marvell's image of secular bliss), three separate speakers cry out on their life in the late-Victorian world, collectively indicting that world in tones that mix varying proportions of defiance, derision, and despair.

To start with the common title, "In Tenebris," one can see that the series is so named by Hardy in satiric ambiguity, since the poems present not merely the melancholy of the three speakers, but rather melancholy in relation to the blindness of those around them. Hardy has achieved this ambiguity by altering the title under which the poems first appeared in *Poems of the Past and the Present*, "De Profundis" (*CPW* 1: 206), which is the opening phrase of Psalm 130 in the Vulgate, "De profundis clamavi ad te, Domine" ("Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord"), and is traditionally associated with a plea for mercy. The rejection of the original title implies that there is no penitential attitude intended in any of the three poems nor are they addressed to the psalmist's God. The Latin preposition *de* ("from") requires a collaborating *ad* ("to"), whereas the preposition *in* is self-sufficient and non-reporting. Putting it another way, the three protagonists do not speak to any listener in particular; they commune with themselves in private, articulating a spiritual condition, a quality of being, that has three dimensions: derision, defiance, and despair. Those are the chief attitudes which the speakers, having all been brought low, adopt towards the forces that degraded them.

Similarly, in the first poem, Hardy uses the Latin epigraph (meaning "Smitten am I as grass, and withered is my heart") to evoke and counterpoint the attitudes of spiritual dependence in the psalm from which it is taken. In both poem and psalm, we hear the voice of a man, who has been personally wronged, pouring out a complaint against that injustice. In Hardy's poem, however, the speaker has no prayer of praise and supplication to offer, does not look for help, and dwells instead on what his world has been reduced to, devastated by the unstoppable processes of Nature that continue indifferent to the suffering they cause to human beings:

'Percussus sum sicut foenum, et aruit cor meum.'--Ps. ci.

Wintertime nighs;
But my bereavement-pain
It cannot bring again:
Twice no one dies.

Subsidence, loss, deprivation, depletion, exhaustion--all diminutions of the spirit that are associated with that lifeless time of year--the speaker feels as one general "bereavement," and also for him as the chief "pain" of his own ("my") life. He feels he has lost every source of spiritual energy that might give him a sense of being humanly alive. Emotionally fatigued, the approach of "Wintertime" cannot move him to grief; his despair is itself a form of death, a state beyond feeling. Hardy incorporates the verse from the Vulgate merely to resist and work away from the inherited responses of pious prostration it might bring into the reader's mind; by dwelling intensively on the speaker's affliction, Hardy frustrates any glib religiousness or pat, unthinking gesture of the reader's heart. Hardy scrupulously keeps the speaker's utterance clear of the slightest prospect of consolation. William Buckler claims that the speaker "may feel [differently] if or when he revives from the dormancy of this 'Wintertime' of spirit" (*Poetry* 220). But this insistence seems a somewhat facile and fallacious inference drawn from silence, a tendentious substitution of wishful speculation for textual evidence; the sustained imaginative movement of the poem is, emphatically and rhythmically,¹⁴ not from "recognition" of reality to "reconciliation" (Buckler's terms, 219), but from despair towards defiance, as we shall see. Only by recognising that Hardy means the supplicatory epigraph sardonically can one interpret what the hiemal metaphor engenders in the poem--a dominant current of confrontation. Having nothing more of which he can be dispossessed, not even hope, the speaker cannot conceive of anything beyond "Wintertime," certainly not Spring. To the nescient speaker, vanished blossoms, dead birds, grey leaves, and violent storms--all the sad, cold etcetera of winter--do not a seasonal cycle make. Without the psalmist's faith and patience, without spiritual light and sight, bereft of all sense or sources (actual and potential) of personal warmth, this nescient speaker, for one, refuses to feel involved in or to respond to the deceptive processes of Nature, in keeping with a passing thought Hardy had jotted down in one of his pocket-books some ten years earlier:

The Hypocrisy of things. Nature is an arch-dissembler. A child is deceived completely:
the older members of society more or less according to their penetration; though even
they seldom get to realize that *nothing* is as it appears.

(L&W 182)

The nescient speaker in "In Tenebris I" may seem to accept his desolation, but only in exasperation and sullen resentment.

At the same time, having withdrawn from the world about him, he also refuses to be psychologically passive and inert, merely waiting for the process of biological death to include him unawares. However pragmatically futile the gesture, this nescient speaker takes up an attitude of considered, calculated resistance to the ineluctable forces of the cosmic process, not of course with any confidence but most certainly with some dignity; and his brooding, saturnine defiance, tinged as it is with the sardonic as well as the despairing, takes several forms:

Wintertime nighs;
But my bereavement-pain

¹⁴ Buckler himself says that the rhythm of "In Tenebris I" is like that of "a stately funeral march" (*Poetry* 217-18). Agreed; but surely if the overall mood is funereal, then it is also final, not "temporary," as he later asserts (220). Bailey concurs: "The symbol of winter denies Shelley's line from 'Ode to the West Wind,' 'If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?' Hardy's 'in unhope' is an absolute negative, stronger than 'without hope'" (*H&C* 181).

It cannot bring again:
Twice no one dies.

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

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

With a futile-defiant rebuke similar to John of Gaunt's in *Richard II*, of subject standing up to sovereign, the nescient speaker attempts to set a limit to the cosmic domain, an area of domination beyond the reach of regnant Nature. When the King patronisingly "decrees" longevity, Gaunt abruptly exposes the imposture:

KING RICHARD

Why, uncle, thou hast many years to live.

JOHN OF GAUNT

But not a minute, King, that thou canst give.
Shorten my days thou canst with sudden sorrow,
And pluck nights from me, but not lend a morrow.
Thou canst help time to furrow me with age,
But stop no wrinkle in his pilgrimage.
Thy word is current with him for my death,
But dead, thy kingdom cannot buy my breath.

(1.3.218-25)

In "In Tenebris I," the series of syntactic oppositions weighs the relentlessness of predictable, natural process against the resistance to pain of individually willed cessation.

Another form of nescient opposition manifests itself in the versification of the poem. One technique is the terminal placing of a strong caesura in the opening line of each stanza, so that the emphasis creates an entirely separate existence for the speaker, an alternative order of being. Then to assert this sense of an independent identity, Hardy uses a rhyming couplet whose rhythm is dynamic and assured, both in its syntactic thrust into the third line of a stanza and also in the pressure of feeling generated by consonantal texture, an effect that occurs throughout the poem, but especially in lines 2, 3, 7, 10, 11, 14, and 23. For instance, in lines 2 and 3, the hiatus caused by adjacent plosive consonants interrupts, resists, and retards any glib passage of ideas, and forces the reader to dwell consciously on the severity of the speaker's loss and emotional emptiness. And when the speaker, intent on thwarting the cosmic process, claims a freedom from serious pain or sorrowful loss--when these enjambed, trimeter couplets intrude between and keep apart the rhyming first and last lines of each quatrain--that immunity reflects his refractory attitude towards the indifferent cosmic process, a stance that in turn rests on the belief that he is inviolable, having nothing left to lose or to smart. So even though Hardy ends each quatrain in a way that answers the opening line--that is, with a dimeter corresponding to the dimeter that establishes the constant properties of Nature--the reversion ironically invokes a material condition of the cosmic process as the incontrovertible, logical premise of the speaker's recalcitrant invulnerability.

That shift from a quotidian dimeter, a line compact with commonplace experience, to a dimeter astringent, systolic, pinched at the quick, serves to indicate the nescient speaker's grim effort to resist the effects of the cosmic process by distancing himself from the material conditions of his natural surroundings. One manifestation of this determined, combative spirit is the threefold reference to time in each quatrain. The

use of the present tense upsets the balance between speaker and setting by emphasising the very act of speaking. Then, when the speaker refers to previous occasions of his misery, he puts a marked interval between himself and his autumnal environment. Finally, the speaker claims exemption from future pain of loss; neither loss of human warmth nor loss of his own life has the power to disconcert him, because his faith in life has in fact gone, as has his fear of death. The joint effect of these temporal stances is to cut off the speaker from the world about him; he wants nothing to do with his environment. The same attitude of defiant and bitter protest against the cosmic process, the attempt (albeit ultimately futile) to shun it, impels the speaker's blocking the reader from full access to specific, concrete details of the setting. The speaker also obtrusively debars personal lyric detail; images occur in isolation, without impinging on or creating contexts for one another, a discrete mode of perception that suggests a consciousness disturbed and violated by the processes of Nature. Hardy allows the speaker to create no clearly delineated scene into which we can be drawn. Instead, Hardy develops a second focus for the speaker, a detached perspective that enables the speaker to put even more distance between himself and his environment, as well as between himself and the reader.

In the second half of "In Tenebris I," the nescient speaker ostensibly eliminates himself, a self-effacement indicated by the transformation of pronouns from first to third person. That is, although stanzaic symmetry persists, the speaker's focus shifts; in the last three stanzas, the first-person speaker describes himself from a narrative perspective that supplements the initial lyric perspective:

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

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

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

(13-24)

Here the nescient speaker's persona of narrator allows him both of two positions: he can clarify and justify his own world, the world of "bereavement," by providing an explanatory context for it; and he can suggest a relationship between his own detachment and some wider perspective. In stanzas 4 to 6, the narrative perspective explains the speaker's emotional condition, and in that way helps us understand compassionately the nescient speaker's inner "darkness," as when the "narrator" informs us that the protagonist is friendless, indifferent to passionate love, and unperturbed by the prospect of death. At the same time, the widening of focus gives us a view from outside the speaker's subjectivity; so that his external references to himself have the accumulated effect of universalising his nescient position. Hardy achieves, in fact, more than a narrative detachment for the nescient speaker; Hardy erects a boundary not only between the speaker and his natural environment, but also between the speaker and his suffering. For the narrative voice, theoretically uninvolved in the "protagonist's" suffering, speaks in his behalf, corroborating the assertions of the first half of the poem, and turning the "protagonist" into a representative figure of humanity. Once Hardy has established the process of mortality as a relentless progression towards extinction, the abrupt pronominal shift confers a distinctive authority on the opening lines of the last three quatrains--the lines suddenly strike one with a gnomic

authority and resonance reaching back centuries, in literary allusion, to the aphorisms of Anglo-Saxon poetry, where we find formulations such as "Forst sceal freosan, fyr wudu meltan" ("Frost freezes; fire consumes wood") and "Winter sceal geweorpan, weder eft cuman" ("Winter wanes; fair weather comes again").¹⁵ In this view, the nescient speaker stands for all human beings inasmuch as his material and emotional condition is the archetype of the gradual abatement of activities essential to humanity. Static and silent, without the energy of faith or the warmth of relationship, this nescient speaker reflects on the entropic processes of mutability; and in the face of the dread inevitability of oblivion, the sheer negativity of human existence, the "protagonist" becomes the hero of the wise "narrator."

However, the narrative perspective of the "protagonist's" position comes into its own in the closing quatrain of the poem, where Hardy stages a subversive tableau with two structural and thematic deviations:

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

(21-24)

First, the choice of "death," where the progression from "friends" (line 14) to "love" (line 18) leads one to expect a correspondingly affirmative word in line 22--"life," for instance--defies both the logical and the stanzaic symmetry of the last three quatrains. The second deviation arises from the first and is more complex than it. Imaging night as an impenetrable covering, Hardy not only evokes the physical sense of blackness, he also activates the idea of a tangible funereal cloth in the rhyming syllable of "appal," so that the primary, moral sense of the word is reduced. The pun suggests that the arrival of the "protagonist's" own death will not come as a calamitous shock, nor will even the thought of death silence or subdue him. The pun further attributes to the "protagonist" a fearless, triumphant spirit consonant with the Pauline boast "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory" (1 Cor. 15.55¹⁶); and this attitude of triumph seems to derive from the absolute conviction of the ambiguous phrase ("past doubtings all") in the next line. But assurance about what? Any expectation we may have of a final declaration of faith or hope, however, is frustrated when Hardy deflates the apparently definitive commitment with the privative prefix "un-," suggesting that through its prolonged absence, hope has now become not just impossible, but inconceivable; the "protagonist's" soul has settled into a state of zero expectancy. This second deviation (instead of "hope" we get "unhope") has a further level of meaning. In addition to the pun, the ambiguity, and the neologism, the "narrator" tangentially alludes, in his closing observation, to the closing line of another poem about darkness--"They also serve who only stand and wait," from Milton's sonnet on his blindness. But whereas Milton's poem affirms the traditional values of patience and faithfulness, Hardy's poem calmly states as a certainty that to expect relief from spiritual "darkness" is futile--the kind of patient expectation we find in the very psalm from which Hardy culled "De Profundis," the original title of the "In Tenebris"-poems: "I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. / My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning" (Ps. 130.5-6 AV). The nescient speaker in "In Tenebris I" looks for no such auroral revelation or comfort to lift the grim and absolute darkness that covers what he values. On the contrary, to the person whose experience of the world has sharpened his consciousness of the process of mortality, who is uncowered by death, and to whom the patient suffering of a devoted servant is alien or obnoxious, faith is futile and irrational.

¹⁵ *Maxims* I.B.1 and 6; Shippey's text; translation mine, taking *sceal* to mean "always does, as a matter of necessity," implying the timeless present.

¹⁶ Hardy quotes directly from 1 Cor. 15 in "In Tenebris II" line 8.

Furthermore, these bathetic deviations decrease the "protagonist's" presence even more. For what they force us to recognise is that in his guise as narrator in the last three quatrains, the nescient speaker employs the stylised speech-rhythms characteristic of himself as protagonist in the first three quatrains. In fact, so accentuated, consistent, intense, and strained is the "narrator's" imitation of the protagonist's verbal traits that the all-too perfect imitation destroys itself. The reality of the desolate, first-person protagonist is narrowed to a mere idiolect, swallowed up in a bizarre style of speech. Putting it another way, the accumulated effect of the structural and thematic symmetry becomes, in the second half of the poem, self-caricature on the part of the nescient speaker. The speaker's ludicrously exaggerated adherence to his own features of speech reduces his consciousness not just to "consciousness of death" (as Robert McCarthy has it, "Void" 95), but to loss of reality, of identity, and of an active will, the speaker's final moment of self-diminution coinciding with the last word of the poem.

But while these deviations, together with the symbolic, textual "suicide" of the protagonist, prepare us for the poem to end, they also engender a concluding sense of absurdity that is crucial, I think, to the overall effect of "In Tenebris I." That by the end of the poem the tone is no longer purely despairing or defiant is due largely to the derision inherent in the nescient speaker's self-caricature of his astringent-morbid style. For it seems entirely in keeping with the negative undervision of nescience that the nescient speaker, acting as a detached narrator, should depict himself as melancholy and morbid and, at the same time, should imply a criticism of his *own* attitude of defiance towards the cosmic process. What saves him from the two extreme responses of insanity or actual suicide, as well as from the two less extreme responses of stoical passivity and cynical rage, is this self-parodic derision, this final wry mockery of his own position.

Although initially the speaker in the second poem in the set seems despondent, the note of derision on which "In Tenebris I" ends carries over into "In Tenebris II," but in an indirect and subtle way, which we need to look at carefully, since at least one major critic claims the speaker mocks his persecutors "aggressively" (Zietlow, *Moments* 175), while Peter Larkin feels taxed by the tone of the poem ("defensively ironic or painfully confessional, aggressively public or intensely, almost incoherently, private?" 6). The central lyric action, as it were, of "In Tenebris II" is an ideological dialogue within the broader context of the cosmic process as presented in the first poem; that is, Hardy gives personal injustice and desolation a social index by having the second nescient speaker in the series quote, unobtrusively, the speech of his contemporaries. In fact, the words and actions of the social majority, of "the many and strong" (line 1), monopolise the poem. But it is precisely that apparently unassailable, engrossing strength, a product of the ethical process, which this nescient speaker questions, derides, and undermines, as he seeks to define the "darkness" of the position in which he finds himself in the world. From the outset of the poem, where Hardy juggled with two Vulgate epigraphs, the speaker is an isolated, dissenting consciousness. The deleted epigraph (meaning "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing" Ps. 2.1 AV) suggests the speaker's detachment from the popular mind, while the epigraph Hardy edited and published (meaning "I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me . . . no man cared for my soul" Ps. 142.4 AV) suggests the speaker's lack of social identity or value:

'Considerabam ad dexteram, et videbam; et non erat qui cognosceret me. . . . Non est qui requirat animam meam.'--Ps. cxli.

When the clouds' swoln bosoms echo back the shouts of the many and strong
That things are all as they best may be, save a few to be right ere long,
And my eyes have not the vision in them to discern what to these is so clear,
The blot seems straightway in me alone; one better he were not here.

The opening quatrain of the poem emits a muted, mocking irony. From the ominously ambiguous cloud-image (hinting perhaps both at divine indifference to devotional acclaim and at a recurrence of deluvian destruction); from the obliquely repeated speech of the strident majority, whose moral optimism ("all") is "qualified, even contradicted, by an aside [e.g., "few"]" (*L&W* 224), and who are insincerely confident in scientific laws to perfect human society; from the words "vision" and "so," which impute blindness to the nescient speaker, the very possessor of negative undervision; from the pronominal shift (from first to third person) emphasising the vast moral superiority of the supercilious "many" over the "one"--from all of these uses of language emanates and spreads the irony that gathers satiric momentum through the hypermetric lines that persist in the second stanza:

The stout upstanders say, All's well with us: ruers have nought to rue!
And what the potent say so oft, can it fail to be somewhat true?
Breezily go they, breezily come; their dust smokes around their career,
Till I think I am one born out of due time, who has no calling here.

Here words indicating dignity and exuberant force--"stout," "potent," "breezily," "smokes," "career"--carry an undertone of pretentiousness; the glorious epithets and qualities of action are haunted by suggestions of corpulence, moral hypocrisy (the implied gulf between profession and practice iambically accentuated by Hardy in line 6: "And what the potent *say so oft*, can it fail to be *somewhat true?*"); and flippancy. Any apparent admiration for the flush majority is further earthed by such bold *double entendres* as the phallic hint in "stout upstanders" and "potent" (for which Hardy first wrote "vigorous"), an erotic energy Peter Casagrande associates with the self-confidence and hope Hardy himself seems to have lacked at the time of writing the "In Tenebris"-poems ("Line" 123), but which I associate with the nescient speaker's subversive derision that counteracts the self-image of abnormality and inadequacy (line 8) induced by the smug optimism of those around him. The derisive eroticism reappears at the beginning of the third stanza where it overlays the ensuing "complacent optimism" (Paulin 72), "the unctuous mouthing of pious sentiments and a sanctimonious prudery" (Houghton 408):

Their dawns bring lusty joys, it seems; their evenings all that is sweet;
Our times are blessed times, they cry: Life shapes it as is most meet,
And nothing is much the matter; there are many smiles to a tear;
Then what is the matter is I, I say. Why should such an one be here? . . .

The chief value here is an attitude to life, in terms of which the speaker's outlook of bold realism seems a moral weakness in English society, a distortion of proper values, a cultural abomination, a dark patch, a "blot." If this nescient speaker refuses to don a mask of conformity or a halo of virtue, he also rejects a blindfold of evasion and self-deception. As Hardy put it in one of his reflections on poetry in 1918, soon after *Moments of Vision* appeared:

As to pessimism. My motto is, first correctly diagnose the complaint--in this case human ills--and ascertain the cause: then set about finding a remedy if one exists. The motto or practice of the optimists is: Blind the eyes to the real malady, and use empirical panaceas to suppress the symptoms.

(*L&W* 413)

The speaker in "In Tenebris II" is a realist in that he refuses to shrink from acknowledging the vices of English civilisation, ignore the root cause of social evils, or hide its various manifestations (see Houghton 414). But precisely because he is a realist, this nescient speaker also recognises his own ostracism in English society, ruminates on his persecution, and interrogates his own values in his estranged position and total self-abatement ("nothing is much the matter . . . the matter is I"). Perplexed by the very existence of his un-

acceptable personal "vision," he frames the majority rejection of his outlook in terms of their values. Hence stanza by stanza, we are drawn into the speaker's mental retreat, as he withdraws from the scolding voices of the majority, whose increasing vociferousness eventually occupies an entire stanza:

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

Here "a chorus of anathema," as William Buckler aptly describes the effect (*Poetry* 217), defines the nescient speaker's social unacceptability. The descriptive clauses that intervene between "Let him" and "Get him" give the contours of the speaker's abhorrent outlook; the three consecutive gnomic utterances arrest the stanzaic flow, taking considerable pains to refine and compile the speaker's identifying characteristics into a moral indictment, before the devastating, final rejection is authoritatively pronounced. The speaker's outlook is considered a cultural abomination because deficient in several respects: he lacks absolute faith in what the clamorous majority assert contradictorily to be the truth; he doubts whether, without dealing with what is disagreeable, progress can genuinely be beneficial to all; and he questions what kind of spiritual well-being can be produced by moral pressure. In short, the nescient speaker's demurrals renders him idiosyncratic ("shaped awry"); his non-conformity constitutes a threat to the moral "order" in English society.

But the speaker's withdrawal is by no means a passive, flaccid, or inert detachment; rather, as he repeats the (putative) words of the moral majority, he puts sardonic stress on the terminal adverb "here" (which, in the manuscript lines 4, 12, and 16, is followed by a mark of exclamation), drawing attention to the social environment from which he is already alienated and now sneers at from an emotional and moral distance. More than this, even while he effaces himself with the recurrent self-depreciation of the "here"-refrain, apparently sinking deeper and deeper into the gloom, the nescient speaker effectively defies those about him by simultaneously insinuating his own opinions and decisions, especially in the closing stanza. When the penultimate stanza ends with an abrupt pause, we naturally attribute the interruption to the voice of the majority. But the absence of a stage-direction or designated speaker makes the source of the words in the closing stanza ambiguous. In the "In Tenebris"-trilogy, we hear several voices: that of Hardy the poet, who added title and date to the poems, of the Vulgate psalmist, and of the three different protagonists; but in the second poem, we hear also the voice of that national symbol of the English character, enormously proud of his personal power and muscular Christianity, Mr John Bull (Houghton 197), at whom the nescient speaker levels his deadliest weapon of destruction: moral laughter--laughter with serious intent. Indeed, against the "stout upstanders," those princes of progress, heroic men who conquered and mastered their immensely intractable material environment, derision is this speaker's only weapon.

Precisely what the nescient speaker achieves with that weapon we witness in the closing quatrain, where he mimics the voice of "the many and strong." When he ventriloquises John Bull, as it were, the nescient speaker's mimicry resolves the "clash" of voices with which the poem begins. As the speaker's voice gradually emerges as a mimic voice, so the initial perspective, which in the first stanza of the poem seems melancholy ("in me alone"), modulates in the final stanza into the derisive and the sardonic. In the very act (and it is merely an act) of scoffing at and rejecting his own values on behalf of the majority, the speaker subtly and deliberately¹⁷ creates a space for those values. Paradoxically, the vehicle of self-effacement

¹⁷ William Buckler's reading of the poem is helpful, until he vindicates the majority by insisting that "the speaker *unconsciously* indicts himself" (*Poetry* 221; emphasis mine). For, as Peter Larkin astutely argues, that would "render the irony less stable and conclusive, for the 'stout upstanders' would seem to have acquired an

becomes the means of self-affirmation; it is the nescient protagonist's voice that opposes, and totally eclipses, the "shouts" of the majority, when his creed displaces and overshadows theirs. At first seeming no match for them, he eventually marks out, conquers, and accomplishes a verbal space for himself which, albeit "dark," contains room for "a delicate growth" to occur; and not only a verbal space, but a moral space, too, where there is no inward corruption, conformity, and destructive insincerity--nothing superficial, imposed, or forced. In other words, the contrast between the values held by the speaker and those asserted by the rest of society is not explicitly set out; instead, it is dramatised ironically as his self-doubt, in flouting impersonation of the arbiters of social morality who evade or repress both the frightening forces and the invigorating energies of the cosmic process within themselves. Climactically, in the closing quatrain, three gnomic statements of his position are paraded as inadequate, exhibited for ridicule, by the majority. But the speaker's real purpose is to establish their moral validity and humane excellence. In fact, the speaker's ostensible ingenuousness and self-depreciation work in his favour, for his self-abnegation reflects satirically on the moral position of the all-too-triumphant majority. This nescient speaker's primary satiric target is the rigidly dogmatic, closed mind of the gloriously boastful and smug optimist, who with unflinching confidence in absolute truths and values staunchly held by all civilised people, states shallow generalisations as profound certainties. To the nescient speaker, however, moral imperiousness is a capital flaw, for it ossifies a civilisation and renders it crass, precarious, and spiritually sterile.

But Hardy uses the speaker's stance of derision more subtly still. The speaker's moral laughter serves a heuristic function inasmuch as it enables him to resolve his initial puzzlement about his moral position in society by indirectly defining his beliefs. The speaker's moral laughter also puts him in vital touch with the humane impulses within himself that nourish the truly civilised mind, of which the fruits are discretion, tact, tentativeness, tenderness, courtesy, modesty--"low-voiced" (line 13) is a pregnant epithet here--as well as moral courage and questing open-mindedness and emotional suppleness (lines 14-15). The speaker is indeed one

in whose ears the low-voiced Best is killed by the clash of the First,
Who holds that if way to the Better there be, it exacts a full look at the Worst,
Who feels that delight is a delicate growth cramped by crookedness, custom, and fear.

Self-affirmative energies springing from the core, quick, and virtue of his humanity redeem this nescient speaker from nihilism and stop him short of savage vituperation. For although he is fascinated by what is socially absurd or morally vile and is detached from the object of his self-defensive scorn, his reserve and urbane wit intervene. With a truly liberal spirit, he refrains from arrogantly declaring the majority wrong; he asks, mockingly, if it is possible they can be right, risking, by his intense mimicry of them, his own discomfiture. But the capacity within the nescient speaker's stance of derision to poke fun at himself saves him from self-righteousness, intolerance, and the blind zeal of a "prophetic mission" (*pace* Steele 77). Hence, when "the many and strong" expel the nescient speaker, and we hear the final pronouncement of the poem (signalled by the words "be gone," an absolute dismissal occurring in the last line), we judge them and their moral "order" by what they reject as alien and disruptive to that order. In the end, what exposes and compromises the ethical process are the positive impulses and realistic assumptions that go with the lone, sane speaker when he withdraws from despotic social opinion. Appearing at first incongruous and somewhat ludicrous, the nescient speaker in "In Tenebris II," because he is free from the repressive morality of the upright majority, and hence is inwardly more fully alive than they, has the last, least insecure laugh.

astonishing gain in intelligence and sensitivity, so minutely is the tragic predicament of 'he' who 'disturbs the order here' communicated, however unfavourably to all outward purpose" (7).

If "In Tenebris I" presents nescient defiance of the cosmic process, and "In Tenebris II" levels nescient derision at the ethical process, then the dominant tone of "In Tenebris III" is despair--a sense of hopelessness at the futility of human life in a world pervaded by the cosmic process--life's sheer pointlessness and man's ineffectualness in altering his condition. Conscious of his powerlessness, this speaker dwells in a state of anguished disillusionment compounded by frustration and disgust:

'Heu mihi, quia incolatus meus prolongatus est! Habitavi cum habitantibus Cedar; multum incola fuit anima mea.'--Ps. cxix.

There have been times when I well might have passed and the ending have come--
Points in my path when the dark might have stolen on me, artless, unruing-
Ere I had learnt that the world was a welter of futile doing:
Such had been times when I well might have passed, and the ending have come!

Here, in the opening quatrain, what oppresses the speaker is his adult awareness that no deliberate action of his can achieve significance; the thought, too, that to have died before he became bent on shaping reality, seeking to effect a pattern in his experience, would have been to die in a blissful natural state of innocence. For, to this nescient speaker, the pursuit of meaning brings the weary resignation that characterises the Preacher's pronouncement--"in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow" (Eccles. 1.18). Similarly, the word which Hardy finally replaced with "artless" (line 2), namely "passive," suggests that whoever attempts purposeful action, or consciously engages with the volatile energies of the natural world in order to achieve a meaningful effect and leave a mark on it, will find life empty, profitless, unfulfilling.¹⁸ However, merging temporal ("times") and spatial ("Points") dimensions, Hardy introduces the basic opposition embodied by the imagery and structure of the poem, the opposition between life's purpose (life as passage along a "path") and those human actions that are actually and potentially purposeless ("futile doing"), since they seem to occur at random or in confusion ("a welter"). The knowledge of his human powerlessness to structure his life disillusiones the speaker and plunges him into a spiritual darkness that amounts to death-in-life. At the same time, such adult consciousness enables him to identify (for himself at least) certain occasions when it would have been "more than ever . . . rich to die" ("Ode to a Nightingale" line 55)--not, as William Buckler argues (*Poetry* 221), restorative Wordsworthian moments, "spots of time" kept for refocillating the soul (*The Prelude*, 1805, bk 11.258), but ecstatic Keatsian moments, times of heightened sensitivity, summoned up by Hardy's nescient speaker in a memory-haunted darkness, the darkness of death-wish and despair. Hardy's nescient speaker is now in a mental state that activates his memory and imagination in an attempt to create meaning out of certain "times" of childhood happiness, instances of wonder and a sense of his own purpose, significance, and value--an attempt, alas, he really knows is futile.

If the dominant tone of "In Tenebris III" is one of despair, a combined sense of fulfilment and futility, then Hardy succeeds in finding the precisely appropriate style for achieving that tone. The chief poetic technique he uses to present this nescient speaker's despair at man's powerlessness to create meaning out of chaos is apposition or parallel variation, on both a small and large scale. For instance, we saw this in the opening stanza in the grammatical parallelism between the terms having the same referent: "My attention has been absorbed and fascinated by moments of such intense fulfilment that had the world about me slowly vanished, I would have neither noticed nor lamented the event." The appositives "times" and "Points in my path" seem to suggest immediate, single experiences of the merest illumination that would have made the approach of death ("in the dark") along that same "path" imperceptible (see "The Absolute Explains" *CPW* 3:

¹⁸ Alluding to Ecclesiastes, one of his favourite biblical books, Hardy wrote to John Meade Falkner that "the vanity of life--the *cui bono?* is overwhelmingly borne in upon us with years" (17 Dec. 1911; *CL* 7: 154).

69, lines 11-25). In other words, without any grammatical co-ordination or overt logical connection, Hardy emphasises different aspects of the occasions his nescient speaker is recalling. But this device of suggestive parallel restatement not only occurs in verse lines; it is also related to the larger structure of the poem. The half dozen instances of linear variation in the poem¹⁹ present the speaker as artificer, no longer "artless"; so do the three stanzaic variations by means of which he dramatises the same thing: childhood wonderment and security. To begin the series of childhood scenes, the reminiscing speaker uses the word "Say" to create a door, as it were, between two worlds, between the present moment and a previous midday at the end of Winter; the word "Or" provides another such means of transition from present to past. These initial words enable the speaker to claim and take control of the experiences he is presenting. We witness his possession and management of the remembered material in stanza 4 especially:

Say, on the noon when the half-sunny hours told that April was nigh,
And I upgathered and cast forth the snow from the crocus-border,
Fashioned and furbished the soil into a summer-seeming order,
Glowing in gladsome faith that I quickened the year thereby.

Or on that loneliest of eves when afar and benighted we stood,
She who upheld me and I, in the midmost of Egdon together,
Confident I in her watching and ward through the blackening heather,
Deeming her matchless in might and with measureless scope endued.

Or on that winter-wild night when, reclined by the chimney-nook quoin,
Slowly a drowse overgat me, the smallest and feeblest of folk there,
Weak from my baptism of pain; when at times and anon I awoke there--
Heard of a world wheeling on, with no listing or longing to join.

(5-16)

If the three cited occasions expand in duration as their date recedes--if, that is, stanza 2 presents the speaker in boyhood but becoming independent of family, stanza 3 presents him more childlike and attached to his mother, and stanza 4 presents him in infancy, helpless after his recent birth (his "baptism of pain": see *B* 16)--then stanza 4 asserts and demonstrates the speaker's creative attempt to impose a structure on human experience. For he appropriates and incorporates into his own speech knowledge that could have come to him only by someone else's telling it to him (presumably by one of the other "folk" present at his birth "on that winter-wild night"), and he presents the physical universe into which he was born as "a world wheeling on," a characterisation that links up with the rolling turmoil of "welter" in the opening stanza, to produce an image of randomness, chance, chaos, the absence of a directive, governing mind. In such an unstructured universe, structure is gratifying. Hence it is that with consciously ironic defiance towards the chaos about him, this nescient speaker achieves a measure of human design and control when Hardy has him echo his own earlier image, and so herald the structural and thematic conclusion to the poem. Indeed, the speaker makes several gestures in stanza 5 that tell us to expect no further illustrative scenes from his childhood:

Even then! while unweeting that vision could vex or that knowledge could numb,
That sweets to the mouth in the belly are bitter, and tart, and untoward,
Then, on some dim-coloured scene should my briefly raised curtain have lowered,
Then might the Voice that is law have said 'Cease!' and the ending have come.

Three things enable the speaker to arrest the succession of scenes and enforce termination: his emphatic use of "then" (line 17), which here enacts the gathering up of all such "times" in one representative

¹⁹ Other grammatical appositions occur in lines 6 and 7; 9 and 10, 11 and 12; 14; 17 and 18.

announcement; the metaphorical allusion to death (line 19); and the framing effect of a return (line 20) to the opening line of the poem.

Yet, for all the human control the creative selection of paradigmatic scenes suggests, that control and design are illusory. Into each scene, for instance, Hardy inserts a descriptive detail which is incidental: "the *crocus*-border" (line 6), "the blackening *heather*" (line 11), and "the *chimney*-nook quoin" (line 13)--the details are there merely to refer to the material texture of the speaker's life, but they create a sense of randomness. Hardy achieves a more comprehensive sense of haphazardness when he employs the conventional metaphor of life as a theatrical play, the supreme human artifice because the playwright has godlike prerogatives and jurisdiction. Out of the tossing confusion of the pointless human enterprise of life the speaker extracts moments from his past, and presents brief scenes that are aesthetically and emotionally pleasing to him; that is, he artistically fictionalises his memory, giving the impression that he has been able to make sense of his life. But to create fictions and mythic scenes is one thing; it is quite another thing to create the final, decisive action, have the last, authoritative say that will give meaning to the whole drama. This the speaker knows; he is only too forlornly aware that the crucial action of any play is the final action, for, weaving all the disparate elements together, the final action enables the spectator to see the whole work as though it wore a unifying garment. The full force, value, and meaning of this speaker's life (it is implied) would have been felt if only "[the] curtain" had been "lowered" on some such "scene" as those described in stanzas 2-4, before he became fully advised of the world about him, before he gained consciousness and insight ("vision"), experienced intensely (as the gustatory aphorism suggests) the gradual process of disillusionment, and discovered the unpleasantly intractable consequences of revealed wisdom. And it would even have been acceptable to him (so his patronising use of "might" suggests) had the Immanent Will then unwittingly ratified his death as the conclusion to his life. For it would now be possible for someone else to survey his whole life, discern its *raison d'être*, and apprehend its significant design. But instead of an ultimate deliberate conclusion ("curtain"), or even an arbitrary but decisive halt ("the Voice"), nothing occurred to prevent the sour realisation which inevitably comes with the passing of the time: that life is meaningless and pointless. In other words, Hardy uses the theatrical metaphor to enforce the point that to the nescient speaker, it does not lie within man's power to create meaning in life; what the nescient speaker has learned is that (to interchange Hamlet's verbs) "There's a divinity that [rough-hews] our ends, / [Shape] them how we will" (5.2.10-11); or as the Player King puts it (no doubt in Hamlet's behalf), "Our wills and fates do so contrary run / That our devices still are overthrown; / Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own" (3.2.202-04). For all his power to bring order into being and to perceive pattern in experience, man's designs ultimately pall with ineffectualness; from the nescient point of view, man can create moments in a life, but not their meaning--scenes, but without the significance of the life as a whole. For ever beyond man's control is the final action in every life: death, the effect of whose unpredictability, disruptiveness, and grimness cannot be fictively designed in advance, for as Raleigh reminds us, "we die in earnest; that's no jest."

Consequently, what colours the nescient speaker's despair in "In Tenebris III" is his awareness of man's inability to prevent the loss of the joy, wonder, value, and meaning that make life worth living. To register that sense of inevitable loss Hardy uses images of divergence and dislocation. The series of stanzaic reminiscences takes us further and further away in time and space from the present moment of utterance, of powerlessness, of "darkness," returning in imagination to a state of illusion and innocence, and suggesting that the speaker regrets he was permitted to live beyond the "winter-wild night" (line 13) of his birth. But the underlying regret is compounded by the vehement wretch of the resumptive "Even then!" (line 17) which emphasises the rupture between the speaker and the accounts of his (albeit largely mythic) past experience that end abruptly in line 16. The poignant note of regret and protest with which the poem concludes actually

originates in the Vulgate epigraph, where the image of protracted exile exerts some thematic and tonal pressure on the ensuing poem. We read the scenic catalogue merely as "times" of possible release from an interminable and intolerable sojourn in a world of misery; each childhood scene is sustained for a moment, but then swept along again in the "welter" of circumstance and vicissitude, with all life's weariness, fever, and fret, all its vain, waxen mannerism. However, if the initial note of the poem is elegiac, reinforced by the slow, deliberating, reminiscential rhythm, a mood of Schopenhauerian tragedy soon takes over as the speaker reiterates his desire for "self-annulment," having long since realised that in the context of an infinitely chaotic and volatile cosmic process, all human "effort" is mere "vanity" (one of Hardy's Schopenhauer notes *LN* 2: 29). The human impulse to achieve fulfilment and significance, and the knowledge that the impulse cannot be realised--Hardy brings both into dissonant coexistence in this nescient speaker's mind, where the loss of innocent wonder broadens into a sense of hopelessness at the waste of whatever in the world is potentially valuable and meaningful; broadens, that is, into a tragic despair.

III

"An object or mark raised or made by man on a scene is worth ten times any such formed by unconscious Nature. Hence clouds, mists, and mountains are unimportant beside the wear on a threshold, or the print of a hand" (*L&W* 120). Assertions like that, as we saw in the previous chapter (pt III), not only belie Hardy's ostensible pessimism (actually an inveterate and unflinching realism) but also convey his high valuation of man's physical presence in the universe. Some of Hardy's poems centre on marks, objects, or moments that carry human significance, whether the marks be "two letters" ("Her Initials" *CPW* 1: 15) or "The shingled pattern" of a piece of wood ("The Workbox" *CPW* 2: 117), and the object be "a drinking-glass" ("Under the Waterfall" *CPW* 2: 45) or a "box for tinder" ("Old Furniture" *CPW* 2: 227), and the moment a "tired" traveller's pause to lean back against "a stunted handpost just on the crest" of a hill "In the solitude of the moor" ("Near Lanivet, 1872" *CPW* 2: 168; see also "Best Times" *CPW* 2: 467 and "That Moment" *CPW* 3: 141). In "At a Lunar Eclipse" (*CPW* 1: 149), the sigh of dismay at the trivial, unremarkable impression mankind seems to make on the cosmos issues from the speaker's deep-seated conviction that mankind is infinitely more impressive than the stars give him credit for:

And can immense Mortality but throw
So small a shade, and Heaven's high human scheme
Be hemmed within the coasts yon arc implies?

Is such the stellar gauge of earthly show,
Nation at war with nation, brains that teem,
Heroes, and women fairer than the skies?

There is no bathos in that closing tercet; the speaker means to celebrate, not satirise, human ingenuity and achievement. And while some early critics, notably R. P. Blackmur and Samuel Hynes, have condemned and construed Hardy's view of man's physical presence in the universe as rigidly narrow, diminishing the complex data of human experience (22-23; *Pattern* 50), other critics have more recently redressed that reductive reading by emphasising a humanist and existentialist perspective--what Robert McCarthy felicitously calls "the human moment," that is,

a space for the play of human values even while acknowledging that ultimately, from the perspective of a disinterested rationality, human reality and human endeavor are of little moment in an indifferent universe wherein no certainty of transcendence exists,

and wherein all men must inevitably die. . . . the moment of love, friendship, the experience of beauty, the cherishing of the dead.²⁰

Or, as Paul Zietlow puts it, Hardy "defined and completed his humanity through poetry by asserting his independent identity against the tendencies of things . . . against change, chance, and oblivion" ("Poet" 178). What these recent critics are responding to and articulating is a source of consoling knowledge that affirms the significance of the human and the individual. Some of Hardy's dramatic speakers make assertions within the terms of a humanist framework, and see man as more than merely an unimportant object in the insentient universe. They assume that man is also an intelligent observer who is aware and can evaluate his own cosmic presence.

4. Humanism

To open out my limitings

("The Sign-Seeker" *CPW* 1: 67)

A corollary of man's dual character is that the consciousness of the perceiving mind is part of the subject matter of Hardy's humanist lyrics. What man is most acutely conscious of is his inevitable limitations--mutability, mortality, meaninglessness--which he can (as does the nescient speaker) reject and disown or (as does the humanist speaker) acknowledge and integrate into his set of attitudes and assumptions, a set he modifies in order to admit those limitations. The humanist speaker, in fact, claims them as part of his inner world by the stance he adopts towards them. The little drama enacted in "An August Midnight" (*CPW* 1: 184) certifies the significance, not the triviality, of human consciousness in the universe; only, this nescient speaker fails to see that. Instead, he merely emphasises his deficiencies and inferiorities as human being:

Thus meet we five, in this still place,
At this point of time, at this point in space.
--My guests besmear my new-penned line,
Or bang at the lamp and fall supine.
'God's humblest, they!' I muse. Yet why?
They know Earth-secrets that know not I.

But without the presence and operation of the speaker's perceiving mind, the spider, moth, bee, and fly would have no status and the moment no significance. Hardy leaves quite implicit the fact that, but for man, the universe would exist merely as it is, natural and neutral, since coherence and valuation are the province of the human mind alone; he is the one creature in whom is set an instinct and a need for meaning. Nor is the attitude in Hardy's humanist lyrics one of unthinking passivity in which a speaker inadvertently discovers "an imaginative freedom" from the reflex action of the Will (Paulin 195; see also Benvenuto, "Space" 39n9) at those moments when "it happens that all the rest of the Great Will is in equilibrium the minute portion called one person's will is free, just as a performer's fingers will go on playing the pianoforte of themselves when he talks or thinks of something else & the head does not rule them" (Hardy, on his 67th birthday; *CL* 3: 255; see also *LN* 2: 174). In Hardy's poems, the humanist position is essentially one of *assertive* acceptance of limitations; as Richard Hoffpauir has observed, "Limits, boundaries, and order are important for Hardy. They not only help men assert their significance and provisional meaning against an indifferent universe, but also prevent men from losing control of their own humanity" (541).

²⁰ "Poetics"; see also Neiman; Brown 166-70; and Brooks, *Structure* 20, 316-18.

The humanist speaker consciously chooses to recognise the harsh facts of terrestrial existence and, while making that frank recognition, regards those limitations as a personal factor which concerns him in a unique way. This decision enables the speaker not only to see things differently, but also to discover human and personal significance in the world. And the very process of discerning a significant moment--a moment of worth, wonder, or emotional warmth--is to the humanist speaker a source of solace, however small. It is, for instance, a humanist orientation that enables the aged speaker in "Life Laughs Onward" (*CPW* 2: 201) to acknowledge and accept life's transience, and find what is most of value in the present, a creative process in which he gains a consoling insight into his own mental and emotional state:

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.

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

The theme of human transience in the face of the permanence of Nature is a traditional one, but it usually leads to self-pity and the search for consoling spiritual or material absolutes. The humanist avoids conventional attitudes and platitudes about man's lot, even while he retains the discomforts of that lot. What consoles this Hardy speaker is not some absolute or external knowledge about this or any other world, but the discovery of a worthwhile correspondence between the condition of this world and his own mood. For by finding such significance in a fundamentally indifferent, meaningless universe, the speaker asserts his essence as a human being. Similarly, in the closing scene of *The Woodlanders*, when Marty South visits Giles Winterborne's grave and pays him homage, she thinks of him both as a unique person and as a human being: "none can plant as you planted . . . none could do it like you. If ever I forget your name let me forget home and heaven. . . . But no, no, my love, I never can forget 'ee; for you was a good man, and did good things!" (ch. 48, 338-39). As Hardy himself observed in one of his biographical journals, "The most prosaic man becomes a poem when you stand by his grave at his funeral & think of him" (29 May 1872; *PN* 10).

In other words, Hardy's negative undervision (discussed in the previous section) has a counterpart. In "The Collector Cleans His Picture," the parson's giddy kiss of pagan adoration effectively intensifies the beauty of the artefact, and also, by a happy culpability or an ironical providence, his remorseful horror renews the blessings his vocation brings him, "Fresh and sweet as the dew-fleece under my luthern" (alluding no doubt to the biblical story of Gideon's confirmation of divine favour: Judges 6.36-40). At the same time, in "Her Dilemma," despite the woman's feelings of oppressiveness at mankind's pitifully desperate vulnerability

to cosmic forces,²¹ her certain untruth secures for mankind in a world of coldness, insensibility, and mortality, a moment of kindness and warmth. That is, Hardy's poetic grasp of these two human situations accommodates a perspective that affirms human nature; his imagination attributes to objects and occasions an affirmative import that coexists in tension with an equally-valid negative undervision, a tension continuous with that complex flux of experience involving the incongruous presence of two incompatible processes of being, cosmic and ethical--"the inherent will to enjoy, and the circumstantial will against enjoyment" (*Tess* ch. 43, 395). The achievement of this affirmative undervision Hardy clearly conceived of as a humanist source of solace, when he wrote:

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

(L&W 222)

So Hardy dramatises also a way to confront "the Worst" that is *positive*, where some of the emphasis is on the moral courage required to stand by one's conviction or faith, and some on the progressive optimism of nineteenth-century positivism.²² That is, the humanist position in Hardy's lyrics is affirmative, and in the face of terrestrial conditions, the humanist speaker knows that what he affirms can be only subjective and relative, "an attitude or value or moment of time brought into being by man's moral consciousness and creative imagination" (Benvenuto, "Space" 43). For with affirmative undervision, Hardy dramatises a perspective on reality that does not turn away from absolute causes to the negation of such causes, but rather attempts to explain "all facts in relation simply to each other, and in relation to more general facts" (Willey 199). Hardy was not, of course, so much of a positivist that he rejected or debunked any notion of a sacred or a secularised metaphysical realm; instead, in Hardyian humanism, there is the awareness of relationship and flux in social-psychological things, a strenuous quest for coherence, and a striving after a fuller humanity--the comparative qualification here being crucial to designate that, for Hardy, humanist affirmation is a matter of progression and degree, according to his dictum "If way to the Better there be, it exacts a full look at the Worst" (*CPW* 2: 319). As he saw it, the difficulty was how to assert one's intellectual and moral strength without losing flexibility of mind. His solution was to arbitrate philosophically between intellectual impressionism and intellectual absolutism (see Houghton 16-18). Hardy's own position is both precise and disinterested: informed by the modern spirit of open-mindedness and doubt, his humanist dictum allows for and encourages the tireless and critical pursuit of new truths that will improve the moral and social order.

Yet the humanist speaker's significance lies in neither social nor cosmic ordering, but in the way he makes himself significant in the specific absence of such ordering. For only by assertively accepting the limitations he has to live by ("the Worst") can the humanist speaker's utterance in "Life Laughs Onward" create significance ("My too regretful mood / Died on my tongue"); that is, he both acknowledges his lot and defies it by freely choosing the stance he wishes to strike at the moment of his discomfiture or confrontation with his mortality. The disappearance of the aged speaker's assumptions alters the basis and force of his final utterance. Consciously--and courageously, as the statement "'Twas well" suggests--he refuses to rely on the

²¹ Although William Buckler regards as "a mite neurotic" what I take to be morally strong in the woman--namely, her humanising exercise of personal freedom in the face of dehumanising forces of Nature--he correctly identifies, I think (as also does Jeffrey Jackson 34), the chief conflict in the poem as that between "the will to live and the will to die" (*Poetry* 109, 110).

²² The third stage in the growth of the human intellect is called the Positive stage and is described in Comte's *Positive Philosophy*, which at one time Hardy frequently read and took notes from: see *LN* 1: 322.

solace to be derived from absolute knowledge. Only by assertively accepting that there can be *no* definitive source of solace or compensation for the meaningless mutability in the world can the humanist speaker avoid feeling degraded. Indeed, his asserting of his individual humanity in the midst of loss and incoherence leaves us with a feeling of exaltation and with a realistic sense of expanded human possibilities.

Some of Hardy's most characteristic and memorable poems are those which dramatise an affirmative undervision, the product of a perceiving mind that is owned by an observer who is aware of the intrinsic significance of being human in the world; that is, an observer who assertively accepts the limitations of his human condition by finding solace within his own individual humanity, acting outside the generally accepted ethical attitudes and assumptions of his community. And in drawing on his own essence as a human being, the humanist speaker in Hardy's poems exercises one or more of three basic capacities or instincts: for discovering "the indestructible essence of human worth and dignity" (Zabel 37), for discerning beauty and wonder even amid ugliness and banality, and for disseminating emotional warmth, tenderness, and lovingkindness in an indifferent universe.

In "Life and Death at Sunrise" (*CPW* 3: 40), for instance, the observation of two country figures meeting in the landscape includes auditory and tactual evidence as well as visual, so that the scene becomes an objective correlative highly charged with intuitions about life and death. The poem successfully knits together several sense-perceptions into an interrelation that suggests the wider contexts of society and Nature, and that also establishes the complexity and worthwhileness of human existence. What the poem embodies and enacts is the human mind's capacity for discovering worth and coherence amid the meaninglessness of mere matter in motion.

A waggon creaks up from the fog
With a laboured leisurely jog;
Then a horseman from off the hill-tip
Comes clapping down into the dip;
While woodlarks, finches, sparrows, try to entune at one time,
And cocks and hens and cows and bulls take up the chime.

...

'And what have you got covered there?'
He nods to the waggon and mare.
'Oh, a coffin for old John Thinn:
We are just going to put him in.'

'--So he's gone at last. He always had a good constitution.'

'--He was ninety-odd. He could call up the French Revolution.'

Hardy presents a similar quest for significance in "The Last Signal" (*CPW* 2: 212), dramatising as it does the mind of the speaker who seeks to know the meaning of

The sudden shine sent from the livid east scene;
It meant the west mirrored by the coffin of my friend there,
Turning to the road from his green,

To take his last journey forth--he who in his prime
Trudged so many a time from that gate athwart the land!
Thus a farewell to me he signalled on his grave-way,
As with a wave of his hand.

Even putting aside (until the next chapter) the portentous force of imagery here both dimensional (east/west) and catoptric ("mirrored"), which in Hardy's imagination is not merely a straightforward and scientific explanation, one can feel the speaker's exaltation at discovering value and meaning in the midst of life's futile labour and mortality, "amid the shadow of that livid sad east" (line 5). The climax comes when the speaker

simultaneously exercises his individual capacity for human warmth in an impersonal universe; the flash of sunlight he takes as a friend's simple gesture of farewell. And the friendship and fellow-feeling that the poem celebrates, as Peter Mitchell astutely points out, "does not transform the ominous landscape with which the poem opens: it provides a point of light within it. . . . Hardy's restraint in this is part and parcel of his affirmation of ordinary experience" ("Churchy" 140). Or, as Richard Benvenuto writes of Jude's capacity for love, "It is his commitment to the little that remains to humanity in the midst of the inhumane. . . . it affirms the independence of human value, if not the independence of man's fate, from natural law and cosmic scheme" ("Modes" 40). In full possession of the knowledge that life can be absurd, ugly, and cruel, the humanist speaker puts meaning, beauty, and love into certain moments that have reality and value, despite the antagonistic and irrational forces that limit human experience. Paradoxically, the ephemerality of such moments enhances the experience by making them, in a sense, eternal. In the very act of regretting another's lack of human warmth--tenderness, courtesy, compassion, love--the speaker in "A Broken Appointment" (CPW 1: 172) brings that humanist value into being:

You did not come,
And marching Time drew on, and wore me numb.--
Yet less for loss of your dear presence there
Than that I thus found lacking in your make
That high compassion which can overbear
Reluctance for pure lovingkindness' sake
Grieved I, when, as the hope-hour stroked its sum,
You did not come.

You love not me,
And love alone can lend you loyalty;
--I know and knew it. But, unto the store
Of human deeds divine in all but name,
Was it not worth a little hour or more
To add yet this: Once you, a woman, came
To soothe a time-torn man; even though it be
You love not me?

Within the depths of personal pain, the speaker discovers the experience he shares with all people in the face of a universe whose massive impersonality and indifference scandalise them; he gently deplores the woman's failure to exercise those elements in her humanity that are worth affirming, her instincts for sympathy and solidarity, as the speakers in "The Burghers" and "A Wife and Another" (CPW 1: 31, 318) affirm theirs. These speakers, though wronged, exercise their innate capacity for a sympathetic understanding and tolerance of other people's blindnesses, weaknesses, formulae, and obsessions that tempers cold, self-righteous reproach. The ebullient speaker in "Great Things" (CPW 2: 214) celebrates romantic love and the sheer pleasure of living, and then places the sources of his joy ("cyder," "dancing," and "Love") in relation to the inevitable fact of his own death, only to shrug off the loss:

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

His mortality can neither annihilate nor retroactively debase ("Will always *have been*") what he has affirmed by means of his own individual ("to me") humanity.

But few poems of Hardy's demonstrate more strikingly the springs of an affirmative undervision than "Transformations" (CPW 2: 211) and "The Darkling Thrush" (CPW 1: 187). In each poem, the speaker

chooses to regard as a personal factor the limitations imposed on him by his surroundings, a factor which concerns him in a unique way. Four statements of speculation and pseudo-facts, the systematic correlation of human character-traits and vegetation, make up the first two stanzas of "Transformations." The poem ends when the speaker abruptly concludes that the personages he has been identifying in the churchyard are not dead and buried, but actually still alive:

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!

Unlike the nescient widow in "Bereft" (*CPW* 1: 263), who takes upon herself the full weight of an unremitting grief by narrowing her solitary life to monotonous and inert waiting, the speaker here draws a totally unqualified inference in an attempt to negate the fact of the evanescence and extinction of the human personality. With an unrestrained aggressiveness, by the force of his imagination, he tries to withhold from death the humane values he seeks to keep alive within himself--senses of dignity, vivacity, humility, and beauty which are of the essence of his humanity. Although "Transformations" celebrates, not visionary delusion or even hope, but imaginative energy, that resounding lack of qualification has been misconstrued by at least one critic as a final declaration of sentimental and gratuitous optimism (Richardson 125). Nevertheless, this is a good (if overt) poem, I think, but the consoling knowledge it dramatises has yet to be fully appreciated; and we shall return to the poem in a moment.

Far subtler in its affirmation of the instincts for human dignity, wonder, and warmth is the ostensibly occasional poem "The Darkling Thrush." Here, the carefully artficed title (see Lock 121-22) enacts in miniature the overall structure and mood of the poem--counterpointing the speaker's observation of the spritely bird reduced to frailty by seasonal vicissitude with his assertive interpretation of the bird's song as joyful. This oxymoronic effect of the title, suggestive of the diminution of the potential for growth, is enforced by the allusiveness of the literary epithet; for while "darkling" may well recall *King Lear* (1.4.200), *Paradise Lost* (3.39) "Ode to a Nightingale" (line 51) and "Dover Beach" (line 35)--the rich experience of English culture embodied in great works of poetry--the word also registers the ironical waning of the significance of all that accumulated experience, the recent demise of an entire era of human achievement and failure, Hardy first having entitled the poem "By the Century's Deathbed." That is, Hardy uses the allusion to register an ultimate bleakness and meaninglessness, the precise objective context in which the humanist speaker creates significance out of his own humanity. As John Bayley puts it, "the poem works by conscientiously invoking all those images and then dissipating them, as if accidentally, in the unexpectedness of its own being. The true contrast in the poem is between the ghost bird of literature and the actual thrush of Hardy's observation" ("Intimacies" 500, col. 3). The point is well taken, but the focus distorts the poem, for the central tension Hardy dramatises here is that between traditional and individual quests for significance. Everything is seen through the eyes of the speaker; and it is he alone who interprets the sound the bird makes as an expression of joy. After taking "a full look at the Worst," at the scenic desolation and cultural exhaustion, in the first two stanzas, the speaker is dumbstruck by the bird's singing:

At once a voice arose among
The bleak twigs overhead
In a full-hearted evensong
Of joy illimited;
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,

In blast-beruffled plume,
Had chosen thus to fling his soul
Upon the growing gloom.

Here Hardy takes scrupulous pains to present the event as the converse opposite to all that precedes it in the poem--through imagery ("arose" counters "leant" and "outleant"), through diction ("full-hearted" and "illimited" offset "shrunken" and "fervourless"), and through rhythm (the resilient iambic pulse of that first line and surging enjambements that culminate in the intensive prefix "be-" sustaining the emphasis on the emotional abandon).²³ In other words, the third stanza violates the speaker's assumption of a decorum between setting and action; the bird's singing, as understood by him, is out of place and logically unaccountable, and he is forced to make sense of it for himself. Consequently, in the first three stanzas, the landscape-setting of bitter waste, decrepitude, and defunctive sterility; the appalling physical state of the bird; the transcendent quality of the bird's song--all these images coalesce into an objective equivalent for the speaker's mental and emotional state in the fourth stanza, where he explicitly asserts his essence as a human being by affirming his instincts for dignity, solidarity, beauty, and wonder:

So little cause for carolings
Of such ecstatic sound
Was written on terrestrial things
Afar or nigh around,
That I could think there trembled through
His happy good-night air
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew
And I was unaware.

"I could think" is the major event the poem records, the subjunctive tentativeness notwithstanding. For Hardy's skilful insertion of the modal auxiliary creates just the right nuance of the possibility of a fresh consciousness coming into being in the universe. The speaker, who reads only what is "written on terrestrial things," this interpreter of strictly objective signs, once found himself in a position to integrate the auditory-visual data so as to deduce quite feasibly the existence of a stance towards the indifferent universe. For a brief moment, the speaker's humanity enabled him, intellectually and morally, to concede to someone else a consoling knowledge from an external source. The poem records no more than that, but it is sufficient to vindicate the humanist speaker's existence as a quest for value and coherence, as the strenuous achievement, in several directions and on several levels, of integration. The speaker's very perception of the bird's sound as "ecstatic" and "happy" singing, against the desolation and fervourlessness of the indifferent universe, is already the expression of a cosmic achievement; and the appropriate attitude is neither revelationist optimism, rationalist arrogance, nor nescient despair, but humanist acceptance, with which "men look at true things, / And unilluded view things, / And count to bear undue things" ("To Sincerity" *CPW* 1: 336). Only because the humanist speaker is content to recognise "the Worst" is he content to assert, as courageously as he can, the limitations of his humanity as it confronts a vastly powerful cosmic process. He knows that by boldly and reasonably affirming his essential humanity in spite of what is accidental and irrational ("undue") inside and outside himself,

The real might mend the seeming,
Facts better their foredeeming,
And Life its disesteeming.

In "The Darkling Thrush," the humanist speaker's response is one of quiet courage and assertiveness, because he lives in the present, without myths and inherited consolations. The one thing in the entire scene

²³ For a fine analysis of Hardy's "consummate trick of assonance" in this stanza, see Lock 129-30.

that corresponds to this speaker's moral being is the song of the thrush, an impulse most decidedly not from a vernal wood, but from a dark coppice. Having critically observed the indifferent, meaningless world about him, and conscious of the vulnerability of the thrush, the speaker interprets the singing as the bird's deliberate and solitary affirmation of the precious essence of itself under extreme conditions. In making this interpretation, the speaker enacts what he himself has "chosen" to do; and even though his own affirmation can itself have no ultimate effect on the conditions of his existence, the very act of affirming himself brings him a form of consolation, while enlarging the reader's sense of what is humanly possible. However, not only does he *not* need the consolation of some absolute truth, but he would reject any notion of it as a denial of his life. Instead, the humanist speaker claims freedom to create value and coherence for himself in a space beyond cosmic and or ethical processes. Accordingly, the world he inhabits remains mysterious and a cause for anxiety; but insofar as there is meaning, it is to be discovered here and now in the midst of despair. If there is a sin against his individual humanity, it is less despair about this life than "Some blessed Hope" in another; from the delighted assurance he attributes to the bird the speaker distances himself, aware as he is that the source of his own solace lies within his individual humanity.²⁴

In Hardy's humanist lyrics, then, solace comes from a speaker's subjective affirmation of a relative valuation made in the face of an indifferent, non-moral universe. Taking a stand against the cosmos, mankind asserts his values and intentions, fragile and limiting though they be. Consequently, the "figure [that] stands in our van with arm uplifted, to knock us back from any pleasant prospect we indulge in as probable"--the Bunyanesque metaphor for inexorable circumstance that Hardy shared with his mother (*PN* 6-7)--has to contend with the fact of, what Delmore Schwartz calls, "human choice, responsibility, and freedom, the irreparable character of human acts and the undeniable necessity of seeing life from the inside of the human psyche rather than from the astronomical-biological perspective of nineteenth century science" (127). To put this another way, the humanist speaker has decisively and assertively accepted that his existence is little and limited, but takes keen delight in what he has; he chooses to make

The most I can
Of what remains to us amid this brake
Cimmerian
Through which we grope, and from whose thorns we ache,
While still we scan
Round our frail faltering progress for some path or plan.
(*"To Meet, or Otherwise"* CPW 2: 16)

The humanist speaker's chief asset is his mind (i.e., intellect, imagination, intuition), which he regards as a cosmic achievement engendering an attitude of patiently courageous assertiveness, an irrepressible intentionality, a leaning mentally towards the goal of finding meaning and value in the universe.²⁵ The speaker in "Drinking Song," stripped of all Western philosophy, one of mankind's supreme achievements, confidently finds solace--in the way that Marty South finds it at the end of *The Woodlanders* (quoted earlier)--in the exercise of his moral being: "We'll do a good deed nevertheless!" (*CPW* 3: 250). Just what the humanist speaker courageously accepts is spelt out by the dying deity at the end of "A Plaint to Man" (*CPW* 2: 33):

²⁴ As Patricia O'Neill points out, the poem ultimately differentiates between the thrush's experience and that of the speaker's (138). Cf. Lock 139.

²⁵ The distinctive awareness inherent in Hardy's courage comes out clearly in one of his unpublished notes: "Imagine you have to walk [a] chalk line drawn across an open down. Browning walked it, knowing no more. But a yard to the left of the same line the down is cut by a vertical cliff five hundred feet deep. I know it is

The truth should be told, and the fact be faced
That had best been faced in earlier years:

The fact of life with dependence placed
On the human heart's resource alone,
In brotherhood bonded close and graced

With loving-kindness fully blown,
And visioned help unsought, unknown.

Hardy means the repetition of "fact" to register and establish the historical and irrevocable occurrence of human existence in "this wailful world" (line 17), without the possibility of protection or solace beyond what mankind is emotionally capable of supplying. And to create a sense of men being confronted with that unavoidable, intransigent reality, Hardy couches this definitive, monolithic "truth" in an oracular, verbless utterance. To accept the limitation ("alone") does not reduce or debase the quality of life. On the contrary, the act of "dependence" forces men to invest all their innermost energies in achieving their common humanity, affirms man's unique potentiality and sole responsibility for fellow-feeling, and brings into splendid flower the crowning moral value known to Hardy, "loving-kindness" which is, as the dominant rhyme suggests, the reward for such confident and concentrated attention. In order "to open out [his] limitings," the humanist speaker creates significance from what he has: the resources of his intrinsic human capacity for dignity, wonder, and lovingkindness; and he does so most successfully whenever he owns and confronts the limitations he was born to, including the ultimate limitation--his own mortality or that of his fellow-men.

5. Personhood

A story (rather than a poem) might be written in the first person, in which 'I' am supposed to live through the centuries in my ancestors, in one person, the particular line of descent chosen being that in which *qualities* are most continuous.

(L&W 452)

Hardy neither confused his idea of lovingkindness with Christian charity nor confined it to "a love of one's own kind" (Pinion, *Commentary* 99). Indeed, he expressly extended it to include the affirmation of the personhood of a fellow human being. Putting this another way, lovingkindness means "a tender respect" for someone, not just as a human being, but also as an individual person (Robinson 143). One of the fundamental assumptions of lovingkindness is, as Roger Robinson puts it, "the value of individual life to the individual who possesses it and the responsibility of others to respect it" (143; see also *Tess* ch. 25, 221).²⁶ It is lovingkindness that Angel Clare eventually achieves in *Tess* (see chs 55 and 57) and Swithin St Cleeve in *Two on a Tower*: "a sentiment perhaps in the long-run more to be prized than lover's love" (ch. 41, 274). Lovingkindness motivates the giving someone personal value and meaning.

But Hardy, of course, recognised too the indispensability of affirming one's own value in the universe. Accordingly, in order to maintain stability of personal identity, the Hardyan speaker can also rely on a concept of the universe that restores a sense of personal value and meaning, a sense of where one belongs in life and where one has an important being. This concept of the universe, or orientation towards cosmic and

there, but walk the line just the same" (*B* 409). The physical activity may be the same, but the human experience is quite different.

²⁶ Considering the plight of Cytherea in *Desperate Remedies*, Mr Raunham, clergyman and magistrate, affirms her personhood when he takes into account the fact that "She had but one life" (ch. 18, pt 2, 356). Conversely, Hardy himself, in a moment of despair, consoles himself with "the reflection that there is but one life for each individual" (15 Oct. 1916; *CL* 5: 182).

ethical depredations, appears most clearly in a speaker's assumptions about living in space and time. To put it another way, there are two necessary conditions of Hardyian personhood: the physical and the cultural.

Although it affords him no solace to counter either the ageing process or the inevitable loss of his friends,²⁷ the speaker's exclamation in "I Look into My Glass" (*CPW* 1: 106) allows us to detect indirectly three fundamental presuppositions of Hardyian personhood that have to do with physical space:

I look into my glass,
And view my wasting skin,
And say, 'Would God it came to pass
My heart had shrunk as thin!'

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

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

To begin with, the speaker observes and attempts to redress a tacit inequality between a reflection and the person reflected. For although the reflection is merely an objective image, a thing framed to be beheld and studied, the beholder, the "I" (line 1) that examines the reflection, is an "I" (line 5) in anguish. The reflection itself is superficial, discarnate, cold, and hard; the speaker himself is substantial, incarnate, warm, and soft. But the inescapability of seeing his reflection the moment he looks in the mirror, a predictable phenomenon enacted fully by the automatic hinging co-ordination of the first "And," instantly demoralises the speaker. He knows that the decaying self he sees is an inevitable fact of his physical existence in time. The incontrovertible evidence before him then induces him to capitulate just as automatically ("And" line 3) to the tendency to limit self-knowledge to this purely visual perception of himself. And his cry is pitiful precisely because he utters it from within, and in the face of, the opposing perception that there is so much more to him than meets his eye in the mirror. In other words, to cope with the grievous loneliness of ageing, the speaker tries to diminish his whole personal being, to reduce himself from a person to an object. Indirectly, then, his desperate cry for relief asserts the presupposition that his body is by no means merely a thing in space, as it would seem from the body's mere reflection.

This speaker's moral-philosophical premise is that his body is not just an object but the psychological and ontological basis of his being human in the world. He orients himself inwardly, by his warm heart, towards the outside world; he is oriented from *within* his body. If only his body were merely a container, he would feel "undistrest" by the sight of its ageing. But when thwarted, his sensitive need for the warmth of personal relationship exhausts him. Paradoxically, the drastic capitulation of what he believes in is a measure of the wearying process of ageing that he seeks to escape: he is prepared to surrender his meaning and value as a person. He desperately wants to divest himself of the capacity for and orientation towards personal relationship, even though this means his being left in monotonous emptiness, resigned to a state in which he and his reflection would correspond completely. Only then (it is implied) would he find the natural cooling and loss of friendships with the passing of time bearable. That is, if he were less of a person, he could patiently endure the feeling of abandonment that old age brings. The speaker's body, then, is the chief source of his relationships with his fellow human beings. And it is this centrifugal impulse, from the core of his

²⁷ Hardy first wrote "By friendships lost to me" (line 6).

physical being, to make contact with other centres of human being that gives the speaker his personal identity, value, and meaning, and that accordingly it grieves him to surrender. That is the second presupposition of Hardy's personhood.

The third presupposition of Hardy's personhood is richly implied by the versification of the closing stanza. The speaker is at the mercy of a bullying reality, "Time," here accorded a malicious motive: to disintegrate the speaker's identity. The subtle violation and the spiteful concession, finely endorsed by the abrupt, paratactic rhythm of "Part steals, lets part abide," make us aware of the speaker's sullen impotence. The term "frame" implies an architectural structure and evokes the speaker's feeling of futility, as he finally resigns himself to the inimical view of the human body as a mere "shake[able]" object in the universe. When the speaker uses that detached, self-reflexive circumlocution ("this fragile frame"), he refers wily not only to his physical body, but also to his mirror-image, whose fragility (being "glass") renders his vulnerability more palpable and immediate. Limited by his physical condition, frustrated by his precarious fleshly enclosure, he is powerless to carry out his intentions. He has lost command of his own body, since it no longer has the power of a medium through which he can act and realise himself. The ageing process holds sway over the speaker in the sense that it strips him of the power to exercise a free moral will.

Furthermore, the speaker also has been robbed of the time needed to come to grips with his own personal experience of the world. He is now at the "eve" of his biological life and subject to "shak[ings]," physically vulnerable to whatever happens to him. At the same time, what torments him is the awareness that he is yet only at the alacrious "noontide" of his inward life, that he still feels the impulses ("throbbings") to make a passionate commitment of himself to what is real--the one action that would signify his full personhood. Being old, therefore, being unable to form intimate relationships, depersonalises the speaker and leaves him with the feeling for the pathos, frustration, and "hopelessness" (Elliott, *English* 344) of his own moral impotence.

So "I Look into My Glass" is a poem about a man reacting not (as some critics believe) to rejection by family, friends, and society,²⁸ but to the natural consequence of growing old: losing friends,²⁹ and hence personal value. That is, the significance of the speaker's withering flesh itself is made to seem separate from the significance of the whole human experience (ageing) to which he is attending. For the speaker's body is defined in terms of austere, geometrical space. In the end, he sees himself as merely inhabiting his body; and as mere frail case, his body ceases to participate in the exercise of his moral will, that central activity which defines Hardy's personhood.

In short, "I Look into My Glass" is a poem that registers the inversion of three fundamental qualities of Hardy's personhood: that the human body integrates the mind into the world, gives the mind an orientation, presence, or place, and is the chief source of conscious relationships; that these relationships provide the medium for realising one's individual will; and, finally, that one has the power to shape one's life and that of others and, by and large, actually does so.

²⁸ Buckler, *Poetry* 191, 206n7.

²⁹ Hardy wrote that "the train [of dead friends] grows longer every year"; "They are thinning out ahead of us"; while those "who are left are made to look rather poor creatures" (22 Dec. 1903, *CL* 3: 94; 22 Mar. 1904, *CL* 3: 117; 26 Dec. 1917, *CL* 5: 235). Also, Hardy was once acutely exasperated by the "close, sad, sensational, inexplicable relations" between body and mind: "Hurt my tooth at breakfast-time. I look in the glass. Am conscious of the humiliating sorriness of my earthly tabernacle" (18 Oct. 1892; *L&W* 265). See Jacobus 271-72.

In "Snow in the Suburbs" (CPW 3: 42), we find a simple, spondaic line that concludes and stamps the poem with its governing point:

Every branch big with it,
 Bent every twig with it;
 Every fork like a white web-foot;
 Every street and pavement mute:
 Some flakes have lost their way, and grope back upward, when
 Meeting those meandering down they turn and descend again.
 The palings are glued together like a wall,
 And there is no waft of wind with the fleecy fall.

A sparrow enters the tree,
 Whereon immediately
 A snow-lump thrice his own slight size
 Descends on him and showers his head and eyes,
 And overturns him,
 And near inurns him,
 And lights on a nether twig, when its brush
 Starts off a volley of other lodging lumps with a rush.

The steps are a blanched slope,
 Up which, with feeble hope,
 A black cat comes, wide-eyed and thin;
 And we take him in.

The title envelopes the poem with themes of the oppressive physical hardships of terrestrial existence and of man's alienation in the universe, imaged as "snow" and "suburbs," so as to invest the scene with the idea of abnormality and liminality--existing in an alien place, between two opposed worlds. Through the Dickensian technique (most memorable in the second or "fog" paragraph of *Bleak House*) of accumulating verbless sentences to evoke scenic density; through the syntactic contortion registering the extent of the snowfall ("Bent every twig with it"); through the hyperbolic repetition of the universal adjective "every," against which we measure the individualising deformations of "big" and "Bent," the contrasting oddity of "web-foot," and the barrenness of "mute"--by all these means Hardy certifies the shape, mass, disfiguring, and muffling effect of the snow's comprehensive coverage. The janus-like pronoun ("it"), which (for the reader's sake) secures the latent continuity between title and poem, effectively intimates how deeply the fictive speaker has already internalised the pervasiveness of the snow; that is, merely a pronoun is needed to refer to it. Moreover, Hardy's elimination of the present tense auxiliary "is" from the first four lines serves to suggest a condition that exists before the poem itself begins; so that with the appearance of the perfect tense "have," a sense of process enters the poem, as the personified snow enacts a little drama of perplexity and tension over the frustrated settlement of stray flakes, an idea which the laboured longer lines tend to underscore.

Then the varying perspectives (in size, shape, position, and motion) and blended perceptions (of colour, texture, and sound) notate the sheer intensity of the speaker's consciousness. Amid the multiple fragments of the landscape setting, three objects (each anchored and focused by the definite article) stand out: fence, tree, and steps. These the snow, itself metamorphosing from veil to flake to lump, dislimns and invests with weird dimensions and outlines, throwing them into stark relief. Accordingly, the landscape, transformed by the snow, is opposed to the world indoors, producing the idea of deformation. For the speaker's attention moves steadily from the wider world of "street and pavement" lying beyond "The palings," to where stands "the tree," and then to "The steps," before edging back to his domestic entrance, which turns out to have been the chief point of reference all along. Such centrality of sensuous awareness affirms the physical existence

and importance of this speaker. Everything is perceived only in relation to his bodily position: where the speaker is physically situated is implicitly the centre of significant being. In other words, the process of the poem dramatises the personhood of the speaker, culminating as it does in the moment of moral integration enacted in the closing stanza:

The steps are a blanched slope,
Up which, with feeble hope,
A black cat comes, wide-eyed and thin;
And we take him in.

Here the fricative sounds of the first line congeal into the affricative encrustation of "blanched slope, / Up which," while the syntactic interruptions produce the image of a gradient obstacle to the approach of the already haggard cat. Then the final parataxis, bringing into instant being agents of humane relief, enacts a straightforward, unstinting decisiveness: "And we take him in." The declaration abruptly integrates and focuses the incidental events of the poem, by involving the speaker personally in the description of objective phenomena, and by enabling the speaker to forge his own awareness of what he is doing in admitting the animal. That single human action--neither "bring" nor "let," for these imply detachment, but "take," implying vigorous acceptance of the cat in his own right--makes all the difference; or, to rephrase one of Hardy's sentiments, an act performed by man is "worth ten times any such [performed] by Nature" (*L&W* 120). The human being is not an object in the physical universe; the human being is the one exception to the objectification of space. Consequently, because the speaker uses them neither according to obligation nor according to desert, but "after [his] own honour and dignity" (*Hamlet* 2.2.533), the sparrow (sympathetically observed) and the cat (heartily accommodated) are given some personhood too in the process (both are referred to as "him"); amid their distress, the cat acquires value and meaning, a place in the scheme of things, a home at the centre of significant organisation.

A far more direct exercise of individual moral will occurs in "Let Me Enjoy," the prelude to "A Set of Country Songs" (*CPW* 1: 290), where the singer's enjoyment of life is quite independent of anyone else's intention, recognition, pleasure, or acceptance. The singer takes up a positively assertive stance--in defence of his personal freedom to choose an attitude and to exercise his moral will--against the implied sardonic dismissal of the value of living in an indifferent cosmos, against the tacit charge that from beginning ("fashioned forth") to end ("Paradise") the world is a wretched place. So it seems natural that he should not only tincture his refutation of the charge with irony, contradiction, and reversal of circumstances, but also reinforce it with negative particles.

The affirmation of human life begins in the first line of the poem with the iambic metre endorsing the singer's aloof claim to exceptionality and imperviousness:

Let *me* enjoy the earth no *less*
Because the all-enacting Might
That fashioned forth its loveliness
Had other aims than *my* delight.

In the second quatrain, the singer's sensitive appreciation of the coincidental presence of female delicacy, her "air" (albeit an "ignoring" one, accompanied by "not a word or sign"), is sufficiently potent to make him want to exert himself in celebrating "lips *not* meant for mine." This ironical captivation catalyses a more dynamic exercise of the singer's imagination in the third quatrain:

From manuscripts of moving song
Inspired by scenes and dreams unknown

I'll pour out raptures that belong
To others, as they were my own.

Here the singer's imagination takes him into an unexplored realm of emotional being that the rational, analytical mind finds strange ("unknown"). The singer's resolve to treat "as they were [his] own" the experiences of others is an energetic, climactic commitment to make contact with what is real, to feel what is humanly valuable, and to participate richly in a common humanity--an ecstasy made palpable by a periodic sentence cascading in three irrepressible enjambements. So that the apparent deprivations of the negative prefix (*un-*) and lack of proprietary ("that belong / To others") are entirely superseded by the closing clause of appropriation. Indeed, by acting as a medium for the lyric impulse, the singer perpetuates the tradition of singing, immortalises the songs, and above all, affirms his own significance in time and space:

And some day hence, toward Paradise
And all its blest--if such should be--
I will lift glad, afar-off eyes,
Though it contain no place for me.

Though denied residence in heaven, the singer has created a "place" for himself, "glad" to be far away from where he does not belong.

What the singer affirms, undaunted by personal suffering--such as material adversity, the indifference of others, loneliness, and the prospect of divine rejection--is life itself. But it is imaginative, spiritual life in the particular; it is close at every point to his own inward experience of his fellow human beings. What lends strength to this reading is Hardy's reliance on the inexhaustibly creative power of the poetic imagination, notated in terms both religious ("Inspired" and "raptures") and supernatural ("charms" and "dreams").³⁰ Yet the poem's total effect is not one of negativity or escapism, but of affirmation, self-affirmation. To redeem his lot in life, the singer, nerved by his imagination, deliberately and even perversely creates a way he can exercise his own individual moral will, by defying the forces in the world that counteract his happiness, by using the indifference of a beautiful woman to his own ends, by appropriating the spiritual experiences of others, and by affirming triumphantly the earth as a substance and a situation he finds delightful. The modal auxiliary verbs, "I'll" (twice) and the full-bloodedly predictive "I will," register a bold volition, resilient declaration, and paradoxical resolve that the singer will create his own heaven on earth. Laying claim to an inner strength beyond the control and responsibility of an "all-enacting Might," the singer takes it upon himself to transform his experience of the world, others, and himself into a happy lot. The singer's deep conviction resonates through the poem: what determines one's happiness ("delight," "raptures," blessedness, or gladness) is not an external circumstance, but an attitude of self-worth, self-reliance, and self-sufficiency, the assertion of one's personhood. Hence the exercise of individual moral will is a truly creative action: in the face of an omnipotent, unpredictable, accidental cosmic process, the singer redeems the essential properties of his personhood--the importance, value, and freedom of his individual being.

The second necessary condition of Hardy's personhood is social and cultural heritage. If the (existential) *where* of a speaker's physical being may be taken as a chief condition of personhood, then another equally crucial condition is the (historical) *whence* of a speaker's emotional and intellectual being. Some of Hardy's first-person speakers live within a wide range of familial, social, and cultural relationships; they rely not only on their physical being, but also on a communal order. These speakers are baptised involuntarily and irrevocably into their communal matrix; their first fellowship provides the context of their identity thereafter. In other words, Hardy's personhood is paradoxical, and its communal attachment--a sense

³⁰ The phrase "scenes and dreams" evolved out of Hardy's manuscripted version "love to me" and initially published "scenes and souls" (*CPW* 1: 290).

of belonging, of origin, of home--is an essential part of that paradox. Hardy blends both the liberating and the limiting influences of being in community.

For the speaker poring over his family-tree in the richly-textured "The Pedigree" (*CPW* 2: 197), it is an obnoxious reality, a manifestation of the cosmic process, that his every deliberate mental act springs from inherited functions of his body; and that his thoughts and beliefs are limited by innate faculties, including the supremely human property of speech:

IV

And then did I divine
That every heave and coil and move I made
Within my brain, and in my mood and speech,
Was in the glass portrayed
As long forestalled by their so making it;
The first of them, the primest fuglemen of my line,
Being fogged in far antiqueness past surmise and reason's reach.

V

Said I then, sunk in tone,
I am merest mimicker and counterfeit!--
Though thinking, *I am I,*
And what I do I do myself alone.
--The cynic twist of the page thereat unknit
Back to its normal figure, having wrought its purport wry,
The Mage's mirror left the window-square,
And the stained moon and drift retook their places there.

(22-36)

Here all the original actions the speaker performed ("made") are rendered, under pressure from the echoic cognate ("making"), simple, ineffective variants of previous, remarkable deeds, the speaker's chagrined sense of inferiority being vented in the iambic indictment of his forerunners: "As *long forestalled by their so making it.*" The speaker's imagination is so dominated by the notion of hereditary determinism that he resigns himself to the doom of fulfilling an ineluctable destiny. No amount of effort, one feels, can free this speaker from the genetic constraint his begetters "imposed" on him. Not only does he fear that no achievement of his would be unique, novel, or even original; he also feels that his life debases the heroic genius of his forefathers. Disillusionment, despair, helplessness, oppression, insignificance--these seem all his food.

However, Hardy's artistic aim is not to melodramatise a scientific theory, or to make pessimistic capital out of a biological law. True, he had read about the immortality of germ plasm in August Weismann's *Essays on Heredity*, had derived his last two tragic novels from the concept of family features and temper, and had already dealt with the theme of hereditary traits in his verse (*H&C* 348). But the verbal richness of "The Pedigree" insists on the speaker's having a quality of mind unlike that of the relentless speaker in "Heredity" (*CPW* 2: 166), whose assumptions of biological inheritance are strictly scientific--impersonal, remorseless, factual. For although the familial connection is inescapable, it also, paradoxically enough, offers its own consolation amid the grim imprisonment, as it were. Whereas the first three stanzas of the poem flow on in an easy, hypotactic, conversational mode ("I bent . . . and as I bent . . . So . . ."), and with the different rhyme-scheme of each stanza creating a durchkomponiert effect, the diction and syntax in stanzas 4 and 5 (those quoted above) set a new tone, one of romantic, celebratory exaltation:

The first of them, the primest fuglemen of my line,
Being fogged in far antiqueness past surmise and reason's reach.

V

Said I then, sunk in tone,
'I am merest mimicker and counterfeit!--
Though thinking, *I am I,*
And what I do I do myself alone.'

By so strenuously asserting the speaker's presumptuous conviction of his self-sufficiency, the italics ironically acknowledge and pay tribute to the robust strength of the atavistic strain that courses through his own life and being, still directed by the chief and most vigorous members of his family. In other words, the effect of the cultural legend is to awaken the speaker's feeling for the heroic glory of his ancestors. The very strength of their possession of him, a decisive sense of belonging, induces in the speaker a subliminal awareness of their ancient splendour. And the paradox is that although he may be limited by his original environment, the speaker is yet free and powerful enough to discover a mode of being for himself that magnifies and enhances his identity.

The Spenserian diction, the elaborate syntax, and the Anglo-Saxon versification confer on the speaker an aura of dignity and grandeur. The speaker's identification of his ancestors is in descriptive apposition ("the primest fuglemen") to a pronoun ("them") whose referent occurs ten lines earlier ("begetters"), only to see them obscured by myth. The entire utterance reverberates with the glory of heroic deeds, resplendent with human excellence, when the pronoun "their" (line 26) generates a subordinate description ("The first") which itself develops into a defining appositive, which in turn shoots out an alliterating, heavily laden participle.

The full force of these climactic lines, of course, can be apprehended only within the context of the poem as a whole. But the rich amalgamation of paradoxes Hardy achieves in the last four lines can be gauged from the juxtaposition of the imaginative and the mathematical:

--The cynic twist of the page thereat unknit
Back to its normal figure, having wrought its purport wry,
The Mage's mirror left the window-square,
And the stained moon and drift retook their places there.

Here Hardy deftly separates the intractable scientific facts of the genealogical document (the work of a "chronicler," the details are "mapped") from the heroic imagery created by the moon and the window-pane. Just how they produce the imagery is obscure and mysterious, "past surmise and reason's reach," the result neither of visionary hallucination ("The Mage's mirror," "the stained moon") nor of geometrical calculation ("normal figure," "window-square," "retook their places"). In three straightforward, declarative statements, and abetted by a rhyming couplet, the resumptive images of reversal, completion, and departure restore the simple scene. But the phenomenon has occurred, and its effect cannot be reversed. The speaker's complex knowledge cannot be replaced. "The Pedigree" is, in fact, *both* scientific hypothesis *and* cultural legend, articulating and integrating as it does the twofold paradox: first, that any attempt to achieve oneself separate from one's origins is self-destructive; and second, that only by being firmly linked to the communal past can one be truly free to create a dignified and worthwhile future.

It is possible, as J. O. Bailey's commentary on "The Pedigree" illustrates, to regard the speaker as having "no freedom of will" (*H&C* 366). Such a reading, however, ignores the simple fact that the speaker's very way of seeing his forebears constitutes his freedom of will. As we have seen, the speaker's mode of perception emerges in the syntax, versification, and diction. It is also embodied in spatial terms, in the way he

perceives his physical environment. At first, the spatial imagery works with the poem's Spenserian diction to create an ominous atmosphere. As the speaker exerts himself to study the genealogical chart, the chilling moonscape intensifies the nocturnal solitude and natural darkness, producing something of the effect of Gothic romance:

I bent in the deep of night
Over a pedigree the chronicler gave
As mine; and as I bent there, half-unrobed,
The uncurtained panes of my window-square let in the watery light
Of the moon in its old age:

The submerged metaphor in "deep" is that of the sea, conventionally dangerous and alien to man, and here assigned to time. Hence night becomes inhabitable, as an underwater place with a spatial index ("there"). Hardy brilliantly exploits this Gothic setting in order to create an enigmatic and exotic order of reality lying just beneath the surface of the civilised mind--the realm of inscrutable markings and perverse, irrational impulses, evoked here by rain-clouds scudding by, dolphins floating spent and aimless, and the moon staring dispassionately:

And green-rheumed clouds were hurrying past where mute and cold it globed
Like a drifting dolphin's eye seen through a lapping wave.

But within this submarine world of aberrant phenomena occur two physical formations that transmute the merely uncanny atmospheric moonscape to a symbolic level:

II

So, scanning my sire-sown tree,
And the hieroglyphs of this spouse tied to that,
With offspring mapped below in lineage,
Till the tangles troubled me,
The branches seemed to twist into a seared and cynic face
Which winked and tokened towards the window like a Mage
Enchanting me to gaze again thereat.

III

It was a mirror now,
And in it a long perspective I could trace
Of my begetters, dwindling backward each past each
All with the kindred look,
Whose names had since been inked down in their place
On the recorder's book,
Generation and generation of my mien, and build, and brow.

Here the syntax endorses one's sense of unreality, where children (usually active) are characterised by an effacing epithet of fixity ("mapped"), and Hardy registers the speaker's moral as well as intellectual disquiet through the barbaric eclipse of the grammatical subject of "scanning" (the pronoun "I") by the labyrinth that so perplexes the speaker, the irrationality of the syntax here acting out a much deeper mystery. The formation of an illusory face, far from adding to the confusion, actually relieves the speaker's vexed bafflement, especially since the enjambed long lines ease the agonising congestion created by the succession of hesitant, groping phrases. The ghostly animation of the face induces the transformation of another physical object: the plain window, the sole source of light in the room, becomes a marvellous mirror, the metamorphosis guiding the speaker further into a dreamlike world. The window assumes an intellectual and emotional rather than a

physical space, and the ominous quality of the supernatural enchantment is made so strong by the mesmeric association with the learned Merlin's omniscient mirror in *The Faerie Queene* (3.2.19) that the abstract significance dominates our sense of mere natural phenomena. Consequently, when his attention returns to the window, and a syntactic inversion subtly marshals a concatenation of subordinate qualifiers, that adumbrates the receding line of duplicated faces, the speaker's mental excursion leads, perhaps, to a counter-epic reversal of Britomart's fateful discovery that she would be the mother of "Renowmed kings, and sacred Emperours . . . Braue Captaines, and most mighty warriors" (3.3.23-24): instead of beholding future progeny, Hardy's speaker sees former progenitors. In other words, Hardy arranges and depicts the physical details in order to give them a symbolic reference and meaning of their own. Mental action takes precedence over perception of space.

The structural and thematic emphasis of the poem suggests that Hardy consciously created the face and the mirror as elements of the speaker's mind to embody its very workings in sensuous, spatial forms; that face and mirror serve an intellectual and moral, as well as emotional, reason; and that they have a symbolic function. After the speaker, submerged and relaxed in a private world, gets caught up unwittingly in a problem he cannot solve, he perceives one face, then adjusts his focus to change the function of the window which exhibits a whole line of faces. By allowing these quick shifts in focus, Hardy embeds within this simple design, a fairly complex tripartite structure. First, in order to see a face on the document, the speaker has to form a pattern out of the welter of diverse details. Next, in order to see in, not through, the window-pane, the speaker has again to recognise patterns (faces). Finally, in order to sort out what troubles him, he has to relate what he (thinks he) sees reflected in the glass to his original problem. The fresh integration of details and the internalising of a problem are themselves movements of the speaker's mind that are unique albeit governed by the past, as is this particular experience, which the poem articulates, of clearing up a perplexity quite unknown to his forbears.

The main point of "The Pedigree" is precisely how and for what purpose the speaker *comes to knowledge* of himself sufficient to enable him to go on living meaningfully. By shifting the speaker's focus from the document to the window-pane, Hardy enables him to resolve the problem. At the same time, the overall rhythm of the poem follows the process of the speaker's mind as he gains self-knowledge, defines the self, and achieves a sense of personhood.³¹ That is to say, Hardy creates in stanza 4 a series of retrospections in which the speaker views the past as a place ("trace") of increasing illusion ("a long perspective") which nevertheless exercises power over him, moulding him, setting him within an order. That the present moment ("now") springs out of the expired ("since") shocks and mortifies the speaker. But the control by the extinct many is essential to give significance to the life of the extant individual. Hardy subtly emphasises this dependence syntactically, when he places the dynamic phrase "I could trace" between the components of the static phrase "a long perspective . . . Of my begetters," the insertion implying the incorporation of the speaker's individual mind within the process of family tradition. Then with the explorative auxiliary "could" empowering a verb of progressive perception, "trace," Hardy conveys further the sheer length of the speaker's lineage. He also achieves the effect by placing the participial amplification "dwindling" immediately after the caesura, thereby establishing the vast number of "begetters," who reassemble in an unending avenue, after a momentary, apparent intrusion by the present into a settled past. The magic mirror thus gives time a spatial

³¹ The constant redefinition of the self in relation to the world, past and present, lies at the heart of Hardyan personhood, and the image of the mirror in "The Pedigree" captures a process that Patricia Ingham sees as static ("Cell" 135), Dennis Taylor more accurately regards as "unfolding in time" (*Poetry* 56), and Jon Stallworthy most aptly describes as a resurfacing ("Moonlight" 187).

index, so that the "perspective," the line of ancient faces extending through space, acts as a gauge measuring the speaker's personal significance in the world.

These shifting foci have a symbolic significance, for they dramatise another element that is essential to Hardy's personhood, moral responsibility. What Hardy means us to see is that the revelation the speaker gains of himself is not just the product of his particular background of time and place. Although rooted in a regional matrix, the speaker's heritage need not determine or reduce his relation to the rest of the world, past or present. Although his new knowledge springs involuntarily from submerged beliefs, ingrained values, and innate assumptions, the speaker in "The Pedigree" is personally responsible for "divin[ing]" that knowledge. What the speaker fails to see is that his integrating first the documentary markings into a face and then the window into a mirror are two decisively personal acts. The perception of the face (and the faces) originates with the speaker, not with his ancestors. The need to interpret his family-tree, the quest to find what is significant for himself in it, the passion to pursue the inquiry--all are indispensable, red-hot coals that burn within the seeking intellect of the speaker. Moreover, because this intellectual urgency implies that the speaker is pursuing something of value, he is also personally responsible for asserting his discovery. And one cannot call this passionate responsibility subjectivism, because the speaker implicitly acknowledges the jurisdiction of what his fellow-men require: that is, what he learns he submits to public criteria. Vigorously stretching his mind in one direction towards something precious (the private thought that "*I am I, / And what I do I do myself alone*"), the speaker allows himself to be acted upon by outside pressures (he is a "mere continuator," as the manuscript has it). But the speaker is not merely attempting to satisfy his own desire for illumination; his desire is to discover and encounter a hidden reality. Hence his implicit acceptance of the theory of hereditary traits is crucial if he seriously wants to say something true about the real world. The speaker in "The Pedigree," then, is morally responsible for what he claims to know, because he himself both performs the "divination" and, even though he is wiser and sadder, stands by what he learns.

The speaker in "Transformations" (CPW 2: 211) behaves in similar fashion, and his behaviour also illustrates well the element of responsibility in Hardy's personhood. This speaker merely finds an ostensibly logical way to celebrate the memorable qualities of fellow human beings known to him, a way that is intellectually satisfying to him:

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.

These grasses must be made
Of her who often prayed,
Last century, for repose;
And the fair girl long ago
Whom I vainly 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!

Here the demonstrative adjectives ("this," "these") vividly dramatise the judicious movements of the speaker's attention, until--after gradual, appreciative rumination, a process of accumulating specific correspondences that smack of individual personalities--the speaker pronounces his triumphant conclusion ("So"). That is, his mind moves deliberately towards a goal which he believes is highly meaningful to him--to be aware of the existence of human worth and personal force in the world. Words like "Portion"³² and "grandsire," together with the intimation of eternally affectionate security in the metaphor "Bosomed," suggest the dignity of the dead to the speaker. But this reverence is curbed by a reality external to the speaker: in the first two stanzas, he subordinates his fancy to the scientific concept of the migration of molecules from one organism to another. Nineteenth-century chemistry taught that:

The very substance of the earth, acted on by air and moisture, underwent perpetual change and provided nourishment for an astonishing diversity of plant life, which in turn, through chemical metamorphosis, supported the full range of animal life. This would then decay, to be resolved into inorganic aggregates; "and the same elementary substances, differently arranged, are contained in the inert soil, or bloom and emit fragrance in the flower, or become in animals the active organs of intelligence."

(Leveré 193)

Nevertheless, this concept is not what the form and technique of the poem are emphasising. After the end-stopped, terminal assonance of "repose," "ago," "know," and "rose," Hardy sweeps up the significance of the sound at the start of the next stanza with "So," as the climactic inference suddenly dawns on the speaker, inverting and arresting the first metrical foot before letting the speaker present his jubilant denial ("Só, they are nó"). Having based his observations on an independent standard of reality, the speaker asserts confidently ("So, . . . !") a conclusion he believes is universally valid, as the appearance of the generalising article (in lines 15-17) implies. Because the speaker's estimate of the significance of his goal is guided by a scientific explanation, he himself knows the value of what he believes. The concluding stanza of the poem amounts to a claim that his vision is true; the exuberant anaphora ("And . . . / And . . .") and the sure-footed monosyllabic last line constitute nothing less than an act of self-accreditation. This is at the heart of Hardy's personhood--the gesture by which one stands by a belief, idea, or position, which is based on standards, principles, or values one shares with others. It is the typically Hardy firm stand against cosmic or ethical odds: passionate in its pursuit of clarity, knowledge, and truth; and responsible in its anchorage to what is externally, independently, actually real (e.g., see Hardy's comments on poetry in *L&W* 302). The closing stanza, then, enacts the strengthening of the speaker's moral conviction in achieving a goal he himself finds deeply significant and that is also of human value to others. The speaker in "Transformations" is the person morally responsible for putting together meaningfully all the diverse details of the graveyard world around him. He has to invent neither the details nor the relationships between them; the relationships are simply there for him to discover. Through this process of integration, of finding patterns of appropriate relationships, the speaker attains a new, emergent level of being. That is his solace.

But the solace a speaker finds within the framework of Hardy's personhood is by no means pure comfort, peace, or happiness. In "Transformations," for example, the speaker's conclusion is a solace to him precisely in the sense that it enables him to feel more fully his humanity. He does not respond to the vegetation with the obtuseness of an animal--of, say, the clergyman's horse in *The Old Curiosity Shop*, "stumbling with a dull blunt sound among the graves . . . cropping the grass, at once deriving orthodox consolation from the dead parishioners, and enforcing last Sunday's text that this was what all flesh came to" (ch. 16, 122). Nor can the speaker's exclamation be dismissed simply as a piece of sentimental materialism

³² The recognisably biblical flavour of this word invokes solemn associations of destiny and divine power: see Ps. 73.26 and Job 20.29.

(Richardson 125), for his final recognition rests not only on an acceptance of the diminution death inflicts, but also on the correlative intensification of life's value and pleasure, on the awareness that death's unremitting sharpness gives life a decisive edge all its own. Nor is his conclusion an attempt to rig a resurrection of the dead simply by postulating that they magnanimously endow with their distinctive traits tree, grass, and flower. Rather, the significance of each observation changes as it combines with the other observations, and their joint meaning emerges only when they are all taken together to form the speaker's complete experience in the closing stanza. That stanza expresses what all the observed traits and correspondences, not simply add up to, but evolve into and become. For only after the speaker has built up the discrete particulars, does he achieve new insight. That is, the speaker's solace comes in the form of assertions of a correspondence between human traits and vegetation, and the achievement of a breakthrough to a new level of psychological reality. The core interest and idea of "Transformations" is how a visit to a churchyard heightens the speaker's awareness of the "nerves and veins" and "energy" of his *own* life, a knowledge that enables him to glory in the sensation of them. The speaker's response to death, then, is human, realistic, and creative; and his solace is his ability to appreciate the "upper air" in which he breathes and celebrates his own "growth."

The chief virtue of Hardy's personhood becomes indirectly apparent in "The Man He Killed" (*CPW* 1: 344), where this kind of solace opens new dimensions in the betterment of society. Paradoxically, the social enterprise of war can be worse on its winners than on its losers. Hardy dramatizes this moral complexity of war when he presents the mental sensations felt by a naïve soldier uncomfortable with what he has done:

'Had he and I but met
By some old ancient inn,
We should have sat us down to wet
Right many a nipperkin!

'But ranged as infantry,
And staring face to face,
I shot at him as he at me,
And killed him in his place.

First, there is the ideal of conviviality brought to the fore by compulsive and futile speculation; then there is the accurate reality of indelible fact to which the mind inevitably returns. The two stanzas enact the divergent social enterprises to which the same speaker is committed. Hardy is careful to represent two identities--in the settings ("some old ancient inn" suggesting a mutually cherished, oddly shaped place of shelter and sustenance as against the unfamiliar, systematically arranged trenches of exposure and fatality); in the syntax (the corporate embrace of "We should have sat down" quite alien to the solitary retaliation of "I shot at him as he at me"); in the diction (the familiar colloquiality of "Right many a nipperkin" made to seem trivial and flippant by the serious technicality of "ranged as infantry"); and also in the versification (a spirit of easy bonhomie portrayed by the run-on lines in the first stanza transformed into tense, mechanical jerks by the regular, end-stopped iambic second stanza). The moment one realises that these two contrastive stanzas alone would have fulfilled perfectly the promise of the poem's title, one penetrates the larger question of why Hardy pursues the course of the speaker's conscience in three further stanzas:

I shot him dead because--
Because he was my foe,
Just so: my foe of course he was;
That's clear enough; although

'He thought he'd 'list, perhaps,
Off-hand like--just as I--

Was out of work--had sold his traps--
No other reason why.

'Yes; quaint and curious war is!
You shoot a fellow down
You'd treat if met where any bar is,
Or help to half-a-crown.'

What Hardy means us to see is that the speaker cannot quite get to the moral particulars and attitudes that go to make up his experience of shooting another person dead, although they are gathered up and embodied in the term "foe." Without understanding or explaining his motivation, the speaker borrows a ready-made label that is conveniently vague, abstract, institutionalised, created by propaganda. But the emphatic reduplication and inversion lack conviction; and the seemingly conclusive assonance ("foe . . . so . . . foe") is subtly foiled by the last, rhyming syllable of the stanza ("-though"), a valve of moral conscience releasing him from the pressure of a social identity alien to him. For the speaker is unable to specify his motives, precisely because his experience of war is compounded of two identities: labourer and soldier. Having appropriated both as his own, he struggles in vain to acknowledge, with equal confidence, that both are universally valid. Hostility, "distance and cold precision" (Hardy's phrase: *CL* 3: 135) are assumed attitudes of duty for the modern soldier that can only preserve his amorphous anonymity; whereas conviviality and fellow-feeling are ingrained constants that define the speaker's identity. And it is in trying to accommodate both enterprises that he articulates a sense of Hardy's lovingkindness (described above).

In other words, prompted by lovingkindness, the speaker feels the rural bond, implied by "just as I" and "traps," restores to him a sure, clear sense of himself as distinct among others in the world. He attempts to know his "foe" as his "fellow," to restore the dead man's personal value and meaning, and in the process, unwittingly creates a perspective, and casts a slur, on war as a social enterprise. The inadequate understatement of his verdict on war ("quaint and curious") actually points up the sort of thing that can endanger or violate personhood. True, the speaker attains a new level of being; but the poignancy of his solace is that he little recognises his own personal debasement. Before he could "shoot" the other man, the speaker had to reduce the wide range of human activities that make up the complexity that is "a fellow" to the single behaviour of a "foe." In the process, however, the speaker lost whole dimensions of himself; he became less of a person for losing the full use of his human faculties; he forfeited the ability to practise lovingkindness. His reaffirmation of the social convention that action be appropriate to setting registers the change which has occurred within him. The very ambiguity of the pronoun "You"--both generic and personal--serves as an organising reference to the speaker's vague inkling of his transformed self.

Modern warfare was for Hardy symptomatic of a retrogression in "the exploration of reality" on which he had embarked to fulfil his cultural calling as a poet ("Apology" *CPW* 2: 318; and see above, ch. 4, pt V). But a worse state of the exploration was institutionalised stagnation. For a retrogression in social thought could at least be interpreted as only "a deceptive appearance" (Dollar 293n1), merely part of a Comtean "looped orbit" ("Apology" line 253; see also *LN* 1: 76); an arrested social institution, however, meant an anathema to Hardy: the effective limiting of reality, which for Hardy is both objective and indeterminate, open-ended, continuously self-manifesting and startling, and hence incapable of exhaustive, final definition. Indeed, for Hardy, all existing knowledge merely conceals the seeds of what has yet to be discovered. Consequently, Hardy believed that all social institutions involved in the exploration of reality, such as law, politics, science, art, music, and also

poetry, pure literature in general, religion--I include religion, in its essential and undogmatic sense. . .--these, I say, the visible signs of mental and emotional life, must like all other things keep moving, becoming.

("Apology" lines 214-19)

The more a social institution becomes determinate and fixed (he implies) the more it forfeits its contact with reality, ceases to be a symbolic structure, and loses its meaning. In other words, only by accepting each current development of an institution as merely a "stage" ("Apology" line 66) leading to further--even uncomfortable and contradictory--stages of development can one keep that institution from stagnating and becoming moribund, meaningless, and then defunct. And Hardy's way of keeping the process of social thought active is to charge it with intimations of reality, "Unadjusted impressions" (*CPW* 1: [113]), "impressions of the moment" ("General Preface" 49)--that ghostly component of new knowledge to be found chiefly in the individual's vitally innovative response to what was already thought. Hardy indicates such a reliance on tradition, towards the end of his "Apology," when he proposes that only the spiritual resources of its cultural heritage--its established "dignity and footing" and "old association" (lines 241, 242)--will enable the Church of England to foster the evolution of religion and so maintain a coherent morality. Reliance on the past is a creative action, because reality for Hardy is constantly disclosing new aspects of itself. The past is a field of potentialities of numberless harmonies, laden with intimations of deeper reality essential to sustain the evolution of social thought and feeling.

But Hardy insists on respect for the individual's response to the tradition of a social institution or symbolic structure, respect for the individual's ability to pick up the scent of hidden truths, to glimpse a reality "few" ever "win" a "hint or warning" of ("The Two Houses" *CPW* 2: 363), and to explore that incipient reality on his own recognisances. Each individual can achieve new levels of being only in fragments, according to his or her particular area of responsibility or goal of self-improvement. And the tradition or structure of experience Hardy dramatises most frequently and powerfully in his short poems is that of home, for the growth of thought in society has, for Hardy, a structure and procedure similar to the progress of family tradition. Home is the basic model, the metaphor, that Hardy uses to represent the dynamic relation between past and present within a culture. The recognition by family members of the same set of persons as their forebears generates a common tradition, of which each member carries on a particular strand. It is through participation in, and submission to, this tradition that the values of domestic life are transmitted from generation to generation. Tradition tends to enforce conformity. But a measure of internal tension is essential to the development of any tradition; conformity and change are the paradoxical and indispensable factors in a living tradition. To the degree that it recognises the inexhaustible depth of individual memory, perception, and experience, the home will paradoxically foster dissent from its traditions. For only so can growth be ensured and reality truly explored. "The Self-Unseeing" (*CPW* 1: 206) is a representative example:

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!

Fascinated, fed, and fulfilled by the longevity of inanimate things and the familiarity of empty spaces, this speaker's mind discovers coherences ("Blessings emblazoned that day" and "Everything glowed with a gleam") that instil an inwardly enriching awareness of the present--make the here and now more real. But the speaker achieves this understanding only after he has feelingly orientated himself towards and imaginatively assimilated--taken "a full look" at--traces of what is dead and gone: some fragmentary moments of his childhood, in which he hopes, and strives, to discover the value and meaning of the past.³³ The speaker's mind quests for new features of reality, for the "ghostly" component of what is already known, such familiarity being rich in seeds of future findings. The separate movements ("Here . . . Here . . . here . . . there . . .") co-ordinate a single act of probing, groping, as the speaker attempts to accommodate and integrate the various domestic activities and so create a coherent, significant scene. The identifications enact a spirit of anticipation, which guides the exploration. What starts as the problem of redeeming what has been lost due to transience ends in the discovery of significance hitherto uncomprehended, the meaning missed. Reconstructing a family occasion with great care the speaker relies on concealed clues which his imagination detects in the memory, perception, and raw experience of familiar places and objects. Each reference to something concrete carries intimations of a deeper reality. The simple acts of walking, sitting, smiling, playing the violin, and dancing; the door, chair, and fire; the evidence of severe friction on the floor; the speaker's self-absorption--all these circumstances are in fact aspects of that new reality. Yet "emblazoned" and "glowed," intense and celebratory though they be, can provide only vague, limited access to the reality from which the speaker and his family "were looking away!" for it remains unspecifiable. Although imaginative dwelling on familiar things puts the speaker in touch with a hidden level of the present, he comprehends that level only partially. That is why the climactic revelation, the insight he originally sought and was capable of achieving, is none the more definite for his conviction. The concluding pang points to the inexhaustible future manifestations of the reality of the family occasion; for the speaker's final remark is itself the first clue to a new, fuller vision of what home means to him. By giving a present place to the past, the speaker performs an individual feat of the imagination that enriches the domestic tradition in which he participates.

Both poems affirm goals of general human value as well as specific significance to their speakers. The speaker in "The Man He Killed" asserts the establishment and exercise of reason and lovingkindness; while the speaker in "The Self-Unseeing" demonstrates a creative awareness of the past as containing unpredictable implications for the present. Both these goals are, of course, typically Hardyian; but the feature central to Hardyian personhood that these two poems illustrate is the mode of *seeing* and *being* in which those goals are pursued. Hardy believed that his calling as a poet was to find "the best consummation possible" for human life on this planet, and to strive for the world's "amendment" (see above, ch. 4, pt V). For Hardy, in fact, the individual mind is the sole source of vital creativity society needs; for him, only the individual, artistic mind, with its "idiosyncratic mode of regard" (*L&W* 235), can pass valid and reliable "comment on where the world stands . . . in these disordered years of our prematurely afflicted century" ("Apology" lines 76-78). The essence of such moral agency is for the individual to internalise the current or recorded words, gestures, and actions of others, living or dead. That is, acting with the interests of his community at heart, he attends to his

³³ As a boy, Hardy was of

ecstatic temperament, extraordinarily sensitive to music, and among the endless jigs, hornpipes, reels, waltzes, and country-dances that his father played . . . and to which the boy danced a *pas seul* in the middle of the room, there were three or four that always moved the child to tears, though he strenuously tried to hide them. . . . he danced on at these times to conceal his weeping. (*L&W* 19)

contemporaries or ancestors, and inwardly assimilates and integrates the many details which bear or bore on their distinctive form of existence. Hardy registers this creative moral action in "The Man He Killed" with the phrase "just as I," and in "The Self-Unseeing" with "Yet we were looking away!" According to Hardy, the artistic "seer" should take as his subject "that pattern among general things which his idiosyncrasy moves him to observe" (*L&W* 158), a vision that can be used to free society from destructive habits, assumptions, and conventions, and that can conduct his fellow-men onto a new level of seeing and being. One chief value of these two poems lies in what they bring home to the reader and impel him to bring imaginatively into being--the practice of lovingkindness and a sense of the past as a creative force in society.

The past and new levels of being become, in Hardy's thought, related aspects of reality--complementaries. The past provides the premises for an indefinite sequence of individual creative actions in the future. Perhaps no poem presents this attitude to the past more poignantly than the remarkable "Old Furniture" (*CPW* 2: 227). Like the speaker in "The Self-Unseeing," this speaker also believes in the presence of a hidden reality, of which familiar things represent only aspects of a reality yet to be revealed more fully by future discoveries, and that will continue to unfold indefinitely. By pursuing new features of reality, this speaker achieves insights that extend his idea of home. The speaker sees on "each shiny familiar thing" the hands of its previous owners

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.

Here are aspects of a reality which promises to be an endless source of new experience. The speaker gradually achieves a new coherence among clues provided by presently known and accepted aspects of home and community--ancestral household "relics":

I know not how it may be with others
Who sit amid relics of householdry
That date from the days of their mothers' mothers,
But well I know how it is with me
Continually

I see the hands of the generations

The speaker implies that he discerns a problem: society's need to be aware of cultural continuity; that is, he integrates some raw observations into clues pointing to a possible gap in people's knowledge.

But if the intimations of further levels of reality which his intellectual flair and enterprise enable him to gain can (his sardonic self-abnegation implies) deepen, invigorate, and benefit social thought, not all members of a community can contribute to its development in the same imaginative way or at the same level of intelligence; and some lack the capacity to pursue and assimilate, or even appreciate, the intimations of a discovery:

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.

But the creative tension is inevitable: orthodoxy enforces "conforming to rules" (*L&W* 114); originality and "idiosyncrasy" (*L&W* 158) encourage dissent. Paradoxically, social institutions both guide the individual to make contact with the hidden reality of the past and also thereby provide him with an independent ground for departing from their teaching--teaching such as the rallying belief in muscular Christianity and heroic progress, invoked here through allusion to Longfellow's "A Psalm of Life": "Act,--act in the living Present! / Heart within, and God o'erhead! . . . Let us, then, be up and doing, / With a heart for any fate" (3). Hence condemnation or rejection of the speaker's cultural contribution as leisured and Hellenistic (see Jenkyns 48, 275) cannot alter its validity. The speaker "see[s]" things, because he is passionately committed to finding a way to enrich and enliven the conceptual framework he is in. His powers of imagination are marshalled in an intense drive to "see" more. At first he is excited by intimations of a hidden present; but then he becomes despondent and then seems to subside into the very framework he is attempting to "amend." Nevertheless, the poem itself exists as the recognition and solution of a cultural problem; and it is through that recognition and solution that a new feature of reality is seen to emerge. The speaker's implicit claim is that he has made a new contact with that reality. What this speaker's attitude asserts is that to improve society is a personal striving, because intimations of a hidden reality in the present impose on the individual an obligation to grasp that reality. A culture can remain alive only so long as it knows itself to be incomplete and points beyond its manifest content.

In this chapter, my concern has been to describe the three dominant philosophical positions from which first-person speakers in Hardy's dramatic lyrics address "the Worst"; that is, I have traced affirmative responses through which human consciousness in pain and fear evolves. In the final chapter, I mean to delineate the ways in which Hardy characteristically uses spatial imagery to embody and reflect those positions and responses.

Chapter 6

IMAGES OF SOLACE:
SETTING AS REFLEX OF THEME

I do not think that there will be any permanent revival of the old transcendental ideals; but I think there may gradually be developed an Idealism of Fancy; that is, an idealism in which fancy is no longer tricked out and made to masquerade as belief, but is frankly and honestly accepted as an imaginative solace in the lack of any substantial solace to be found in life. (*L&W* 333)

Hardy's idea of home is a complex of meaning, because it gathers up, focuses, and encapsulates much of the emotional tension, pressure, and irony inherent in his concept of personhood. Hardy's declared and distinctive poetic contribution to the "amendment" of English culture ("Apology" line 78) was to evoke thought in the minds of his fellow-countrymen by rich intimations of "inner themes and inner poetries" ("The Milkmaid" *CPW* 1: 195), "domestic emotions," for the individual speakers in many of his first-person lyrics are "beings in whose hearts and minds that which is apparently local [is] really universal" ("General Preface" 45). Drawing on "rural and regional realities" (*Millgate, B* 277)--the objects, activities, customs, relationships, institutions, legends, and myths on which a domestic tradition depends for its meaning--Hardy used his idea of home as a metaphor for culture. To keep alive and active the urban dweller's knowledge of those ancestral values by which culture propels itself, Hardy packed into the conventional poetic idea of home a deep understanding of his own rootedness in, and responsibility to, the world that bore him.

But Hardy's metaphor of home is complex for another reason: it functions within an antithesis between enclosed and open space that underlies all his lyric poetry. Hence my purpose in part I of this chapter, dealing as it does with the spatial embodiment of the three philosophical frameworks we discussed earlier, is twofold. First, from an analysis of several poems on domestic and familial topics, I shall derive three images fundamental and intrinsic to the metaphor of home in Hardy's poetry, three salient spatial images--of enclosure, extension, and dimension. Something further is needed, however, a line of organisation along which the main thematic things in the poetry can be significantly related; and here it is that a network of spatial images presents itself as meeting the case ideally. So, second, I shall link up a miscellany of key images of enclosure into a map that incorporates and reflects some of the ramifying connotations of Hardy's master theme. This dual approach offers a specific way of getting one's bearings in Hardy's *Complete Poetical Works* and establishing one's axes of reference.

This approach rests on the assumption that the three dominant philosophical positions, resorted to as sources of solace in the face of "the Worst," often crystallise out in the spatial images of a lyric, "just as when one sees a landscape of miles length [sic] reproduced in a charming miniature picture inside a camera," the helpful analogy Hardy used to salute a friend's impressive historical digest of the theory of evolution (17 Jan. 1897; *CL* 2: 143). Although critics have, in fact, all but ignored the literary procedure that chiefly accounts for this miniaturisation of Hardy's master theme in his first-person lyrics, for the purposes of this discussion it is crucial that we understand how the convention works.¹ Hardy himself was quite evidently familiar with this

¹ One exception is William Buckler, whom I soon quote below. Another is David Sonstroem, who although he is not specifically concerned with *multum in parvo*, implicitly accepts the idea as typically Hardyian, when he writes that "the poems tend to reproduce in miniature the aesthetic pattern of *Jude*" (12).

convention whereby the small is identified with, and seen as synonymous with, the substantial. Hardy had a good idea of this symbolic device which enlists the twin tropes of metonymy (referring to something by the name of one of its incidental companions) and synecdoche (referring to something by naming one of its essential components), as Hardy's note for 1 July 1892 attests:

The art of observation (during travel, etc.) consists in this: the seeing of great things in little things, the whole in the part--even the infinitesimal part. For instance, you are abroad: you see an English flag on a ship-mast from the window of your hotel: you realize the English navy. Or, at home, in a soldier you see the British Army, in a bishop at your club, the Church of England; and in a steam hooter you hear Industry.
(L&W 262)

Although Hardy had no need to differentiate the two tropes, it is well that we see that each appears here twice--metonymy in the flag and the hooter, synecdoche in the soldier and the bishop. Both tropes work through substitution, but they differ in that while synecdoche assumes a direct, integral connection or belonging, metonymy implies merely an association and usually a reduction in size (Lanham 97, 67).² The figure of Marty South, too, illustrates the distinction. At the beginning of the novel, she is "*part of the pattern in the great web of human doings*"; at the end, her "*slim figure*" stands for "abstract humanism" (*Woodlanders* ch. 3, 24; ch. 48, 338; emphases mine). As we shall see, Hardy's first-person lyrics derive their thematic import, from the symbolic force of the convention of *multum in parvo*, whereby they become dramas in miniature.

Other evidence maintains the point that small-scale representation accords with Hardy's central artistic procedure. In *The Dynasts*, for instance, human beings are "flesh-hinged mannikins," each of whom partakes of and depends on "the total Will." Nevertheless, even the common soldier has cosmic significance, just as, according to Schopenhauer, "one oak" may manifest the Will "as completely and as much" as "millions" (qtd in Wright, *Shaping* 44). Similarly, Hardy believed that each person somehow reveals the cosmos and all that is not-self. In one of his last notebook quotations, Hardy jotted down in pencil that a man "derives from the whole universe, & is in a way the whole universe. He is an expression, a moment of the whole universe" (*LN* 2: 249). Pursuing his typically Victorian interest in tell-tale physiognomy, an obsession nowhere more active than in his descriptions of Tess's features,³ Hardy extended facial symbolism to characterise the wife in his short story, "The Imaginative Woman." When Mrs Marchmill secretly and studiously induces her orgasmic surrender to the portrait-photograph of her make-believe lover, his eyes are said to have "looked out from beneath well-shaped brows as if they were reading the universe in the microcosm of the confronter's face" (*Ironies* 21). Finally, the miniaturising convention is at work, too, in Hardy's first-person lyrics, where philosophical positions are microcosmically registered by means of spatial images. The especial thesis of the present chapter is that spatial images embody and enact in embryo Hardy's master theme.

To put this another way, the symbolism of the settings in Hardy's dramatic lyrics springs from exactly the same premise as that informing his novels, from what one might call the "Wessex principle." Defending the "circumscribed" settings of his novels, Hardy appealed to the precedent of Greek drama and argued that "the domestic emotions have throbbled in Wessex nooks with as much intensity as in the palaces of Europe" ("General Preface" 45). That is, no matter how narrow its locale, a study of human nature is universally compelling. We see this clearly in, say, Little Hintock which, as Michael Millgate observes, is "the microcosm of a world in which the struggle for existence is everywhere the chief condition of existence"

² Notice that, strictly speaking, Hardy's examples would all be synecdochic had he taken the flag to refer to an English ship and the hooter to a machine; alternatively, to see an army in a musket or a church in a mitre would be a metonymic transference of meaning.

(*Career* 250). Less obvious, but no less symbolic, are the "minute pools" Tess passes as she abjectly yet faithfully follows Angel, after his staggeringly cruel betrayal of her confidence and his self-mortifying rejection of her as a person--"she would not have known they were shining overhead if she had not seen them there--the vastest things of the universe imaged in objects so mean" (ch. 35, 328).⁴ Formed from the tracks of farm animals, each pool becomes an emphatic emblem of Tess's sexual and moral degradation.

Conversely, even the epic canvas of *The Dynasts* includes emblematic settings. For Hardy's celestial perspective condenses all Europe to "a mere garden" so that the action might have universal significance. Take Waterloo, for instance. The field of Waterloo, just as much as that other tract of ground sacred to Hardy,⁵ the fictional composite "Egdon Heath,"⁶ secreted something which only his devout interest in the works of his suffering fellow-mortals descried. In *The Dynasts*, Hardy's symbolic imagination empowered him to portray how "the fate of Empires" (see *LN* 1: 148) had grown out of the seeds of time sown in that humble continental field. Clearly, to Hardy, this microcosmic convention was no mere knack of finding importance in the banal or wonder in the ordinary (see above, chapter 2n9), but a matter of some literary sophistication, of a kind he could admire in "On a Roman Wall," a poem by his friend, Sir George Douglas, "a dignified & suggestive poem--a *multum in parvo*--the largeness of the view opened up to the mind's eye contrasting excellently with the insignificance of the cause" (19 Dec. 1897; *CL* 2: 183). Indeed, according to William Buckler, "seeing *multum in parvo*," that is to say "gradually recognising the inexhaustible depths of apparent simplicity," is "the subtle secret of Hardy's poetry" (*Poetry* 277).

And yet no critic has realised that this miniaturising convention operates most vigorously in Hardy's spatial images, into which, as though they were literary mustard-seeds or silicon chips, a dramatic lyric compresses its substance. The essence of Hardy's aesthetic is that the setting of a dramatic lyric comprises spatial details that are thematic; a dramatic lyric organises those details into a unique pattern. Hence when we analyse one of Hardy's dramatic lyrics or a whole group of them, we learn something about the master theme condensed and embodied in the particular or overall setting. Accordingly, my dual approach--by means of a triad of spatial images and a network of enclosed spaces--will co-ordinate conceptual associations, emotive connotations, and symbolic values in Hardy's short poems; it will also indicate variations in the tone of poems that comprise a formal set, as we shall see in part II of this chapter, the concluding part of this study, which is devoted to those classic elegies, *Poems of 1912-13*.

³ E.g., *Tess* chs 27 and 42; see too Irwin 10-41.

⁴ Notice how Hardy compresses Angel's agony into a mere droplet of water:

She remained mute, not knowing that he was smothering his affection for her. She hardly observed that a tear descended slowly upon his cheek, a tear so large that it magnified the pores of the skin over which it rolled, like the object lens of a microscope. (ch. 35, 328)

⁵ On Hardy's attachment to Waterloo, see *L&W* 114 and 301; and *CL* 2: 135.

⁶ For the composition of Egdon Heath, see Pinion, *Companion* 312-17.

I

1. Tones, Tensions, and the Dimensions of Home

The poor man's attachment to the tenements he holds . . . has a worthier root, struck deep into a purer soil. His household gods are of flesh and blood, with no alloy of silver, gold, or precious stone; he has no property but in the affections of his own heart; and when they endear bare floors and walls, despite of rags and toil and scanty fare, that man has his love of home from God, and his rude hut becomes a solemn place.

(Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop* ch. 38)

Turning now to some of Hardy's poems on domestic and familial topics, we can do no better than begin with the poem usually taken to be his first, "Domicilium" (*CPW* 3: 279; but see below, appendix B); for in it we see Hardy already developing imagery of enclosure, extension, and dimension in order to embody his idea of personhood--in particular, his sense of man's rootedness in, and responsibility to, the past, of the dynamic relation between past and present. Here is the poem as Hardy intended it to be read by his public:

It faces west, and round the back and sides
High beeches, bending, hang a veil of boughs,
And sweep against the roof. Wild honeysucks
Climb on the walls, and seem to sprout a wish
(If we may fancy wish of trees and plants)
To overtop the apple-tree hard by.

Red roses, lilacs, variegated box
Are there in plenty, and such hardy flowers
As flourish best untrained. Adjoining these
Are herbs and esculents; and farther still
A field; then cottages with trees, and last
The distant hills and sky.

Behind, the scene is wilder. Heath and furze
Are everything that seems to grow and thrive
Upon the uneven ground. A stunted thorn
Stands here and there, indeed; and from a pit
An oak uprises, springing from a seed
Dropped by some bird a hundred years ago.

In days bygone--
Long gone--my father's mother, who is now
Blest with the blest, would take me out to walk.
At such a time I once inquired of her
How looked the spot when first she settled here.
The answer I remember. "Fifty years
Have passed since then, my child, and change has marked
The face of all things. Yonder garden-plots
And orchards were uncultivated slopes
O'ergrown with bramble bushes, furze and thorn:
That road a narrow path shut in by ferns,
Which, almost trees, obscured the passer-by.

"Our house stood quite alone, and those tall firs
And beeches were not planted. Snakes and efts
Swarmed in the summer days, and nightly bats

Would fly about our bedrooms. Heathcroppers
 Lived on the hills, and were our only friends;
 So wild it was when first we settled here."
 (L&W 8n1)

On a superficial view, the poem seems to have a simple temporal structure--what is; what was--with some ambivalence towards the past. Does the poem triumphantly celebrate the superiority of a secure, civilised present over an appalling past of social isolation; or nostalgically summon up an irretrievably lost world of happy innocence? Without saying whether the poem favours past or present, F. B. Pinion argues that the poem contrasts the boyish impressions of the place with the later perceptions of the youthful poet (*Commentary* 262). Judged according to Hardy's characteristic, perhaps obsessive (see Gunn 226 and cf. Furbank, rev. 176), cherishing of the personal past (e.g., "An Anniversary" *CPW* 2: 209) or anxiety over the transience and uniqueness of each moment (e.g., "On the Departure Platform" *CPW* 1: 271), "Domicilium" is doubtless a poem of "a regret for the past" (Thom Gunn's phrase: 226), of "strong feeling for the unique and desolate beauty" of the place known to the boy (from a note to Florence Hardy's copy of the poem; *CPW* 3: 335), and dramatised in the words of the grandmother.

Yet to emphasise the poem's temporal structure alone is to miss a large part of its imaginative force; for the relation between past and present in "Domicilium" is neither antithetical nor competitive, but complementary. Between two poles of commitment, between an idealisation of primitive conditions and an exultation at the advance of human organisation, we can place Hardy's purpose. The structuring impulse of the poem is, in fact, to solve a human problem: how to achieve security, dignity, and significance in an insentient universe. Insofar as the ancestral homestead described by the youthful poet comprehends, integrates, and fulfils the frustrations and aspirations experienced by the grandmother and her peers, the house is a solution to the problem faced and understood fully by the poet's ancestors. The past supplies the present with promptings whereby the present can fulfil the needs of the past for shelter, control, and community--so that, together, present and past form a whole. The fact that Hardy's poems may often evoke possibilities which are no longer possibilities does not mean that the poems never evoke intimations of the past realised in, and hence to some degree defining, the present. For Hardy, the ancestral past is not all lost opportunities; it is potentialities hidden in the present. If we recall how the past is an aspect of an inexhaustible reality in, say, "The Pedigree" (as personal history of the speaker) or "The Self-Unseeing" (as formalised traditions and skills of the community), we become aware of the past in "Domicilium" as a spirit nourishing and informing the structured flesh of the present. What critics have usually taken to be two disparate, incompatible ideas in his poetry, the past and the present, Hardy is able here to include in a single imaginative structure. "Domicilium" is one continuous process of human experience--the imaginative record of one family's accommodation of Nature's vast, intractable, and threatening energies.

The record begins, of course, with the grandmother's "answer" (line 24), which turns out to be the metamemorial germ from which the entire poem issues. The youthful poet remembers that when he was a boy, his grandmother described to him her past. The poet's telescopic retrospection focuses on her first-hand experience of the homestead. By enshrining his "father's mother[s]" words in a third-person characterisation, Hardy achieves for her a venerable, contemplative serenity, all the more Miltonic and impressive for her having endured the wildness, isolation, and grotesque conditions of the original settlement; so that her stature creates a climactic resonance for the adverb "So" (line 36), conveying the explanation for their behaviour in the absolute wildness:

At such a time I once inquired of her
 How looked the spot when first she settled here.
 The answer I remember. "Fifty years

Have passed since then, my child, and change has marked
 The face of all things. Yonder garden-plots
 And orchards were uncultivated slopes
 O'ergrown with bramble bushes, furze and thorn:
 That road a narrow path shut in by ferns,
 Which, almost trees, obscured the passer-by.

"Our house stood quite alone, and those tall firs
 And beeches were not planted. Snakes and efts
 Swarmed in the summer days, and nightly bats
 Would fly about our bedrooms. Heathcroppers
 Lived on the hills, and were our only friends;
 So wild it was when first we settled here."

(22-36)

The slight change from "when first *she* settled here" to "when first *we* settled here" reinforces the sense of closure in the last line. But it is not the only mark of closure in the line. First of all, the refrain signals to the reader that its cargo ("So wild it was") constitutes the "answer" to the boy's earlier question ("How looked the spot"); secondly, the ambiguity of "here" effectively merges her perception with the present, creating not only immediacy but also continuity and tradition. The "here" that the youthful poet uses (in line 23) imbues the grandmother's mind with all the admirable and appealing properties of "the spot" already evoked and into which the poet conjures her up and places her; she possesses these qualities even without knowing it--"who is now / Blest with the blest"--by the simple fact of having the present spot (the youthful poet's "here") as her setting when she speaks. The moral-psychological process is cyclical: the quality of mind that the poet inherits from her is used to present her as having that very same quality of mind. In other words, her "answer" enables his perception of the ancestral dwelling to be as flexible, accommodating, optimistic, and creative as hers. The original quality of the grandmother's piggyback memory is the radical characteristic, the crucial condition, of the youthful poet's awareness of the homestead and precincts; her perception and experience are present in his every act of observation. Without possessing her "answers," he would not see what he sees; without her attitude to the eternal wildness, he would fail to recognise the beauty of the heath, or to marvel at the dignified achievement of a house in *such* a place: hence he stresses the "otherness" of the outside world. His spirit of accommodating unruly Nature, like the sense of beauty he feels before the landscape, comes from his knowledge that the look of the place was once in agreement with his grandmother's personality. Present discoveries embody past questions.

The youthful poet articulates that ancestral spirit of adaptability and accommodation at the outset of the poem, where the early caesura (after "west") momentarily isolates the house so as to orient all surrounding physical objects in relation to "It." This first pause also embosses the opening three words, for in their cardinal position they seem to confer on the titular referent of the initial pronoun the full advantage of the setting sun's warm, gentle rays; then, after capturing and savouring an aspect of the homestead, the sentence immediately leads on to other aspects of the home that enjoy natural benefits:

It faces west, and round the back and sides
 High beeches, bending, hang a veil of boughs,
 And sweep against the roof. Wild honeysucks
 Climb on the walls, and seem to sprout a wish
 (If we may fancy wish of trees and plants)
 To overtop the apple-trees hard by.

Here, by intercalating an unexpected participle, with alliteration that reinforces (b/b) and reverses (H,b/b,h), and by syncopating a simile--

High beeches, bending, hang [like] a veil of boughs

--Hardy subtly suggests that, in exerting themselves to alter their customary position, the impressive and virtually omnipresent beeches both favour and adorn the homestead with leafy drapery, while they themselves become a light covering that caresses the top of the house. Such is the mutually transforming intimacy between natural forces and human ingenuity, and a relationship which is to the grandmother a sign of the "change [that] has marked / The face of all things" (lines 25-26). With regard to the isolation of the homestead and the virtual omnipresence of tall trees, the opening three lines of the poem in fact answer her own reference: "Our house stood quite alone, and those tall firs / And beeches were not planted" (lines 31-32). Admiration for the majestic yet deferential beeches modulates into delight in plants, as a dialectally affectionate pet-name and a parenthesis of confidential self-indulgence enact the speaker's sweet familiarity with the wilfulness and ebullience of "honeysucks" (see Elliott, *English* 296).

In stanza 2, Hardy continues to define the youthful speaker's mind in terms of the scene it configures, for there is in the lovingly measured cataloguing a particular rhythmic effect: "Are there," "Adjoining these," "and farther still," "then," and "last"--these suggest not merely sequence but design, harmony in variety. This progression from item to item is continuous through time and space, and by means of static and implicit verbs, Hardy plots the youthful poet's vision of a gradual coalescence of human structures ("cottages") and natural vegetation into an organic unity, a vision that zooms out finally into a prospect view of the entire neighbourhood:

Red roses, lilacs, variegated box
 Are there in plenty, and such hardy flowers
 As flourish best untrained. Adjoining these
 Are herbs and esculents; and farther still
 A field; then cottages with trees, and last
 The distant hills and sky.

The speaker's pleasure in the wildness of Nature reaches a peak in stanza 3, where he revels in the fantasy of picturing a full-grown, towering oak in a process of organic acceleration--

An oak uprises, springing from a seed
 Dropped by some bird a hundred years ago.

--a process aided and abetted by the poetry which feeds the temporal splice through the archaic flavour of "uprises" (Elliott, *English* 189), a verb to whose action the caesura gives an achieved prominence that is in reality due to the vigorous impulse and nourishment from the past. "How bracing to see a now-established tree as, comparatively, a fresh shoot!" one feels. By fulfilling the potentiality of the past, the imaginative, virtual coexistence of "oak" and "seed" represents the complementary relation between the grandmother's experience and the youthful poet's. The youthful poet's two ecstatic hyperboles here are symptomatic of his secure faith in the human accommodation of Nature's unpredictable energies. The word "springing" is something of an exaggeration, because it blatantly belies the appearance of the action it denotes; while the numerical exaggeration in "a hundred years ago" is in the same idiom as that rapturous hyperbole of Wordsworth's: "Ten thousand saw I at a glance." What also gives clarity to this idea of the speaker's assured capacity for flexible, enthusiastic, and involved management of some wayward forces of the cosmic process--this theme of control and freedom, design and diversity--is the striking contrast between the civilised classicisms of stanza 2--"variegated," "flowers [that] flourish" (the etymological richness is typical of Hardy), "Adjoining," "herbs and esculents," "cottages"--and the blunt, Anglo-Saxon monosyllables that succeed them:

Behind, the scene is wilder. Heath and furze
 Are everything that seems to grow and thrive

Upon the uneven ground. A stunted thorn
 Stands here and there, indeed; and from a pit
 An oak uprises, springing from a seed
 Dropped by some bird a hundred years ago.

This stanza, moreover, has such a halting, disjunctive ("uneven") movement through both space and time that the orientation of the surroundings is no longer spatial, geographical, and individual, but temporal, historical, and ancestral. And it is the imaginative leap from this stanza to the next that deepens our sense of the atavistic suffering, the arduousness with which the first settlers had to contend, which in turn, as Patricia Clements observes, makes the wildness, as the youthful poet presents it in the opening stanza of the poem, seem "very domestic indeed" ("Order" 148)--idealised, romanticised, and therefore diminished.

Indeed, the intemperance in the last three stanzas is of quite another order, and consequently carries a different emotional and moral value in the speaker's mind. The red and lilac world outside the homestead is not all variegated abundance--"Behind the scene is wilder," the child adventurer is exposed to furze and thorn, and the heath is a place where a child's first memories may become infested with reptilian terrors, the youthful dream become a nightmare about bats. Moreover, the wildness of the scene (in stanza 3) does not simply represent a phase in sure growth to a predictable outcome (in stanza 2); it implies, at some level, cost--exaction of "a full look at the Worst" (here: isolation, exposure, deprivation, debasement, degradation). For in order to open up the possibility of fuller experience and reality, the youthful poet's ancestors had to accommodate the intemperate forces of the cosmic process flexibly, and be "marked" (line 25) by changes it wrought.⁷ The wildness demands a yielding up of something proudly possessed or inwardly valued:

"Our house stood quite alone, and those tall firs
 And beeches were not planted. Snakes and efts
 Swarmed in the summer days, and nightly bats
 Would fly about our bedrooms. Heathcroppers
 Lived on the hills, and were our only friends;
 So wild it was when first we settled here."

The "untrained," "uncultivated," and "wild" aspects of Nature, and the difficult tensions in its relationship with human civilisation and morality are chief among Hardy's concerns here. The potential for the cosmic process to slip from creative promise to destructive menace is always an ingredient in his idea of Nature, as we saw in the previous chapter. The moment where the moral order of human society buckles or collapses, where institutionalised man and raw Nature interpenetrate, so that the coherence and the stability of their separate identities are unexpectedly lost, may well be enriching (one sense of the grandmother's ambiguous, intensifying "So"); but such a moment may also be disturbing or terrifying. Seclusion abuts on loneliness; being "shut in" (line 29) incurs social obscurity. The terror and disgust of an unknown number of secretive, outdoor creatures; the regularity and inevitability of distress for the first settlers; the pervasiveness of their disturbed peace, as the natural world enters the home at will, violating its sanctity--to locate mankind in that

⁷ Any rigid, dogmatic accommodation would have been blind folly, as Lawrence remarks of Clym Yeobright's moral systematising of the chthonic forces of Egdon Heath:

Egdon to him was the tract of common land, producing familiar rough herbage, and having some few unenlightened inhabitants. So he skated over heaven and hell, and having made a map of the surface, thought he knew all. But underneath and among his mapped world, the eternal powerful fecundity worked on heedless of him and his arrogance. His preaching, his superficiality made no difference. What did it matter if he had calculated a moral chart from the surface of life? Could that affect life, any more than a chart of the heavens affects the stars, affects the whole stellar universe which exists beyond our knowledge?

precarious estate is a characteristic of the Hardyian imagination. Putting it another way, the natural energies that (at the outset of the poem) cause a sense of wonder at the implied effect on the house of the beautiful animation--"High beeches, bending, hang a veil of boughs, / And sweep against the roof"--accord with the energies (at the close of the poem) informing the penarbooreal ferns that render faceless "the passer-by" (line 30), keep the person at a distance and receding, and leave the settler frustrated and "quite alone," with a hint perhaps of nescient reclusiveness (see also Job 3.23).

What makes "Domicilium" such a suitable if complex instance of Hardy's use of spatial imagery is that it holds in tension as well as in harmony several thematic threads at once. And to capture and organise a sense of the urgent pressure behind the other sources of solace we examined, not just personhood, the tensions inherent in other philosophical-psychological responses to the conflict between ethical and cosmic processes, we need to feel the force of the creative passion that informs and shapes the spatial details in "Domicilium." The cosmic process remains indifferent to the human world and unpredictable. Nature is not simply beneficent in the first two stanzas and, in the last three, malignant; though the honeysuckles be "Wild" and bent on "overtop[ping]" the unsuspecting apple-trees, and heathcroppers be friendly, Nature is non-moral throughout. The real point is that both orders of wildness are ever-present; one does not supersede the other. And Hardy, to dramatise the tensions between them, to embody his analysis of the course of cosmic energies through the human world, to impress upon his reader what inward disruptions the family of the youthful poet encountered, endured--and, in accommodating, were enriched by--when first they settled there, chiefly (and subtly) employs images of enclosure, extension, and dimension, to instances of which in other of his dramatic lyrics we now turn.

The force of Hardy's imagination enlists and moves through these three salient kinds of space in order to present sources of solace in various forms of dynamic relationship to one another. That is, Hardy's first-person lyrics dramatise an underlying conflict between two kinds of knowledge--one, absolute and a product either of institutionalised religion or of reason; the other, relative and a product of the individual imagination. Absolute knowledge, or the speaker's recourse to vision or to rationalism to make livable sense of the world about him, manifests itself in images of enclosure, containment, constriction, limitation, and regulation. Relative knowledge, or the speaker's attempt to discover significant moments and patterns of experience, defines itself primarily in images of extension, openness, expansion, release, and radiation. Hardy judges both kinds of knowledge to be affirmative, but they remain for the most part at opposite poles: on the one hand, a search for shelter and comfort in abstraction and remoteness; on the other hand, a search for freedom in concreteness and relationship. Between them lies the middle ground of nescience, to which absolute knowledge tends to decline and from which relative knowledge to arise.

In its simplest, most palpable manifestation, for instance, the fundamental opposition between absolute and relative knowledge is embodied and enacted by the images of enclosure and extension in "Amabel" (*CPW* 1: 8) and discernible in a way that affects the overall structure of the poem. In the first half of the poem, images of enclosure and regulation embody the speaker's disillusioned observations of the woman he once loved: "custom-straitened," "indwell," "gown," and "mechanic." Then, as the speaker integrates these details within the wider perspective of common human experience, these images modulate into images of extension and openness: "sweet in swell," "sings the strain," "All find in dorp or dell / An Amabel," and "housetop." The concluding spatial image of the poem clearly demarcates the division between the speaker and the woman who has been the object of his attention:

'But leave her to her fate,
And fling across the gate,

"Till the Last Trump, farewell,
O Amabel!"

The speaker refuses unsentimentally (with "heartless egotism," according to William Buckler, *Poetry* 87) to allow the death of love or the destructiveness of time oppress him. Having, by means of some angular diction and jaunty couplets, thought and felt his way imaginatively through the sadness of the transience of love and beauty, the speaker finally achieves--the refrain for the first time addresses the woman directly and personally--a last brief cry of honest recognition that, although they share the same mortality, the two of them live in separate social-psychological worlds.

In another poem of simple disillusionment, "The Well-Beloved" (*CPW* 1: 168), Hardy gives the rivalry between absolute and relative knowledge a different spatial character. Although the symbolic structure of this poem is not symmetrical like that in "Amabel," Hardy develops the image of a minute physical container housing an abstract infinitude. Before he encounters the ancient goddess of Love, the young traveller is quite certain that the boundaries of his future father-in-law's "grange and grove" contain his betrothed who is, for him, "the God-created norm / Of perfect womankind"; he is convinced that the setting unites material and ideal realities, accommodating a visionary "queen." However, after he passes the place where once stood a Roman temple, a building erected in honour of a deity publicly recognised, his bride-to-be becomes less and less an ideal and increasingly mortal. Challenged by the relative "truth" that "Brides are not what they seem; / Thou lovest what thou dreamest her," the speaker instantly abandons his previous, subjective belief, having reached a new awareness of his bride-to-be as a creature of limitation. In the course of his extended journey--travelling in the open air, "by star and planet shine," walking "On gravel and on green," and singing "to sky, and tree"--the speaker comes to see "the Pagan temple" as "the Fane / To Venus," a more musical phrase that registers his contrasting vision of the woman living "inside / Her father's walls":

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

The woman's body now functions as the derelict abode of her soul; that is, the speaker has attained a more robust and honest level of relationship with his future wife. There is no desire to flee his impending marriage--she remains "my bride"--for he has found a way to view and love her that assimilates her human frailties and limitations; that is, compassionately, "As if her soul had shrunk and died, / And left a waste within."

More subtle still is the poetic integration of absolute and relative knowledge in "In a Waiting-Room" (*CPW* 2: 266). Far from "fail[ing]" to "dispel" the dreariness of the scene by creating "an imaginative glimpse past surface appearances" (Perkins 268), Hardy achieves, I believe, in the very midst of grim material oppressiveness--wet weather, a bible desecrated with commercial calculations, the "haggard look" of a soldier and his wife who are fatigued by their hard lot--a kind of spiritual resurrection:

But next there came
Like the eastern flame
Of some high altar, children--a pair--
Who laughed at the fly-blown pictures there.
'Here are the lovely ships that we,
Mother, are by and by going to see!
When we get there it's 'most sure to be fine,
And the band will play, and the sun will shine!'

It rained on the skylight with a din
As we waited and still no train came in;

But the words of the child in the squalid room
Had spread a glory through the gloom.

The entrance of the children has the force of a reconstitution of the scene or a reanimation of the speaker's soul. Interestingly, in the first edition of *Moments of Vision*, the quickening radiation comes not from some remote source of illumination, but is "Of morning in April," an image which was (presumably) too similar to the earlier image of "an English May" (line 3) to achieve the integration of opposites, abstract and concrete orders of being, that Hardy seeks. For his poetic aim is not to cancel the grimness of the scene, but to qualify or overlay it. The scenic alteration appears here not like the dispelling of the gloomy aspects of life, but like the infiltration and participation of the visionary in the mundane. The central effect of radiance is not determined by the disappearance of the harsh setting; rather, admitting the children, "the gloom" is "spread . . . through" by "a glory"--interwoven and suffused with splendour. And this "glory" is neither visionary escape nor humanist acceptance, but a fabric of both, since the speaker discovers in that temporal and spatial juncture a significance which includes the symbolic value of the two children. The transformation raises up the spirit of the speaker while preserving the restrictive setting: the room still looks squalid, the pictures remain fly-blown, and the downpour continues.

Hardy gives a similarly subtle process of philosophical integration a spatial character in "The Temporary the All" (*CPW* 1: 7). According to William Buckler, the speaker in this poem learns "the difference between illusion and fact, myth and history," a "truth" that "though sobering, does not demand a catastrophic price" (*Poetry* 84); yet according to Paul Zietlow, the speaker learns "the painful, commonplace lesson that his temporary compromises make up his all" (*Moments* 63; see also "Poet" 179); that is, for one critic the poem has some tragic import, for the other it has none. Although valid, both these readings are ultimately unreliable, because both fail to appreciate how carefully Hardy has deployed images of enclosure and extension so as to dramatise a consciousness that is neither archetypal nor moralistic, but irrepressibly and realistically happy.⁸ Indeed, by attending to this open/closed opposition, one can highlight the paradoxical resolution of the conflict underlying the poem.

Words either denoting or connoting extension, expansion, profusion, and openness occur in each stanza--"flowering," "sun by sun," "roomy," "unbounded," "wistful way," "visioned," "ripe," "pending," "onward"--but the concluding implication of the poem is that, with the passing of time, comes a reduction of the seemingly limitless possibilities for improving one's lot in life, and also regret at having squandered opportunities for making more of friendship, romance, environment, and aspirations:

Mistress, friend, place, aims to be bettered straightway,
Bettered not has Fate or my hand's achievement;
Sole the showance those of my onward earth-track--
Never transcended!

But feelings of frustration and regret are already present in the poem from the start--feint at first, but then inflamed, as is reflected in the corresponding imagery of enclosure, compression, restriction, and narrowness, which are simultaneously active at a subsidiary level of meaning. Submerged images of enclosure--"sun" (as a ball), "Fused," "room-," "bound"--break the surface in stanzas 4 and 5 in the words "Tenements," "house," "lodging," and "hermitage," and take over the thematic structure of the poem. In other words, that final spatial image of relentless and grim limitation, of mere unconscious process ("onward earth-track"), is not the first

⁸ Albert Camus's definition of happiness comes to mind: "But what is happiness except the simple harmony between a man and the life he leads? And what more legitimate harmony can link a man to life than the twin awareness of his longing to endure and the death which awaits him? At least he learns to count on nothing and to see the present as the only truth given us" ("The Desert" 98-99).

image of nescient, feelingless enclosure to appear in the poem; consequently, this image does not subvert all the foregoing images of extension. On the contrary, "my onward earth-track" is an ambiguous kenning, a condensed metaphor that, even while it suggests ceaseless plodding, includes a reference to the energy and scope of the speaker's life; the effect of the closing image is, in fact, to countervail the latent nescience of the images of enclosure in the poem. Ringing the gloomy denial of his life's amplitude is a halo of glorious affirmation: "Never transcended!" What the speaker once thought he would enjoy for a while turned out to be perfectly satisfying. It is precisely when we re-read the poem in the light of the closing line that the full psychological resonance of the philosophical conflict is felt. Hardy discovered a way to stage the conflict between absolute and relative knowledge, when he changed in the manuscript "But woe me" to "But lo, me!" (line 20) and "Stand in their poorness/[scantness]!" to "Never transcended!" for he thereby achieved a rich ambiguity of tone, the sadness of universal wisdom coexisting with the joy of personal fulfilment that sweetens cynical exasperation. The speaker is not just saying that one gains experience too late to use it, as does the speaker in "A Young Man's Epigram on Existence" (*CPW* 1: 359):

A senseless school, where we must give
Our lives that we may learn to live!
A dolt is he who memorizes
Lessons that leave no time for prizes.

In "The Temporary the All" we have more than a self-derisive irony; we have a true paradox: only in failing to achieve one's ideal--as of necessity one must fail--does one realise one's goal and potential. Time blends the ideal and the actual; but the value of having an ideal is that it enables one to assess the significance of the real--what might be sifts what comes into being. The speaker in "The Temporary the All" remains self-deluded, until he is prepared to adjust his absolute assumptions--like Angel Clare (*Tess* ch. 49, 462)--until he reaches the point of accepting what his life is. This awareness is indivisibly loss and it is gain, lamentation and exaltation, regret and triumph. In the end, the only absolute value is the immediate instance; the provisional accrual of "temporary" experiences and relationships is "all" the reality he can ever hope to know; and that, for him, is sufficient.

But the central spatial polarity that embodies the relationships (tensions as well as harmonies) between sources of solace is that between exterior and interior space, outdoors and indoors, heath and hearth--a spatial polarity that establishes itself in poems like "A Night in November" (*CPW* 2: 352) and "The Dream Is--Which?" (*CPW* 2: 427). For instance, the scheme of the settings in "A Night in November" is simple: the lyric contains a central opposition between the wild outdoors which is quickly identified with the forces of chaos, and the calm indoors which is nevertheless disturbed by the speaker's restlessness ("lying half-awake"). But crucial in Hardy's symbolic use of setting here is the way in which the leaves move between the two opposed worlds. The leaves move from the cold outdoors to the warm shelter of the speaker; and the verbs "blew" and "alighted" seem to attribute active purpose to the leaves, as though they have initiated their own flight from tree to bed:

I marked when the weather changed,
And the panes began to quake,
And the winds rose up and ranged,
That night, lying half-awake.

Dead leaves blew into my room,
And alighted upon my bed,
And a tree declared to the gloom
Its sorrow that they were shed.

Yet the leaves appear to determine their destination and to act on their own only because the force that drives them, the wind, is invisible; it is the wind that moves panes and tree. The speaker is merely a passive observer in the scene. Indeed, although the leaves are actually dead and powerless to control their own movement, the sense of their passive movements, which take them from the cold exterior world to the interior world of warmth, is central to the final effect of the poem.

The speaker, presumably supine and semi-conscious, observes the effect of the wind on the window-panes. The darkness of the scene and the proximity of noisy wildness serve to unsettle the speaker; and this unsettling makes it clear that the raw, restless elements, and not the speaker, control the scene. The speaker's second reference to the outdoors, this time immediately after referring to the warm security of his bed, is even more vivid in the sense of vulnerability and failure which the speaker feels. As soon as his bed receives the dead leaves, he takes the sound of a tree to be the lonely lament for the loss of loved ones it has "shed"; the tree is the helpless victim of the forces of external chaos. His growing despair at the neutral violence of cosmic forces is conveyed poignantly by the image of "gloom" which intensifies both the darkness of the night and the loneliness and emptiness of the speaker. In this context of exposure to cosmic chaos, where the observing mind lies passive, empty, and secluded from a brutal external world, the slightest intrusion from outside becomes charged with human significance:

One leaf of them touched my hand,
And I thought that it was you
There stood as you used to stand,
And saying at last you knew!

Superficially, it is the personification of the tree (through "declared" and "sorrow") that ensures the personification of the leaf: "touched" takes on intimations of a deliberate gesture. But the speaker's mind turns away from a final position of desolation, rescued by a thought that springs from the framework of relative knowledge. The speaker's mood of embattled detachment in the first stanza and his vulnerability and passivity in the second stanza turn, in the last, to affirmation. What alters the tone of the speaker's inferences and inflects his mental and emotional state is an openness, even within an impersonal universe of infinite randomness, to the discovery of human significance. By asserting his essence as human being--which means relying on his perceiving mind and accepting his own mortality as well as the death of his beloved--the speaker is able to see value in the smallest of objects and events. This speaker realises that the single leaf which the tree has shed represents symbolically the infinitude of the Other--of all that is not himself--for if that otherness was not immeasurable, then this one leaf would be only just one dead leaf. But since the world external to his mind is without limit, then one is everything. The speaker's affirmative inference has its cause; in the infinity of a loved one's absence, one touch brings back the entire personal relationship. As Tom Paulin puts it, the poem has "a kind of gentle tact" that "speaks and faces the facts directly and yet has a softly oblique subtlety that insinuates that she is still there" (62).

But if Hardy has given a spatial reflex to a moment of psychological restoration, he has created, too, a poetic analogue for the effect of reconciliation we feel, especially in the lines

And I thought that it was you
There stood as you used to stand,

where the immediacy of the restoration (albeit only a delicate presence, as in "The Shadow on the Stone") is enacted by an enjambement that decisively frees the speaker's mind from its mechanical series of dependent inferences; and although the causality and interconnectedness of the cosmic--a continuity suggested by the paratactic anaphora in each of the first two stanzas--is upset in the third, there is another continuity at a much

deeper level of human experience. The speaker reinforces this sense of continuity and familiarity when he derives the present from the past by reassuringly matching action ("stood") to character ("used to stand"). With this kind of wordplay, Hardy successfully dramatises the bereaved speaker's desperate need to be reconciled to someone dear and intimate. The paradox evoked by the indoors/outdoors polarity is clear: out of a harsh, meaninglessly cruel world comes a simple gesture of human warmth, tenderness, and great personal value: "One leaf of them touched my hand." The effect of the event is to create a sense of not just intimacy after severance, but release from mental oppression, a sense of achievement of inward peace and joyful reassurance.

The indoors/outdoors polarity works differently in "The Dream Is--Which?" To begin with, the indoors is harsh, not the outdoors:

I am laughing by the brook with her,
 Splashed in its tumbling stir;
 And then it is a blankness looms
 As if I walked not there,
 Nor she, but found me in haggard rooms,
 And treading a lonely stair.

The most obvious characteristic of the settings in this poem is the way in which they are quickly divided into two opposing worlds. On the one hand is the companionship of youth and vigour; on the other is the solitariness of age and sluggishness. The division between these worlds is depicted in the stark black and white terms of spatial opposition between indoors and outdoors. The two worlds have no links other than the fact that the speaker appears in both; and the reader cannot be certain which of the two settings will finally lay claim to the speaker. As Donald Hogan points out, the poem is sharply split along structural lines, and "the partitioning of each stanza implies the equal validity of both aspects of the experience" (72).

Hardy presents us with an almost Manichean dualism between the bright, active world of the young lovers and the dark, cold world dominated by a decrepit man. While the division between the two settings is obvious, equally obvious are the moral judgements that Hardy means his reader to make. The aged world is one of emptiness and fatigue, a world which numbs the senses of the speaker. That insensibility is characterised by slow movement: when the speaker loses his sensuous perception of the world, his movements become heavy or uneven. By contrast, the youthful world is representative of the life of vitality, gaiety, and passionate love; the outcome of vitality is purposeful companionship--at least that is the outcome enacted by the settings in this poem. Here is the second stanza:

With radiant cheeks and rapid eyes
 We sit where none espies;
 Till a harsh change comes edging in
 As no such scene were there,
 But winter, and I were bent and thin,
 And cinder-gray my hair.

There seems to be no question where Hardy intends to direct our sympathy: he means us to admire the youthful world of cheerful brook and secluded seats, and shrink from the silent, inert world of empty house and burnt-out fire.

And yet the fact that the title questions the reality of *both* worlds seems to indicate some doubt about the validity of the youthful, passionate relationship: is *it* not the illusion, and the ineluctable separation wrought by time or death the reality? While we may imaginatively reject the physical aspects of the indoor world as destructively intrusive, it is nevertheless this setting in the poem that captures and touches our

imagination. Interior space is not without redeeming qualities for the reader; it is the world that evokes our pity, and it is the force and clarity of the images of vacancy, exhaustion, and shrinkage that achieve that evocation. The physical images associated with the indoors are primarily negative: the speaker sees himself lost and struggling through a world of empty, jaded, uninviting rooms and stale air. Hardy takes pains to create the impression that the person who lives in that world of discomfort and decrepitude is associated with death in some form--his actions have the inescapable taint of tenacious mortality. And the more Hardy gives us of this interior world, the closer to an embodiment of death the setting becomes. The house is a case in point, especially in the growing emphasis on the images that suggest inevitable cessation of activity: the staircase must have a summit; cinders will be all that is left of the fire in winter. The indoor setting seems to get colder and harsher as the poem progresses.

However, it is actually the exterior world of youthful delight that is the illusory world in this poem. Hardy has deliberately turned the tables on the speaker's physical condition by presenting it as hypothetical or hallucinatory; that is, Hardy has cast the speaker's reverie in the indicative mood and the harsh reality in the subjunctive, thereby creating an ambiguity that nothing intrinsic to the poem can resolve.⁹ Consequently, the final stanza leaves us with a double experience--the speaker as a young man, who in the midst of dance halls filled with noise and gaiety has a premonitory vision of himself as widower, and the speaker as an old man, who relives the graceful past (registered in the poem by the historic present) until it collapses when the aching present reasserts itself:

We dance in heys around the hall,
 Weightless as thistleball;
 And then a curtain drops between,
 As if I danced not there,
 But wandered through a mounded green
 To find her, I knew where.

In the first two stanzas of "The Dream Is--Which?" the speaker's trial is that he is unable to come to any full, sustained realisation in the present of the illusory nature of the past joys of the cheerful world. He is unable to refer to the past without immediately appending a counter-reference to the present: the present reality soon retracts the fibres of his memory. In the first two stanzas of the poem, a state of ecstatic recollection is imperceptibly superseded by a state of heightened sensitivity to a single aspect of the physical world, to its mutability. But in this final stanza, no such supersession or trial occurs; there is no sense of failure. Instead, there is more a balance of past and present images that immediately becomes personal fulfilment. What the ambiguity secures is an equilibrium between two convictions held by the speaker: that he wants to go on living and that he knows he is going to die; his fervour to live is coupled with awareness of his mortality. And, far from being pessimistic, this balance makes for affirmation of the present.

Interestingly, in the final stanza, too, the indoors/outdoors polarity is suddenly reversed, and the balanced interchange of these spatial images asserts the richness of the coexistence of absolute and relative knowledge. Neither form of knowledge is illusory so long as they are both distinguishable and poised in mutually advantageous tension with each other. The balance between the two states of awareness is typified in the imagery of motion in the poem: the brook's "tumbling" and the speaker's "treading"; the furtive rapidity of the lover's eyes and the oblique insinuation of a painful prospect into the speaker's consciousness; the

⁹ Of course, the extrinsic evidence of the date of composition, "March 1913," which is printed at the foot of the poem readily suggests that the "recollected past is displaced by the present reality" (Pinion, *Commentary* 186-87). But my point is that without that date, the elastic ambiguity of the title is all the more palpably established.

merry floating around a dance-hall and the slow, irregular wading through a churchyard. One state is ease and liveliness, the other is struggle and exertion; and yet the oppressive world engages our moral being more than the lively world. The description of the settings of the lovers is thoroughly convincing: the scenes are evoked in concrete detail (e.g., "Splashed," "rapid eyes," "thistleball"); and they are given force by the very vividness of that to which they are opposed. Nevertheless, by comparison, it remains a world of youthful romantic frivolities, a place of laughter, secrecy, and frolic. As a result, these scenes, juxtaposed with the severity of the aged world, serve Hardy's purpose of embodying a passionate affirmation of personal significance in the face of death. More than this, however, a sense of the speaker's fulfilment emerges in the closing lines, when his movement "through a mounded green / To find her" seems at first the aimless stumbling (the manuscript has "tottered") of an old man lost and lonely, until, as the sentence ends, it directs his steps and makes his destination certain; that is, his movement is unhurried and unswerving, because he knows "where" to find her. The speaker imagines himself visiting a familiar spot, gladly allowing his steps to be determined also by the spaces between the mounds, and there is a strong sense of his acceptance of ultimately rejoining her as someday he must. But the simple contrast in the first two stanzas between fiery youth and dull senescence has been replaced by two kinds of vitality: an obvious spriteliness of limb counterpoised with a less obvious, but real, quickness of a deep, mature love. The double image of "a mounded green"--an image of secure enclosure and luxuriant extension--celebrates the speaker's having found the proper place for his most satisfying movements in the present.

Another function of the central polarity between open and closed space is to characterise outdoor settings; and what Hardy himself said of all setting seems to apply especially to outdoor setting: "The poetry of a scene varies with the minds of the perceivers. Indeed, it does not lie in the scene at all" (*L&W* 52). The interrelation between images of enclosure and extension serves to differentiate the quality of the landscapes in which a speaker seeks consoling knowledge. According to a speaker's focus and perspective, a particular landscape is either restrictive or exhilarating. We see this at its simplest in poems like "My Cicely (17--)," "The Seasons of Her Year," "The King's Experiment," and "The Voice of the Thorn" (*CPW* 1: 67 [see Buckler, *Poetry* 153-58], 195, 201, 284)--poems that, following in the tradition of eighteenth-century topographic poetry,¹⁰ illustrate the way consciousness and mood colour or filter perception of external reality. When a speaker's subjective interpretation of natural (and hence emotionally neutral) phenomena merges and co-operates with his cosmological outlook, terrestrial existence, seeming at first limiting, acquires affirmative qualities when viewed in relation to the entire universe:

In vision I roamed the flashing Firmament,
So fierce in blazon that the Night waxed wan,
As though with awe at orbs of such ostént;
And as I thought my spirit ranged on and on

In footless traverse through ghastr heights of sky,
To the last chambers of the monstrous Dome,
Where stars the brightest here are lost to the eye:
Then, any spot on our own Earth seemed Home!

And the sick grief that you were far away
Grew pleasant thankfulness that you were near,
Who might have been, set on some foreign Sphere,
Less than a Want to me, as day by day

¹⁰ See, for instance, Rodney Edgecombe's fine discussion of Crabbe's use of psychological landscape (138-60).

I lived unaware, uncaring all that lay
 Locked in that Universe trackless, distant, drear.

Seen as situated within a monstrous cosmic prison, this planet has for this lovesick observer in "In vision I roamed" (*CPW* 1: 10) the qualities of both an open and closed space, so that he enjoys the world he knows as a place of shelter and freedom; and he also feels free to roam about physically as well as mentally. There is here a distinct stress on extended distance as an essential quality of terrestrial existence and also, as in "At a Lunar Eclipse" (*CPW* 1: 149), the suggestion of an accompanying human significance. That is, if to traverse widely extended spaces is man's lot, it is also what enables him to realise his intrinsic value in the universe; his imagination and intellect free him to go wherever he wills. The sonnet follows the psychological structure of Hardy's dictum, "If way to the Better there be, it exacts a full look at the Worst" (*CPW* 2: 319): the speaker's "spirit" explores the sky, and observes frankly stage by stage along the survey, until it recognises the worst possible reality; only then does it announce what the better is. The moment the speaker directs his imagination into the midst of the terrifying sky, and enters its darkest recesses, where even the lurid brightness of the stars is obscured, invisible, and swallowed up--then the speaker feels that any "spot" (the Wordsworthian term seems apt and right) on *terra firma* is safe and significant. The speaker's fear "grows" into an attitude of thankfulness, an open-hearted and expansive response, when he realises that spatial distance is merely relative. He thought deeply and was afraid; he imagined worse and was relieved. That fact is important to Hardy's depiction of the relationship between absolute and relative knowledge: in attempting to make coherent sense of life, a speaker can focus on the world either as enclosed space or as free space, a place either for self-delusion, dogmatism, and despair, or for the achievement of moral freedom, a sense of human significance, and personhood. The extended spaces to which this visionary lover's mind takes wing are described as "ghost heights of sky." But while this image of extension serves to bring the separated lovers into physical proximity and psychological intimacy, it effectively evacuates the universe itself of all other value and warmth apart from themselves. No quick-and-easy, coherent sense can be made of man's existence in the universe, and the interplay of images of enclosure and extension in this sonnet--even though it celebrates something especially human: love--enacts this negotiation between absolute and relative knowledge in the speaker's mind.

Far more complex a staging of this negotiation is that of Hardy's presenting a speaker's faculties of memory and perception at work within a landscape setting.¹¹ Being both a mental faculty and a form of knowledge, personal memory is in an interesting position as intermediate between absolute and relative knowledge. In lyric after lyric, a first-person speaker's memory has received and stored sense-impressions, to which, voluntarily and involuntarily, it refers for information; moreover, the memory also produces data by giving meaningful shape to those incoherent impressions it has experienced. Fixed in historical time, a speaker's awareness of past events and emotions remains yet open to subjective alteration; and the coexistence of two levels of being, of absolute and relative knowledge gives the speaker a sense of his deepest being. Several lines of the open/closed polarity are interwoven to establish this psychologically

¹¹ A hybrid subset of images of enclosure and extension that is typically Hardyan is *catoptric* imagery, those images of visual reflection (but also of physical framing and depth) in mirrors, water, and windows that occur usually with profound and portentous import, in such poems as "I Look into My Glass" (*CPW* 1: 106), "Moments of Vision," "Old Furniture," "The Lament of the Looking-Glass" (*CPW* 2: [159], 227, 456), "The Robin" (*CPW* 2: 264), "At Rushy Pond" (*CPW* 3: 21), "The Pedigree" (*CPW* 2: 197), "Wessex Heights" (*CPW* 2: 25), "Coming up Oxford Street: Evening" (*CPW* 3: 25). See also *L&W* 431 ("Orion upside down in a pool of water"); *Tess*, ch. 35, 328 ("Across these minute pools the reflected stars flitted").

layered¹² effect in "In Front of the Landscape" (*CPW* 2: 7), a poem remarkable for its imagery of both extended and dimensional space (the third type of spatial imagery I want to introduce into the discussion).

In "In Front of the Landscape," the speaker's absolute knowledge of the death of loved ones, and also of his sorrow and guilt, deepens into a relative knowledge of his domestic and familial self as the vulnerable, unrealised centre which he has tended to avoid and slight, but which nevertheless has become implicit in the objective, outer world (including as it does the churchyard), a world that here gives that self a real and significant shape which the speaker finally accepts. What happens fundamentally is similar to what happens in Wordsworth's sonnet "Surprised by Joy": the agonising frustration inherent in the unself-regarding impulse to embrace a certainty that no longer exists raises the speaker's consciousness to a higher level of insight and relationship: the "visions" before him are both "Dolorous *and dear*" (emphasis mine). In terms of the polarity between enclosed and extended space, the scene through which the speaker "perambulates" extends in vague definition--"the customed landscape / Yonder and near // Blotted to feeble mist. . . . Seemed but a ghost-like gauze . . . Lengthening to miles." There is, however, also in this same landscape some sense of containment:

So did beset me scenes miscalled of the bygone,
 Over the leaze,
 Past the clump, and down to where lay the beheld ones;
 --Yea, as the rhyme
 Sung by the sea-swell, so in their pleading dumbness
 Captured me these.

Here, in one and the same stanza, Hardy uses images of expansion offset by images of confinement, a spacious landscape contrasting with the constrictive graves contained within it, to embody an experience of poignant tension for the speaker, between knowledge that is open-ended (the landscape teems with associations) and knowledge that is fixed (the landscape centres on the churchyard). The paradoxical fluidity and fixity of the past is suggested by precisely this imaginative interaction between the variable focus of the speaker's attention and the stable background of the landscape. The effect of the pun on "beheld" here depends largely on its relation to "beset" and "Captured": in the dignified periphrasis, "beheld" has its contemplative meaning; at the same time, the speaker's plight--besieged by his memories and detained by his conscience--aggravated by the contrasting images of the jocund sea's full-throated freedom and the implied suffering of the silent dead, confers on "beheld" a shadowy suggestion of imprisonment, a nuance too, no doubt, of the intensifying prefix "be-" in "beset." Through this verbal play, Hardy has contrived to hint at the presence of a fusion of absolute and relative knowledge, a relationship that makes the speaker intensely aware of his personal identity and familial being. But this entire stanza has the power of a frame for the speaker's imaginings, bringing us back--the adverb "So" clearly announces a completed demonstration--to the landscape setting of the first two stanzas. This envelope-structure appropriately insulates the speaker's reminiscences and insights, keeping him isolated in the scene, for he uses a language noticeably different from that on "the tongues of the passing people." This stanza also prepares us for the conclusion of the poem: the periphrasis "where lay the beheld ones," redolent with the heroic idiom of the preceding stanza ("chiefest the one of the broad brow"), becomes in the crass, popular mind merely "a few tombs":

Hence wag the tongues of the passing people, saying
 In their surmise,
 'Ah--whose is this dull form that perambulates, seeing nought
 Round him that looms

¹² Hardy once described the past as consisting of ghostly strata: "To-day has length, breadth, thickness, colour, smell, voice. As soon as it becomes *yesterday* it is a thin layer among many layers, without substance, colour, or articulate sound" (*L&W* 302).

Whithersoever his footsteps turn in his farings,
Save a few tombs?'

Here the anticlimactic discrepancy between reference and setting--an unceremonious response to a dignified, solemn reality--ironically dramatises the speaker's sneering view of the trivial, limited perspective held by passers-by. Hardy has carefully achieved this difference in mode of response to the landscape background, most notably in his manipulation of the rhyme-scheme. In each sixain, the final sound of the fourth line generates the rhyme for the succeeding stanza; but here in the final sixain, Hardy makes line 6 echo line 4 instead of (the usual) line 2, creating a mocking closural jingle quite alien to the more subtly melodic note that interlocks successive stanzas.

Indeed, the loss of dignified and heightened awareness at the end of "In Front of the Landscape" points up the speaker's chief source of solace. Whereas the passers-by see only one configuration of physical details and mentally label it a place where there are "tombs," the speaker sees configurations "Whithersoever his footsteps turn in his farings"; whereas their attention is focused on the details of the landscape setting, his is concentrated on the patterns those details suggest to him. He sees the greater reality that is "in front of the landscape," a perception achieved by relegating the physical particulars of his surroundings to the background of his consciousness, in which the landscape can only "glimmer." Consequently, the sense of loss we feel at the end of the poem is the abrupt diminution of the reality privately discovered by the speaker, a richness of experience beyond the loose, superficial comprehension of the passers-by.

The protagonist in the poem, however, gains a measure of consolation, and his consolation comes from the way he mentally processes the concrete particulars of his given location. True, whichever way he turns in this fixed setting ("the customary landscape"), he is surrounded by figures, objects, and locales that are fixed in attitudes of bitter reproach for his failure to appreciate others:

For, their lost revisiting manifestations
In their live time
Much had I slighted, caring not for their purport,
Seeing behind
Things more coveted, reckoned the better worth calling
Sweet, sad, sublime.

Thus do they now show hourly before the intenser
Stare of the mind
As they were ghosts avenging their slights by my bypast
Body-borne eyes,
Show, too, with fuller translation than rested upon them
As living kind.

(55-66)

But although the speaker's personal past may seem to invade and dominate his consciousness, compelling him to ignore the present and dwell, passive and exposed, in a world of self-recrimination over lost opportunities, the speaker is neither querulous nor morose, expressing no grievance and no frustration; he makes no attempt to redeem time lost or to remedy errors made. The poem is the brave and honest record of the speaker's discovery that his regret and guilt are the inescapable conditions of being that he must accept if his life is to have its fullest meaning. Far from being abjectly resigned to his lot, the speaker assertively accepts that "slow-born tears" have "trundled"; in fact, he accepts the past in whatever way it makes itself felt in the present. For the circumambient "tide of visions" of the past is essential to the speaker's making sense of his present.

However, "visions" of the bygone figures, objects, and locales would not exist if the speaker were not, at some level of his mind, conscious of his physical surroundings. All the speaker's "images" in some way draw on the landscape background; that is, the reminiscences are latent in the concrete circumstances through which the speaker moves, even though he only vaguely apprehends them. The speaker's bodily presence there in that specific place seems to be what influences his mind and prompts these memories and associations. And we notice that, paradoxically, the enclosed mind of the speaker expands to include "infinite spectacles," while the open landscape contracts to the space occupied by "a few tombs." Hence the relationship between the speaker's past and present, between inner and outer worlds, is hardly a simple dichotomy (cf. Pinion, *Commentary* 91) or a total eclipse (Orel, *Years* 73). Hillis Miller is nearly correct when he calls this relationship a "strange combination of presence and absence, continuity and discontinuity" ("History" 238), but errs, I think, when he claims that the poem itself is the speaker's means of escape from the vengeance of the past ("Topography" 82-85). Miller takes the poem as Hardy's own self-defensive act of "translation" (line 66), of wilfully distorting reality by figuratively turning the ghosts into nothing but words on the page. But Miller strains Hardy's meaning of the word "translation." Hardy certainly did not regard the artistic representation of reality as a slighting of the truth. On the contrary, "The exact truth as to material fact," wrote Hardy, "ceases to be of importance in art," for the artist's mind brings something "to the object that coalesces with and translates the qualities that are already there,--half hidden, it may be--and the two united are depicted as the "All" (*L&W* 192; and see above, ch. 3, pt II). In "In Front of the Landscape," the relationship between the speaker's past and present is more than simply the sum of its material components; the speaker's past and present take their significant being from their integrated union in the landscape setting:

What were the infinite spectacles featuring foremost
Under my sight,
...
O they were speechful faces, gazing insistent,
Some as with smiles,
Some as with slow-born tears that brinily trundled
Over the wrecked
Cheeks that were fair in their flush-time, ash now with anguish,
Harrowed by wiles.

Yes, I could see them, feel them, hear them, address them--
Halo-bedecked--
And, alas, onwards, shaken by fierce unreason,
Rigid in hate,
Smitten by years-long wryness born of misprision,
Dreaded, suspect.

Then there would breast me shining sights, sweet seasons
Further in date;
Instruments of strings with the tenderest passion
Vibrant, beside
Lamps long extinguised, robes, cheeks, eyes with the earth's crust
Now corporate.

These familiar faces derive their meaningful identity from the action of the speaker's shaping mind; each face is an integration of impressions of the ghostly *background*. For although the elements of the natural scene remain insubstantial and unspecifiable, the speaker clearly experiences the particulars of the scene through which he makes his "paced advancement." The crucial point is that the speaker's attention is focused inward, on the past, not on the present, landscape; he is exquisitely alive to the constructs of his memory and imagination, precisely because--not although--he is subliminally aware of his real and contingent

environment. If the speaker were to attempt to describe the landscape specifically, the past would lose its pre-eminence, and the experience would be quite a different one.

And it is the organic integration of the subsidiary particulars of the scene that affords the speaker a dual source of solace. One source is the mental process of actually integrating and unifying those subconscious impressions of the landscape which keep the memory alive and active. The other source is the act of considering and accepting the patterned associations as expressing his deepest sense of his identity. We see this most tellingly in the contrastive stanzas 7 and 8:

Also there rose a headland of hoary aspect
 Gnawed by the tide,
 Frilled by the nimb of the morning as two friends stood there
 Guilelessly glad--
 Wherefore they knew not--touched by the fringe of an ecstasy
 Scantly descried.

Later images too did the day unfurl me,
 Shadowed and sad,
 Clay cadavers of those who had shared in the dramas,
 Laid now at ease,
 Passions all spent, chiefest the one of the broad brow
 Sepulture-clad.

The speaker is too honest to fudge all the imperfections of his former days. The dead do not, for instance, acquire perfect bliss, as they do in *In Memoriam*, merely because "the past will always win / A glory from its being far" (st. 24). By the same token, the speaker gives full expression to a relationship of especial value to him; it is the very frankness of the rest of the poem that makes stanza 7 so beautiful in its delicate sense of lost innocence, joy, and intimacy. The reality of the speaker's personhood declares itself in the simple, if grim, fact of "Clay cadavers of those who had shared in the dramas." It is only in terms of the concrete immediacy of particulars such as these that he can realise the significance of the past; but it is also only by subordinating the details of the landscape itself that he can fully grasp that significance. Hardy dramatises what it is like to be someone whose mind, in the pain of isolation and self-reproach, is focused on finding the significance *felt* in the patterned associations created by that mind--a sense of personal strength enacted by the speaker's wading gait ("Plunging and labouring on. . . Forward I pushed"), an expansive motion suggesting an upright, confident sense of inner life which the onlookers are incapable of perceiving. For one thing the end of the poem tells us is that this speaker knows more than can be articulated in public discourse.

"In Front of the Landscape" is a complex poem about the gaining of consoling knowledge--only, the consolation neither reduces nor removes the mental pain, but rather enables the speaker to cope with it in such a way that he enlarges his capacity for living his life in *this* present which, he accepts, grows out of *such* a past. This speaker's perceptual response to the external landscape dramatises the pre-eminence of an emergent level of being within him; that is, in this poem, relative knowledge is in the forefront, is "foremost" (line 13), while absolute knowledge stands in the background, essential but subordinated. The interrelation between memory, perception, and imagination produces a state of mind and emotions that includes a fresh grasp of personal identity and value, with an undertone of elation.

So, in addition to the relativity due to mood and cosmology, there is also a relative knowledge that comes from an intellectual process of patterning the minutiae of objective reality. In seeking psychological assuagement, a speaker might sentimentally distort the landscape, reinterpret it cosmologically, or subconsciously integrate its concrete details to form a deeper sense of his own significance. And to dramatisé this last source of solace, Hardy characteristically uses images of dimensional space that embody a speaker's

perceptual responses to external landscape, whether static or shifting. We can now describe the chief effects of the central Hardy polarity between open and closed space. Outdoors, a speaker tends to feel enclosed or confined within himself;¹³ indoors, a speaker usually has a keen awareness of an opposing world "out there." In other words, the open/closed polarity gives us a sense of the antinomial, of two mutually exclusive, contradictory worlds; when these overlap, they produce as well a sense of ambiguity and apparent contradiction, an effect that Hardy secures chiefly by means of imagery of dimensional space, to which we now turn.

We get a sense of paradox and ambiguity from Hardy's use of images of dimension, which includes the imagery of the journey (examined by Simon Gatrell), since dimension refers to both fixed location and movement (directly or indirectly) towards a destination. But we also get refinements of these effects, because the essence of Hardy's use of dimensional imagery is not contradiction, but connectedness. Subordination, derivation, qualification--these are some of the principal relationships between absolute and relative knowledge that Hardy dramatises in terms of dimensional space, as the foregoing analysis of "In Front of the Landscape" revealed. For a still more instructive use of these images, we need only return for a moment to "Domicilium," which is paradigmatic in providing four basic aspects of this kind of spatial embodiment that are typically Hardyian.

In "Domicilium," the house (the world of fixity and enclosure) and the heath (the world of volatility and expansion) resolve into an intermediate image of dimensional space in the form of the public road that was once merely "a narrow path" along which travellers passed unseen. The road, an image of horizontal passage, suggests a purposely opened space, and implies the expansiveness of the experience of conviviality. Hence this image completes the reversal of the original settlement, since first an enclosed space ("shut in") becomes undesirable ("obscures the passer-by"), and now its opposite, an expanded space, has been transmitted into a desirable state of deliberate communication with the world at large. Conscious of man's gradual transformation of the intractable objective world, the main speaker's mind is an intermediate term between absolute and relative sources of solace. For to him, absoluteness has become openness and flexibility, while relativity has become responsibility. Because his ancestors dared to accommodate the wildness of the heath, they found their human significance in the house built in that place. Indeed, much of the richness of the poem is in the sense of the main speaker's achievement of a personhood that integrates some of the underlying tensions between absolute and relative sources of solace.

Horizontal passage, imaged here in the road and in "The Wind's Prophecy" (*CPW* 2: 238) in the coastal route, has another symbolic value. In "Domicilium," the very succession of years--the passing-by of days--has a destination; and the image seems to fuse paradoxically the remoteness of the country road with the generations of human beings who have travelled in the pilgrimage of life. One result is that the kinship between the speaker and his grandmother is emphasised, because, in a sense, the family living in that isolated house makes up the entire human race, securely convinced--and blissfully deluded--that they keep the universe alone, so to speak.

Imagery of horizontal movement connotes an absolute revelationist position in "The Wind's Prophecy" too. Several critics have remarked the sense of fatalism in the poem; the speaker's journey is an onward movement to a critical destination and hence a metaphor for his life; however, they misinterpret the clue to the tone given by the spatial imagery, regard the wind's utterance as menacing and, consequently, the poem an inferior work (see Davie, *Poetry* 18-22; Taylor, *Poetry* 36). The wind's utterance seems "one of ironic

¹³ Though out of doors, the bereaved speaker in "Molly Gone" feels in a "prison close-barred" (*CPW* 2: 241).

foreboding" (Bailey, *H&C* 393) and "ominousness" (Davie, *Poetry* 20; Taylor, *Poetry* 73 and 111) precisely because the speaker focuses on no definite pattern, no gestalt; there is no coherent resolution or climax of implications. For what Hardy's personification of the wind enacts is the human experience of having an inkling, of being on the brink of a discovery of new knowledge, a sense of a new life in the future. The wind's "voice" dramatises the speaker's being about to come to a realisation about his life and the values he lives by. In each stanza, the wind's final remark has the effect of capping the speaker's, because it completes the rhyme initiated by the speaker's final phrase:

The all-prevailing clouds exclude
 The one quick timorous transient star;
 The waves outside where breakers are
 Huzza like a mad multitude.
 'Where the sun ups it, mist-imbued,'
 I cry, 'there reigns the star for me!'
 The wind outshrieks from points and peaks:
 'Here, westward, where it downs, mean ye!'

Yonder the headland, vulturine,
 Snores like old Skrymer in his sleep,
 And every chasm and every steep
 Blackens as wakes each pharos-shine.
 'I roam, but one is safely mine,'
 I say. 'God grant she stay my own!'
 Low laughs the wind as if it grinned:
 'Thy Love is one thou'st not yet known.'

My point is that the wind regularly enjoys having the last word, with which it articulates the speaker's own intuition. Donald Davie comes close to formulating, unwittingly it seems to me, the very emphasis of the poem, when he says that Hardy presents "only the components of an experience" (*Poetry* 22). For Hardy presents, in each stanza, an integrated perception of one particular setting; but the total relationship between the various elements of the landscape, the awareness of what all the scenic details, especially the images of dimensional space, constitute together, escapes the speaker. Putting it another way, the perceptual mode here is the opposite process from that in "In Front of the Landscape". As the speaker in "The Wind's Prophecy" travels along, he focuses on separate, particular features of the present landscape, but without attempting to integrate them all into a single experience or an overall impression. Nevertheless, what the speaker experiences are irresistible promptings that provide irrefutable evidence of another level of the speaker's love, of greater potential for feeling and fulfilment. Throughout the poem a mounting anticipation in the speaker is reflected in the tension between the tight, highly alliterative, internally-rhyming stanzas and the frequent run-ons that create a meditative momentum, propelled by the placement of the main verbs (e.g., "Huzza," "I cry," "Snores," "Blackens"). Then, in the closing stanza, the wind confidently persists in asserting the superiority of its knowledge over that of the lover; the exultant tone of the wind implies future vindication. In other words, the speaker gains an undeniable feeling of an unspecifiable joy to come; indeed, his outlook on life is an optimistic one, he soon exercises his faculty for visionary interpretation of the world about him, and he heads towards an experience of personal fulfilment despite the apparent hostility of the landscape--and this entire process of finding solace Hardy dramatises in the playful and ebullient repartee which the speaker enters into with the wind, while he travels along the coast.

If horizontal movement connotes revelationist solace and personal growth, so does vertical ascendancy. After so vividly depicting the inscape of beech and honeysuckle in the opening stanza of "Domicilium," Hardy in the second stanza enlists nouns of increasing generalisation, until the diminishing

specificity evokes a sense both of a universality and of a community with heaven. As Donald Davie observes of eighteenth-century generalised nouns, they imply "a view of the natural creation as a divinely ordered hierarchy" (*Purity* 43). Hardy's "distant hills" (line 12), like Wordsworth's "steep and lofty cliffs," connect the entire scene with the profound peace of the heavens ("Tintern Abbey" line 7). Hardy associates the ascendancy of the beeches and honeysuckles with the exultation of the landscape into the western sky; but then in stanza 3, he abruptly interposes a deep ideological gulf in suggesting, through distorted idiom ("everything" replacing "all"), the ungovernable supremacy of heath and furze, which "grow and thrive" in mockery of the absolute order they disrupt:

Behind, the scene is wilder. Heath and furze
Are everything that seems to grow and thrive
Upon the uneven ground. A stunted thorn
Stands here and there, indeed; and from a pit
An oak uprises, springing from a seed
Dropped by some bird a hundred years ago.

(CPW 3: [279])

Conspicuous and forlorn, the oak is so completely out of context that it seems to gain connotations of an absurd volatility (enforced by that obtrusive affix in "uprises"), an unreality that subverts its traditional character of sturdiness and durability. Unlike "sprout," "stunted" suggests a crippled, retarded quality of life, grotesque and lost. Quality of life as it affects growth and well-being is now located in a pit, a relatively enclosed space; it cups the oak tree, but permits it to grow. The poem moves on two levels at once here: the speaker, thinking of the pit in the ground, remembers the origin of the towering oak. Then, too, the seed itself is a place of growth, a container of potentially perfect life no matter where it is planted. In other words, Hardy has in "Domicilium" exploited the different symbolic values of images of dimensional space. High position indicates order; low position, even undulation or declension, tends to correlate with randomness, disorder, and volatility. As a result, these images of uneven ground and the pit are ambiguous and paradoxical, combining connotations of chaos and death with those of transformation and life. There is a contrast between the pit catching the seed which the bird drops and the pit holding the oak which the seed releases.

In "Domicilium," movements up and down co-operate to form part of a process of integration, with downward movement associating with destructive alteration due to cosmic forces. This association is typically Hardyian, and one thinks immediately of the refrain in "An Autumn Rain-Scene" (CPW 2: 382)--"On whom the rain comes down"--or that classic instance in "During Wind and Rain" (CPW 2: 239):

How the sick leaves reel *down* in throngs!
...
See, the white storm-birds wing *across*.
...
And the rotten rose is ript *from* the wall.
...
Down their carved names the rain-drop ploughs.

These are the concluding lines of the four stanzas that make up the poem; each is the longest line in its stanza and follows the dimeter refrain "Ah, no; the years" that abruptly arrests each five-line reminiscence. In other words, after scenes of human ingenuity, tenderness, and conviviality comes the sudden awareness of collapse and loss, evanescence and extinction that these grim lines register. But the poem is surely not simply about an old man's brief and futile escape into an idealised past, as Vernon Scannell has it (72), or "the human spirit cling[ing] creatively to life" generation after generation, as William Buckler claims (*Poetry* 240). What Hardy evokes most skilfully is the shocking paradox that in a cold, non-moral, nonchalant universe, the fact of

transience confers value on human beings in warm relationship. Hardy achieves an intensity of sensuous awareness (Dennis Taylor aptly calls it "concreteness": *Poetry* 33) mainly through images of vertical descent, an effect reinforced climactically in the final line of the poem: "Down their carved names the rain-drop ploughs." The syntactic inversion; the spondaic pressure of the last three syllables; the startling microscopic focus on a single globule of water, which is implicitly endowed with tremendous physical force--"ploughs" here suggests both follows the grooves made by the stone-mason's chisel, and also erodes and ultimately effaces their names; the shift from wind to rain as the agency of brutal and ineluctable mutability (see also "Unrealized" *CPW* 1: 355)--all these elements intensify the marring, thwarting, destructive quality of movement downward.

In the companion poem "The Wind's Prophecy," there is no sudden downward movement, because the storm does not break; true, clouds lour and the terrain is uneven, but there is no destruction. However, the images of downward movement are counterbalanced by two images of upward movement--the gradual, as when the sun rises ("ups it"), and the sudden, as when the waves "Huzza like a mad multitude" and

From tides the lofty coastlines screen
Come smittings like the slam of doors,
Or hammerings on hollow floors,
As the swell cleaves through caves unseen.

Like the image of sudden upward movement in "Domicilium," these images are paradoxical. The key to their structural principle is that the surge of energy, noise, or violence leads in one way or another to a renewal of life or of a relationship. We see this in "The Darkling Thrush," in the verb "arose," which Hardy eventually preferred to "outburst" (*CPW* 1: 188) to describe the bird's song suddenly breaking forth; and also in "Once at Swanage" (*CPW* 3: 103):

Roaring high and roaring low was the sea
Behind the headland shores:
It symbolled the slamming of doors,
Or a regiment hurrying over hollow floors. . . .
And there we two stood, hands clasped; I and she!

Certain directional associations, implicit in the Wordsworthian universe, Hardy adopts and exploits. Joy and perfection increase as the distance increases *inward*, away from the material world, especially from the city (it is in his soul that Wordsworth unites urban and rural settings, in his elevated position on Westminster Bridge), *outward* from the earth (as in the metaphor of a star applied to Milton's soul), and *upward* from the earth (as in the image of a rainbow). Hardy makes complex symbolic use of these values, when he dramatises the philosophical structures and imperatives on which his first-person speakers rely for solace. In both "Wessex Heights" (*CPW* 2: 25) and "Midnight on Beechen, 187-" (*CPW* 3: 86), the speakers eschew an urban environment; they cannot be true to themselves "Down there" or "below"--phrases that reveal their isolated orientation. It is only by taking up a position above town or city that they can reinforce their sense of identity and personal value:

So I am found on Ingpen Beacon, or on Wyls-Neck to the west,
Or else on homely Bulbarrow, or little Pilsdon Crest,
Where men have never cared to haunt, nor women have walked with me,
And ghosts then keep their distance; and I know some liberty.

Here the summit imagery provides the last clue, as it were, to the solution of the implied question posed by the speaker: "Who am I?" (Hillis Miller proposes "a local deity" ["History" 226].) And indeed, like an Anglo-Saxon riddle or a Metaphysical conceit (see Adams 336), in which an object describes itself (see also "I am

the one" *CPW* 3: 169), the entire poem acts as a metaphor for the new identity of the speaker. Yet the purpose of this poem is not to demonstrate wit; it is to find a new name ("continuator") and status, to gain fresh recognition as a person distinct from his former self:

Down there I seem to be false to myself, my simple self that was,
And is not now, and I see him watching, wondering what crass cause
Can have merged him into such a strange continuator as this,
Who yet has something in common with himself, my chrysalis.

Emerging from a series of enigmatic paradoxes such as these, the poem turns the apparently "strange" back into the familiar; only, the familiar is now slowly redefined, in that the speaker catalogues all the persecuting phantoms and figures in the lowlands, towns, and train that are excluded from "where one's next neighbour is the sky." Consequently, when the speaker reaches a new significance in being himself ("So I am found"), and has demonstrated a degree of assertiveness within the community ("I know some liberty"), the effect for the reader is that of an expanded awareness; and that sense of enlargement and resolution is bound up with hilly scenery and embodied in the imagery of height.¹⁴ People and objects located at a level specifically described as high are characteristically associated by Hardy with the achievement of personhood; in his sonnet eulogising Leslie Stephen, a mountain becomes the veritable embodiment of the subject's "personality" and "the eternal essence of his mind" ("The Schreckhorn" *CPW* 2: 30).

Another group of dimensional images that have Wordsworthian associations comprises the four cardinal orientations. In Hardy's poetry, north is regularly associated with cold wind (as in "The Voice" *CPW* 2: 56, "The Prospect" *CPW* 3: 87), south with death and war ("War Poems" *CPW* 1: 116-31), and east with sunrise ("The Chimes Play 'Life's a Bumper!'" *CPW* 2: 375) and sorrow ("The Last Signal" *CPW* 2: 212, "The Woman Who Went East" *CPW* 3: 259). But, for Hardy, the chief orientation is the west, which usually connotes sunset, but also works as one of the elements in a pattern describing romantic love, adventure, personal achievement, or the past (e.g., "She opened the door" *CPW* 3: 90). Of course, the east/west orientation carries symbolic values firmly established in Victorian culture: for instance, because the cycle of the day is associated with the course of human life, the eastern sunrise indicates birth or renewal, while the western sunset indicates bodily decline or death. But in addition to these conventional associations of the west, Hardy assimilates and transmutes Wordsworthian ones created in "Stepping Westward"--the joint ideas of life as a journey towards death, a journey made pleasant by warm fellow-feeling:

The dewy ground was dark and cold;
Behind, all gloomy to behold;
And stepping westward seemed to be
A kind of *heavenly* destiny:
...
The echo of the voice enwrought
A human sweetness with the thought
Of travelling through the world that lay
Before me in my endless way.

Part of the paradox in "The Wind's Prophecy" is that journeying westward ought to imply some kind of disaster or destruction, whereas this association is held in tension with a promising, new life; that is, in Hardy's poetry (as we shall see in the next section) movement away from the capital is a movement, literally

¹⁴ Of his journey to the Pyrenees, J. S. Mill wrote: "This first introduction to the highest order of mountain scenery made the deepest impression on me, and gave a colour to my tastes through life" (qtd in Griffin 179). For a discussion of how Mill's new freedom to feel is reflected in his "language of altitudes and open vistas," see Griffin 179-80.

and figuratively, away from illness, stultification, and death. Wordsworth's use of the horizontal image "Behind" to refer to the east is a technique that Hardy emulates to good effect of course in the third stanza of "Domicilium." But the thematic use of converse opposites--in front of/behind, especially--is also characteristic of Hardy's presentation of ironical perspectives, such as those in poems like "On the Esplanade"--"That, behind, / My Fate's masked face crept near me I did not know!" (CPW 3: 23)--"Overlooking the River Stour" ("To see the more behind my back. . . "), and "The Shadow on the Stone" (CPW 2: 223, 280).

In Hardy's poetry, space structured dimensionally--that is, in terms of position and orientation, direction and passage--carries various symbolic values derived from his idiosyncratic association as well as from cultural and poetic tradition. As I have tried to show, these values collaborate with those assigned to images of enclosed and extended space, to provide a framework which contributes to the characterisation of a speaker's mental and emotional state. At a deeper level, these three salient types of spatial imagery contribute to the depiction of a speaker's tone and philosophical position, and so to the dramatisation of the fundamental thematic contrast between absolute and relative knowledge. Enclosed space in Hardy's dramatic lyrics is generally an image of personal affirmation that comes from absolute assumptions; and this applies even to that ostensibly nescient place of confinement, the grave, which is, typically in Hardy, an image of joyful security rather than of wilful withdrawal from consciousness (as poems like "Channel Firing" and "While Drawing in a Churchyard" confirm). Extended space, on the other hand, is chiefly an image of consoling knowledge that comes through assertion and discovery of significant moments. What we need to do now is to link similar spatial images in a network so as to see how they interrelate and to what extent their associations modify and enrich each other. For groups of spatial images connect, align, or equate attitudes and assumptions presented in Hardy's dramatic lyrics, so organising the diverse sources of solace into a coherent and complex response to "the Worst." Consequently, the next section is devoted to the spatial image that dominates Hardy's imagination: enclosure.

2. A Network of Images of Enclosure

Visionary power

Attends the motions of the viewless winds,
Embodied in the mystery of words:
There, darkness makes abode, and all the host
Of shadowy things work endless changes there,
As in a mansion like their proper home.

(Wordsworth, *The Prelude* 5.595-600)

The image of the house is central to Hardy's dramatising of various sources of solace; and other images of enclosure are linked to the house in a fairly complex pattern. A house is a physical enclosure offering twofold protection: from the natural elements and from (in Walter Houghton's words) "the anxieties of modern life, a place of peace where the longings of the soul m[ay] be realized (if not in fact, in imagination)" (343). But, also, a house becomes a home when it enables the occupants to preserve "those moral and spiritual values which the commercial spirit and the critical spirit [are] threatening to destroy, and therefore also a sacred place, a temple" (Houghton 343). In other words, a house brings its occupants into a communality that is all-embracing--spatial, spiritual, and temporal. Usually, in Hardy's lyrics, a house is perceived in the present by a speaker who simultaneously recalls the house as it was in the past; what happens is that both the house and the speaker are engulfed, as it were, in a single, celebratory moment of passionate recollection, and from the compound of perceived and remembered house, a new perception of the dwelling emerges that reveals the speaker's mental and emotional state. Hence, on another level, the speaker represents

the creative artist, whether poet, architect, builder, or stone-mason, inasmuch as his passionate memories and perceptions become the images from which a family tradition may be constructed. This we saw in "Domicilium," where the ancestral homestead is an area of the environment that has been demarcated by force and "claimed by feelings" (see Ford, "Space" 48). Other poems that spring to mind are "Night in the Old Home" (*CPW* 1: 325), "The Two Houses," and "A House with a History" (*CPW* 2: 363, 419); and, of course, there are more. But, in general, the house in Hardy's poetry may be considered both isolative and connective: the place where one is withheld from or lost to society (like a grave), and the place that links one with the rest of society (like a web).

On a symbolic level, this ambiguity of the house is more complex still, as an analysis of an early poem, "Heiress and Architect" (*CPW* 1: 98) will show. Although not a lyric, this poem dramatises an interrelation between all three fundamental sources of solace--absolute knowledge, nescience, and relative knowledge--in a way that succinctly demonstrates Hardy's use of the house as the central image of enclosed space. In the course of the young and ambitious woman's consultation of the highly experienced architect, edificial terms are varied in order to create an identification between house and confined space, specifically a coffin. The heiress, starry-eyed and enthusiastic, comes seeking the best advice and, possessing plans and wealth, adopts a commanding attitude:

She sought the Studios, beckoning to her side
An arch-designer, for she planned to build.
He was of wise contrivance, deeply skilled
In every intervolve of high and wide--
Well fit to be her guide.

Intent on appearing impressive, the young woman apes sophistication, her gesture being pretentious and ludicrous, as if her accompanying reason entitles her to command. The intransitive use of "build" suggests that she plans to establish a reputation as well. The preliminary assessment of the architect's credentials seems to justify her choice and carefully sets up the reader's expectations. The phrase "high and wide" keeps in focus the grand wishes of the young woman.

The architect's formal response, however, assuring the heiress of his knowledge of proper, technical principles, conveys stern impassivity, and the symmetry of the narrator's interpolated comment is unsettling, because the periodic sentence it colours is only superficially flexible and accommodating. The interval between the seemingly magnanimous "Whatever it be" and the resolutely contractual "That will I do" is a ponderous qualification expressing an ambagious and intransigent professionalism:

'Whatever it be,'
Responded he,
With cold, clear voice, and cold, clear view,
'In true accord with prudent fashionings
For such vicissitudes as living brings,
And thwarting not the law of stable things,
That will I do.'

This is an imposing manifesto-statement containing two conditions--circumspection and necessity--and these establish an image-cluster in which the desired house is viewed as a forbidding dwelling: the staid and (apparently) reassuring expressions "prudent fashionings" and "stable things" turn out in the end to be "the close and surly wall," "house for secrecy," "nook," and "coffined"--all expressions which evoke a place of severe incommodiousness.

The development of the image-cluster is carefully structured. Living-space shrinks as the poem progresses, and the shrinkage dispossesses the heiress of her grandeur, aplomb, and artificiality. The architect initiates a relentless, almost mechanical process of reducing her edificial ambitions to the dimensions of a coffin. He first browbeats her with two reprobatory apostrophes ("An idle whim!" and "O maid misled!") and then conducts her mind along a sliding scale of conceptual oppositions. When she responds to his insistence on adapting to what "living brings" by calling for an "open," merry, and convivial structure to be built, back he answers that her house ought to be walled, "close and surly"; when she agrees to enclosure, but wants the walls to show her off in all her splendour, he grimly advises "secrecy"; when she exchanges exhibition for a small but exotic place lending itself to sensuous appreciation ("engrailed with rare device / Of reds and purples"), he warns against the ephemerality of intense physical experience ("For you will fade"); and when, finally, she wearily grasps at abject solitude ("Some narrow winding turret"), he again issues a restraining corrective:

'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 confined corpse adown the stairs;
For you will die.'

Throughout the poem, the amoebae exchange of ideas and ideals allows the architect to block the heiress the moment she modifies her stipulation. Each expository admonishment, given edge by its terminal placement and dimeter rhythm ("For you will tire/fade/die"), makes his "guidance" as unstoppable as steel. He scouts her every proposal, so that for her the "consultation" ends in a fiasco.

Two things make this process of defining a house as a confined space invidiously "decremental," as J. O. Bailey aptly puts it (*H&C* 108): one is its unnaturalness, because it befits the falling off of physical powers rather than the coming into them, ageing rather than maturing; the other is its impersonality, because it imposes on the heiress a role of inevitable victim--indeed, the impersonality of death ("life ends unawares") quite deprives her of individuality. But the main way that Hardy establishes the house/confined space equation is by layers of irony: verbal, dramatic, and thematic. The malignance (stanza 4) works retrospectively to activate puns in the opening stanza of the poem: "arch-designer" (suggesting the self-importance of the architect), "contrivance," "deeply," and "intervolve"--each word conveys not only thorough technical expertise, but also thoroughgoing subtlety and ingenuity. These words perhaps work also as allusions to the intellectual prowess of the chief figures in *Paradise Lost*, since each word is associated there with Milton's God, Son, or Satan (see Giordano 106; and also bk 2.53; 3.629, 707; 10.1034, 11.732). Similarly, dramatic irony becomes discernible in the summary certifying of the architect's fitness to "guide" the ingenuous heiress. Verbal parallelism, alliteration, and spondaic balance ("cold, clear voice, and cold, clear view") enact the slow, deliberate bearing of a man who, to the prepossessing young woman's consternation, turns out to be indifferent to social conventions: "Whom nought could warm to gallantries." Accordingly, the urbane vagueness of his "such vicissitudes as living brings" loses its social index and acquires a narrow philosophical one.

The identification of house and confined space suggests a further irony, in the heiress's incantatory use of architectural terms. Mesmerised by such terms (and stimulated by the novel acquisition of money), she naïvely addresses the architect as a magician, because she thinks she can control her social environment. She seems convinced that the terms themselves have the power of a magical charm to transform reality for her; and that the moment she obtains the prerequisite material objects--the "best" house her money can buy--she

will become a social monarch and her personal influence will increase automatically. She falls, however, mock-heroic victim to the very power she puts her trust in, architecture: she is "pierced," "swayed," and ultimately driven into her last refuge, self-imposed solitary confinement, which becomes her last dear fancy" the efficient practitioner is able to "slay" with his unerring "eye." The features she specifies ("high walls with tracery / And open ogive-work") make the projected dwelling desirable for its heightened sensuousness and activity; but the desirability is highly ironic, because the enthusiasm that has produced the sensuousness incurs the immutable "law of stable things" that destroys dream-house and heiress together. And here the dimensional imagery delivers the final irony, insofar as the upward/downward movement of the heiress's architectural ambitions reflects the subsidence of her spirit. In an indirect way, she gets what she originally wants: an edifice both "high and wide"--as high as a tower and just wide enough to permit the descent of her coffin.

Without being unsympathetic to the architect, whose objective outlook is certainly affirmative and valid, one can see that all forms of consoling knowledge resorted to by the heiress--idealism, humanism, personhood--are reduced to a bleak and narrow rationalism that stops just short of nescience, for there is no bitterness or despair at the end of the poem, merely an austere recognition of "the Worst." The final stanza (quoted above) registers an acceptance of mortality and the consciousness of mortality, but it is not an acceptance that can bring human significance, reinforce personal identity, or produce another level of personal being. The architect's stance is limited to didactic superiority and dogmatic arrogance towards man and Nature. Frank Giordano considers that Hardy's use of Miltonic allusions to the character of both Satan and God confuses the tone of the poem (109n20). Nothing, however, in Hardy's poem imputes moral or spiritual goodness to the architect; after all, his rationalist advice can hardly be said to improve the quality of the heiress's life. One has only to compare the architect's severe injunctions with the sincere "Sweet teachings" of the overprotective lover in "Misconception" (*CPW* 1: 283) to realise the suffocating reductiveness of the architect's absolute source of solace. The architect's oppressive logic and aloofness allow no room for the compliant heiress to answer in the vein of the woman in "Misconception": "Those moils you fear for me / My nature revels in!" Consequently, in "Heiress and Architect," Hardy dramatises nothing so parabolic as "a conflict between fancy and duty within the rebellious individual" (Giordano 111). The architect is no melodramatic villain either, nor Milton's God. Presuming to know what is best for the spiritual well-being of another, the architect resigns himself to "the Worst," to dying in an indifferent cosmos; but he neglects any possibility of nevertheless believing in or finding value and meaning in human actions and states of mind. For although, as Paul Zietlow observes, the heiress means "to live, to participate in the world, to expose herself, to love" (*Moments* 13), the architect's defensive rationalism ultimately reduces her openness, freshness, optimism, and visionary joy, as well as her feeling for human relationship (even with herself), to soulless insignificance.

This shift in the poem from imagery of extended space ("high," "open," "travelling") to imagery of enclosed space ("coffined") embodies and enacts the paradoxical isolativeness of the house in a way typical of Hardy's poetry. The way in which Hardy refines and integrates sources of solace becomes clear: image patterns operate through, and unify, the entire corpus of poems, and specific images merge with one another to interlock different ideas, attitudes, and assumptions. Applied indirectly to a coffin in "The Workbox" (*CPW* 2: 117), in "A Forgotten Miniature" (*CPW* 3: 240) directly to a locket, and in "Architectural Masks" (*CPW* 1: 199) directly to a house, the term "box" functions as an intermediate image of enclosed space that transfers emotive connotations from one space to the other. In converting references to spacious accommodation into constrictive enclosure, housing into entrapment, Hardy has created a paradoxical metaphor that forms part of, and is subsidiary to, the larger complex of images of building that pervades his

poetry. Within the set of images of enclosed space, the house is important for two aspects: who builds it and who inhabits it. For instance, the house is the embodiment of the architect who designs and builds it (see above, ch. 3, pt V); at the same time, the human body is a "fragile frame" ("I Look into My Glass"), a deftly-achieved shell ("The Mother Mourns"), an ark ("The Subalterns" *CPW* 1: 106, 144, 155). The house, in other words, is an ambiguous and paradoxical enclosure in Hardy's poetry, carrying a twofold symbolic value: on the one hand, isolation and relationship, and, on the other, security and vulnerability. The house can appropriately be both, because its demise or destruction is the way to life on another level of experience or, in architectural terms, restoration. Death is, in fact, partially defined by its association with renewed fellowship in the grave (see "Friends Beyond" *CPW* 1: 78, "Channel Firing," "While Drawing in a Churchyard" *CPW* 2: 9, 287; also *CL* 6: 122), an enclosed space connoting a mental state of peaceful comfort. Also, because the relationship a house embodies stretches through time as well as space, the entire set of "building"-images is represented by the church, an enclosed space which undergoes destruction as a means of restoration. Hence the fundamental ambiguity and paradox of the house is also the ambiguity and paradox of Victorian aesthetics which we discussed in chapter 3--that which is created to preserve the past and relate it to the present can indeed do so only at the cost of the destruction of the substance of the past (see also "A Man" *CPW* 1: 191). In Hardy's poetry, then, the house is not simply a place of protection and companionship; within its walls lurk feelings of insecurity and alienation.

But the system of "building"-images is still more complex, for a house is also described figuratively as a tomb in "Silences" (*CPW* 3: 201), while a bird in a cage is said to be "Enjailed" and "ensepulchred" in "The Blinded Bird" (*CPW* 2: 181), and like a Babylonian captive in "The Bird-Catcher's Boy" (*CPW* 3: 150); and then the term "bird" is also applied figuratively to a ghost (Hardy achieves the association of bird and ghost in the character of Sue Bridehead: see Fischler 257), and to a poet, as spokesman of society, whose imagination springs "up out of him in the dark, / And [takes] on the lightness of a lark" ("A Poet's Thought" *CPW* 3: 200). Then again, architect, stone-mason, poet, and bird are all creators; consequently, in Hardy's poems, works of art are deeds which memorialise either the builder or the occupant, as in "The Abbey Mason" and "Her Temple" (*CPW* 2: 124, 401).

Two further subsets of enclosure images are linked to this "building"-network. One involves a polarity between enclosed space in the form of the city and extended space in the form of the countryside (including the coast); the rural dwelling (usually ancestral) is an intermediate, liminal point in the polarity, situated amid the vast expanse of cosmic wildness and simultaneously enclosing things associated with the city and oppressive constructs of the human mind:

Heart-halt and spirit-lame,
 City-opprest,
 Unto this wood I came
 As to a nest;
 Dreaming that sylvan peace
 Offered the harrowed ease--
 Nature a soft release
 From men's unrest.
 ("In a Wood" *CPW* 1: 84)

What underlies this urban/rural polarity? Extended space suggests variety, brightness, and spontaneous growth, and much of Hardy's poetry describes the free processes of the natural scene. The city is the opposite, both in spatial and in physical and social-psychological terms, a place of "rayless grime" ("Dream of the City

Shopwoman" *CPW* 2: 379), bleakness, horrible fascination, and illness.¹⁵ In "A Wife in London" (*CPW* 1: 123), Hardy contrasts the gloomy, moribund isolation of urban life with the warm, songfilled experience that is possible only in a Wessex field:

She sits in the tawny vapour
That the Thames-side lanes have uprolled,
Behind whose webby fold on fold
Like a waning taper
The street-lamp glimmers cold.

Meanwhile, the husband, slain in battle "in the far South Land," has spoken in his last letter, which is now read posthumously,

of home-planned jaunts by brake and burn
In the summer weather,
And of new love that they would learn.

In effect, this polarity links enclosed space with absolute knowledge, extended space with relative knowledge--associations corresponding to what we saw in the discussion of "Domicilium," and forms a subset of urban/rural images, also dependent on the "building"-cluster.

The other subset comprises images of covering--or clothing (e.g., "The Old Gown," "The Pink Frock" *CPW* 2: 351, 211)--something or someone, and fuses with the "house"-subset: for instance, snow "near inurns" the sparrow in "Snow in the Suburbs" (*CPW* 3: 42). Like those of the house, the connotations of images of covering may be either destructive or protective, disruptive or integrative. Snow and frost cover the earth; so do autumnal and winter leaves ("a pond edged with grayish leaves": "Neutral Tones" *CPW* 1: 13), which are related to "wasting skin" ("I Look into My Glass" *CPW* 1: 106) and "whitening hairs" ("A Light Snow-Fall after Frost" *CPW* 3: 43) by the conventional association of ageing and loss of physical vigour with instances of natural decay. A "mouldy green" can "overspread" the ancestral home ("The Ageing House" *CPW* 2: 233), and so link this subset to the complex of "building"-images. But covering can also be protective, of course: in "The House of Hospitalities" (*CPW* 1: 255), moonlight "sheets" the ancestral home and restores warm family relations; and in "The Reminder," "The Rambler" (*CPW* 1: 324, 325), "Once at Swanage," and "Discouragement" (*CPW* 3: 103, 155), for instance, colours clothe objects. Another image within this subset is the web. Cobwebs, for instance, imperceptibly cover a house in the form of "festoons of thick white worsted" ("A Light Snow-Fall after Frost"). Indeed, the web is a fateful image in Hardy's poetry, indicating "that desolation that comes to the human scene when death is realised" (Hyde 268), as well as all the autumnal anxiety at the prospect of death.

But perhaps enough evidence has been adduced here to correct a misconception to do with Hardy's repeating certain spatial images throughout his eight volumes of verse. The repetitions are not accidental or without thematic reverberation; rather, they serve to enforce and extend connections between spatial images. Dennis Taylor, for instance, is aware that the Hardyian web can symbolise natural decay and dissolution, and is connected with "workings of the imagination" (*Poetry* 45). But Taylor fails to mention any connection between web and speaker in terms of an organic linking of house, body, and web as enclosed or enclosing spaces, as habitable structures; and so he fails to recognise that Hardy has set up a fairly patterned universe in which the nature of the world and the events described in it appear inevitable and willed, because most things seem to fit into, and contribute to, the pattern. The effect of a structured set of spatial images is metaphoric in

¹⁵ Replying to Florence Henniker's invitation to her farm, Hardy once wrote "We have been saying how foolish it seems to have come away from where we were well, &, as you are now, surrounded by birds' songs

We are getting to the end of visioning
 The impossible within this universe,
 Such as that better whiles may follow worse,
 And that our race may mend by reasoning.

We know that even as larks in cages sing
 Unthoughtful of deliverance from the curse
 That holds them lifelong in a latticed hearse,
 We ply spasmodically our pleasuring.
 (CPW 3: 273)

The poet in "He Resolves to Say No More" (CPW 3: 274) cries out:

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

But what the foregoing diagram does purport to indicate are simply some interrelationships that may well contribute richness and depth of connotation to any one of those "building"-images used by Hardy in a poem. Clearly, no particular "building"-image will always and necessarily be thematically enriched by its association with the other images of enclosure; there can be no automatic or rigid correlation, no simple equation. Nevertheless, the network is a suggestive frame of reference that stands to enlarge the import or deepen the nuance of any "building"-image we encounter in one of Hardy's poems. And in the final part of this chapter, by taking a group of poems deliberately designed by Hardy as a set, I hope to show how he develops the connotations of some of these salient "building"-images into larger themes. In *Poems of Pilgrimage* (CPW 1: 132-43), for instance, Hardy uses the images of city and body to symbolise the permanence of art; and in a miscellany of bird-poems (CPW 1: 184-88), the metaphoric association of house and cage enables him to dramatise the responsibility of the artist in society to create values for his fellow-men to live by. But Hardy's most significant use of images included in the "building"-network--most significant, because most profound and subtly integrated with images of both extended and dimensional space--occurs in *Poems of 1912-13*, to an analysis of which I now turn, in order to complete the detailed demonstration of guidelines for reading Hardy's poetry.

II

Of setting as a reflex of Hardy's master theme, as embodying Victorian-Edwardian philosophical psychological sources of solace, that nexus of assumptions, attitudes, and affirmations in the face of "the Worst," *Poems of 1912-13* (CPW 2: 47-70) constitutes a classic instance. Not only do these poems form a group of first-person lyrics that is, according to William Morgan, "central to Hardy's poetic canon because it is a central expression of the way he saw the world," but also these poems are universally regarded as being among the masterpieces in the English elegiac tradition, "a significant reshaping of the traditional elegy," as Morgan puts it, "and a boldly impressive formulation of the logic of grief in a godless universe" ("Form" 504, 496).

Yet when we extol Hardy's sequence in the same breath as we do, say, Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, we must immediately add that Hardy's is the more impersonal, despite his predecessor's disclaimer: "The different moods of sorrow as in a drama are dramatically given . . . 'T' is not always the author speaking of

himself, but the voice of the human race speaking through him" (*Memoir* 1: 304; qtd Ross 94). For to many critics, as Robert Ross observes, Tennyson's poem, while thoroughly Victorian in temper, is unquestionably confessional-personal rather than controversial-public (94-95). While *Poems of 1912-13*, too, represents its cultural provenance but without fostering public debate, Hardy achieves the greater artistic detachment; so much so, in fact, that well-known events of his life need not interfere with or inhibit our reading of the series of poems, "all the relevant history being incorporated into the texts and blended with events that are purely imaginary" (Buckler, *Poetry* 222). Or, as Douglas Brown claimed almost thirty years before Buckler,

the particular distinction of the elegies is their *dramatic* vitality, something other than the lyric pressure usual in verse of this kind. The poems may lodge in personal memories and in recollections that came unbidden upon the consciousness, but the peculiar excellence lies in the disengagement of the self. There may be an 'I', named or speaking, for this loss has happened; but the grief does not turn inward upon 'I, Thomas Hardy' nor ask attention for him.

(173)

That Hardy has indeed achieved an imaginative transformation of his traumatic experience of his first wife's death Robert Gittings indirectly bears out when he somewhat cynically remarks of "The Going" that "of course the whole truth is not revealed in this apparently all-revealing poem and its fellows. His [Hardy's] full guilt was too horrible to face" (*Older* 207). The critic of *Poems of 1912-13*, then, would do well to heed Michael Millgate's general caution against "the danger of reading the verse, for all its deep autobiographical roots, as too literal a transcription from life, or of attributing permanence and definitiveness to the mood of any particular poem" (*B* 388; but see above, ch. 3, pt I). As "the only amends" he could make in case he had treated Emma inconsiderately was the justification Hardy gave his lifelong friend, Florence Henniker, for his decision to have these elegies published (17 July 1914; *CL* 5: 37). Their composition, far less deliberately motivated (or documented), processed the sorrow through his conscientious and compassionate (and hence cleared of remorse) imagination--a sorrow perhaps so profound that it surfaced involuntarily and keenly in "broken words" about Emma on his dying lips (see *B* 572; Pinion, "Sorrow" 163), even though Emma's name nowhere occurs in the sequence (see Murfin 79-80).

Having characterised *Poems of 1912-13* modally, in terms of the relation between poet and protagonist (that is, the first speaker who is the bereaved husband), we might attempt to describe the distinctive nature of the sequence as major elegy in English, that is, generically. M. H. Abrams's general definition of elegy, modified by Bernard Richards's discussion of Victorian elegiac poetry, provides a useful starting-point. Abrams defines the elegy as "a formal and sustained lament (and usually consolation) for the death of a particular person" (*Glossary*, 4th ed., 46-47). Its modern informality and starkness notwithstanding, Hardy's dramatised outcry for his dead wife consists of nearly 600 lines, linked by varying rhyme-schemes, deployed in twenty-one stanzaic poems, and embodies a contrasting pattern of loss and consolation. One recent full-scale study of the genre also credits elegy with the same fundamental tension between "mortal loss and consolation" (Sacks 3). More specifically, Richards describes constituents of Victorian elegiac feeling--such as mourning, nostalgia, mutability, and celebration (152-53)--that follow the same movement from loss to consolation; and Hardy's sequence certainly includes these. Moreover, although Hardy's elegy is less sentimental or emotionally self-indulgent than most Victorian elegies, Hardy's search for consolation and self-definition resembles Tennyson's in the emphasis on the workings of the mourner's mind that are "not necessarily linear and time bound" (Richards 155). *Poems of 1912-13* is no mere "sad mechanic exercise, / Like dull narcotics, numbing pain" (*In Memoriam* st. 5) of grief and guilt. Hardy's domestic elegy comprises poems of deep, personal sorrow--but sorrow as merely one of several states and impulses in a whole process

of human grieving and achieving consolation; and this mourning process itself is dramatically presented as the operation of a bereaved husband's mind.

Since Hardy's elegy is a dramatic poem of loss and consolation, of reflection and celebration, having affinities with Victorian elegiac feeling, we are not surprised to find that he likewise adopts the Victorian poetic technique of (in Bernard Richards's words) "exploit[ing] the congruence of emotion and geographical place" (*Period* 163). In other words, since the phenomenon Hardy is dramatising is the individual consciousness of a bereaved husband, the spatial images embody the speaker's psychological or inward being.

Many of Hardy's poems, of course, embody something of a correlation between setting and mood that is part of a received--"traditional and archetypal" in Samuel Hynes's words (*Pattern* 119)--poetic imagery: the conventional association of winter landscape or night with grief or awareness of death, for instance, in poems like "Neutral Tones" (*CPW* 1: 13), "A Night in November" (*CPW* 2: 352), "At Rushy-Pond" (*CPW* 3: 21). However, as John Casey points out,

There is no intrinsic connection between the emotion and the object, between the inward state and its outward expression. . . . The connection between the emotion and the object which expresses it is an essentially private act of the poet, an inward "baptism."
(93)

Indeed, as we saw in chapter 3, Hardy may employ familiar images, but he can exploit them to his own poetic ends. Conventional evocations, therefore, of direct sensory experience that stir the reader to apprehend psychological states can function in ways peculiar to a given poem; for example,

Plunging and labouring on in a tide of visions,
Dolorous and dear,
Forward I pushed my way as amid waste waters
Stretching around,
Through whose eddies there glimmered the customed landscape
Yonder and near
("In Front of the Landscape" *CPW* 2: 7)

Or, more subtly, while latching onto some places, objects, or spatial details, the speaker's mind can in turn be acted upon by the setting fully experienced, in a creative interaction or reciprocal process that raises up, brings forth, and defines unrealised attitudes and submerged feelings and mental faculties. As L. C. Knights puts it,

the mind finds in external objects something more than analogies for its inner experience: the objects, when contemplated and responded to with sufficient steadiness and fullness, *evoke* qualities in the mind that the mind did not know it had.
("Self" 372)

Contemplating the gradual draining of interest in human existence, the ineluctable process of subsidence into total loss enacted in "A Commonplace Day" (*CPW* 1: 149) opens up and enlivens the speaker's capacity to feel in a human way:

Wanly upon the panes
The rain slides as have slid since morn my colourless thoughts; and yet
Here, while Day's presence wanes,
And over him the sepulchre-lid is slowly lowered and set,
He wakens my regret.

In a truly collaborative, indissoluble relationship, both mind and object emerge in new forms, as they do also in "After a Romantic Day" (*CPW* 2: 417), a mature poem about an immature lover:

The railway bore him through
 An earthen cutting out from a city:
 There was no scope for view,
 Though the frail light shed by a slim young moon
 Fell like a friendly tune.

Fell like a liquid ditty,
 And the blank lack of any charm
 Of landscape did no harm.
 The bald steep cutting, rigid, rough,
 And moon-lit, was enough
 For poetry of place: its weathered face
 Formed a convenient sheet whereon
 The visions of his mind were drawn.

Here the gentle, enchanting moonlight, the rugged indifferent wall of earth, and the sensation of travelling--all work on the passenger's mind so as to suggest a (specious) harmony between rural and urban setting, and at the same time the illusory, superficial quality of his love.

So in addition to Hardy's idiosyncratic use of spatial images we looked at in the first part of this chapter, those interlocking images of enclosure, extension, and dimension that stand for certain philosophical ideas and psychological states, there is Hardy's conventional use of images for their allusive and emotional effect, and also his interactive use of images to discover and articulate a speaker's mental properties. Hardy combines all three uses of spatial imagery in *Poems of 1912-13*; but what distinguishes his elegiac sequence is his structural use of spatial imagery. The spatial images provide the concrete components of this structure, so that by explicating the psychological structure within the elegiac sequence, that is the contour of the bereaved husband's various states and movements of mind as symbolised in places, objects, and spatial details--in a blanketing pattern of tensions between images of enclosure, extension, and dimension--we can catch the right elegiac note and so define the especial achievement of *Poems of 1912-13*.

1. The Process of Mourning

To take "The Going," advisedly¹⁷ the first poem in the series, we can see that Hardy has structured the bereaved husband's mental and emotional condition according to a complex of spatial-temporal images. First, let us examine that condition:

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

Never to bid good-bye,
 Or lip me the softest call,
 Or utter a wish for a word, while I
 Saw morning harden upon the wall,
 Unmoved, unknowing

¹⁷ The insertion of the adverb "advisedly" is supported by William Buckler's remark that "The Going" "contains in seed all the chief poetic elements of the sequence" (*Poetry* 225), and also by Ross Murfin's that "the reader who assumes a significant precedence is well-rewarded for close scrutiny" (73).

That your great going
Had place that moment, and altered all.

There can be no realisable answer to such a question as the bereaved husband here puts to his dead wife. The poem (and hence the entire series of poems) begins *in medias res*, the prelusive immediacy suggesting an easy, conversational familiarity. However, feelings enter of reproach and frustration as the husband finds himself awkwardly holding a question that articulates the deepest reality of his marriage, a reality that declares itself in the fact of his wife's unexpected death: a lack of communication obscuring a deep-seated personal affection and human attachment (not necessarily love) between them.¹⁸ His mild rhetorical reproach exposes the estrangement; without notice, as though sullenly obeying a dismissal ("up and be gone"), she seems to have concluded the business of her life, "as if indifferent quite" to the fact that her husband's life was joined to hers. The only way the "I" can comprehend the conduct of this "you" in relation to himself is by framing them both in a question. He is unable to recall the nerve-shaking suddenness of her death without his mind immediately and querulously adducing the powerlessness ("Where I could not") and inertia ("while I . . . / Unmoved") he felt that day. (Later, of course, in "A Death-Day Recalled," the bereaved husband's anger and numbness dissolve to the point where he can objectively and calmly ask a question that lessens his guilt and reflects eulogistically on the heroic stature of his dead wife: "Why did not Valency / In his purl deplore / One whose haunts were whence he / Drew his limpid store?"--much in the idealising vein of the classic elegiac tone, as in Milton's "Where were ye, nymphs, when the remorseless deep / Closed o'er the head of your loved Lycidas?") The husband's chief struggle is to find and grasp a perspective of reality that reconciles his wife's death with his ignorance of its imminence and his unpreparedness for it. To him, her death is "the Worst," because it brings him abruptly to the extreme limit of his life's meaning and his own identity. Consequently, he can at first realise the suddenness of her departure and the absence of a farewell only in relation to the slow, silent progression of time, an image achieved by Hardy through caesura, assonance, and spondee in "while I / Saw morning harden upon the wall." Then there is also self-reproach in the irony of the moment she died, when he was, as usual (it is implied), coolly ignorant that the opportunity for relationship was slipping away before his very eyes, and that also, unawares, the whole substance of his life and identity was changing.¹⁹ Although at odds with the latest condition of their marriage, the absolute loss he feels forces him to acknowledge as crucial to his life the life that seemed not really to matter. Hence he gains a measure of solace when he can say, affirming her vital influence: "your great going / Had place that moment, and altered all."

At this point in the process of the husband's mourning, then, we find a source of his solace that is a humanist one: he discerns the dignity and meaning of the occasion of her death, a moment made coherent and distinctive by supremely human action and experience. Over against a seemingly infinite succession of temporal units ("night," "dawn," "term," "ever anon") stands one particular moment which alters that infinitude. The psychological modulation from the outrage expressed in the blunt chiding of "gone" to the

¹⁸ Peter Mitchell defines Hardy's view of love as twofold: as passion and as companionship, meaning "a personal relationship less intense but possessing greater stability and endurance than passion" (81).

¹⁹ Louis MacNeice's use of the wall-image sensitises the reader to the exquisite regret of this loss:

The sunlight on the garden
Hardens and grows cold,
We cannot cage the minute
Within its nets of gold,
When all is told
We cannot beg for pardon.

("The Sunlight on the Garden")

solemn celebration in "great going" is reflected in the spatial imagery. In the opening stanza, the figurative reference to a swallow's wing may be taken as an image of extended space, because some idea of spatial movement is associated with the function of a bird's wing. However, the image is used as a measure of extremely restricted space, an inverse symbol of a place where it is impossible for a swift bird to sweep. Meanwhile, the terse, syncopated syntax in which the image is couched enforces the sense of futile alacrity. In the second stanza, "wall" is a synecdochic image of the house in which the wife dies, but is also symbolic of the emotional barrier between husband and wife. Together, the bird's wing and the wall of the house suggest that husband and wife were enclosed in separate worlds by inflexible attitudes towards each other. Only in the husband's brief but assertive acceptance of the importance to him of his wife's life can he acknowledge the "great[ness]" of her death, an ultimate value embodied climactically in a spatial-temporal image: "your great going / Had *place* that moment, and altered all." This declaration secures some significance for the dead woman's existence, the assertion registered by the verb "Had" usurping the more common verbs "Took" (which would imply mere occurrence) and "Made" or "Gave" (which would imply supersession).

The husband's grief may find its objective equivalent in imagery of confined space, but the image of the grave or the house does not exist in isolation:

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

The precincts of the house provide the second set of spatial images, contrasted with the house itself. Imagining his wife, alive and active, outside the house expresses his delight in her vesperal custom of walking in the garden, "At the end of the alley of bending boughs"; the contrast in setting illustrates the different state of mind represented by imagery of extended space. From the focus on the restrictions of enclosed space as symbolic of angry protest, desperate frustration, and numb remorse, the emphasis has shifted to the alternating pattern of enclosed space as a symbol of the husband's recent state of estrangement contrasted with extended space as a symbol of present joy and affection. And then once again, he expresses his feelings in a paroxysm of sadness at the moment of release, discovery, and communication, the shattering illusion of which is suggested by the spatial image of an empty chasm, an expanding vacancy, and the sensuous image of bodily distemper. Once again, however, the relationship between husband and wife takes the form of a reproachful question. The familiar references to "*the* house" and "*the* alley," the gasp of excited recognition, and the intimate contingency of "you" and "I" obscure the deep domestic division, but only superficially. By giving prominence to the direct object ("you") so as to arrange its reverse collocation with the subject of the verb ("I see"), Hardy evokes a continuity between the momentary illusion of the wife's presence and the consciousness of the startled widower, and recalls the situation in "The Dream Is--Which?", a poem composed in March 1913 (see above, pt I, sec. 1, esp. n9). In reality, the imagery of extended space represents the bereaved husband's yearning and impulse to look for his wife, and so may be associated with self-delusion, but less tactful than the kind revealed by the analysis of "The Shadow on the Stone" (in ch. 5, sec. 1).

Now, in stanza 4, a decisive shift occurs:

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

What seems merely a continuation of the visionary setting of extended space changes to encompass enclosed space too ("abode"). As symbolic images, the opposed psychological settings of enclosed and extended space are here merged. No longer symbolising estrangement, the imagery of enclosed space has become one with the illusion of extended space. Indoors now takes on the imaginative qualities of the outdoors itself, as though the wife were veritably at home among the rocks. But if we are to trace the process of the husband's mourning from loss to consolation (whatever final form that consolation takes) by outlining its shift from state to state, then this grouping together of enclosed and extended space must have some import for the complete elegy. This import is partially explicable here, because in the form and structure of "The Going" Hardy has inscribed the psychological paradigm for the remaining twenty poems; for instance, as William Morgan observes, "The temporal model that informs the entire sequence is evident in miniature in "The Going" ("Form" 497; see also Sacks 244 and n17 above).

At the end of stanza 3, in the spatial-temporal image of a vacant darkness, redolent both of engulfing night and of the terrifying vast eternity of the grave, something alters in the husband's consciousness. His yearning for her presence, and also for any further opportunity to appreciate her presence, which the finality of "ever anon! // Never" rules out, beguiles him to the trauma of absolute loss and desperate incompleteness--what Dickens calls "the weary void"²⁰ and what D. W. Harding describes as "the empty outline of the dead that forms a great gap in what had been the continuous pattern of our interests and sentiments and daily habits, a huge piece now missing from the jigsaw picture of the self" (747, col. 2). This alteration in his consciousness brings on the third state of the husband's mourning; his anger, reproach, and yearning have evolved into reminiscence. The states of being so carefully presented in the first three stanzas have not disappeared from the process of the husband's mourning, but they now seem to have a different point of reference. In an attempt to fill the chasm in the reality of his present self, he now defines the "you" in terms of the remote past and imagery of dimensional space. Complementary to enclosed and extended spaces stand images of romantic orientation and ennobling elevation, dimensional images which embody the husband's reconstitution of his early relationship with his wife ("us").

But the alteration in the bereaved husband's consciousness produces also a change in the psychological and symbolic meaning of enclosed space for him. When set in a remote place ("far West") and time ("days long dead"), imagery of enclosed space symbolises the joyful, transcendent union of husband and wife:

²⁰ *The Old Curiosity Shop* ch. 72:

If there be any who have never known the blank that follows death--the weary void--the sense of desolation that will come upon the strongest minds, when something familiar and beloved is missed at every turn--the connection between inanimate and senseless things, and the object of recollection, when every household god becomes a monument and every room a grave--if there be any who have not known this, and proved it by their own experience, they can never faintly guess how, for many days, the old man pined and moped away the time, and wandered here and there as seeking something, and had no comfort. (545)

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

Chiding interrogation of the "you" has modulated into confessional self-examination and regret over the shared folly of apathetically neglecting their courtship in Cornwall. But this new tone of questioning flows from the celebratory idealisation created by the closing line of the previous stanza, a stanza in which the rugged Cornish coast embodies ("red-veined") and enacts ("beetling") their early courtship in all its sheer, passionate sensuousness: "While Life unrolled us its very best." By virtue of its ambiguous syntax, this line means that their courtship was marked by one continuous fulfilment of their joint needs and desires; but, taken elliptically, the line means also that, during their youthful courtship, they felt that their union was the paragon of vitality and joy--the presentation of "us," who were the very essence of all life's "sublimities" (Hardy's word: "Reading" 114), the excellent things that being alive together had to offer. The symbolic import of "unrolled" interlocks, in fact, imagery of enclosed and extended space, for it suggests not only the absolute vastness of extended space ("Life" with a capital letter), but also what was previously tightly compacted into an enclosed space; that is, not only the immensity of their rich relationship (being representative of all mankind), but also the intensity of their experience of love. There is still, perhaps, another dimension to the spatial image inherent in "unrolled," an allusion that describes the quality of that experience as being a self-contained world of vigorous, joyful abandon. "Let us roll all our strength and all / Our sweetness up into one ball, / And tear our pleasures with rough strife / Thorough the iron gates of life" (Marvell, "To His Coy Mistress"). In other words, in stanza 4 of "The Going," Hardy transforms the imagery of enclosed space, from symbolic of reproachful estrangement, into a container of a dreamlike, ecstatic relationship of heroic proportions.

Imagery of enclosed space in the remote past now symbolises the bereaved husband's nostalgia and intense desire to revisit old places. But there is also a further change, in the temporal relationship between images of enclosed and extended space. In the first three stanzas of "The Going," extended space symbolises the husband's desire in the present to communicate with his wife and accord personal significance to her. In stanza 5, however, he wants to put as much temporal distance as he can between himself and the horrifyingly empty present, so that he may "strive to seek [the remote past's] renewal." Interestingly, the pattern of contrast between extended and enclosed space continues; only, in keeping with the radical shift in the emotive connotations of an enclosed space, there is an answering shift in the symbolic value of an extended space. Extended space, last associated with disillusionment and bleak desolation, becomes coloured with "this bright spring weather," an image that symbolises the husband's optimistic nostalgia.

By stanza 5, extended space seems no longer opposed to enclosed space, for it is the thought of joyful outings that makes the husband imagine the reminiscential conversation. Yet extended and enclosed space remain opposed as symbolic settings; and to find the contrasting symbol to enclosed space in the remote past, one has to look for a change in the temporal coefficient of extended space. Extended space up to this stanza has been closely identified with the reality of the husband's existence in the present: outside the house lies the wide and all-too empty world. The reminiscence that "this bright spring weather" symbolises is of another quality of extended space entirely; and the husband's "might have" refers to another kind of present--a fictional present. "Those places" are purely hypothetical and hence become symbolic also of the bereaved

husband's present desire to reminisce. That is, an extended space in a fictional present stands in symbolic contrast to an enclosed space in the remote past.

Hence the husband's impulse to escape from the grim, vast void left by his wife's departure from the real world, and to seek and win another realm of significance for her receives full embodiment in the imagery of dimensional space implied by his willingness to travel westward and upward--that is, to enter a world of enchantment and fiction. From the perspective of ecstatic transcendence, the bereaved husband tries to bridge the abyss between the "us" of the remote past (line 28) and the "we" of the recent past (line 29); he attempts also, with a piece of make-believe conversation, to merge the "we" of the remote past (line 35) into the "we" of the pseudo-present (line 34).

But the estrangement of recent years defies the temporal translation of the encapsulated wish for renewed relationship. As T. S. Eliot puts it in *Four Quartets*, "What might have been is an abstraction / Remaining a perpetual possibility / Only in a world of speculation" (1.1.6-8). The optimistic delusion cannot be sustained:

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

This is a complex stanza psychologically, as it dramatises elements of at least three sources of solace. First, the husband checks the illusion with a brusque and sobering self-reprimand ("Well, well!").²¹ Basing his emotions in a rationalist framework, he dogmatically rejects his own impulse towards one-eyed or one-sided ambivalence, the conscious inhibition of the real (which we examined in the first part of the previous chapter, sec. 1). He makes blunt claims about incontrovertible certainties, and about what is absolute and necessary. The irrevocable alteration his wife's death causes to the reality of his life and identity totally pre-empts any belated wish of his to "amend" his valuation of her. All exertion for growth in that direction is (it is implied) senseless and futile. Having arrived at a rationalist conclusion--"It must go": he both grimly acknowledges the impersonality imposed by death upon the "you" of previous stanzas and finally concedes, by means of a final echo, the reality of the event announced in the title of the poem--the widower declares himself to be one step away from losing all manhood and humanity. His sole remaining source of consolation, in fact, is a nescient faculty: an ironical derision aimed at his own powerlessness, and a despair at the sterility and meaninglessness of his existence as a mere victim of cosmic forces.

The third element of solace, however, is a humanist one that enables the husband to take up a stance in the face of his own imminent destruction. Frequent though the symbolic use of aposiopesis is in Hardy's poetry, few abrupt pauses reverberate as thematically as does this mid-line silence in "The Going" (see, for comparison, "Hap," "Neutral Tones," "Nature's Questioning" *CPW* 1: 10, 13, 86). For in the very moment in which he is once again forced to take a full look at that "yawning blankness" of his being--the absolute exhaustion of inward values, a moment in which the progression of his life is no longer suspended in a state of visionary reminiscence--he feels an upsurge of tenderness for his wife. In assertively accepting that with her death, he suffers the loss too of the assumptions on which he based his life, the husband confronts his own "going" with dignity. And it is precisely at this point that the process of the husband's mourning takes a

²¹ Dwayne Howell interprets this utterance as the widower's "weary . . . sigh of rational submission" to the factual reality of his wife's absence (11).

remarkable turn. Instead of affirming his own individual humanity in the midst of emptiness and absurdity, he performs a supreme act of lovingkindness. All protest and chiding interrogation have ceased; now he makes allowances in her behalf: "you *could* not know"--where the emphasis enacts a tender respect for his wife's individuality (see "Without Ceremony": "such swift fleeing" registering his partial acceptance of her "style" and "meaning" as valid) and, by extension, also implies a confession *in extremis* of his own blame for his inconsolability.

Emotional estrangement between himself and his wife, his consequent shock at the suddenness of her death, his denial of her importance to his life and identity--these are the chief factors that complicate the process of the husband's mourning in "The Going," a process that includes angry reproach, delusive yearning, passionate reminiscence, and remorseful tenderness. Three mental and emotional actions bring him consolation: he regards their entire marriage as one coherent and valuable moment contained within a limiting cosmic process of mutability and meaninglessness; he accords his dead wife the personal and human significance due to her not merely as a "long housemate" ("A Dream or No"), but more especially as a woman of great energy, beauty, and charm. He sympathetically recognises and tolerates her individual way of living in the world. However, this consolation is rendered incomplete by the husband's failing to accept the indelibility of marital scars and to achieve the element of solace he needs most: a sense of a personal future for himself.

This complicated and inconclusive process of mourning is reflected in the final imagery of dimensional space in "The Going." In the last two stanzas, joyful movement upward and outward (revisiting the Cornish cliffs) is counterbalanced by destructive movement downward and inward ("To sink down" in heart as well as body). On a subtler level, the penultimate stanza is a stanza of reconstitution: husband and wife merge in romantic togetherness, concentrated in the purpose of rediscovering the original freshness of their relationship. The next and final stanza, however, presents through its "broken," lurching syntax (Brooks, *Structure* 98; Sacks 243) the frustration of that purpose: the enchanting speculation disintegrates, subsides, and vanishes. Hardy inverts the defiant assertiveness so often found at the close of an elegy (see Hough 146). In other words, the poem's psychological structure, already symbolised in an alternating contrast between enclosed and extended spaces, is here embodied and reinforced in a polarity between ingathering and dispersal--like a circle that first contracts, then expands; or like the husband's focusing sharply on "the end of the alley of bending boughs," only to become aware of the focus slipping away into a "yawning blankness." Actually, the sequence of concentration and disintegration, contraction and expansion, is fundamental in the series of poems as a whole, structuring as it does the central experience: the underlying tension between the husband's repressing the knowledge of his wife's death and achieving consolation--a tension, in fact, left unresolved at the end of the series. Moreover, what we need to note here is that this compound image of double movement (closing in and then spreading out) is closely related to the imagery of covering, surrounding, and encasing (e.g., "Her Definition" *CPW* 1: 269), and through that cluster to the entire complex of house-images. The main difference between this hybrid, enclosing-expanding image and the house-imagery is the difference between dynamic and static space, between movement and position (or condition: see ch. 2, pt II; "Aberdeen" *CPW* 1: 357; and also the discussion of "The Well-Beloved" in pt I above). For it is precisely this difference that enables Hardy to dramatise the husband's achieving fuller consolation through a growing sense of a future in the face of cosmic decay and disintegration, as we shall see.

Meanwhile, the husband's sense of a reordering of his mental and emotional life evolves through the series of poems in a disordered way, with feverous variations in tension and metrical complexity, as the four seminal states of mourning re-establish themselves or recede, and contribute to or detract from his consolation. "Without Ceremony," for instance, combines mild reproach with tender respect. In "The Voice,"

the trochaic rhythm, onomatopoeia, biblical allusion (see Richards, "Notes" 4-6), and imagery of downward movement in the final stanza--

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

--intensify the husband's relentless, self-delusive yearning for what is rationally impossible, what Jean Brooks calls the "unalterable presentness of present reality" (*Structure* 84). Imagery of dimensional space in "At Castle Boterel" dramatises nostalgia and the impulse to reminisce as they confront the flux of vast, unconscious forces--"Time's unflinching rigour, / In mindless rote"--within which lies the smaller structures of human reality, conscious and value-directed: "It filled but a minute. But was there ever / A time of such quality." Memory of the lovers' joyful ascent up the steep road, "border[ed]" by objects of the remote past, is gradually marred by the steady rain in the present; the rich experience of mutual love dissipates into nescient despair at wasted human value:

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.

Even the seemingly meagre poem "A Circular" contributes to the widower's sifting and reorganising of his psychological condition; and the repeated misprinting of the poem's title as "*The Circular*" (e.g., *B* 629; Buckler, *Poetry* 300) is instructive here. The blatant ephemerality, opportunism, and commonness of the document the bereaved husband reads disgust him; the document casts him unavoidably into a social role which he cannot bring himself to name without a derisive tone that is proof against the cold impersonality of the law. Nothing could be further removed from Tennyson's spiritual rapture while reading the "noble letters" of his dead friend (*In Memoriam* st. 95.21ff.) than this:

As 'legal representative'
I read a massive not my own,
On new designs the senders give
For clothes, in tints as shown.

Although Peter Sacks does recognise something of the husband's "uneasy position" as "the unhappy mediator between the living and the dead," the irony that governs the poem--a fashion-brochure, advertising the latest clothes for women, has been sent to the widower's wife--seems more than "trivial," "covertly . . . fault-finding," or "wry" (Buckler, *Poetry* 223; Murfin 78; Sacks 251). All three critics miss what Hardy dramatises in this little poem, that is, what the circular itself represents: the wretched reality that confronts the grief-stricken husband, the specific weight and texture of which we feel when the poem comes to rest on that final word "shroud." Not only does this image of woven enclosure suggest hideous, unstylish folds; not only does it suggest the shrunkenness of old age; but the image indicates too, by contrast, how once all the newest garments might have been filled and animated, but now must remain useless, futile, and incongruous as far as the husband's life is concerned. An image of covering, moreover, "shroud" connotes all that is socially disruptive, designed specifically as it is for isolation, silence, and to conceal the ugliness of death:

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

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

The irrelevance of the garments advertised is what strikes the husband, belonging as they do to a shifting, self-deluding, fictive realm that is mocked by the permanent reality of his wife's absence and his own desolation. She (this "lady" presumably once "proud") is involved in neither the ethical world structured by social occasions (such as "tea") nor the cosmic world ordered by seasonal change (such as "spring"); the only circle to which she now belongs is the diurnal course she shares with the rocks and stones and trees. By contrast, the bereaved husband has to stand in for her in the social circle she has left, "the diurnal spin / Of vanities" ("Misconception" *CPW* 1: 283), and this practical surrogation, albeit temporary, merely reminds him of her absence and wastedness. In its bitter reductiveness, the concluding, satirising image of the shroud embodies and enacts the husband's nescient sense of his wife's profound loss to him in his own world, a sphere of personal experience from which time has simply "ebbed out," where nothing can be "Warranted up to date," where all is vacancy and stasis and silence.

But the spatial imagery in stanza 4 of "The Going" indicates that this psychological structure of the husband's mourning has also another distinct layer of feeling: heroic idealisation set in the remote past on the coastal cliffs of Cornwall, where he imagines his wife finding spiritual harmony with the elemental forces of sea and landscape. Into this memorialising space the husband collects valuable moments from their romantic courtship. For he is the one

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

("Places")

At this mythic level of consciousness, the husband acts like a visionary archaeologist gathering fossils of experience from a stratum of Arthurian legend embedded in the present, such as that of the love of Tristram and Iseult.²² It seems gratuitous and wrong-headed to pursue, as some critics do, a close, detailed parallelism between Hardy's elegy and the mythic and legendary analogues which underlie it (e.g., Miller, *Distance* 248; Paulin 49; Buckler, "Space" 99-100). Hardy uses heroic myth and legend much as Milton does in his sonnet on the death of his second wife ("Methought I saw my late espoused saint / Brought to me like Alcestis from the grave"); that is, for metaphoric effect--to suggest emotive connotations and symbolic values, not to fix reductive, cramping identifications and correspondences. Hardy draws on myth and legend to suggest the bereaved husband's perception of the vast scale of his loss, and also to give sufficient scope for his grief to evolve into consolation. All the data that a certain Cornish place embodies about the past the husband diverts to this visionary area of mediaeval romance. In "I Found Her Out There," Hardy employs contrasting spatial

²² Of his visit to Cornwall with the second Mrs Hardy, Hardy wrote: "We went to Cornwall--& saw the tablet [to the first Mrs Hardy's memory] at St. Juliot, Boscastle; & thence to Tintagel. Alas, I fear your hopes of a poem on Iseult--the English, or British, Helen--will be disappointed: I visited the place 44 years ago with an Iseult of my own, & of course *she was mixed in the vision of the other*" (20 Sept. 1916; *CL* 5: 178-79; emphasis mine; see *B* 508).

images to dramatise the intensity of the bereaved husband's yearning to regain something of the magical quality of his days of courtship:

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

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

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

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

Even a cursory reading of this poem will reveal a symbolic opposition between images of extended and enclosed space. The two elements of land and sea stand apart or merge, as the husband's quest for consolation through reminiscence progresses. Images of extended space associate his wife with the violent energies of land and sea, and identify her spiritual affinities with legendary places. Images of enclosed space, on the other hand, present a condition of deprivation, confinement, and debasement. The conflict is resolved in the final stanza by the hyperbolic fusion of images in a magical subterranean escape from the imprisoning grave, in what Donald Davie claims is "the first movement towards recovery" ("Purples" 148):

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

The westward movement of his wife's "shade" enacts the husband's mental and emotional state of intense reminiscence, a consoling knowledge of her youthful vitality. By recreating her presence as a legendary personage, the husband is more easily able to accept the impersonalising effect of his wife's death; by creating for her a timeless zone of reminiscential homage in an heroic fiction, he enshrines her essential vitality and being in an eternal quasi-present like that in "the tale / Of sunk Lyonesse."

However, the consolation he gains here is too pat, too simple, and ultimately self-defeating. By diverting his memories and associations to a sealed, inactive system of absolute knowledge, he prevents himself from drawing on them to reorganise his emotional being. The unreality (and hence implicit sadness) of this fictional world--eternally present, static, impersonal, absolute--dominates, inhibits, and puts in jeopardy the process of the husband's mourning. For instance, "The Phantom Horsewoman," which originally concluded the series of poems, characterises the husband as an old man, exhausted by unresolved grief that drives him to search for solace in visions of the past:

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

Yet, although the bereaved husband accords significance and transcendence to the woman he once loved, the visions throng his mind, leaving his thoughts no room for growth and the continuance of his own life:

III

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

IV

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

Only once he has mentally consigned this visionary realm to a separate level of being will he be free to create for himself a sense of a future, based on reality, not romance. That is, he has to acknowledge that he inhabits a world of transience, decay, and disintegration; and also he has to accept his physical rootedness in and psychological responsibility to a human relationship of forty years' duration. Only then will he be able to use

still enjoys the knowledge of her company. That is, he affirms the value in his life of the associations conjured up by certain places they visited during their courtship. But she is now just a ghost in the real present, not a romantic queen in the remote past; her non-human impersonality is no longer a psychological obstacle in her bereaved husband's mourning. Moreover, in a fundamental paradox of the poem, the irregular spatial movement and the unexpected outbursts of the sea (a destructive force) symbolise a coherence of being, not disintegration. The focus of his own inward attention determines his progress. At first he is bewildered by the ghost's whimsical leading; but soon he sees that the guessed-at path actually draws him into an experience of sensuous delight. In other words, the husband's perplexity, powerlessness to resist--the pun in "no knowing" is typically Hardy--and uncertainty are only apparent. What his wife's spectral ubiquity--what the dimensional imagery--represents is not an obsession on the husband's part, but rather his heuristic openness to the future and a joyous conviction that he is doing the right thing in questing for intimations of that future that are hidden within the shared experience of forty years of marriage:

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

When he turns his attention to his wife's favourite Cornish sites, reflecting on "the dead scenes," places she frequented long ago, he is actually reaching out from the past to the future; he is not attempting to evade or postpone the future. He comes to understand himself by being drawn towards a deeper knowledge of the setting, charged as it is with the ghostly component of what is already known, with associations rich in seeds of future insights. The word "tracked" registers a continuous movement from uncertainty to certainty; and the periodic sentence, which this spatial image eventually completes, suggests a mood of patient determination to endure whatever pain such a discovery might cost. His sense of achieved awareness ("Hereto I come," "Yes . . . at last") is created by the outcome of his faithfulness to his memories. For him as a living person, the future is essential to the substance of his past as well as present: "What have you *now* found"--that is, from the position in which each has reached a final knowledge of their relationship--"to say of our past." Without this realised future, his past as well as present would cease to mean anything. Their past, in fact, as they lived and knew it, was not a mere sequence of instants moving forward in a straight line; their past was a living process evolving, through an amorphous reality, into a pattern of relationship: "Summer gave us sweets, but autumn wrought division? . . . all's closed now," the latter image of wholeness and reintegration spondaically asserting human value and coherence in the face of disillusioning transience and grim severance. This kind of relative knowledge comprises a boundless multiplicity of forces and passions, of ways in which the future pulls the husband towards it. Within the initial perplexity of the opening stanza the destination is already being structured; what radiates out in front of the husband is an unlimited number and variety of impressions and clues (in Latin, *vestigia*) that all eventually lead him to a definite rendezvous and a satisfactory discovery.

In a moment of vision, the husband sees that the way in which the future draws him towards it is in a "'looped orbit,' sometimes apparently backwards, but really always forwards" (*LN* 1: 78), a curve of time that circles away from its goal back to the very steps that started it:

I see what you are doing: you are leading me on
 To the spots we knew when we haunted here together,
 The waterfall, above which the mist-bow shone

At the then fair hour in the then fair weather,
 And the cave just under, with a voice still so hollow
 That it seems to call out to me from forty years ago,
 When you were all aglow,
 And not the thin ghost that I now frailly follow!

What the bereaved husband has come to realise is that his knowledge of his dead wife ("Dear") is not only crucial in his life, but also is part of, and constituted by, the future, not fixed and absolute in the past. Neither the mere passing of time nor the physical and mental pains of everyday living can deprive him of realising a meaningful future:

Soon you will have, Dear, to vanish from me,
 For the stars close their shutters and the dawn whitens hazily.
 Trust me, I mind not, though Life lours,
 The bringing me here; nay, bring me here again!
 I am just the same as when
 Our days were a joy, and our paths through flowers.

He has accepted the persistence of the old affection, and also that only within the terms of his personal and marital identity can he create, out of the experience of the future, a new significance for the past. That is, he fully acknowledges his responsibility for discerning the potent associations of familiar places, for discovering significant patterns of relationship over the forty years of marriage, and for exploring the reality of this new, emergent level of his being. The bereaved husband has moved beyond his stunned gaze at "the Worst" and found a "way to the Better": responding consciously to the call of his own potential and significance.

2. Vestiges of an Epic Tragedy

Poems of 1912-13 is a record of the states and movements of a bereaved husband's mind as it comes to know the value and meaning of his marriage to his life and identity. But only through the final acceptance of the fact of mortality, mutability, and meaninglessness can he achieve the consoling understanding of the place his wife holds in his personal future. If the husband's final stance towards the reality of his wife-being-dead is an openness to the future in the face of destructive, supernatural forces, then Hardy's achievement is in finding an aesthetic mode equal to presenting his poetic vision of that stance and that reality. For Hardy employs the mixed genre of epic tragedy to dramatise this final mental action in the bereaved husband's mourning, discovering a fulfilling but vulnerable future for himself. That Hardy sees the husband's failure to gain complete consolation as an essentially tragic experience is seminally suggested by the titular epigraph, "*Veteris vestigia flammae*," excerpted from *The Aeneid*.²⁴ As Peter Sacks correctly observes, "The consoling potential of allusion as an elegiac device is thus partially undercut by the ironic aspect of its usage here" (236). The tragic allusion works at several levels simultaneously, all of which are, of course, unknown to the bereaved husband; from his point of view, the Latin epigraph is not meant to be read immediately as a signal of an ensuing epic tragedy. But the aesthetic structure to which the allusion attaches itself is the pattern of spatial images that enacts the husband's responsiveness to, and gradual insight into, the reality of his own future self. The tragic allusion is not the protagonist's choice, but the poet's.

The effect of the Virgilian epigraph is both specific and universal. On a personal level, the allusion evokes the mind of Queen Dido of Carthage when she confesses that her feeling for Aeneas shows all "the signs of the old flame," meaning love of the serious, deeply passionate kind she felt for her late husband,

²⁴ Regarding Virgil "affectionately," as having one of the finest minds of the ancient world (15 Nov. 1917; *CL* 5: 232-33), Hardy "never wearied" of *The Aeneid*, having received a copy of Dryden's translation from his mother when he was only eight (*L&W* 61, 21).

Sychæus (96). At a human level, the allusion categorises Hardy's elegies themselves as instances of the passionate love for which men and women have a capacity. Then, as an inherent part of reading the poems, the foreign sound of the Latin has the power of representing an ancient world of heroic experience. Finally, on the level of mere historical event, the allusion implies that these few poems are all of his deepest self that a man can hope will survive the negating alignment of indifferent, irrational forces in the universe--mere fragments shored against his ruins. In creating effects like these, Hardy suggests that he has seen "in particular human experience some significant symbolism of man's general destiny," which is the "determining" factor of epic (Garrison 129).

Other traces of an embedded epic tragedy surface in the course of the series. That is, *Poems of 1912-13* reveals Hardy's tragic vision through juxtaposed events that occur within a progression which is not strictly sequential, but groping, complementary. To call this mode of representing the husband's final psychological action "dramatic" merely means that Hardy's technique of presentation is analogous to actual drama; he sets the characters or speakers--husband, wife (quoted), and phantom--against one another. In this series of poems, Hardy presents the conflict of the bereaved husband with his thoughts, memories, emotions, needs, desires, impulses, delusions--with all that is irrational and supernatural in the universe; and the dramatic structure Hardy creates reflects this conflict in terms of actions. This generic shift from elegy to epic tragedy occurs most ironically when "The Voice" is preceded by "The Haunter" and followed by "His Visitor," and the husband cannot hear what the phantom says to him. The phantom, in fact, stands in opposition to both husband and wife; and this conflict Hardy embodies by using settings themselves as dramatic characters (see above, ch. 2, pt II). In a metaphorical sense, then, the spatial images in *Poems of 1912-13* conflict and interact, for as reflections of the three main characters, the settings are part of the dramatic action.

In the bereaved husband's psychomachia, his struggle with his perceptions, memories, delusions, and impulses, the settings become symbolic extensions of the characters who inhabit those settings. The physical environment of the lovers is the setting in which they live and act; in turn, these settings are the objective poetic creations which reflect the emotional world of the lovers. As Donald Davie has observed, Hardy's technique is Dantesque, inasmuch as "'every natural site has the ethical rank of the rational beings who dwell in it. . . . the landscape is nothing other than the appropriate scene or metaphorical symbol of human destiny'" ("Purples" 147, quoting Erich Auerbach); or in Davie's own words, "each locality . . . is presented as the location, the haunt and habitat, of some one particular moral proclivity or principle" (147). Consequently, the settings become characters themselves in that psychological drama. This equation of setting and emotional significance is obvious in the identification of the volatile woman with Beeny Cliff. Critics have never failed to comment on the rightness of the wild sea-coast for her natural environment (*H&C* 303); as we shall see, the house and the revisited places have a similar symbolic function.

The first half of *Poems of 1912-13*--i.e., up to and including "A Circular"--contains two settings which oppose each other directly: one, the quiet house (indoors); and the other, the wild headland (outdoors). In the visual description of the two settings certain elements of contrast are stressed. Superficially, when the husband first mentions the house, in "The Going," the building is the symbol of all that is fixed, inflexible, and unalterable, and of the peace of mind the husband has before his wife's death. While he sees "morning harden upon the wall," he feels strong in his unsuspecting knowledge of her present condition. As far as he is concerned, the building offers its occupants security and shelter. In "The Spell of the Rose," their house becomes a "manor-hall"; and surrounding the "hall" itself, decorated as it is, are all the accessories of a civilised life and dignified social status:

How she would have loved
 A party to-day!--
 Bright-hatted and gloved,
 With table and tray
 And chairs on the lawn.
 ("Lament")

"The Spell of the Rose," in which the phantom reports her husband's plans for building their house, emphasises culture and romance. The husband presents the house almost like a mediaeval knight as he promises to bring into being a splendid dwelling. The sense of allegorical fantasy, as in a lover's boast, is strong in the images which suggest the husband's chivalric dream of the house:

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

By suggesting a courtly vision of the house, Hardy raises to the ultimate the symbolic force which the house is meant to carry as a revelation and embodiment of civilised human love. In its full range, the house stands at the zenith of the social order defining and controlling the courtly ideal. However, "Come live with me and be my love"--the allusion in this opening stanza is too strong to be insignificant, and it exposes a point of anxiety in the marriage: the husband's failure to fulfil his promise to "Plant roses." Soon after the conception and building of the house, there occurs the planting of the rose-bush "at dead of night"--an act of lonely, earnest passion on the part of the wife. On the one hand, then, the house must be seen as at least reflecting something of the husband's promise of union and affection; on the other, the rose-bush is intended to be the "queen of trees" on the estate, a figure of the wife's passion that "May end divisions dire and wry, / And long-drawn days of blight." And as the house is identified, even indirectly, with the sensibility of the husband as its builder,²⁵ the pattern is clear: the rose-bush is meant to dispel his misconceptions, to bring him an awareness of his wife's deep love. The rose will have its own "glow" to correct his distorted vision of her. The husband's failure to "Plant roses" is symptomatic of the "mis-vision" from which he suffers--he cannot "see" his wife, cannot respond to her as she deserves and needs to be responded to, cannot perceive her passion for him.

The outdoors, here the "spell" of the rose-bush, stands dramatically opposite as the symbolic inversion of the house. The true significance of the outdoors lies in the discovery of its structural function in regard to the other settings of the series as a whole. Whatever the outdoors symbolises, the reader assumes it is an extension of the characters whose lives it influences. If the outdoors is ominous, that is because the flowers that inhabit it are ominous--like the "heart-bane" that puts asunder the souls of man and wife. But, to pinpoint the nature and extent of the malignancy of the "other flowers" is as complicated a task as unravelling the meaning of the outdoors itself. The dangers of logical circularity lurk everywhere. One starts with the proposition that the outdoors represents the evil of emotional chaos as opposed to the good of rational and social order, and then instantly concludes that the wife's passion must be sinister and destructively selfish--her "style" of doing things, one recalls, is "swift" ("Without Ceremony"), and gives "no hint" of her intentions ("The Going")--while the husband's mood must be tender, sociable, and controlled. Only one element remains

²⁵ See above, ch. 3, pt V, as well as pt I, sec. 2 of the present chapter.

as a kind of reductive substratum: that the house represents something of emotional and moral stability and urbanity, the outdoors something of precariousness and menace.²⁶

To look for the ethical extension of character in the house requires one to consider the identity of the bereaved husband. The husband--the protagonist who designs and erects a shelter for his wife from the ravages of the outdoors--does indeed come very close to assuming the role of gentleman and protector. The house, however, does not reflect the husband's character in exactly the same way that the outdoors reflects the wife's. First, the finished house is, already from the outset, an imperfect ideal; the protection it offers is limited. As an enclosed space belonging to the "building"-network, the image of the house has a high capacity for connotations of emotional insecurity and alienation. Walls, no matter how hard, cannot insulate one from emotional vicissitude: the grandeur of the house diminishes through lack of communication and love, and the inhabitants of the house are, in their own ways, responsible for that deficiency. They have allowed their separateness to harden. The bereaved husband was once the romantic lover, and, as the initiator, still carries with him the power to restore the original promise of that place. But a different perspective operates here, because the devotion and passion of the young husband is suggested, not by the present setting, but by the grandeur that his house *might* have had. To set up a dichotomy between the house and the outdoors on the simplistic equation of order and chaos is to assume that the house, as symbol of right, inevitably reflects the quality of respectable, decorous, Victorian-Edwardian society. The struggle, tacit as well as explicit, between isolative husband and gregarious wife is certainly that eternal conflict between order and chaos mirrored in the opposition between the house and the outdoors. But to deny the imperfectness of the equation would be critically irresponsible. The outdoors may be malignant, but the house, whatever it might have been, is not now totally wholesome.

From one point of view, the house and the outdoors contrast order and chaos; from another, they are identified by a common bond. And this common bond not only explains the way in which the house, though opposed to the outdoors, is not all good and grand; it also defines the criteria by which one can judge the qualities of order and chaos reflected in these two settings. Indeed, this bond and its extensions clarify the nature of the emotional disruption in the entire series, including the setting of the husband's experience of the phantom. For in contemplating his wife's grave, the husband associates it with a house which is silent, uncomfortable, and restrictive: he calls it "a noiseless nest," "her loamy cell" ("I Found Her Out There"), and "the jailing shell / Of her tiny cell" ("Lament"). Analogous to the merging of enclosed and extended spaces we saw earlier in stanza 4 of "The Going," the outdoors may not be quite so unlike the house as at first appears. While the disturbing, unpleasant associations of the outdoors are important, equally significant are the descriptions that sketch the outdoors as an enclosure similar to the house, and the parallel may be taken even further into the past experiences which occur indoors and outdoors. For instance, in his references to the early, "fair" days of their marriage ("The Voice"), the husband suggests the limited reality of the urban setting, in which his wife, "in her flower," feels "confined" ("A Death-Day Recalled"). Conversely, in references to the latter part of their marriage, this same sense of physical restriction, of loneliness and frustration appears, not in the town, but in the house:

And when you'd a mind to career
Off anywhere--say to town--
You were all on a sudden gone

²⁶ Donald Davie equates the indoors with treason, coldness, and indifference, and the Cornish outdoors with loyalty, warmth, and love ("Purples" 147-51).

Before I had thought thereon,
 Or noticed your trunks were down.
 ("Without Ceremony")

Town, house, and grave are all inevitably imprisoning to a volatile and exuberant person "who *abode* / By those red-veined rocks far West" ("The Going"; emphasis mine) and had her fullest being there.

Then in the complex universe of *Poems of 1912-13*, the physicality of the natural world which is known to exist serves as the norm for expressing and measuring what goes beyond that real, material world. Such a conclusion is certainly to be drawn from the sudden association in spatial images of the house and the grave. Both share a sense of common, definable, and limited reality that permits not merely the acceptance, but also the understanding, of the "supernatural." By emphasizing the particularity of the physical world--those things which actually do exist in space and time--one can then perceive the existence of those characters who, although they have an earthly abode, cannot be wholly contained within man's temporal and spatial conceptions or society's moral-emotional categories.

The stress on physical limitation in the universe, the containment of experiences within tightly bound, carefully-constructed enclosures, continues in an extended pattern that prescribes the limits, both physical and metaphysical, of the settings in the poem and of the characters associated with those settings. Such indeed is the case with the notations of time and space in the early years of the marriage. As "wild weird" as the coastal setting may be ("Beeny Cliff"), its distance and direction from town, house, and grave are fixed: it is "far West" ("The Going," "I Found Her Out There," "Where the Picnic Was"). The origin of the woman who is a child of the sea-cliffs is as unknown as her home:

Nobody says: Ah, that is the place
 Where chanced, in the hollow of years ago,
 What none of the Three Towns cared to know--
 The birth of a little girl of grace--
 . . .
 Nobody calls to mind that here
 Upon Boterel Hill, where the waggoners skid,
 With cheeks whose airy flush outbid
 Fresh fruit in bloom, and free of fear,
 She cantered down, as if she must fall
 (Though she never did),
 To the charm of all.
 ("Places")

Nevertheless, the husband has associated her with the coast, "Where she once domiciled" ("I Found Her Out There"), for a knowable length of time:

And the cave just under, with a voice still so hollow
 That it seems to call out to me from forty years ago,
 When you were all aglow.
 ("After a Journey")

This period of forty years includes the "twenty years and more" they lived together in the house ("His Visitor"), while, in contrast, time does not touch the "ghost-girl-rider" ("The Phantom Horsewoman").

If the pattern of physical limitation may be said to begin in the settings, it nevertheless encompasses the imagery and action of the rest of the series. After his wife's death, the husband comes into the possession of knowledge neither of them can have before that event: "And on your left you passed the spot / Where eight days later you were to lie" ("Your Last Drive"). This is not an isolated example of the knowledge-motif; the

husband remembers confidently "that clear-sunned March day" on Beeny Cliff. His private memories of her also compensate for her absence:

Nay: one there is to whom these things,
That nobody else's mind calls back,
Have a savour that scenes in being lack,
And a presence more than the actual brings.
("Places")

The number of days and the name of the month may well be conventional--"eight" suggests a regrettably short space of time, while "March" suggests spring weather for young lovers--but their specificity is not to be dismissed. The husband's knowledge of his wife is the outcome of a limited relationship in restricted settings, however near their early years together approach the limitlessness of heroic-romantic proportions.

What begins to emerge from this similarity in detail between indoors and outdoors is the suggestion of the way in which the volatile, wild nature of the wife may itself be judged and measured. The suggestion is already strong that the wildness and weirdness of the wife is that of the physical world of knowable reality. Her true "home" is a definite distance and direction from the house she inhabits, and she is subject, presumably so it would seem, to the same demands of time as the other "lad[ies] proud" of fashionable society ("A Circular").

The pattern of physical limitation would seem to be a thoroughgoing figure in the thematic development of the series of poems. To be valid, however, this pattern should suggest an interpretation of the phantom in relation to the wife and the limited world of terrestrial reality which wife and husband both occupy. In fact, the pattern does remain intact in the poems in which the phantom addresses the reader, but the pattern becomes dramatically reversed. In contrast to the young/mature wife and young/mature husband, the phantom is able to travel unseen anywhere and anytime, and this freedom of movement indicates that the world the husband enters after his wife's death--the world of the phantom--belongs to an order entirely different from that of the house. A hint of universality hovers over the phantom and its world simply because it does not seem to exist within the limits of human space and time. In "His Visitor," the phantom's spectral omnipresence emphasises the temporal structures and physical limitations that rule the world of the living:

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

As with the wife, when young or mature, the phantom takes its meaning from its surroundings. But the environment of the phantom, the outdoors where the husband strives to encounter it, has none of the concrete detail, the concern for physical limitation, that characterise the settings in the other poems in the series. The phantom's environment is open, unimpeded, unenclosed, ranging from Mellstock to the Atlantic coast; it is a milieu that includes "places / Only dreamers know" ("The Haunter") as well as "the *roomy* silence" of the grave, the company of living flesh as well as the company of "the mute and manifold / Souls of old" ("His Visitor").

Whereas limit and restriction are stressed for the young wife, immeasurability and open-endedness are the key images for the phantom: the entire universe becomes unfathomable, impervious to the bereaved husband's attempts to comprehend it. As Hillis Miller observes, "for Hardy ghosts are out of time altogether" ("History" 231). Perceptivity about space and time, the property of the physical and human world, diminishes as a landscape with metaphysical overtones comes into being, a landscape in which a more terrible and dark

experience occurs. Images of oblivion and eternity tumble together with far too much frequency to be ignored. For the husband, the dead are "Wholly possessed / By an infinite rest!" ("Lament"), "banished / Ever into nought!" ("St. Launce's Revisited"). Although the phantom does not live within the confines of human time, on one level it seemingly has enough physical reality to enter into the orbit of such time. For the husband, the "ghost's" (i.e., the phantom's) domain is "round about [him] everywhere" ("After a Journey"), and he cannot be sure of finding the phantom in any one place as he could be sure of finding his young wife on the Western coast; he must speak to her in order to "view" her. Only after he has succeeded in "seeing" the phantom's purpose can the husband accept its toing-and-froing as part of his own future.

The immense force of the phantom causes the husband to focus on his own relative physical frailty. When he says, "Trust me, I mind not, though Life lours, / The bringing me here," he is giving no empty assurance; he feels that he is staking on the new relationship all that he is. For in this moment of his life, as the natural and supernatural forces of his world converge, his future is close to being inaugurated--"nay, bring me here again!" He accepts that the fabric of his world must first disintegrate in order to admit forces which defy accurate description except in images of unlimited space and eternity. The husband's world is transformed by the awesome sound of "unseen" waters into another world which begins to lose physical limits. Romantic husband and immortal phantom now inhabit a universe almost beyond physical limitation.

With the understanding achieved between husband and phantom comes a sudden return to number: "I see what you are doing . . . the cave just under, with a voice still so hollow / That it seems to call out to me from forty years ago." The effect in context is startling. Now that the phantom has been "found," the reintroduction of precise physical dimensions brings a deeper awareness of the limitless world defined by the phantom's setting. We comprehend what the husband means by "dead scenes" and "dark space": in the moment of his comprehending the phantom, the husband's world is juxtaposed with a world both indefinable and dimensionless. The image of "stars" that have "shutters" to "close" accentuates the disproportion between the two worlds.

The knowledge-motif follows exactly the same path of reversal. The husband's gain "after" his "journey" in pursuit of the phantom is the heightened awareness of the phantom. But, here again, nothing is numbered or specified. After the open-endedness of "Where you will next be there's no knowing," we get only the ironic allusion to "what there is flitting here to see." So that, in this context, the single "minute" during which the husband "sees" the phantom on the slope at Castle Boterel represents metaphorically the vastness of his consciousness and the continuousness of the phantom's calling. That one momentous instant of awareness is for the husband the equivalent of infinite knowledge.

It is entirely fitting in this scheme of things that the husband should receive special, open-ended knowledge for his part in a relationship that approaches the limitlessness of the supernatural. But the irony that the knowledge is imaginary ("of his own figuring"), or even worse, insane ("The Phantom Horsewoman"), parallels the irony that in his discovery of the phantom's world he makes himself desolate. That is, as a further ironic contrast to the husband's sense of an unbounded future, he is once again limited to perceiving the full significance of an event only after it has happened:

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.

("At Castle Boterel")

The husband's dual, natural-supernatural perception is, then, catastrophic for his personal identity, and the pattern of physical limitation underscores this consequence. Although the pursuit of the phantom is enveloped by a world that is romantic and poetic, it is also a world that is measured and known by the instruments of number and limit, by constructs which the human mind erects in order both to organise space and time and also to understand the emotional implications of beings and actions within space and time. By contrast, the phantom inhabits another world that does not, and cannot, share this dependence on the limits of human perception. Unlike the husband, the phantom knows no mental and emotional tension.

The precise nature of the psychological state which wife and phantom represent still remains to be defined. They share some aspect of chaos against some aspect of order. The disparity between wife and phantom creates a tension that shows itself in the difficulty one has in differentiating the wife from the more cosmic phantom. The theme of dimensionality and physical limitation provides a basis for making that distinction. One cannot deny that, as a threat to emotional stability and social decorum, the wife, being of romantic origin and affined to the elements, partakes of certain "wild weird," i.e., supernatural, qualities. But she exists in a demonstrably physical and limited world. However disquieting the confusion that surrounds any manifestation of chaos such as the Western coast may be, the embodiment of the chaos is still subject to the forces of time and space, with those consequences that temporal and spatial considerations imply--namely, dimensionality and limitation. That is the undoubted lesson to be derived from the metaphorical identification of the house and the coast.

Even if one could establish a truly archetypal identity for the wife, it would be impossible to make the same identification for the phantom. That which separates wife from phantom is the difference in imaginative time between the "twenty years and more" ("His Visitor") of the wife's marriage and the timelessness of the phantom's hold on the husband, as well as the difference between the confined space of the grave and the vastness of the phantom's environment. A gathering of all the evidence--the wife's social habits (she is after all a good hostess), her childlike femininity, and the important linking of the coast with the house--supports the conclusion that she represents only that part of the cosmic process potentially present in all members of society. That this disordering force is so disturbing that it assumes supernatural qualities is not surprising; but one must remember that the wife can be passionate about such fragile things as teacups, saucers, and flowers, ("Lament" and "His Visitor") and that she is afraid of rain ("Rain on a Grave"). The wife feels, reacts, and suffers in an unmistakably social way, and her doom can be sealed by another socially-minded person, albeit her husband, who needs only to provide a dwelling for her and trust in reason and his own identity.

In contrast, the universe of the phantom is not the universe of the wife, as Hardy makes clear. The phantom's world of nearly immeasurable "reality" is unlike and opposed to anything within the comprehension of human society. The force of disorder inherent in the phantom is one that, by its very nature, would be infinitely lessened if it possessed anything so social as specific emotional reactions. For the phantom is an elemental force for chaos unleashed in the universe, totally beyond and separate from the merely petty disorders of passion symbolised in the wife. Of course, the phantom's power is not really without limit; the husband is able to follow it and find it. What the existence of the phantom implies is the presence of an eternal force for chaos and destruction that manifests itself within time. In confronting this symbol of eternal and unknowable "evil," even the rational, staid, conventional, and absolute forces of society are doomed. The specific manifestation may likewise expire, but the evil spreads, and in *Poems of 1912-13* it is the annihilation of an intimate community, "we four" ("Where the Picnic Was") that marks the end of this phantom's terrestrial sway. In one sense, the phantom is a personification of guilt, selfishness, and resentment (the evil side of marital life), the force for personal and social negation at once present as fact in the world and eternally present in the universe. And once the human imagination has created a symbol containing a

force of negation as immeasurable and powerful as this phantom, one understands why the human psyche, in confronting it, may abandon itself to the lure of self-destructive pessimism.

On this reading of *Poems of 1912-13*--taking into account, that is, its elements of epic tragedy--the bleakness of the outlook at the end of the series seems worlds removed from the elegiac affirmation of the process of mourning, for only the vision of the negation of all life within time remains:

--But two have wandered far
From this grassy rise
Into urban roar
Where no picnics are,
And one--has shut her eyes
For evermore.

However, in "Where the Picnic Was," Hardy dramatises the "overlapping" (Fowler, *Kinds* 55) of the two genres by means of a culminating spatial image that links the different levels of experience in the series. The complex symbol of a burnt circle atop a sea-facing hill far from the city draws together three major groups of connotations attaching to Hardy's spatial imagery:

Now a cold wind blows,
And the grass is gray,
But the spot still shows
As a burnt circle--aye,
And stick-ends, charred,
Still strew the sward
Whereon I stand,
Last relic of the band
Who came that day!

First, the rural/urban polarity contributes the idea of the loss of friends in the amorphous impersonality and cold isolation of industrial society. The "roar" of the city is quite alien to the sweet song of Wessex birds; alien, too, to the thrilling noise of the Western sea, whose intense energy provides the husband with a sense of belonging to a place sanctified by mutual love and courtship. By contrast, in the city, human relationships have "no roots in neighbourhood, in vocation, in creed, or for that matter in race" (Houghton 79). And for Hardy, where there is no sense of physical rootedness and cultural responsibility, no shared familial or communal reality--no sense of home in the world--there can be no growth into personhood. The city is not a setting that makes for human conviviality, for "picnics." Far from urban stultification, therefore, the husband stands in a place of spontaneous personal growth, "Mellowed by sundry days of sadness" (see "A Private Man on Public Men" *CPW* 3: 271).

The second group of connotations that converge on "the hill to the sea" has a similar affirmative effect, deriving as it does from images of dimensional space. Vertical ascendancy and elevated position both connote emotional order and an enlarged awareness of personal identity (of the kind we find in, say, "Wessex Heights"). At the same time, however, the polarity between ingathering and dispersal, concentration and disintegration, that we see in "The Going" (in stanzaic composition and the metaphoric use of "unrolled") works here against affirmation, embodying the tension in the mourning husband between consolation and desolation, between gaining a new level of personal being and losing for ever a focused sense of a future.

Finally, the image of the burnt circle carries a still more paradoxical charge of meaning. On the one hand, the circle is a figure of waste; it contains nothing, and its rim consists of useless, charred grass. On the other hand, the circle has a distinct shape that suggests fulness, not emptiness. Putting it another way, Peter Sacks claims that "the circle is a figure for the past and perhaps for the elegies themselves" (259). For in

creating the image of a burnt circle that marks the locale of human communion, Hardy was surely mindful of the unmistakable echo of the epigraph he chose to head the series of poems. "*Veteris vestigia flammae*" means "The signs of the old flame," and these emotional ashes of Queen Dido's first serious love suggest the cinders of her own burnt out life. But more than this, Hardy's diction in the final poem actually provides us with a gloss on the epigraph that suggests a further layer of significance. When the bereaved husband, who stands as the sole survivor of the picnicking party, calls himself the "Last relic of the band," we realise that the metaphor equates him with the charred stick-ends of the burnt circle, for they too are "relic[s]" of "the fire" they made "that day" a year before; so, too, are the twenty-one poems the merest vestiges or relics, the lamentably trivial remains of a long marriage; indeed, to phrase it in keeping with Hardy's own fascination with geology--one thinks of *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, an early novel whose fictional world re-surfaces in stanza 4 of "The Going" and stanza 5 of "At Castle Boterel"--the series of poems forms a regrettably incomplete fossil-record of a personally momentous human relationship (but see Ingham, "*Wonders*" 62). As Hardy himself once remarked of his experience of occasionally browsing in books of 17th-century English miniature-painters, "sad . . . as one looks at the various representations of human beauty and thinks how evanescent it all is, and how much more than has here left a record behind has passed utterly away without a trace remaining" (25 Oct. 1917; *CL* 5: 231). Similarly, the cold evidence of the burnt circle implies both an absence and an abundance of life--courageous, nescient despair at what has gone: "I slowly climb / Through winter mire, / And scan and trace / The forsaken place" (we hear this tone too in "In Tenebris III"); and keen, humanist delight in what there is: "But the spot still shows . . . Yes, I am here" (we hear this tone in "Great Things" and "Transformations").

But this paradoxical attitude to the obliteration of personal experience is, in Hardy's fragmentary epic tragedy, a more fundamental tension that occurs when anyone must ultimately face the phantom of negation and be defeated within the world of time. Thus the critical controversy over whether the husband's tone at the end of the series is one of gain or loss, redemption or resignation, seems merely academic (see Miller, *Distance* 251; Brooks, *Structure* 102; Mahar 309; Buckler, *Poetry* 225; Sacks 258). The husband's final vision contains only the bare fact of unresolved psychological tension between the life-affirming self of a solitary man and the indifferent, cosmic process that exists to efface or eradicate him and his values from a world that is pervaded by the irrational forces of universal decay and disintegration, a world in which his future is already inscribed--penned--in his past. A man's significance, the closing image of *Poems of 1912-13* implies, depends solely on the living shape he gives to his own history, public as well as personal; as T. S. Eliot puts it in *Four Quartets* (4.3.162-65),

History may be servitude,
History may be freedom. See, now they vanish,
The faces and places, with the self which, as it could, loved them,
To become renewed, transfigured, in another pattern.

Appendix A

HARDY'S DEPICTION OF FOURIER'S PASSIONAL TREE

Together with a laconically annotated list of painters (the so-called "Schools of Painting"-notebook, dated 12 May 1863), the Fourier-drawings (*LN* 1: 3-4) constitute the earliest extant notes of Hardy's (*PN* [105], xix), diagrams he made on the back of a page of notes round about the time he consciously dedicated himself to writing poetry (*B* 87-90).

Walter Wright and Lennart Björk describe front and back of the tipped-in sheet of notes (reproduced here together as one page) in detail and agree that it is important to an understanding of Hardy's interest in psychology (28-29; "Vision" 86-92 and *LN* 1: 239-40). However, they both fail to relate the heading on the page to the accompanying diagrams--"Diagrams shewing Human Passions, Mind, & Character - Designed by Tho[mas] Hardy. 1863"--and, in particular, Wright and Björk disagree over the relative significance of a small but (for them) salient annotation, "Intellect - the adviser of P[assions] & W[ill]." Wright says that although this note "fits none of [the diagrams]," Intellect "does presumably help to shape personality and action" (29). As far as Björk is concerned, the note is "directly pertinent" to the tree on the right of the page (240) and means that Intellect is "only the 'adviser'--not the ruler, that is, of Passions and Will" and has a "restraining effect" on them (89). My own view is that Hardy kept this sheet of notes and diagrams as a record of his search for an organic model of the relation between the psychological components of human nature, which Fourier describes in terms of a tree.

Let us assume that Hardy works from left to right on the page of diagrams. If so, then Hardy seems to follow a criticism of the tree analogy levelled by the editor of Fourier's *The Passions of the Human Soul*:

The passions of the soul, in fact, cannot be logically classed as *a ramified tree*, or as *the radii of a circle*, proceeding from a centre on a simple surface. They may, to some extent, be deemed analogous to the forms and the developments of vegetable life, and classed in such an order; but their real type in nature is that of *the human body, with its various developments and movements throughout life*.

(Doherty xl; emphases mine)

But if Doherty's suggestion inspires Hardy's corresponding life-graph--and the idea is in keeping with thoughts Hardy expresses elsewhere¹--the comment does not seem to satisfy Hardy. For he then goes ahead and draws beneath the graph a tree of human nature; in fact, Hardy attempts twice to depict the psychodynamics of human nature as a tree, with the passions at the centre, mediating between intellect and will. First, he makes "Passions" rise like a tree out of the ground of human nature (marked "Humanity") and attract to it on either flank tendrils ("Intellect" and "Will") that spring from the same soil and curl upwards about the central trunk. But without filling the solitary, projecting, circular offshoot, Hardy abandons this first tree and moves on to design a second tree in which he can incorporate all three psychological components in a single trunk. That is, he divides this second trunk in three, "Passions" once again dominant and central, flanked by "Intellect" and "Will." Half-way up this trunk cuts a straight, horizontal line representing the point at which all three faculties unite in an "Amalgam[ation]." Above the line of amalgamation sprout flowers of "Moral Harmony," below the line grow moral "monsters." But again, Hardy

¹ E.g., "Scenes in ordinary life. What are insipid at 20 become interesting at 30, and tragic at 40" (19 Apr. 1888; *L&W* 216). "I was a child till I was 16; a youth till I was 25; a young man till I was 40 or 50" (13 Nov. 1917; *L&W* 408). See also 26 June 1876, *L&W* 114; and 12 Sept. 1892, *CL* 1: 283.

is dissatisfied, for with a looping line he cancels the arrangement at the base of the second tree, to which he attaches, in the right-hand corner of the page, a revisionary cross-section of the bole. In this cylindrical bole, "Passions" again take up the most space, but Hardy depicts the occupation as a thick rind. Further in comes "Intellect," while the core is "Will." And it is to this concentric or radiating model that Hardy assigns the disputed annotation.

To sum up, Hardy sets out to depict the relation between Fourier's three psychological elements or faculties of human nature. Although unsatisfactory, Hardy's attempts are exploratory and provisional (which is, presumably, why he keeps them all together). Hardy's last attempt, it seems to me, is the drawing in the bottom right-hand corner of the page, where he reorganises the tree model so as to bring "Intellect" into the middle. He then translates this latest configuration to the superior level of a main heading, in order to register and spell out the central position of "Intellect"--"Human Passions, Mind, & Character."

Finally, the term "Character" is, of course, absent from the diagrams themselves. But on the front of the tipped-in sheet of notes is the verbless phrase "Character a conglomerate or pudding-stone," and the sketch alongside it resembles the flowers or offshoots of the second tree. Indeed, Björk calls these offshoots "conglomerates of circles" (240), although surprisingly, he makes no reference to character or Hardy's use of the word "conglomerate" on the front of the preserved page. But Hardy's graphic point is surely that the relation between the three psychological elements determines the conglomerate quality of the character, whether morally harmonious or monstrous; and in producing that quality, the mind ("Intellect") is the chief formative, moderating force.

Appendix B

THE COMPOSITION AND PUBLICATION OF "DOMICILIUM"

We do not know, of course, what stage of composition "Domicilium" had reached before Hardy prepared it for publication; the poem may well have been, in his eyes, unfinished. Although at first glance "Domicilium" seems merely a stylistically derivative, Wordsworthian imitation; and although we have every reason to believe the three dozen lines Hardy's first poem, indications of his highly practised poetic hand at work in the published version may well be real. At least one critic has felt that it "may not be an early poem, at least not entirely. In fact, it would be remarkable if Hardy had not altered it between 1857 and 1916" (Casagrande, "Record" 212). What is certainly not illusory is the brief provenient note Hardy added to the handwritten version of "Domicilium" he sent his friend, Clement Shorter, in 1916:

T. Hardy's earliest known production in verse
(originally written between 1857 and 1860)
(this being a copy some years later)

(CPW 3: 335)

Included by someone whose factual and epistolary prose is so economical, the adverb "originally" seems superfluous here--unless Hardy meant to indicate he had revised the poem that came into being between the stated years; or unless he meant his friend to know that the document he was sending was not the one "originally written" but a fresh "copy"--that is, an exact, unswerving duplicate--of it. But that, after sixty years, would surely have been obvious from things like the paper, the ink, and the handwriting. Indeed, when Shorter had the poem printed privately as a pamphlet, he omitted the demonstrative participle just quoted (Hynes, *CPW* 3: 335; *H&C* 637), the implication being that he took the poem he received to be a mature recension of a youthful exercise. I am inclined to take the published text of the poem as a reproduction, not necessarily with direct correspondences to what had been "originally written," but probably with adaptations occurring in the general process of revival and transcription. After all, as the two variorum editions of his short poems have recently made known, Hardy was an assiduous, some say "compulsive," reviser of his work (Hunter, rev. of Elliott 349). During the war years, he was an indefatigable literary practitioner, poetry being his chief interest (and spiritual comfort: see above, ch. 4n74).

In the same year that he sent the poem to Shorter, Hardy was seeing into print *Selected Poems*, and all through 1917, *Moments of Vision* (B 509, 512, 514); yet he excluded "Domicilium" from both volumes. Instead, he launched it as a footnote of stature in the opening chapter of a prose narrative of his life, to quicken this starched reference to the house he was born in:

Some Wordsworthian lines--the earliest discoverable of young Hardy's attempts in verse--give with obvious and naïve fidelity the appearance of the paternal homestead at a date nearly half a century before the birth of their writer, when his grandparents settled there, after his great-grandfather had built for their residence the first house in the valley.

(L&W 8)

Here the last pair of clauses, genealogical and sagalike, would seem to indicate that Hardy's main aim in using "Domicilium" was to document the historical record of his birthplace at the beginning of the nineteenth century; but also, taking into account the connotations of the scholarly classification ("Wordsworthian") with its evaluative definition ("obvious and naïve fidelity"), to evoke and celebrate a pastoral world in which the

genesis of the Hardy clan took place.² However, there may also be a subsidiary motive behind Hardy's so prominently labelling the juvenile lines "Wordsworthian." Peter Casagrande suggests it was "to divert hostile critics" ("Record" 224), or in Hardy's own words, "to win commendation--or at any rate toleration" (*L&W* 322).³ But chronic retrogression into apprenticeship seems hardly the stratagem of a poet who had already been publishing verse for two decades. Hardy's motive seems rather to be to insinuate his orthodox credentials as a talented young poet capable, at an early age, of imitating the supreme nineteenth-century poetic genius of Nature benign and holy. Hardy always insisted his verse was superior to his fiction--his "essential" writings, the "key" to his novels (*CL* 5: 94, 172)--and sometimes went to excessive lengths to have posterity, as well as London critics, regard him foremost a born poet (see *B* 509). Emphatically contextualising "Domicilium" as Wordsworthian, and strenuously exhibiting it as a footnote, would serve to further that cause.

At the same time, however, "Domicilium" is not purely imitative (after Wordsworth) in the sense Hardy understood the term--in "philosophy, manner, and theology" (*L&W* 322). True, there is simple expression in enjambed blank-verse; also descriptive realism, the imaginative attempt to see into the "heart of a thing" (*L&W* 151), no doubt Hardy's paraphrase of his mentor's "life of things" in "Tintern Abbey" (line 50), the poem (really lines, as the main title states) Hardy seems to allude to most explicitly--"Five years have passed" and "These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts" (lines 1 and 11)--and rely on for the temporal structure of "Domicilium." But this style is subverted not only by some exotic diction ("honeysucks," esculents, "efts"), but more importantly, by the self-conscious and confidentially sceptical licensing of the pathetic fallacy in Hardy's parenthetical "If we may fancy wish of trees and plants" (line 5)--an ambivalence towards Wordsworthian doctrine he once felt moved to record: "In spite of myself I cannot help noticing countenances & tempers in objects of scenery: e.g., trees, hills, houses" (*L&W* 302; emphasis mine). Hardy cannot bring himself to adopt Wordsworth's stance to the description of the physical world and to worship Nature wholeheartedly as "an assemblage of souls, masc[uline] & fem[inine], with feelings like those of men & women," as one biographer of Wordsworth prompted Hardy to note (*LN* 2: 222). Hence where Hardy's thorn is "stunted" (line 15), his eminent precursor's is--despite being "aged"--strong and "erect" enough to resist the "plain and manifest intent" of the "heavy tufts of moss, that strive / To drag it to the ground" ("The Thorn" lines 6, 19, and 245-46). These thorns are two quite divergent poetic images of human experience: Hardy's instils a feeling of grim futility in the face of fate's indifference to unachieved life; Wordsworth's effects a keen sense of the mysterious irrepressibility of life. In short, Hardy's characteristic method of renunciative recourse to Wordsworth, using him as an ironic foil to his own world-view⁴ strongly suggests that "Domicilium," far from being consciously-imitative neo-Wordsworthian, is deliberately-

² As Dennis Taylor reminds us, Hardy was, during the war years, susceptible to an impulse for pastoral (*Poetry* 146-47).

³ Towards the end of 1919, Hardy advised a young poet

to begin with *imitative* poetry, adopting the manner and views of any recent poet--say Wordsworth or Tennyson. You will thus attract the praises of the critical papers, and escape the satire and censure which they are sure to bestow on anything that strikes them as unfamiliar. Having won them by good imitations you can introduce your originalities by degrees. (*L&W* 430)

⁴ That Hardy's "habit of consulting his Wordsworth--if only to reject him--is manifest as well in the many allusions in the novels, as later in the poems" Peter Casagrande has amply shown ("Record" 223; see also 219-22, 228).

modified para-Wordsworthian; that is, instinct with the mature Hardy's usual ambivalence towards the plain words, portentous cadences, sinewy intellections, and moments of intense visionary joy Wordsworth is given to.

The history of poems like "The Darkling Thrush" (*CPW* 1: 187; see esp. lines 6 and 17), "In Time of 'The Breaking of Nations'" (*CPW* 2: 295; see 505), and "Christmas in the Elgin Room" (*CPW* 3: 272; see *CL* 7: 89) teaches us that Hardy was capable of making late alterations and postponing ultimate composition, and testifies also to the endurance and complexity of his poetic awareness. If the early date of the composition of "Domicilium" is apocryphal, if when Hardy originally wrote "In *years* bygone-- / Long gone" (lines 19-20; my italicisation of the ms. reading: *CPW* 3: 279), he meant many actual years, if in other words, he did in fact refashion or finish it in 1916, then that would only strengthen my assumption that the poem, its composition spanning three decades, is quintessentially Hardyan.

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