THE DECAY OF ROMANTICISM
IN THE POETRY OF
THOMAS HARDY

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
North Texas State University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

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Denton, Texas
December 1978

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate that the concept of a godless universe governed by a consciousless and conscienceless Immanent Will in Hardy's poetry is an ineluctable outcome, given the expanded scientific knowledge of the nineteenth century, of the pantheistic views of the English Romantic poets. The purpose is accomplished by tracing characteristically Romantic attitudes through the representative poetry of the early Victorian period and in Hardy's poetry.

The first chapter is a brief introduction. Chapter II surveys major Romantic themes, illustrating them in Wordsworth's poetry. Chapter III treats the decline of the Romantic vision in the poetry of Tennyson and Arnold. Hardy's views and the Victorian poets' influence are the subject of Chapter IV. Chapter V demonstrates Wordsworth's influence on Hardy in several areas.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Although Thomas Hardy is generally recognized as a late Victorian novelist and poet, scholars have noted that much of his poetry is more modern than Victorian. Harold Bloom in The Visionary Company seeks to connect Hardy with the main tradition in English poetry, the Protestant tradition, which Bloom says "begins with aspects of Spenser and Milton, passes through the Romantics and Victorians, and is clearly represented by Hardy and Lawrence in our century."¹ Another scholar, Joseph Warren Beach in The Concept of Nature in Nineteenth-Century English Poetry, briefly examines the possibility that Hardy's concept of nature is in some way related to that of the nineteenth-century English Romantic poets. Beach's brief treatment of Hardy is confined to citing examples from Hardy's novels.² A reading of Thomas Hardy's poetry clearly indicates the relationship of his philosophical outlook to that of later twentieth-century poets; yet his relationship to the optimistic nature poets of the Romantic period is not so apparent. The purpose of this study is to demonstrate that such a relationship does indeed exist and that it is more than a chance occurrence. My thesis is that the views of man, nature, and God presented in the poetry of Thomas Hardy are an inevitable consequence
of the radical concepts of man, nature, and God set forth in
the poetry of the great English Romantics of the nineteenth
century, given certain scientific and sociological developments
of the age.

The separation of the Romantic poets like William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge from Thomas Hardy is not only in years but it is also in contrasting views of man, nature, and God. Although an oversimplification, it is not inaccurate to say that for Thomas Hardy man is an insignificant creature in an indifferent universe governed by an unknowable power. This view appears in direct opposition to that of the Romantics, who see divinity in the individual as well as in nature. Nature in Romantic poetry invariably begins with a capital "N," for nature is God, a benevolent parent and teacher of man. For these poets evil exists in the world as a result of society and progress—man abandoning divine nature and failing to recognize the divinity within himself. Between these two apparently antithetical views fall the works of the Victorians Tennyson and Arnold. Tennyson, struggling to overcome doubt and maintain faith in God, and Arnold, struggling to live by the Christian ethic while rejecting the Christian faith, will provide a necessary link in this attempt to show the inevitable progression of thought from Romantic pantheism to the godless universe of Thomas Hardy.

Demonstration of the relationship between Thomas Hardy's thought and that of the Romantic poets necessitates a survey
of the views of the universe held by the Romantic poets. Because the notions about man, nature, and God which are considered characteristically Romantic, as well as the struggle to hold on to these notions, loom so large in the works of William Wordsworth, his poetry will be examined as representative of the period. Not only will his early pantheistic period, during which he celebrates the divine aspects of man and nature, be treated, but also his later period, when he can no longer remain faithful to his original vision of the universe, will be considered. The explanation underlying Wordsworth's loss of the "visionary gleam" is an important factor in establishing the link between Romanticism and Thomas Hardy.

After Wordsworth the works of Alfred, Lord Tennyson and Matthew Arnold will be considered as representative of the Victorian struggle to maintain order in a universe beginning to crumble under the scrutiny of science and the onslaught of rapidly advancing technology. Because external factors play a major role in the poetry of Tennyson and Arnold, some attention will be given to the major scientific, technological, and social developments of the nineteenth-century which influenced these poets and Hardy.

From the Victorian writers, the discussion will move to the poetic works of Thomas Hardy. Although to illustrate Hardy's view of the universe as portrayed in his poetry is to traverse territory already covered by many scholars, it will again be covered here with the intention of proving that this
view is the ineluctable outcome of those aspects of Romanticism treated in the poetry of William Wordsworth. The connection between Hardy's view of the universe and Wordsworth's will be established by examining three significant points. The first point is the parallel interests of both poets in rural life and nature. The similarity between Wordsworth's Active Principle and Hardy's Immanent Will is the second point to be considered. Finally, both poets' feelings about man's loss of harmony with nature will be compared. The influence of Wordsworth on Hardy in these three areas will illustrate that Hardy's view of nature is Wordsworth's pantheism run aground on the shoals of science. Wordsworth's view of God in nature leads unavoidably, in light of scientific knowledge, to Hardy's godless universe operated by an indifferent, immanent power. The God Wordsworth found in nature must turn to ashes for Thomas Hardy, ashes that are the necessary result of the fire lighted by Wordsworth and other Romantic poets in the nineteenth century.
NOTES


CHAPTER II

ROMANTICISM AND WORDSWORTH

Although scholars have recognized the English literary movement known as Romanticism, they have long debated what characteristics actually constitute Romantic poetry. For the purpose of this study, however, it is necessary to consider only those characteristics of Romanticism which are generally agreed upon, specifically the return to nature and the glorification of the individual. Each of these points will involve several aspects which overlap one another.

Any discussion of the Romantic poets' concern with external nature must necessarily involve primitivism and the depreciation of urban life. Also of importance is the elevation of commonplace incidents, existence, and men to a suitable subject matter for poetry. As everyday life and the common man became popular subjects for poetry, a new interest in humanitarianism was also evinced by many Romantic poets. These poets showed a sympathetic concern for all God's creatures—the poor, the oppressed, even the animals.

Perhaps the most significant characteristic of Romanticism, however, is the celebration of the individual. For when the Romantic poets began to recognize and glorify the individual for what was unique about him, they also displayed an optimism for his unlimited capacity for achievement and the infinite
possibilities of his mind. Somewhere in this new emphasis on external nature and the optimism for man's potential greatness, many Romantic poets began to see divinity in both nature and man which led them to a natural religion, very different from Christianity but, according to Harold Bloom, very much in the Protestant tradition of Spenser and Milton.¹

In the eighteenth century, the works of James Thomson, Thomas Gray, the Wartons, William Cowper, and other English poets demonstrated a new awareness of external nature. These poets were primarily concerned with the picturesque in nature, giving verse descriptions of the sights, sounds, and colors of the natural world. Some poets, Thomson for example, showed an interest in the powerful, awe-inspiring aspects of nature; others, like Gray, were much concerned with the humble life of English peasants. It is in this tradition that the poetry of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, and Keats has its foundation.

From this early eighteenth-century interest in external nature, William Wordsworth unquestionably developed and refined to the greatest extent the possibilities of man's relationship with nature; yet Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, and Keats all exhibited such unusual and diverse interpretations of the natural world that Romantic poetry has today almost become synonymous with nature poetry.

Although Romantic poetry concerns itself with natural beauty and phenomena, description alone is not the end for
which the Romantics are striving. They often begin with the depiction of a natural scene only to apply what they describe to a more abstract problem of human nature. Poems like "Tintern Abbey," "Frost at Midnight," "Ode to the West Wind," and "To Autumn" differ from early eighteenth-century nature poems in that from description they turn to contemplation of a human problem. The problem is usually that of the poet himself, and here surfaces another important aspect of Romanticism: the poet's frequent choice of himself as a poetic subject.

Another significant element of Romanticism is primitivism; primitivism is an aspect of the Romantic poets' enthusiasm for nature. Although the tradition of the "noble savage" does not dominate the greater works of the major Romantic poets, they undoubtedly believe that a life lived close to nature is better than one lived in cities amid society and its complications. This belief is exemplified in heroes like Wordsworth's Michael, a humble rustic who is "nature's venerable patriarch," and even, to some degree, in Byron's Don Juan, who is an innocent--mobile and free of society's strictures. The Romantics find in rural life an innocence, uncorrupted by the temptations of the city, and they derive moral strength from nature's healing powers. Natural scenes contemplated in solitude act, at one time or another, as a restorative power for Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, and Keats.
In their portrayal of the "Humble and rustic life," the Romantics found the commonplace a fit subject for poetry. Wordsworth desired to awaken man's sense of wonder in himself and in all that was around him. The interest in the common man and the incidents of his life rendered possible the humanitarianism which is so much a part of Shelley's poetry. This humanitarian concern for the state of the poor and the oppressed is seen in the many urgings for labor reform by the poets of this period, but it is nowhere more evidenced than in their almost unanimous support of the French Revolution. Related to their humanitarian desire to free the oppressed and their belief in the goodness of the natural life is Rousseau's belief that there exists between man and nature a kind of harmony which would enable man to live in a paradisical state if he could only rid himself of the evils of society.

This Rousseauistic philosophy carries over into the Romantics' glorification of the individual. The new importance of the individual is evinced by the subject matter of Romantic poetry. For the most part the single most often recurring subject for Romantic poems is, as previously mentioned, the poet himself. Characteristic of early Romantic poetry about the French Revolution is an optimism leading to the belief that man would have the power to accomplish great things if he were freed from the artificial bonds of society. The optimistic belief in the ultimate perfectibility of man is, obviously, a reaction against the eighteenth-century mechanistic
universe in which each man had his unalterable place in the
great chain of being. The Romantic revolt against the
eighteenth-century mechanists profoundly influenced what
might be called their religion.

Blake, Wordsworth, and Coleridge saw the French Revolution
"as a necessarily violent threshold to a thousand years of
peace, after which Christ would come again to judge the
nations of the earth." The outcome of the French Revolution,
however, brought tremendous disappointment to these hopeful
supporters. Incidents like the reign of terror convinced
them that organized political action would not bring about
the hoped-for millennium. Youthful dreams shattered, the
Romantics turned their hopes for man's salvation inward. Much
as Shelley would do later in *Prometheus Unbound*, the earlier
Romantics sought the Apocalypse in the hearts of individual
men. To renew themselves, they returned to nature for solace
and comfort. It is at this point that the religious relation-
ship with nature, which is so often considered the major
characteristic of Romantic poetry, begins.

The Romantics had traditionally attributed to nature
human traits and characteristics, but now nature is invested
with a religious aura. The spiritual fervor and the apocalyptic
language which had been applied to the French Revolution is
now concentrated in writings about the natural world. Nature
as a source of comfort was not a new idea, for even the
eighteenth-century poets had found restoration for their souls
in its calmness and beauty. But nature as a benevolent
goddess, a gentle parent and teacher, whose laws are for the
ultimate good of mankind, assumes the role once traditionally
reserved for the Christian God.

The role of teacher gently guiding his children toward
a state of final perfection is, in effect, the role of the
creator. But it was not only to nature that this role was
attributed. William Blake imbued the mind of man with the
ability to create perfection, and, in doing so, he attributed
to man the same aspect of divinity which Wordsworth attributed
to nature. Wordsworth and Coleridge, rejecting the eighteenth-
century concept of the mind as a mirror, also believed that
the mind could create its own experience if man followed
nature's lead. By assuming that the mind was capable of
creating its own reality and that nature was the teacher of
the mind, man and nature became, to varying degrees, at once
the outward and visible manifestations of the Deity. By
adopting this view, wholly or in part, that is, by allowing
man or nature to take on the function of God--creation--the
Romantics had, in effect, rejected traditional Christianity
and adopted the natural religion of pantheism. The laws of
this new religion would be the laws of nature, and man's
salvation would depend upon the ultimate rightness and
benevolence of those laws.

By investing man and nature with aspects traditionally
attributed to the Christian God, and by assuming that the
individual joined with nature could improve his position in the universe, the Romantics had not only rejected traditional Christian beliefs, but they had also rejected a basic organizing principle of Western thought—the static chain of being. Before this time men generally believed that any change in man's or any other object's position in the chain would lead to a chaotic universe; but now that the Romantics accepted the possibility of man's improving himself and his world, it became necessary to find a new organizing principle. This is not to suggest that the idea of the chain was rejected altogether; it was only adjusted. According to A.O. Lovejoy the world for the Romantics was now in the process of becoming. The natural laws expounded by science gave this process of becoming an order which satisfied man's desire for an understandable universe.\(^5\) Joseph Warren Beach has said that the Romantics' concept of nature "was a synthesis of elements derived from science and religion: the scientific notion of regular and universal laws, the religious notion of divine providence" and that they conceived of "natural phenomena as purposive in action and adapted to one another and to the general designs of the cosmos."\(^6\) The Romantic concept of the universe is in fact a religious one, pantheistic in nature and relying on a belief in science rather than on Christian faith.

The poetry of William Wordsworth is generally recognized as the apotheosis of nature poetry in the English language.
As Joseph Warren Beach has said, "Wordsworth is, of all English poets, the one who gave the most impressive and the most emotionally satisfying account of man's relation to universal nature." An attempt to demonstrate that Thomas Hardy's view of man's relation to nature is an inevitable result of the Romantic view necessitates an examination of the poetry of Wordsworth, who provided the most complete and comprehensive treatment of the relationship between man and nature. This discussion will, however, be confined to those aspects which actually anticipate Hardy's views: Wordsworth's preference for rural life and his dislike for materialistic progress and technology; his pantheistic natural religion, which meant an altered view of the traditional Christian God; and finally his loss of faith in his natural religion which leads to his acceptance of an orthodox Christianity.

Like Rousseau, Wordsworth emphasizes his preference for a life lived close to nature and his dislike of materialistic progress and technology. Over and over again his affinity for life in the country where he can commune with nature and develop his creative powers away from the "din / Of towns and cities . . ." surfaces. In "Tintern Abbey" it is this communion with nature on the banks of the river Wye that brings on the transcendental state which allows him to "see into the life of things" (l. 49). Life in towns and cities represents "the fretful stir / Unprofitable, and the fever of the world . . ." (ll. 52-53). Wordsworth says in The Prelude
that love cannot

    thrive with ease
Among the close and overcrowded haunts
Of cities, where the human heart is sick. . . .(XIII. 202-4)

But what accounts for his negative attitude about city life? In "Lines Written in Early Spring" where he has portrayed nature, man, and God as all of a whole, he laments "What man has made of man" (l. 8). The implication here is, as it is much later in "The World is Too Much With Us," that contemporary society and all it represents has destroyed man's contact with nature. Governments, institutions, and industrialization have caused man to "neglect the universal heart" and "society has parted man / From man . . . (Prelude. XIII. 219-20). By becoming so caught up in "Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers . . ." (CPW, p. 349) and being "pressed by heavy laws . . ." of society, we are "often, glad no more . . ." (CPW, p. 117).

This preference for the country and for its solitude manifests itself in Wordsworth's selection of peasants and rustics as the characters for many of his narratives. Michael, Simon Lee, and Lucy of the "Lucy Poems" are only a few who come immediately to mind. In his portrayal of these simple men and women, uncorrupted by the institutions of society, is a vestige of Rousseau's "noble savage" as well as Wordsworth's condemnation of the materialistic progress and advancing technology which were a part of the city life of his
day. Perhaps his concept of the inherent goodness of man living in a natural setting can be seen most explicitly in these lines from "Descriptive Sketches":

Once, Man entirely free, alone and wild,  
Was blest as free—for he was Nature's child.  
He, all superior but his God disdained,  
Walked none restraining, and by none restrained,  
Confessed no law but what his reason taught,  
Did all he wished, and wished but what he ought.  
As man in his primeval dower arrayed  
The image of his glorious Sire displayed,  
Even so, by faithful Nature guarded, here  
The traces of primeval man appear... (ll. 433-42)

Although Wordsworth paid great tribute to Newton in The Prelude, he does condemn the kind of intellect which has made possible the technological and scientific advancements of the day. Of the scientist in "A Poet's Epitaph" he says,

Physician art thou?—one, all eyes,  
Philosopher!—a fingering slave,  
One that would peep and botanize  
Upon his mother's grave? (ll. 17-20)

And although

Sweet is the lore which Nature brings;  
Our meddling intellect  
Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things;—  
We murder to dissect. (CPW, p. 83)

The main body of Wordsworth's poetry unquestionably reflects a predilection for rural life and an unfavorable impression of modern technology and progress. His attitude toward progress presages a conflict which recurs frequently
in the poetry of Tennyson and which will surface more subtly in the works of Thomas Hardy. In Hardy's poetry there is also a very close connection between his feelings about scientific and technological development and his attraction to rural life.

Although in Wordsworth's earliest poetry he develops a relationship between man and nature which hints at a natural religion, it is not until "Tintern Abbey" that he refines and formalizes his beliefs into pantheism. It is Coleridge's "one Life" theme invested with a religious aura which appears in the following passage from "Tintern Abbey," the passage William Hazlitt referred to as the most perfect statement of pantheism ever written:

And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. . . . (ll. 93-102)

By perceiving a single spirit operating throughout the natural world and in man himself, Wordsworth has endowed both with a divinity which Christianity traditionally reserves for God. By further attributing to nature the power to bring on the mystical state which allows Wordsworth to "see into the life of things" and gives him the ability to "half create" (CPW, p. 92)
the world he sees and hears, nature and man become at once
the creator and the created. By attributing to nature and
man the power of creation in the universe, Wordsworth, in
essence, rejects the anthropomorphic God.

Operating in Wordsworth's natural religion is an assurance
that the universe is functioning with a purposiveness according
to natural laws which are for the ultimate good of man and
the natural world. This concept of a benevolent, purposeful
nature ordering the universe is essential to Wordsworth's
ability to maintain faith in his natural religion. With
reference to the birds singing in the trees, old Matthew in
"The Fountain" says,

"With Nature never do they wage
A foolish strife; they see
A happy youth, and their old age
Is beautiful and free. . . ." (ll. 41-44)

Even the animals can view their lives as ordered for the
best. An optimistic faith in the continuance of the natural
processes is also voiced by Matthew in this poem:

"No check, no stay, this Streamlet fears;
How merrily it goes!
'Twill murmur on a thousand years,
And flow as now it flows."(ll. 21-24)

And unquestionably Wordsworth attributed the origin of these
natural processes to that "presence that disturbs" him:

Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!
Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought!
And givest to forms and images a breath
And everlasting motion. . . . (Prelude. I. 401-4)
But again it is in "Tintern Abbey" that Wordsworth has given his fullest portrait of nature as his kind teacher and his most perspicacious statement of his optimistic faith in the benevolent purposiveness of her laws which order the universe for the ultimate benefit of all:

Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her: 'tis her privilege,
Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy; for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings. (ll. 122-34)

Wordsworth's intensive treatment of a pantheistic universe is the basis for his exalted position among English nature poets, and yet there is another side to Wordsworth's poetry for which he has often been criticized not only by present-day scholars but also by his contemporaries. For in his later poetry a staunch belief in orthodox Christianity appears. Scholars and critics have also noted a falling off of his creative powers, especially in the poems following "Ode: Intimations of Immortality." Wordsworth did not write great poetry, the poetry of genius, in his later years, but the specific link between his orthodoxy and his mediocrity has not been firmly established. Whether the shift to a strong Christian faith resulted from a decline in poetic powers or
whether the reverse is true may never be satisfactorily demonstrated. There is, however, some evidence in his poetry which suggests that he was forced to abandon his earlier natural religion and adopt Christianity for reasons more fundamental than a waning of creative powers. This evidence suggests that it is not Wordsworth who deserted nature, but that it is nature which deserted Wordsworth. Nature evinced aspects which forced Wordsworth to question his view of it as a benevolent goddess functioning for the good of mankind and the universe. Carson Hamilton, in *Wordsworth's Decline in Poetic Power*, has commented on this aspect of Wordsworth's nature:

In Wordsworth's narrative poems, there is not much evidence that Nature loved Man. The characters that Wordsworth delineated suffer the influence of elemental Nature, which does not lack for "wilder effects." The characters do not demonstrate Nature's "exclusively pure, serene, and benignant power" or her "sympathy and love."\(^1\)

Hamilton goes on to say that Wordsworth did come to recognize the evil in nature operating against himself as well as others, but "by adopting the ancient theory underlying Job, that evil is somehow really good, Wordsworth had been able to justify the delinquency of some of his early days (as well as the misery and grief in the lives of the characters of the narrative poems)."\(^12\) Wordsworth could not effectively reconcile the evil he saw in nature with his pantheistic concept of the universe, although he continued his struggle for such an
effective reconciliation until as late as 1804 in "Ode: Intimations of Immortality." The movement of this poem is from a recognition that his view of nature has altered since his youth to a kind of compromise which evokes a God much nearer the Supreme Being of Christianity than the earlier "presence," of "Tintern Abbey." When the poet asks, "Whither is fled the visionary gleam? / Where is it now, the glory and the dream?" (ll. 56-57), he is referring to the disappearance of the transcendental state which allowed him to "see into the life of things," and this, in effect, implies that he can no longer see a divinity inherent in nature, a "splendour in the grass" or a "glory in the flower" (l. 178).

The climax of Wordsworth's struggle to maintain his early faith in nature as a benevolent deity comes in "Elegiac Stanzas Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle" (1805), written in bereavement over the death of his brother John. John Wordsworth's death at sea, at the hands of nature who had been "the guardian" of Wordsworth's soul in "Tintern Abbey," appears to have sounded the death knell for any idealistic view of nature the poet might have retained. Referring to a period in 1794 when he spent a few weeks near Peele Castle, Wordsworth says, "I could have fancied that the mighty Deep / Was even the gentlest of all gentle Things" (ll. 11-12). Of that earlier time, he continues,
Ah! Then, if mine had been the Painter's hand,
To express what then I saw; and add the gleam,
The light that never was, on sea or land,
The consecration, and the Poet's dream. . . . (ll. 13-16)

But the "gleam," the same "gleam" of "Ode: Intimations of Immortality," is now recognized as "the light that never was." All attempts at justification and rationalization of the contrasting aspects of nature are gone; Wordsworth sees nature revealed for what she is. He gives up all efforts to force nature into the mold of his earlier pantheistic period, openly admitting that these earlier views were "the fond illusion of my heart" (l. 29). Wordsworth realizes that he can never be "what I have been" (l. 38) for "A power is gone, which nothing can restore; / A deep distress hath humanised my Soul" (ll. 35-36). This "deep distress" can be interpreted not only as resulting from the death of John Wordsworth but also from the poet's realization that he has spent all his life believing what he now recognizes as merely "the Poet's dream."

In the final stanzas of the poem, Wordsworth bids farewell to the solitude which was so important to his communion with nature, and he welcomes what are, in essence, the Christian virtues of "fortitude, and patient cheer" (l. 57). And, as Christian doctrine promises, it is "Not without hope we suffer and we mourn" (l. 60). In "Elegiac Stanzas Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle," Wordsworth ends his struggle to maintain his belief in a natural religion. He relinquishes "the Poet's dream" which has been central to his life and
poetry, and though the "power is gone, which nothing can restore" (1. 35), he says, "The feeling of my loss will ne'er be old . . ." (1. 39).

Because of the intensity of Wordsworth's attachment to nature, his poetry reflects his recurring attempts to reconcile the conflicting aspects he sees in nature. Sometime after the death of his brother, however, he can no longer rationalize nature's cruelties as a necessary discipline for man. If nature is cruel and not benevolent, it must follow that nature has no "holy plan" and that nature is not divine. If the life force operating in nature is not divine, it also follows that the force in man is not divine. What is man's position then in a world where nature is indifferent, showering her blessings as well as her evil indiscriminately? Joseph Warren Beach says that it is man's sense of spiritual isolation which drives him to "construct a system which will enable him to feel that he does not stand alone but is intimately associated with some force or group infinitely more powerful and significant than himself." But now Wordsworth has discovered that his system has failed him and he must find another means to confront his spiritual isolation and the alienation he now feels from nature.

In an effort to construct a new system, Wordsworth turns to reason. Now he can see the natural laws operating in nature as something completely separate from mankind. And in Christianity he finds an explanation for man's suffering, as well
as his sinful nature. Wordsworth can separate nature and man, as Tennyson always does in his poetry. Reason and orthodox Christianity provide the means for ordering Wordsworth's universe. They are the new moral centrality for the life of England's most celebrated nature poet.
NOTES


4 Bloom, p. xx.


7 Beach, p. 208.

8 William Wordsworth, *The Complete Poetical Works of Wordsworth*, ed. Alice N. George (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1932), p. 91; hereafter cited as *CPW*. Wordsworth's poetry is quoted from this edition, which includes the 1850 *Prelude*. Future references will be by line number in the body; if the
poem cited is not clear from context, reference will be to this edition and the page number.


13 Beach, p. 8.
CHAPTER III

THE VICTORIANS: TENNYSON AND ARNOLD

The inability of Wordsworth to maintain his faith in nature as a benevolent goddess leading and guiding man to create a new world through poetry was not a unique situation among the Romantic poets. Of the loss of the Romantic faith, A. Dwight Culler reminds us that this faith had . . . been lost by the very man who created it. It was in the "Elegiac Stanzas Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle" that Wordsworth first entered that world of "deep distress," of "fortitude, and patient cheer, / And frequent sights of what is to be borne." . . . It was in "La Belle Dame sans Merci" that Keats found himself upon the "cold hill side" of a purely phenomenal world, and in the close of the "Ode to a Nightingale" that he was tolled back from ecstatic union with the bird to "my sole self" and found that "fancy cannot cheat so well / As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf." It was in the "Ode to the West Wind" that Shelley fell upon the thorns of life and bled, and in "The Triumph of Life" that he looked steadily on the procession of those who had bled before him. And it was in "Dejection: An Ode" that Coleridge, who had ascended the highest, also fell the lowest in the loss of that active, sacred power wherewith, a pure and joyous soul, he had created a pure and joyous world around him. Of the whole generation Wordsworth has said,

We Poets in our youth begin in gladness;
But thereof come in the end despondency and madness. ¹

The Romantic faith in nature and man balances precariously between the ability of the poet to see a divinity in nature, manifesting itself in a benevolence toward mankind and in the

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transcendental vision which allows him to "see into the life of things," thus recognizing the divinity within man. Once either of these fundamental aspects of the Romantic faith fails, the scale is toppled and the faith cannot be sustained. Whereas Wordsworth took what was probably the only, if not the safest, route open to him, a retreat into orthodox Christianity, to regain order in his life, an entirely new generation of poets followed him who could neither begin in "gladness" nor in Christianity; but rather the Victorians began, in the main, in "despondency."

J. Hillis Miller, in *The Disappearance of God: Five Nineteenth-Century Writers*, says that "The history of modern literature is in part the history of the splitting apart of this communion"² between man and God. The Romantics had failed in their attempt to reestablish a connection between man and God, which, according to Miller, had been breaking down since the High Renaissance,³ and, after this failure, the point of departure for the nineteenth-century writer "was likely to be the isolation and destitution of Matthew Arnold. . . ."⁴ If the cause of the "despondency," the isolation, the destitution of Victorian poets like Alfred, Lord Tennyson and Matthew Arnold is the disappearance of God, the question arises, why did God disappear? As Miller makes clear, there can be no single satisfactory answer; yet the Victorian era with its rapid growth of knowledge, both scientific and technological, was a period of distress and
discord for a great number of people and especially for the sensitive poetic mind. Of the exploding knowledge and its effect on Victorian thought, Walter E. Houghton says,

The history of thought from 1830 on, religious thought in particular, is a history of successive blows. Each advance in knowledge, every new theory, raises fresh difficulties; the entrenched position to which one retreats today is under threatening attack tomorrow. . . . Always a fresh assault makes the last defense obsolete and raises again the ghost of doubt which one thought—or hoped—he had laid.\(^5\)

The knowledge Houghton refers to here is specifically scientific knowledge which caused man to question his place in the Newtonian universe. Lyell's *Principles of Geology* (1830-33), Chamber's *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* (1844), Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859) and *Descent of Man* (1871), Huxley's "On the Physical Basis of Life" (1868), as well as the new biblical criticism, are only a sampling of the scientific revelations and speculations which created the agonizing conflict between science and religion. It is this conflict that surfaces in so much Victorian poetry. The Victorian is faced not only with a struggle between his orthodox Christian faith and the doubt created by this new knowledge, but also with the misery of a modern industrial, urbanized society where rapid technological advancement has resulted in sociological problems heretofore unknown.

Confronted by this rapidly changing society and the explosion of traditional ideas about man, nature, and God, Alfred, Lord Tennyson and Matthew Arnold, heirs to the failure
of the Romantic vision, attempt in their poetry to redefine man's position in the universe and his relation to nature. Both poets have been linked by various scholars to the Romantic tradition of Wordsworth and to the more modern poetry of Thomas Hardy. In an effort to establish the connection between William Wordsworth's nature as a benevolent goddess and the consciousless and conscienceless nature of Hardy, the idea of nature, first in the poetry of Tennyson and then in the poetry of Arnold, will be examined, always looking backward to their heritage from Wordsworth and anticipating their legacy to Hardy.

In Tennyson's poetry there is very little of what has been characterized as the Romantic view of nature. Joseph Warren Beach has noted that "He indulges very little in unconscious pathetic fallacy. He never confuses the beauty of the landscape with a conviction of the benevolence of nature" and that "Almost invariably in Tennyson the word nature denotes distinctly either the world of material things which is the subject-matter of scientific study, or else the natural instincts and impulses which we share with the lower creatures and which thus bring us, as animals, under the observation of science." This materialistic view of the natural world owes much to Tennyson's interest in science and the rise of science in the Victorian Age. Jerome H. Buckley says that, as early as Tennyson's years at Trinity, he had begun to question the feasibility of mechanistic
Newtonian science as an explanation for an evolutionary universe. Paley's natural theology, which found evidences of a divine intelligence behind the creation, was effectively repudiated by Tennyson in *In Memoriam*:

I found Him not in world or sun,  
Or eagle's wing, or insect's eye;  
Nor thro' the questions men may try,  
The petty cobwebs we have spun.

Tennyson could not believe that the instances of adaptation in the natural world were the proofs of a divine First Cause as Paley had optimistically claimed. In this respect Tennyson's view is that of modern science, which does not refer to a First Cause or a divinity to explain the functioning of the natural world. Tennyson's awareness of scientific explanations for nature had separated him from the Wordsworthian concept of nature as a benevolent deity.

When Tennyson's poetry does, however, appear to reflect something of a Romanticized concept of man and nature in harmony, this appearance is quickly dispelled by the recognition that the poet has only used nature to create a necessary poetic effect and that he is not attempting to convey a philosophical view. For example in section LXXII of *In Memoriam*, the imagery suggests that nature is somehow disturbed by Arthur Hallam's death. The day is marked by "blasts that blow the poplar white, / And lash with storm the streaming pane" (ll. 3-4). As for Tennyson, it is in nature a "dolorous hour." Nature seems to reflect the poet's own emotions on
this "disastrous day" and to be in sympathy with him:

Day, when my crown'd estate begun
   To pine in that reverse of doom,
    Which sicken'd every living bloom,
   And blurr'd the splendour of the sun. . . . (ll. 5-8)

Jerome H. Buckley attributes Tennyson's depiction of the natural setting in harmony with his own life to "The idyllic mode, which dictates the pastoral artifices . . ."; and "Yet the poet is not to be deceived. . . . The nature that seems to die on the fateful September day of Hallam's death must in any case suffer decay with the coming of autumn."10

Another salient example of Tennyson's adaptation of acharacteristically Romantic nature concept for his poetic purpose is the well-known lyric "Come Into the Garden, Maud." This represents one of Tennyson's rare uses of the pathetic fallacy so common to Romantic poetry:

There has fallen a splendid tear
   From the passion-flower at the gate.
She is coming, my dove, my dear;
   She is coming, my life, my fate.
The red rose cries, "She is near, she is near";
   And the white rose weeps, "She is late";
The larkspur listens, "I hear, I hear";
   And the lily whispers, "I wait." (ll. 908-15)

John Ruskin, who originated the term, cited this lyric as an example of the justified use of the pathetic fallacy.11

Tennyson does not, however, invest nature with divinity as Wordsworth did; the distinction between nature and man is always evident in Tennyson's poetry.
For the most part, nature is seen as a separate entity from man, indifferent to his struggles and concerns, and from whom man should not expect benevolent treatment: "Tho' Nature, red in tooth and claw / With ravine, shriek'd against his creed--" (In Memoriam, LVI. 15-16). The cruelty in the natural world also dominates "Maud" in stanzas such as this one:

For nature is one with rapine, a harm no preacher can heal;
The Mayfly is torn by the swallow, the sparrow spear'd by the shrike
And the whole little wood where I sit is a world of plunder and prey. (ll. 123-25)

The only relationship between man and nature in "Maud" is that the hero-narrator, fallen to his lowest, misanthropic state, sees the vicious struggle for survival as a kind of "sanction for the universal selfishness" he finds in mankind. Nature then is not a guide or a norm of conduct for mankind as it is in Wordsworth's early poetry, but rather the narrator finds some parallel between the cruelty in nature and man's cruelty to his fellow man. It is the "pangs of nature" and her neglect of "the single life," as well as of "the type," which concern Tennyson most in his poetry, as is evidenced in sections LIV, LV, and LVI of In Memoriam:
LIV

O, yet we trust that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill,
To pangs of nature, sins of will,
Defects of doubt, and taints of blood;

That nothing walks with aimless feet;
That not one life shall be destroy'd,
Or cast as rubbish to the void,
When God hath made the pile complete;

That not a worm is cloven in vain;
That not a moth with vain desire
Is shrivell'd in a fruitless fire,
Or but subserves another's gain.

Behold, we know not anything;
I can but trust that good shall fall
At last--far off--at last, to all,
And every winter change to spring.

So runs my dream; but what am I?
An infant crying in the night;
An infant crying for the light,
And with no language but a cry.

LV

The wish, that of living whole
No life may fail beyond the grave,
Derives it not from what we have
The lik'est God within the soul?

Are God and Nature then at strife,
That Nature lends such evil dreams?
So careful of the type she seems,
So careless of the single life,

That I, considering everywhere
Her secret meaning in her deeds,
And finding that of fifty seeds
She often brings but one to bear,

I falter where I firmly trod,
And falling with my weight of cares
Upon the great world's altar-stairs
That slope thro' darkness up to God,
I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,  
    And gather dust and chaff, and call  
To what I feel is Lord of all,  
And faintly trust the larger hope.

LVI

"So careful of the type?" but no.  
    From scarped cliff and quarried stone  
She cries, "A thousand types are gone;  
I care for nothing, all shall go.

"Thou makest thine appeal to me.  
    I bring to life, I bring to death;  
The spirit does but mean the breath:  
I know no more." And he, shall he,

Man, her last work, who seem'd so fair,  
    Such splendid purpose in his eyes,  
Who roll'd the psalm to wintry skies,  
Who built him fanes of fruitless prayer.

Who trusted God was love indeed  
    And love Creation's final law--  
Tho' Nature, red in tooth and claw  
With ravine, shriek'd against his creed--

Who loved, who suffer'd countless ills,  
    Who battled for the True, the Just,  
Be blown about the desert dust,  
Or seal'd within the iron hills?

No more? A monster then, a dream,  
    A discord. Dragons of the prime,  
That tare each other in their slime,  
Were mellow music match'd with him.

O life as futile, then, as frail!  
O for thy voice to soothe and bless!  
What hope for answer, or redress?  
Behind the veil, behind the veil. (PDT, pp. 175-76)
Tennyson's concept of the impersonal, amoral nature which has alienated man from her anticipates Thomas Hardy's indifferent nature, governed by chance and fate. Another aspect of Tennyson's nature which looks forward to Hardy's nature surfaces in the poem "Despair." Nature here is much like Hardy's consciousless and conscienceless nature:

O, we poor orphans of nothing--alone on
that lonely shore--
Born of the brainless Nature who knew not
that which she bore!
Trusting no longer that earthly flower
Would be heavenly fruit--
Come from the brute, poor souls--no souls
--and to die with the brute-- (ll. 33-36)

Tennyson's "Nature red in tooth and claw" is obviously a germ of the modern view of nature and of Thomas Hardy's in particular; but in this view are also the origins of the great struggle between religion and science, between faith and doubt, which dominate Tennyson's poetry as well as much of Victorian thought.

As Wordsworth ultimately did, Tennyson recognized the harshness of nature to its inhabitants and to man, but he was unable at first to reconcile nature's malevolent aspects with the benevolent God of Christianity. His intellectual integrity, as well as his awareness of the early theories of an evolutionary universe, would not allow him to separate man and nature and God as neatly as Wordsworth could in his later period. In Memoriam presents the problem faced by Tennyson and many other Victorians in their attempt to reconcile a
benevolent God, who promises immortality to man, with a life of constant struggle and death. Houghton in The Victorian Frame of Mind sums up the possibilities that science was now offering and which Tennyson treats in In Memoriam:

nature became a battleground in which individuals and species fought for their lives and every acre of land was the scene of untold violence and suffering. If this nature was the creation of God, then God, as Tennyson put it, "is disease, murder and rapine." Or if not, then either there is no God and no immortality, but only Nature, indifferent to all moral values, impelling all things to a life of instinctive cruelty ending in death; or else God and Nature are locked in an incredible and inexplicable strife.  

The effects of the new scientific knowledge, as well as Tennyson's separation of God from nature, are apparent in sections LV and LVI of In Memoriam. In lines 5, 16, and 19 of section LV and in line 13 of LVI, it is obvious that, for Tennyson, God is not in nature and can never be. A major concept of the Romantic faith is dead; God is alienated from nature, and man senses his alienation from both God and Nature.

In Memoriam records Tennyson's struggle to maintain his faith in God in light of both the new scientific knowledge, which destroyed the benevolent concept of nature, and the death of Arthur Hallam, which had shaken Tennyson's confidence in a benevolent creator. Of this poem Buckley says,

It occupies a place in Tennyson's own development comparable to that of The Prelude in the career of
Wordsworth. Like The Prelude, which appeared posthumously in the same year, it describes the loss of hope and the recovery of assent, the reassertion of the dedicated spirit. . . .

Because these parallels with Wordsworth's work do exist and because the means by which Tennyson resolves his spiritual dilemma are reminiscent of certain Romantic attitudes, it is important to examine those ideas which aid in establishing Tennyson as a specific link between Wordsworth and Hardy. The ideas to be considered are Tennyson's mystical vision and his optimistic faith in man's moral and spiritual progress.

The turning point of Tennyson's attempt to conquer his grief and to reconcile the death of his friend with his belief in God comes in section XCV of In Memoriam, when the poet experiences a mystical vision similar to Wordsworth's transcendental state, which allows him "to see into the life of things." Alone in the darkness reading Hallam's letters, the poet feels his dead friend's "living soul . . . flash'd" (l. 36) on his own. A mixing of the poet's consciousness with that of the dead man occurs:

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. . . . (ll. 37-40)

And it is at this point that the poet is allowed to see everything, much as Wordsworth did:
Æonian music measuring out
The steps of Time—the shocks of Chance—
The blows of Death. (ll. 41-43)

And although he cannot sustain the vision—"At length my trance / Was cancell'd . . ." (ll. 43-44)—it is from this point on that Tennyson begins to move from the darkness of grief and doubt into the light of acceptance and faith. Now he can face the fact of Hallam's death, "the petty cobwebs we have spun" (CXXIV. 8), and the voice which says "'believe no more'" (CXXIV. 10), and confidently reply with a "warmth within the breast" (CXXIV. 13), "'I have felt'" (CXXIV. 16).

Out of his spiritual experience comes renewed strength which allows him to envision both a moral evolution for man on earth as he "throve and branch'd from clime to clime, / The herald of a higher race . . ." (CXVIII. 13-14) and also a spiritual evolution for the soul after death "in a higher place" (CXVIII. 15). Much as the Romantics had seen the possibility for man's ultimate perfectibility, first in the French Revolution and later within the hearts of individual men, Tennyson here displays an optimistic faith in man's moral and spiritual evolution.

In the Epilogue the note of optimism again echoes Romanticism. Hallam, he asserts, "is but a seed"—a prophecy—of what man may become, "the crowning race" of those that are "No longer half-akin to brute." Finally Tennyson concludes the long colloquy with his soul with the sanguine statement that his friend now "lives in God" and
that "That God, which ever lives and loves" is the

One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves. (ll. 142-44)

The spiritual agony Tennyson experiences as a result of
Hallam's death is a manifestation of the conflict between
science and religion, a major theme in Victorian poetry, and
the preeminent concern of Matthew Arnold's poetry. The
starting point for the nature poetry of Matthew Arnold is,
like Tennyson's, a recognition of man's separation from
nature and from God. Arnold, also like Tennyson and many
Victorians, was exposed to the incredibly icon-shattering
developments of science. But unlike Tennyson, Arnold is never
able to affect a pious acceptance of God through an intuitive
faith in "What is, and no man understands . . ." (In Memoriam.
CXXIV. 22). Of the new knowledge and its effects on man,
Arnold says in "The Scholar Gipsy":

For what wears out the life of mortal men?
'Tis that from change to change their being rolls;
'Tis that repeated shocks, again, again,
Exhaust the energy of the strongest souls
And numb the elastic powers.

Again in "Stanzas in Memory of the Author of 'Obermann,"
Arnold describes the experience of nineteenth-century man:

But we, brought forth and rear'd in hours
Of change, alarm, surprise--
What shelter to grow ripe is ours?
What leisure to grow wise?
Like children bathing on the shore,
Buried a wave beneath,
The second wave succeeds, before
We have had time to breathe. (ll. 69-76)

The collapse of faith in religion as well as the continued
questioning of every aspect of human life which had once given
order to Arnold's universe results in what he describes as
ennui. In his excellent essay "Ennui and Doubt" in The
Victorian Frame of Mind, Walter E. Houghton describes the
ennui experienced not only by Arnold but by other notable
Victorians such as John Stuart Mill and Thomas Huxley.
"Action," Houghton says, "is not only short-circuited by
speculation, it is frustrated by indecision." In "The
Scholar-Gipsy" Arnold describes this state as being one in
which men "fluctuate idly without term or scope" (l. 167).
It is a state in which men's

Vague resolves never have been fulfill'd;
For whom each year we see
Breeds new beginnings, disappointments new;
Who hesitate and falter life away,
And lose to-morrow the ground won to-day-- (ll. 175-79)

Beginning here with Arnold's state of isolation, aliena-
tion, and despair may aid in an understanding of the varied
use Arnold makes of nature in his poetry and the various
interpretations scholars have made of Arnold's nature poetry.
J. Hillis Miller says that Arnold has three ways of viewing
nature: one, a romantic view in which he desires to learn
the secret nature contains; two, a view of nature as only a
"collection of unrelated fragments juxtaposed without order
or form"; and three, the theory that "nature does possess a
secret life which is also a divine life," but "this life can
only be reached with great difficulty, if at all." In
Imaginative Reason: The Poetry of Matthew Arnold, A. Dwight
Culler offers a symbolic interpretation of Arnold's natural
settings, which he also sees as a triad, each level having
both a naturalistic and a religious meaning. He sees these
three natures in Arnold as a myth of the three phases of man's
life: the Forest Glade, The Darkling Plain, and the Wide-
Glimmering Sea. The first nature is represented by settings
such as the forest glade and the sea cave; it is a golden age
when man was in harmony with nature. It may be the world of
the Romantic poets, the world of the early Greeks, or the
age of the birth of Christianity. Whatever historical
period this first phase represents, Culler calls attention
to the fact that it is always in the past. The second
phase, Arnold's second kind of nature, is the burning or
darkling plain—the present phase of man's life. It is here
that man "is abandoned by God, divorced from Nature, and
alienated from his fellow man . . . and even from himself." The third phase is that of the hoped-for future suggested by
the wide-glimmering sea and alternatively referred to as the
City of God or Throne of Truth. This third nature, the
third period of man's life, is one of "peace in which
suffering subsides into calm and then grows up into a new
joy, the joy of active service in the world." Although
both Miller's and Culler's interpretations and explanations of nature in Arnold's poetry are useful in dealing with the problems of consistency which have often been noted in certain poems, and although both will be called upon in this discussion of Arnold's nature poetry as it looks back to the Romantics and forward to Thomas Hardy, perhaps the most adequate explanation of the idea of nature for the purpose of this study is one presented by G. Robert Strange in *Matthew Arnold: The Poet as Humanist*.

Strange attributes the problems seen in Arnold's nature poetry to the failure of critics to recognize that Arnold holds a dualistic view of nature. Arnold holds a traditional humanistic view of nature which "would affirm the supremacy of reason and deny that moral and intellectual values can be derived from the external world." But on the other hand, he believes "that unique and perceptible goods rest in nature, and that communion with it may influence man toward a perception of truth." It is Arnold's dualistic philosophy of nature's value to man which leads Strange to recognize the two external natures in Arnold's poetry. "The lower form," Strange indicates, "is the living, changing nature around us; the higher is the universal cosmic process, the general life in which change assumes permanence." Further Strange sees these two natures as "matched by two forms of self-consciousness in man." Man in his lower form of self-consciousness is the man Arnold describes as
subject to the "repeated shocks," "the change, alarm, surprise" of everyday life. At this level he is able to experience "charm, comfort, a certain solace in the natural world, but not ethical value or spiritual insight." But at a higher level "of self-awareness which involves a sinking into the depths of self," man achieves a "unity with the cosmic order." Man and nature are one on this level, and man "may best achieve awareness of this permanent life by clearing and purifying his own vision." This is the level of the Scholar-Gipsy whose spirit is eternal for he had "one aim, one business, one desire" (l. 152), and he has prepared himself to wait for "the spark from heaven" (l. 171).

Arnold's dualistic view of the universe and those interpretations offered by Miller and Culler are an aid in examining those particular aspects of Arnold's nature poetry which make him such a significant connection between the Romanticists and Thomas Hardy. The most obvious Romantic ideas of nature in Arnold's poetry are his desire to find in nature a source of peace lacking in modern life and his view that man can learn something from nature. Those facets of his nature poetry which reveal his connection with the more modern views of Thomas Hardy are his portrayal of the alienation of man from nature and the alienation of both from God and his indication that the lesson man learns from nature is despair. Of these diverse characteristics in Arnold's nature poetry, those which seem to be a carry-over from the Romantic period
will be dealt with first; and then his more modern, even sometimes Hardyan, characteristics will be examined.

Under the influence of the Romantic poets Arnold often turns to nature as a source of consolation, a soothing, healing power. In "Quiet Work," "Self-Dependence," and "Lines Written in Kensington Gardens," he seeks refuge from the confusion of modern life in nature's calm. The speaker in "Quiet Work" envies nature's ability to complete its "glorious tasks in silence perfecting" and its "toil unsever'd from tranquillity!" Reminiscent of Wordsworth when he was "sick, wearied out with contrarieties" (The Prelude. XI. 304), the poet in "Self-Dependence" describes himself, with more of the Victorian introspection, as "Weary of myself, and sick of asking / What I am, and what I ought to be . . ." (ll. 1-2). Then addressing nature he pleads, "Ye who from my childhood up have calm'd me, / Calm me, ah, compose me to the end!" (ll. 7-8). Again a similar note which recalls Wordsworth's Prelude appears in "Lines Written in Kensington Gardens":

Calm soul of all things! make it mine To feel, amid the city's jar, That there abides a peace of thine, Man did not make, and cannot mar.

The will to neither strive nor cry, The power to feel with others give! Calm, calm me more! nor let me die Before I have begun to live. (ll. 37-44)

The lesson nature seems to teach in these poems is the lesson of "quiet work" and "self-dependence." Man must go about his
tasks as nature does, calmly and without distraction; but he must first recognize, as nature says in "Self-Dependence," who he is and what tasks he is suited for:

"Resolve to be thyself; and know that he, Who finds himself, loses his misery!" (ll. 31-32)

The difference, of course, in Arnold's view of nature as a kind of teacher and that of the Romantics becomes apparent in a poem like "In Harmony With Nature." Here the speaker ridicules those who believe that man can ever be in harmony with nature, for

Nature is cruel, man is sick of blood;  
Nature is stubborn, man would fain adore;

Nature is fickle, man hath need of rest;  
Nature forgives no debt, and fears no grave;  
Man would be mild, and with safe conscience blest. (ll. 7-11)

Here Arnold's view of the two natures becomes significant. Man on one level can seek to emulate the higher nature, which involves the continuing natural processes of the cosmic order in which he expressed faith in "Quiet Work": "Still working, blaming still our vain turmoil, / Labourers that shall not fail, when man is gone" (ll. 13-14). In "Resignation" this changing but permanent cosmic order is the "general life" in which man can find some sense of unity with the universe as Empedocles and the Scholar-Gipsy attempt to do as they await "the spark from heaven." But on the lower level, the
level of the ignorant preacher, the level of rocks and trees and storms and ceaseless cruelty, man and nature can never be in harmonious agreement, for

Man must begin, know this, where Nature ends;
Nature and man can never be fast friends.
Fool, if thou canst not pass her, rest her slave! (APW, p. 5)

In this nature—marked by mutability and death—which surrounds man, there can be no ethical or moral lessons to be learned because man and nature are far apart; man has far surpassed the natural world in his intellectual and spiritual development. Although this traditional humanistic view of man's relationship to nature points toward the alienation from nature that modern man senses, there still seems to be a kind of optimism in the belief in the general life and the hope that man can find a sense of peace and wholeness here. But as in "The Scholar-Gipsy" and "Empedocles on Etna," there is no hint from Arnold of any kind of conventional immortality—not even that which Wordsworth suggested for Lucy: "Rolled round in earth's diurnal course, / With rocks, and stones, and trees." 30

What Arnold does promise in "Resignation" is that through stoic detachment man can see

life unroll,
A placid and continuous whole—
The general life, which does not cease,
Whose secret is not joy, but peace;
That life, whose dumb wish is not miss'd
If birth proceeds, if things subsist;
The life of plants, and stones, and rain,
The life he craves—if not in vain
Fate gave, what chance shall not control,
His sad lucidity of soul. (ll. 189-98)

Arnold’s inability to give man any hope for immortality arises from his inability to believe in any kind of benevolent creator whether it be the traditional God of Christianity or the pantheistic universe of the Romantic poets, the "one Life within us and abroad." When Arnold does refer to the gods in his poetry, it is with reference to the gods of ancient Greece or to fate and chance which now govern man’s life. In "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse" Arnold laments but firmly acknowledges the demise of Christianity and of the faith of the Romantic poets. He is explicit in recognizing that both were only an illusion: "For the world cries your faith is now / But a dead time's exploded dream . . ." (ll. 97-98). With the dream exploded, God has disappeared from the world. But when Arnold looks to nature, he finds it also indifferent to man, as in "In Harmony with Nature." Even the calmness of nature he has sought out so often may be a result of nature’s inability to experience the pain man feels at his isolation from God, as in "Resignation":

the mute turf we tread,
The solemn hills around us spread,
This stream which falls incessantly,
The strange-scarel'd rocks, the lonely sky,
If I might lend their life a voice,
Seem to bear rather than rejoice. (ll. 265-70)
And in "Morality" Arnold characterizes nature, in its isolation from man and God, as beneath man in morality and understanding:

"Ah child," she cries, "that strife divine, Whence was it, for it is not mine?"

"Yet that severe, that earnest air, I saw, I felt it once--but where?" (11. 23-24, 11. 29-30)

Something in this characterization must have been in Hardy's mind when he depicted his darkling thrush casting his song "Upon the growing gloom" when there was "So little cause for carolings..."33

But when Arnold turns to another human being to seek relief from the pain of this isolated human existence as he does in "The Buried Life," he realizes the necessity of asking "is even love too weak / To unlock the heart, and let it speak?" (ll. 12-13). Men are alienated from one another as well as from themselves in this broken, fragmented world:

I knew they lived and moved Trick'd in disguises, alien to the rest Of men, and alien to themselves-- (ll. 20-22).

Man has isolated himself from others because he cannot understand himself, as witnessed by his inability to name his innermost feelings in the following passage:

But hardly have, we for one little hour, Been on our own line, have we been ourselves-- Hardly had skill to utter one of all The nameless feelings that course through our breast... (ll. 59-62)
Perhaps in Arnold's most famous poem lies not only the summarizing statement of his painful existence in a universe where God has deserted man and nature but also the legacy of the early Victorians to Thomas Hardy. In "Dover Beach" the sea can only bring to the poet "the eternal note of sadness" as it must have brought to Sophocles the "ebb and flow / Of human misery . . ." (ll. 16-17). And now that the Sea of Faith has retreated, the natural world becomes "drear" and "naked," and our world which "seems / To lie before us" is only a "land of dreams" (ll. 30-31). For in this world there is

neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night. (ll. 33-37)

The temporary condition of Coleridge's ancient mariner has become the permanent state for mankind:

Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide wide sea!³⁴

Although nature does have a significant role in Victorian poetry, its position is no longer anything like the benevolent goddess of Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" period. Of the shift from an age when nature was the embodiment of the Deity for many Romantic poets to an age when nature is mainly a fragmented collection of trees, rocks, hills, and animals, Joseph
Warren Beach says,

Already in Arnold and Tennyson, nature has ceased to be the object of reverent and heart-felt enthusiasm; for it has ceased to be the unmistakeable manifestation of divine purposiveness and providence. In Hardy, nature has turned sinister, her teaching dubious or vile. In contemporary poetry, nature has become a mere box of toys, a stage-set for the puppet-passions of men, or a mere decorative arrangement in form and color.35

Tennyson's poetry clearly reflects the division between man and nature, and, as a consequence, he insists on the religious belief in God and immortality to raise man above the level of the objects in the natural world. Arnold, on the other hand, "is equally hostile to supernaturalism and romantic naturalism."36 He recognizes that man is a creature in a godless universe, but, at the same time, he believes men need something which will give their lives order. For this reason he recommends Christianity for the masses. For himself and men like him, however, he advocates a kind of stoic acceptance of things as they are and a turning inward to find one's true self. By these means man without God can find some peace. Through love of another human being, Arnold feels man can dispel, if only temporarily, the pain of existence on the darkling plain. By divergent paths the early Victorians, Alfred, Lord Tennyson and Matthew Arnold, are able to deal with the world in which they find themselves. Tennyson resolves, at least for himself, the conflict between science and religion facing nineteenth-century Englishmen. Arnold, however, resolves nothing; he only points out means by which England can save herself from
cultural anarchy and by which the most intelligent and thoughtful of men may find surcease from the agony of spiritual isolation. Because Arnold comes to no safe conclusions, because he cannot express a blind faith in God, because he ends much as he began—in despair, his poetry is much nearer Thomas Hardy's in tone and attitude than is Tennyson's. Hardy's poetry does, however, exhibit some Tennysonian influences.
NOTES


4 Miller, *The Disappearance*, p. 4.


8 Alfred, Lord Tennyson, *The Poetic and Dramatic Works of Alfred, Lord Tennyson*, ed. W.J. Rolfe (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1898), p. 194; hereafter cited as PDT. Tennyson's poetry is quoted from this edition. Future references will be by line number in the body; if the poem cited is not clear from context, reference will be to this edition and the page number.
9 Beach, p. 409.

10 Buckley, p. 117.


12 Buckley, p. 141.

13 Houghton, pp. 68-69.

14 Buckley, p. 108.

15 Matthew Arnold, *Matthew Arnold's Poetical Works* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell and Co., 1897), p. 386; hereafter cited as *APW*. Arnold's poetry is quoted from this edition. Future references will be by line number in the body; if the poem cited is unclear from context, reference will be made to this edition and the page number.

16 Houghton, p. 72.


18 Culler, p. 4.

19 Culler, pp. 19-20.

20 Culler, p. 12.

21 Culler, p. 4.

23 Strange, pp. 126-27.

24 Strange, p. 127.

25 Strange, p. 139.

26 Strange, p. 139.

27 Strange, p. 140.

28 Strange, p. 139-40.

29 Strange, p. 140.


34 Coleridge, Poems, p. 196.

35 Beach, pp. 200-1.

36 Beach, p. 15.
CHAPTER IV

HARDY

Thomas Hardy is the inevitable product of the reaction, which began with the early Victorian poets, against the Romantic concept of man and nature in harmony with a benevolent God. Hardy could not, however, accept Tennyson's faith which passes understanding any more than he could accept Wordsworth's belief in "Nature's holy plan." His inability to believe in either Wordsworth's or Tennyson's God may seem unusual in light of Hardy's youthful religious ties. Hardy had begun life as a regular churchgoer; he had taught Sunday school as a youth; he had, until the age of twenty-five, considered going into the Church; he had carefully studied and annotated his Bible and various prayer and hymn books; he earned his livelihood for many years as a church architect; and he even, at one point, suggested that the best adjective to describe him was "churchy." But Thomas Hardy was also a reader, a thinker, a poet, and a novelist. He very much wanted to make literature his vocation, but he felt keenly his lack of education. Before leaving Dorchester he plunged himself into a variety of self-education projects which he continued long after going to London to work as an architect for Arthur Blomfield. As a result of his extensive reading and study, by the time Hardy met the notable agnostic Leslie
Stephen, he had absorbed the major scientific and philosophical concepts of his age. In light of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, which lowered man to the level of the animal world, and other developments like the "Higher Criticism," which exploded biblical miracles and cast doubt upon the general historical accuracy of the Bible, Hardy could not sustain his early belief in God.

Jean R. Brooks, in *Thomas Hardy: The Poetic Structure*, enumerates the scientific and philosophical ideas which must have influenced Hardy's transition from a "churchy" young man to the pessimistic agnostic which his poetry reflects:

Evolution through natural selection, the origin of man, the long stretch of geological time behind him, the displacement of a transcendent personal Deity by immanent process without mind or purpose, the "Higher Criticism" of sacred texts, Herbert Spencer's philosophy of the Unknowable, John Stuart Mill's essays on the religious and social liberty of the individual—all left their mark on Hardy's vision of man placed in nature. Douglas Brown stresses the destructive effect on a stable peasant culture of the revolution in industry that joined with the revolution in thought to define man as product and victim of a soulless mechanism.

Harvey Curtis Webster, in *On a Darkling Plain*, gives an extensive account of books, magazines, and treatises that Hardy may have read which would have influenced his transition to agnostic and could have advanced his ideas about the nature of life. Webster does not, however, hesitate to qualify his bibliography of Hardy's reading as, for the most part, only probable. Whether Hardy was acquainted with all that Webster suggests or not, the Victorian period, especially after 1860, was one in
which religion lost much ground to science. Of this period and its effect on Thomas Hardy, James Granville Southworth says,

During the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth century all vitality had evaporated from this sense of spiritual tradition, leaving only a placid outward manifestation in social taboos. The revolt against this debilitated religion broke out in many quarters, with the scientists in the vanguard. Agnosticism, long kept closely under cover, gradually emerged into the light. Men sought avidly for an anchor that could take the place of what they hollowly called faith. The young Matthew Arnold chose love; Hardy could not even accept that. He pondered long the nature of God but could find no answer. He rejected utterly, as most persons have done, an anthropomorphic concept of deity, just as he rejected the concept of God as a quality within oneself.  

The cause of Hardy's loss of faith in a benevolent creator undoubtedly has its roots in the spirit of his age, but the often melancholy tone of regret for this loss of faith which pervades his poetry may be a result of his peculiar temperament and certain circumstances of his life. Webster gives support to G.R. Elliot's contention that Hardy displayed a "paradisiac tendency." That is, rather than never expecting much from life, Hardy expected overmuch. According to Webster the young Hardy demonstrated "an extreme sensitiveness to pain and injustice" and had as "excessive belief in the goodness of the universe" which resulted in shattering disillusionment when life did not live up to his early expectations. Robert Gittings, in the most recent and most comprehensive biographical study of Hardy, depicts the young author as introspective and something of a loner. Carefully
tracing Hardy's emotional and intellectual development, Gittings reveals the poet's close relationship with Horace Moule, an intellectual with the brightest of futures. Moule, Hardy's close friend and mentor, suffered from inexplicable fits of depression leading to excessive drinking. As a result he experienced unanticipated academic failure, which brought about a serious collapse in 1870. Later, in 1873, after one of his periodic breakdowns, Moule committed suicide. Although Hardy's loss of faith in the God of his youth, which Gittings dates as around 1866 from Hardy's markings in his Bible and other texts, occurred during his early period in London,11 Gittings says of the impact of Moule's 1870 collapse on Hardy: "To see this collapse of his friend was enough to convince Hardy alone that the universe was ruled by a power indifferent to man."12 Why Hardy lost his faith in God cannot be attributed to any one factor; the doubting spirit of his age, his intellect, his temperament, and his personal associations are all inextricably involved in the view of the world which is presented in his poetry. That view may be characterized as essentially a collapse of the Romantic faith in nature and the optimistic concept of man's position in the universe. This collapse results in a vision of life determined by a blind, conscienceless force operating without regard to man and his aspirations.

To demonstrate the relationship of nature in Thomas Hardy's poetry with nature in the works of Wordsworth, Tennyson,
and Arnold will require an examination of Hardy's view of the universe, of man's position in the universe, and of man's relation to nature. Before making even a general statement about these philosophical concepts as they appear in Hardy's poetry, three significant points about his philosophy and his art should be considered. First of all, Hardy insisted that his poems were not an attempt to express a consistent body of philosophical thought, as is witnessed by his frequent warnings to his readers in various prefaces. In his Preface to Poems of the Past and the Present (1901), he is very clear on this point:

Moreover, that portion which may be regarded as individual comprises a series of feelings and fancies written down in widely differing moods and circumstances, and at various dates. It will probably be found, therefore, to possess little cohesion of thought or harmony of colouring. I do not greatly regret 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.  

Even more explicit is the Introductory Note to Winter Words, published posthumously in 1928, in which he asserts, "I also repeat what I have often stated on such occasions, that no harmonious philosophy is attempted in these pages--or in any bygone pages of mine, for that matter" (CP, p. 834).

The second point, closely related to the first, is Hardy's apparent inconsistency in the personification of nature and the forces operating in nature which appears in his poetry. Hardy wrote well over nine hundred poems, employing
in many of these the imagination of the artist to personify diverse elements in the natural world. Because the elements and forces of nature do appear in a variety of guises sometimes leading to misinterpretation of his ideas, Hardy's comments on this subject are important:

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

Hardy is an artist, and as such he exercises the artistic license of imagination in creating metaphors for poetry with little thought to setting forth a consistent philosophical system.

The third point to consider, which is relevant to the first two, is the need for a specific definition of the term "nature" as it is used in Hardy's poetry. This is possible, however, only within the context of a particular poem and not within the entire body of Hardy's poetry. Depending on the poem in which nature appears, it may be the same rocks, trees, hills, and animals—external nature—that it is in many of Wordsworth's, Tennyson's, and Arnold's poems. For example in "Neutral Tones," nature is a pond, the sun, a few leaves, and dead grass. But in a poem like "The Mother Mourns," nature is personified as the creator
of all things. Again nature may have reference to the natural laws which operate within man and the universe. In "Her Dilemma" the woman's compassion for the dying man forces her to lie, to express love for him falsely. Here the natural laws operating are those which cause death and those which cause man to feel an attraction, love, to one person and not to another. When she curses the nature which has devised her dilemma, she is cursing these natural laws. Whatever the reference nature has in each particular poem, Joseph Warren Beach's comment on nature in Hardy's poetry is germane:

Thomas Hardy heralds the disappearance from English poetry of nature with a capital N. Even more vigorously than Tennyson he denies the benevolence of nature conceived as the unity of things personified or as a sum of natural laws. . . . He has neither the naturalism of Wordsworth nor his religion-inspired optimism. 15

The key word in Beach's comment is "benevolence." Whatever nature represents in Hardy's poetry, it is not benevolent nor is it malevolent. Nature is indifferent in the Hardyan concept of the universe. And although individual poems may suggest an evil or beneficent natural world, Hardy's philosophical concept of nature is to be deduced only from the large body of his poetry rather than from isolated poems.

Thomas Hardy's "full look at the Worst" (CP, p. 168) informs the great body of his poetry, and, although he did not claim to develop a consistent philosophy which could explain the universe and man's position in it, a great number
of his poems may be considered philosophical, for they do present his view of the universe and the human condition. Although his philosophy may not always be consistent and explicitly stated, it is a unifying element in many of his poems. A list of the poems considered philosophical in nature would have to include the following: "The Impercipient," "God's Funeral," "Hap," "The Subalterns," "Nature's Questioning," "God-Forgotten," "Agnostic Theo," "God's Education," "The Lacking Sense," "The Mother Mourns," and "A Dream Question." Paul Zietlow, in Moments of Vision, has labeled these poems and others like them Hardy's "philosophical fantasies." Of them he says, "Hardy creates his own personal myths to account for the nature of things." An examination of these poems does reveal the major ideas which constitute Hardy's concept of the universe: a universe devoid of God, motivated by an impersonal force which operates through Natural Laws, Chance, and Time; a universe in which man is but a mean creature subject to the same Natural Laws which govern the natural world; a universe in which, by some defect or accident, man has been raised to a higher level of morality and consciousness than the force which governs him.

More obvious than any other theme or philosophical concept in Hardy's poetry is the expression of man's painful recognition and acceptance of his alienation from nature and the disappearance of God from his world. When Wordsworth mourned
"that there hath past away a glory from the earth," in "Ode: Intimations of Immortality," and when he realized, in "Elegiac Stanzas Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle," that the relationship he had seen between man, nature, and God was only "a Poet's dream" of "a light that never was, on sea or land," he could safely retreat into orthodox Christianity. Tennyson's recognition, in In Memoriam, of an indifferent nature, "so careless of the single life," caused him great spiritual agony until, through a vision, he was able to accept faith in God as "believing where we cannot prove." The scientific knowledge which had disturbed Tennyson's faith then became a gift from God that would finally lead to man's betterment and, perhaps, to an understanding of his relationship to God. By the time he came to write the introduction to In Memoriam he could assert:

We have faith: we cannot know,  
For knowledge is of things we see;  
And yet we trust it comes from thee,  
A beam in darkness: let it grow. (11. 21-24)

But for Thomas Hardy there was no safe retreat into the fantasy of Christianity, nor did he receive a vision. For Thomas Hardy had only the knowledge of "things we see."

Hardy's lament for the passing of a glory from the earth is the theme of "The Impercipient" and "God's Funeral." The earlier of these poems, published in Wessex Poems (1898), is "The Impercipient," subtitled "At a Cathedral Service." The speaker realizes that he has "no claim to be" with the
"bright believing band"; their beliefs "seem fantasies" (ll. 1-4) to him. The comforting vision, which plays such an important role in Tennyson's ability to believe in God, eludes the speaker:

Why always I must feel as blind  
To sights my brethren see,  
Why joys they've found I cannot find,  
Abides a mystery. (ll. 9-12)

And nothing in the world of nature even faintly suggests to him the existence of a benevolent God:

"Alas, 'tis but yon dark  
And wind-swept pine to me!" (ll. 23-24)

Yet since no intellectual comfort proceeds from the speaker's contemporary view, he feels the believers should have sympathy for his condition:

Since heart of mine knows not that ease  
Which they know, since it be  
That He who breathes All's Well to these  
Breathes no All's-Well to me,  
My lack might move their sympathies  
And Christian charity! (ll. 13-18)

Nor should the believers condemn the speaker for his state of unbelief, for he has not chosen his position, which is much like Hardy's--an agnostic set apart from the majority of believers:

O, doth a bird deprived of wings  
Go earth-bound wilfully! (ll. 29-30)
In the later poem "God's Funeral," published in *Satires of Circumstance* (1914), Hardy's speaker does not stand apart from the crowd at the burial of the anthropomorphic Christian God; he "followed with the rest" (l. 68). The narrator's position suggests the growing acceptance of the failure of old beliefs to stand up against the scrutiny of modern science and philosophy. The mourners at the funeral acknowledge God as a creation of man, a myth which man has altered and adjusted to suit his needs. The myth, however, is no longer believable because of the new knowledge man has acquired. The mourners' acknowledgement of God as a myth of their own creation and the resulting death of the myth may be attributed to historicism according to J. Hillis Miller in *The Disappearance of God: Five Nineteenth-Century Writers*. Miller explains how historicism contributed to God's demise in the nineteenth century:

Love, honor, God himself exist, but only because someone believes in them. Historicism, like perspectivism, transforms God into a human creation. And as soon as a man sees God in this way he is effectively cut off from the living God of faith.

Stanzas VI, VII, VIII, and IX of "God's Funeral" demonstrate Miller's point:

VI

"O man-projected Figure, of late
Imaged as we, thy knell who shall survive?
Whence came it we were tempted to create
One whom we can no longer keep alive?"
VII

"Framing him jealous, fierce, at first,
We gave him justice as the ages rolled,
Will to bless those by circumstance accurst,
And longsuffering, and mercies manifold.

VIII

"And tricked by our own early dream
And need of solace, we grew self-deceived,
Our making soon our maker did we deem,
And what we had imagined we believed.

IX

"Till, in Time's stayless stealthy swing,
Uncompromising rude reality
Mangled the Monarch of our fashioning,
Who quavered, sank; and now has ceased to be." (ll. 21-31)

Two other aspects of these stanzas which should be noted here
are that man's unhappiness is attributed to circumstance in
stanza VII, and Time is characterized as a sly but overpowering
force in stanza IX. Circumstance, another name for Chance,
and Time are the powers which man can neither understand nor
control operating in the universe.

The speaker in "God's Funeral," like the one in "The
Impercipient," is not disdainful of the old concept of God.
But rather he is saddened by the passing; for he admits,
"I did not forget / That what was mourned for, I, too,
long had prized" (ll. 55-56). Hardy's long association with
Christianity explains the line, and a comment he made in
1890 may explain his preoccupation with the loss of God in
both "The Impercipient" and "God's Funeral": "I have been
looking for my God for 50 years, and I think that if he had existed I should have discovered him."^20

Hardy's godless universe is governed by Natural Laws assisted by the powers of Chance and Time. Motivating these powers is the Cause of Things, a kind of life force described in "The Convergence of the Twain" as "The Immanent Will that stirs and urges everything" (l. 18). Other references to the Will and its character are the "Willer masked and dumb" of "Agnosto Theo" and "the Great Face behind" of "The Last Chrysanthemum." Jean R. Brooks has noted the variety of personifications Hardy employs in his description of the Immanent Will:

His personification of the ultimate Cause of things moves from God ("God-Forgotten," "A Dream Question," "By the Earth's Corpse") to Nature ("The Mother Mourns," "The Sleep-Worker," "The Lacking Sense") to the "Willer masked and dumb" of "Agnosto Theo," and the neuter "It" of "A Philosophical Fantasy" and "The Absolute Explains." In some poems two or more manifestations of the ultimate Cause share responsibility; Doom and Nature in "Doom and She," in "Hap," Time and Chance; the elements and all the ills of the flesh, driven by Necessity, in "The Subalterns."^21

A letter to Alfred Noyes, dated December 19, 1920, further clarifies Hardy's concept of the force determining the universe and the character of that force:

My imagination may have often run away with me; but all the same, my sober opinion—so far as I have a definite one—of the Cause of Things, has been defined in scores of places, and is that of a great many ordinary thinkers: that the said Cause is neither moral nor immoral, but unmoral: "loveless and hateless" I have called it, "which neither good nor evil knows"—etc., etc.—^22
Hardy's universe then is shaped by a Cause which, by its nature, is amoral. It is neither benevolent nor malevolent. The Will, possessing neither consciousness nor conscience, defines the precarious position of man in the universe.

Hardy's speculations on the character of the Will are the themes of "Nature's Questioning," "God-Forgotten," "Agnosto Theo," and "God's Education." In "Nature's Questioning" aspects of the natural world—the dawn, the pool, the field, and tree—ask the speaker the eternal question, "why we find us here!" Nature only seems to question man, for the four conjectures of the purpose of creation are man's own conjectures. Could life be the creation of "some Vast Imbecility" without power to care for his creation, as the Deists suggest? Or perhaps life is the result of an unconscious "Automaton." The third possibility is that man and nature are the "live remains / Of Godhead dying downwards, brain and eye now gone" (ll. 19-20). Finally, existence and its accompanying pain may be the result of a plan that cannot be understood but which will ultimately lead to good, similar to Tennyson's belief in evolutionary progress for man. But man, in the end, can only reply to these conjectures as a true agnostic, "No answerer I" (l. 25).

The possibility of an unconscious creator is posed again in both "God-Forgotten" and "Agnosto Theo." The creator, personified as God, in "God-Forgotten," has forgotten the
Earth and its inhabitants. Reminded by man of his long-suffering creation, God admonished man with, "'Thou shouldst have learnt that Not to Mend / For Me could mean Not to Know'" (ll. 41-42). Now aware of his creation, God promises to mend the present state of affairs on earth; but this hope is quickly dispelled when the man admits that his conversation with God has been only a pleasant illusion:

--Oh, childish thought! . . . Yet often it comes to me
When trouble hovers nigh. (ll. 47-48)

It is this kind of fantasizing to which the speaker admits in the opening lines of "Agnosto Theo":

Long have I framed weak phantasies of Thee,
O Willer masked and dumb!
Who makest Life become,—
As though by labouring all-unknowingly,
Like one whom reveries numb. (ll. 1-5)

Again in this poem the speaker asks, "How much of consciousness informs Thy will . . ." (l. 6). Like the "Mother of all things made" in "Doom and She," the Will in this poem is depicted as lacking the human attribute of sight. Unfortunately for man, the Will's blindness is also a blindness to man's misery on the Earth.

A Will blind to or unaware of man's condition is no worse than the possibility of a Will without a conscience depicted in "A Dream Question" and "God's Education." In both these poems God is conscious and yet unconcerned for his creation. The Lord is the speaker in the following stanza from "A Dream
Question," and his attitude toward man, whose insignificance in the scheme of things is emphasized by likening him to a dwarf, is one of disdain:

He: "Save me from my friends, who deem
    That I care what my creatures say!
Mouth as you list: sneer, rail, blaspheme,
    O manikin, the livelong day;
Not one grief-groan or pleasure-gleam
    Will you increase or take away." (ll. 13-18)

In "God's Education" the creator, personified again as God, acts knowingly but apparently without pangs of conscience. As man watches, God slowly steals a woman's youth: first the light from her eye, then the colors from her complexion, and finally her "spritliness of soul" (l. 8). When man inquires as to God's purpose, God admits that he has no use for these treasures: "'They charm not me; I bid Time throw / Them carelessly away'" (ll. 14-15). When man calls attention to the cruelty of God's act, God replies, "'The thought is new to me'" (l. 18).

The idea implicit in all these poems is that the creator and mover of all things operates at a lower level of consciousness and morality than man. Whether the Will has been characterized as blind or unconscious or thoughtlessly cruel, it has created "a world of defect" from which man can expect at best only "thwarted purposing" (CP, p. 198) and "neutral-tinted haps and such" (CP, p. 886).

The origin of man's superior morality and intelligence is often presented in Hardy's poems as some mistake made in
nature. The following note made in 1883, quoted by Florence Emily Hardy in *The Life of Thomas Hardy*, suggests this theme: "November 17: Poem. 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 satisfaction." Nature's error is apparent in "The Mother Mourns":

"I had not proposed me a Creature
(Shew soughed) so excelling
All else my kingdom in compass
And brightness of brain

"As to read my defects with a God-glance,
Uncover each vestige
Of old inadvertence annunciate
Each flaw and each stain!

"My purpose went not to develop
Such insight in Earthland;
Such potent appraisements affront me,
And sadden my reign!" (ll. 21-32)

Nature had erred in allowing man sentience, and, for Hardy, man had gained only pain from this mistake. For now he possesses what Hardy refers to as "the disease of feeling" in "Before Life and After." Many of the workings of the earth which are, at the least, natural, if not kind, now seem cruel to man: "And primal rightness took the tinct of wrong . . ." (l. 14). An 1881 entry in Hardy's notebook clarifies this important view of man's intelligence and morality. The term "Law" in the following passage may be taken to mean Natural Law, a force through which the Immanent
Will operates:

General Principles. Law has produced in man a child who cannot but constantly reproach its parent for doing much and yet not all, and constantly say to such a parent that it would have been better never to have begun doing than to have overdone so indecisively; that is, than to have created so far beyond all apparent first intention (on the emotional side), without mending matter by a second intent and execution, to eliminate the evils of the blunder of overdoing. The emotions have no place in a world of defect, and it is a cruel injustice that they should have developed in it.25

"Before Life and After" affirms Hardy's view of this cruelty and pictures the time "before the birth of consciousness" in man as one "when all went well" (ll. 3-4). The final lines of this poem are a plea for a return to this earlier state: "Ere nescience shall be reaffirmed / How long, how long?" (ll. 15-16).

The ironic twists in Hardy's narrative poems, for which he is so famous, owe much to man's development of emotions in a "world of defect." These ironic events, which are frequently cruel, "happen naturally, as an explicable sequence of physical and human actions mixed," according to J. Hillis Miller. He continues, "This is what makes them so painful. Things happen as they happen and only man, with his desire that events should correspond to some abstract idea of justice, or to some providential or human design, finds them ironically cruel."26 Many poems of this nature exist in Time's Laughing-stocks and Other Verses. "A Sunday Morning Tragedy" is one
from this volume often used to illustrate this theme. In the poem the mother of a young girl, pregnant but unwed, fails in her attempt to persuade the girl's lover to marry the girl. To protect her daughter from the disgrace of bearing an illegitimate child, the mother secures and administers a herb to induce abortion. In the meantime the girl's lover, experiencing a change of heart, decides to marry the girl. When he appears at the house to declare himself, the mother discovers her daughter dead as a result of the attempted abortion. The tragedy in this poem involves the complex interaction of the Natural Law of natural selection, which first attracted the two people and leads to the conception; the mother's natural instinct to protect her child; and the chemical reaction of the herb within the girl's body resulting in death. Chance and Time play their part only in that the lover arrives too late, after the girl has taken the herb. Although these events are a result of the nature of things in the universe, it is this kind of cruelty in life which led Hardy to depict life as "a senseless school" (CP, p. 299) "for ends unknown" (CP, p. 298), and to declare in his notebook:

A woeful fact--that the human race is entirely too extremely developed for its corporeal conditions, the nerves being evolved to an activity abnormal in such an environment. . . . This planet does not supply the material for happiness to higher existences.
Man's superior intellect and moral sense are offended by the Immanent Will operating through Chance, Time, and Natural Law. Hardy does, in some of his poems, make a distinction between these three impersonal powers. Natural Laws are those aspects of nature which man can understand through scientific knowledge. Chance, frequently related to environment, is any inexplicable circumstance or occurrence in man's life. Time is the power which inevitably destroys youth, love, and beauty. Chance and Time result in man's greatest frustration because, although their effects are painfully obvious, these effects can neither be predicted nor explained. In the early sonnet "Hap," both Chance and Time are the objects of the speaker's angry frustration. Like the personae in "The Impercipient" and in "God's Funeral," the speaker in "Hap" wishes he could believe in God. But in "Hap" there is no note of sadness for the disappearance of God, but rather a kind of fist-shaking vituperation against a universe where God does not exist. The speaker insists that he would gladly accept even a "vengeful god" who, by his very punishment of man, would give significance to his existence. But with the turn of the sonnet, the speaker seems to shrug in recognition of his true position in the universe and the real causes of his suffering:

But not so. How arrives it joy lies slain,  
And why unblooms the best hope ever sown?  
--Crass Casualty obstructs the sun and rain,  
And dicing Time for gladness casts a moan.
These purblind Doomsters had as readily strown
Blisses about my pilgrimage as pain. (ll. 9-14)

Hardy's negative coinage "unbloom" in the second line of this stanza suggests that "Crass Casualty" and Time have the power to reverse even the natural processes. Gittings notes that the fourth line, an example of Hardy's inexperience, "is not only clumsy but obscure--one has to substitute 'in place of' for the word 'for' to make any sense of it." The imagery of Chance, "Crass Casualty," and Time as blind judges determining man's fate on a roll of the dice further indicates man's insignificance as a pawn in a game played by the impersonal, ruling powers of the universe. Chance and Time are just as likely to deal man misery as joy, and man is helpless to predict or alter his fate.

Man's realization that he is of little significance in the scheme of things does not provide him with any comfort in "Hap," but in "The Subalterns," published in 1901, there seems to be some comfort in the stoic acceptance of man's position. Man is but a wanderer in a universe over which he has no control; but in this poem he realizes that, like himself, the forces in nature are powerless to determine their fate:

I

"Poor wanderer," said the leaden sky,
"I fain would lighten thee,
But there are laws in force on high
Which say it must not be."
II

--"I would not freeze thee, shorn one," cried
The North, "knew I but how
To warm my breath, to slack my stride;
But I am ruled as thou."

III

--"To-morrow I attack thee, wight,"
Said Sickness. "Yet I swear
I bear thy little ark no spite,
But am bid enter there."

IV

--"Come hither, Son," I heard Death say;
"I did not will a grave
Should end thy pilgrimage to-day,
But I, too, am a slave!"

V

We smiled upon each other then,
And life to me had less
Of that fell look it wore ere when
They owned their passiveness. (CP, pp. 120-21)

The speakers, appearing in ascending order of their ability
to harm man, are the leaden sky, which dampens man's spirits;
the North, which chills the wind; Sickness, which racks the
body with pain; and finally Death, which creates the ultimate
fear. The first two speakers are meteorological elements and
the last two are physiological elements. All four, as well
as man, are subject to Natural Laws--"laws in force on high."
Man's ability to understand the operation of Natural Law may
be one reason he can smile with acceptance in the fifth
stanza. The Immanent Will, the Cause of Things, remains
completely outside the poem; yet its mysterious workings are observable through the agents which attack the wanderer. The title casts these meteorological and physiological agents in the role of junior officers obeying the commands, the Natural Laws, of a superior force. Man's smile in the final stanza arises from his ability to understand the workings of the "laws in force on high" and from his acceptance that he and nature are only slaves to the commands of the mysterious Will.

The mysterious Will's indifference to man is emphasized by meter and language in "The Subalterns." Hardy's use of common measure and the language of faith has been noted by John Crowe Ransom in his Introduction to Selected Poems of Thomas Hardy. Common measure and the biblical references made by the speakers would have been familiar to Hardy because of his religious background.30 The North alludes to the Christian proverb, "God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb," but the proverb does not hold true in this poem. The ark will not be secure as promised by the Covenant, and the wanderer's "pilgrimage" will end in death rather than in renewal.31 These aspects of meter and language to which Ransom has called attention, along with the frequent personification of the impersonal Will as God or Lord in other poems already discussed, may be Hardy's heavy-handed ironic sense driving home the obvious reasons for his inability to believe in the benevolent Christian God.
The philosophical poems illustrate Thomas Hardy's view of the universe. Behind the functioning of the universe is a Cause of Things, an Immanent Will, whose character is consciousnessless and conscienceless. This Will is the motivating force behind all action in the natural world, as well as in the world of man. The Will acts in and upon man and nature through Natural Law, Chance, and Time. And insofar as both are subject to these three forces, man and nature are related. What separates man from the natural world and from the Immanent Will is his higher level of intellect and morality. Man's superior intelligence and his elevated moral sense are attributed to some accident of the Will; moreover, it is these qualities which allow man to understand the Natural Laws by which the Will operates. Man is at a loss, however, to explain the functioning of Chance and Time. Because the Will is unconscious and unaware, its actions are neither malevolent nor benevolent; they are only indifferent. Much of the pain of existence arises from man's frustration over the unpredictable, impersonal workings of the Will through Chance and Time. Contributing to man's spiritual agony is his superior intellectual and moral state which isolates him from the natural world and the Will. Man's sentience enables him to see the workings of the Will as very often cruel, and this knowledge, in turn, effectively cuts him off from faith in a benevolent creator.
Obviously the philosophy posited in Thomas Hardy's poetry is very much the product of his age. Hardy was admittedly influenced by Darwin, Huxley, and Spencer in his view of man as subject to the same laws as nature. Because Hardy's poetry does illustrate many aspects which proceeded from the increased knowledge that so profoundly influenced the Victorian temper, many similarities in the works of Alfred, Lord Tennyson, Matthew Arnold, and Thomas Hardy are evident. The cruel struggle for existence, the acknowledgement that many old beliefs are no longer apposite to man's condition, a hope for man's evolutionary progress, the possibility of love as buffer against man's spiritual isolation, and the unconventional speculations on immortality are all ideas in the poetry of Tennyson or Arnold which carry over into Hardy's poems. The similarities are never exact, for Hardy's views are modified by the changing intellectual temperament of his day. As the scientific revelations of the first sixty or seventy years of the nineteenth century became less startling simply by the passage of time, and as agnosticism became more acceptable with the continuing increase in knowledge about man and his environment, the characteristic doubts which marked early Victorian poetry became foregone conclusions in Hardy's poetry. As a result, his poetry moved toward resigned acceptance of man's position in the universe and away from the Victorian conflicts of faith and doubt and religion and science.
The nature which Tennyson saw as "red in tooth and claw," "one with rapine, a harm no preacher can heal . . ." (PDT, p. 201) is subdued in Thomas Hardy's poetry. Rather than "the Mayfly . . . torn by the swallow, the sparrow spear'd by the shrike" (PDT, p. 201), Hardy sees a pitiful blinded bird, "Resenting not such wrong!" (CP, p. 446), and a starving thrush, "constrained to very / Dregs of food by sharp distress," yet "Taking such with thankfulness" (CP, p. 268). Instead of Tennyson's "world of plunder and prey" (PDT, p. 201), Hardy more often sees "an aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small," who has "chosen to fling his soul / Upon the growing gloom" (CP, p. 150). The creatures in Hardy's poetry inhabit landscapes which seem to mirror their acceptance, as well as the poet's, of the strife in nature which caused Tennyson, in In Memoriam, to falter and fall with his "weight of cares." Hardy's landscapes are dominated by images of the "neutral tones," to borrow one of his titles, of resignation in nature and in Hardy's soul. In "The Darkling Thrush" the earth is "shrunken hard and dry;" the twigs are "bleak" and the frost is "spectre-grey." The clouds in "The Year's Awakening" have "wrapt the sky in a clammy shroud . . ." (l. 6). Tennyson's red nature has mellowed into Hardy's natural world most often described in terms of "twilight-time," "the dim-lit cease of day" (CP, p. 436).

Just as Tennyson saw the struggle for existence in nature, which Darwin had described, Hardy also is conscious
of this struggle. In these lines from "In a Wood," Hardy's awareness of the natural world as a battlefield is obvious:

Great growths and small
Show them to men akin--
Combatants all!
Sycamore shoulders oak,
Bines the slim sapling yoke,
Ivy-spun halters choke
Elms stout and tall.

Touches from ash, o wych,
Sting you like scorn!
You, too, brave hollies, twitch
Sidelong from thorn.
Even the rank poplars bear
Lothly a rival's air,
Cankering in black despair
If overborne. (ll. 18-32)

Hardy's likening of the forest growth to men and labeling them as "combatants" indicates that he, like Tennyson's hero in "Maud," saw the struggle for existence in nature reflected in mankind.

In recognizing the truth of life and nature's cruelty, man was faced with the knowledge that his past belief in a benevolent creator was difficult to maintain. Although Tennyson was able to reconcile his conflict between knowledge and religion by faith, Matthew Arnold, like Hardy, was not, and many of Hardy's poems echo Arnold's on this problem. The following lines are from Arnold's "Despondency":

The thoughts that rain their steady glow
Like stars on life's cold sea,
Which others know, or say they know--
They never shone for me.
The same thought in a similar mood is expressed by the speaker in Hardy's "The Impercipient":

Why thus my soul should be consigned
To infelicity,
Why always I must feel as blind
To sights my brethren see,
Why joys they've found I cannot find,
Abides a mystery. (ll. 1-6)

The sorrow the speakers in both poems feel is for the recognition that they are cut off from belief in religion. Arnold acknowledges in "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse," however, that this religion has always been only a myth:

For the world cries your faith is now
But a dead time's exploded dream;
My melancholy, sciolists say,
Is a pass'd mode, an outworn theme--
As if the world had ever had
A faith, or sciolists been sad! (ll. 97-102)

The speakers in Hardy's "Yuletide in a Younger World" and "The Oxen" also know that these earlier beliefs have not just waned in importance, but that they were always an illusion. Both poems, set at Christmas, expose the myths which surround this central event in Christianity. In "Yuletide in a Younger World," the speaker sees the myth as so unbelievable now that past belief in it seems impossible:

We heard still small voices then,
And in the dim serene
Of Christmas Eve,
Caught the far-time tones of fire-filled prophets
Long on earth unseen...--Can such ever have been? (ll. 19-24)
In "The Oxen" the fable of the animals kneeling at midnight on Christmas Eve is no more of a fair fancy of childhood than the entire body of Christianity which "few would weave / In these years!" (ll. 9-10). The tone of both Hardy's poems is resigned sadness for a lost dream; there is none of Arnold's anger, conveyed by his choice of volatile words like "cries," "dead," and "exploded" in lines 97-102. Hardy, standing at a distance from the Victorian conflict of faith and doubt which embroiled Arnold, is content to express only the gloom of his soul existing in a godless universe.

One of the main developments of the new knowledge, resulting in man's inability to sustain his belief in orthodox Christianity, is the theory of man's evolutionary development. Tennyson treated evolution in the famous sections LIV, LV, and LVI of In Memoriam. By the conclusion of the poem, however, he had modified the theory of evolution into a vision of spiritual progress for man which would bring him nearer to perfection. Hallam, in death, became the symbol of this spiritual evolution. Hardy neither doubts nor debates man's origins, as is evident in these lines from "Plaint to Man":

When you slowly emerged from the den of Time,  
And gained percipience as you grew,  
And fleshed you fair out of shapeless slime,  

Wherefore, O Man, did there come to you  
The unhappy need of creating me--  
A form like your own--for praying to? (ll. 1-6)
The species and his consciousness are attributed to an evolutionary progress described in Darwin's *Origin of Species*. Any future progress man may make is not spiritual, according to Hardy, but social, and it must issue from the human capacity for sympathy:

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. (ll. 28-32)

Another theme related to the possibility of social progress for man is the extreme slowness of such progress. "A Night of Questioning," "Channel Firing," and "The Jubilee of a Magazine" evince Hardy's concern for man's halting social evolution. "The Jubilee of a Magazine" demonstrates Hardy's conviction that social progress has not kept pace with material progress:

But if we ask, what has been done
To unify the mortal lot
Since your bright leaves first saw the sun;

Beyond mechanic furtherance—what
Advance can righteousness, candour, claim?
Truth bends abashed, and answers not.

Despite your volumes' gentle aim
To straighten visions wry and wrong,
Events jar onward much the same! (ll. 15-23)

Hardy's letter written to the American National Red Cross Society in 1900 provides further insight into this theme:
A society for the relief of suffering is entitled to every man's gratitude; and though in the past century, material growth has been out of all proportion to moral growth, the existence of your Society leaves one not altogether without hope that during the next hundred years the relations between our inward and our outward progress may become less of a reproach to civilization.

The hopeful note of Hardy's letter is absent from "Channel Firing" and "A Night of Questionings." "The world is as it used to be: / All nations striving to make / Red war redder" (ll. 12-14) in "Channel Firing." And in "A Night of Questionings," the wind can only tell the dead, "Men still / Who are born, do good, do ill . . ." (ll. 8-9).

Throughout the body of Hardy's poetry an underlying idea is that life can be improved to some degree. But man must face the realities of existence before he can make any changes in his condition. He insists, in In Tenebris II, "that if way to the Better there be, it exacts a full look at the worst . . ." (l. 14). Human progress is "a delicate growth cramped by crookedness, custom, and fear . . ." (l. 15).

Another aspect of the Victorian interest in evolution surfaces in Hardy's various speculations on the possibility of the Immanent Will evolving into a state of consciousness and, as a result, bettering man's lot. This idea emerges in several of the philosophical poems, but its most obvious expression is in "Agnosto Theo":

Perhaps Thy ancient rote-restricted ways
Thy ripening rule transcends;
That listless effort tends
To grow percipient with advance of days,
And with percipience mends. (ll. 11-15)
The hope for the Will to gradually evolve into consciousness rests on reasoning that since man, a "Part . . . of the general Will" (l. 9), has reached a state of percipience, so too may the Will. This theory of evolution, so much a part of the rise of science, gave Tennyson hope for man's spiritual progress. For Hardy evolution suggested man's potential for improving society and, perhaps, the possibility of an awakening of consciousness in the Cause of Things, surely resulting in a more meaningful existence for mankind.

Although Hardy's application of the theories of evolution to man as a social being and to the Will does suggest what he referred to as his melioristic views, much of Hardy's poetry is marked by an inability to see in the outward and visible manifestations of the Will any promise for improvement. The lessons of "quiet work" and "self-dependence" that Arnold learned from nature were very different from those Wordsworth had learned, and, when Hardy turns to nature for an understanding of life and the workings of the Immanent Will, his lesson is an empty one. Of "The Darkling Thrush," "A Backward Spring," and "The Year's Awakening," Paul Zietlow has commented, "they celebrate not the gaining of knowledge, but the realization of the impossibility of getting it." The "aged thrush," in "The Darkling Thrush," knows so little that he will "fling his soul / Upon the growing gloom" (ll. 23-24). The only lesson man can learn from crocus in "The Year's Awakening" is that nature operates by "merest
rote," and, as in "A Backward Spring," it will continue in this manner "never to ruminate on or remember / What happened to it in mid-December" (ll. 14-15).

This inability to be taught by nature is a manifestation of Hardy's belief in man's superior morality and intellect. This idea may be seen as an echo of Arnold's view that man can gain no moral or ethical values from nature because he is on a higher spiritual and intellectual plane than the natural world. Again, although the ideas are very similar, Arnold's tone has an undercurrent of angry frustration missing from Hardy. These stanzas, the first from Arnold's "In Harmony With Nature" and the second from Hardy's "The Last Chrysanthemum," demonstrate the point:

Man must begin, know this, where Nature ends;
Nature and man can never be fast friends.
Fool, if thou canst not pass her, rest her slave!
(1l. 12-14)

But Hardy is resigned to nature's lack of intelligence and his own superior and lonely position:

---I talk as if the thing were born
With sense to work its mind;
Yet it is but one mask of many worn
By the Great Face behind. (ll. 21-24)

Arnold's realization in "Self-Dependence" that man must rely on himself if he is to find any peace in this indifferent cosmos where nature and man are alienated by man's morality and intellect anticipates Hardy's belief that the only hope
for mankind rests "on the human heart's resource alone" (CP, p. 326). Empedocles, in Arnold's "Empedocles on Etna," counsels man to know himself, to take pleasure in what little life has to offer, and then, perhaps, man will recognize that there is room for at least a measure of improvement in his lot:

And yet, for those who know
Themselves, who wisely take
Their way through life, and bow
To what they cannot break,
Why should I say that life need yield but
Moderate bliss? (ll. 387-91)

Is it so small a thing
To have enjoy'd the sun,
To have lived light in the spring,
To have loved, to have thought, to have done;
To have advanced true friends, and beat down baffling foes-- (ll. 397-401)

I say: Fear not! Life still
Leaves human effort scope,
But, since life teems with ill,
Nurse no extravagant hope;
Because thou must not dream, thou need'st not then despair! (ll. 422-24)

Hardy renders sentiments very near those of Empedocles in "For Life I Had Never Cared Greatly." There is no extravagant optimism in this poem, but, as in the lines from "Empedocles on Etna," there is an intelligent recognition of the value of life and an insistence that man must not waste his lifetime in needless despair over what life cannot offer:
For life I had never cared greatly,
As worth a man's while
Peradventures unsought,
Peradventures that finished in nought,
Had kept me from youth and through manhood till lately
Unwon by its style.

In earliest years—why I know not—
I viewed it askance;
Conditions of doubt,
Conditions that leaked slowly out,
May haply have bent me to stand and to show not
Much zest for its dance.

With symphonies soft and sweet colour
It courted me then,
Till evasions seemed wrong,
Till evasions gave in to its song,
And I warmed, until living aloofly seemed duller
Than life among men.

Anew I found nought to set eyes on,
When, lifting its hand,
It uncloaked a star,
Uncloaked it from fog-damps afar,
And showed its beams burning from pole to horizon
As bright as a brand.

And so, the rough highway forgetting,
I pace hill and dale
Regarding the sky,
Regarding the vision on high,
And thus re-illumed have no humour for letting
My pilgrimage fail. (CP, p. 537)

One way of giving meaning to life and of providing a
sense of order in the midst of cosmic indifference is, for
both Matthew Arnold and Thomas Hardy, through love for another
person. As Arnold implies in "The Buried Life" and "Dover
Beach," this relationship is only a temporary hedge against
the chaotic universe. In Hardy's poetry love cannot last
forever, but it can, at least temporarily, transform man and
his way of seeing life. This altered view of life and the change in man wrought by love is the idea in "When I Set Out for Lyonnesse," the subject of which is Hardy's meeting of Emma Gifford, who became his first wife:

When I came back from Lyonnesse
With magic in my eyes,
All marked with mute surmise
My radiance rare and fathomless,
When I came back from Lyonnesse
With magic in my eyes! (ll. 13-18)

The power of love to free man from the empty strife of life is developed more explicitly in "She Opened the Door":

She opened the door of the West to me,
With its loud sea-lashings,
And cliff-side clashings
Of waters rife with revelry.

She opened the door of Romance to me,
The door from a cell
I had known too well,
Too long, till then, and was fain to flee.

She opened the door of a Love to me,
That passed the wry
World-welters by
As far as the arching blue the lea.

She opens the door of the Past to me,
Its magic lights,
Its heavenly heights,
When forward little is to see! (OP, p. 773)

The great majority of Hardy's love poems, however, treat its inconstancy, reflecting Hardy's naturalistic view of man. Man, as subject to Natural Laws, falls in love mainly because of physical attraction. But physical attraction is a shallow foundation for any lasting relationship, and,
hence, the early intensity of love cannot be long sustained. A comment from his notebook bears this out: "Love lives on propinquity but dies on contact."35 "At Waking" and "The End of an Episode" illustrate the ephemeral nature of love and the disillusionment which results when the magic fades. In "At Waking" "an insight that would not die / Killed her old endowment . . ." (ll. 10-11), and the lover sees the once beloved as "but a sample / Of earth's poor average kind . . ." (ll. 17-18). With the fading of the old feeling, the speaker says, "the prize I drew / Is a blank to me!" (ll. 31-32). And in "The End of the Episode" it is love's evanescent qualities which cause the speaker to admit, "The paths of love are rougher / Than thoroughfares of stone" (ll. 19-20).

If love cannot last forever, perhaps man's real hope lies in a kind of after-life, some continuance of existence after the body has ceased to be. Tennyson was able, through faith, to believe in a traditional immortality by which man would be united with God. Arnold rejected this idea, suggesting that, as in "Thyrsis," a high ideal, embodied in his friend Clough's search for truth, would continue when its proponent was gone. On this point in "Thyrsis," Jean R. Brooks says that there is a "metaphysical consolation by linking the temporal search for truth which he [Clough] and Arnold pursued to the eternal symbol of the tree."36 And yet this symbolic continuance of a quest is far from Tennyson's idea of Hallam as "mixed with God and Nature" (PDT, p. 196)
after death. Arnold's idea of immortality is much nearer Hardy's view that there is no conventional immortality. One of Hardy's poems, "Transformations," does suggest that the dead are transformed into elements of nature. This poem, however, seems to be only fanciful speculation on Hardy's part because of his use of the conditional "may" in two of the three stanzas, and because it is not an idea he chooses to develop in other poems.

Imortality, if it is possible at all, is in a continuance in the memory of those still alive. "Her Immortality," appearing in Hardy's first published volume, Wessex Poems, provides a comment on the concept of immortality through memory. The speaker is a ghost addressing her living husband:

"A Shade but in its mindful ones
Has immortality;
By living, me you keep alive,
By dying you slay me.

"In you resides my single power
Of sweet continuance here;
On your fidelity I count
Through many a coming year." (ll. 33-40)

F.B. Pinon, in Thomas Hardy: Art and Thought, says of "Her Immortality," "This poem is a dramatized fantasy, yet it firmly suggests that living intensely in the memory was not a secondary sort of 'immortality' but the only one in which Hardy the rationalist believed at this time." But Hardy's naturalistic view of man as subject to Time dictates that this hope must also die. Man is a weak creature; his memory
fades with time. As a result, immortality through memory is not immortality at all.\(^{38}\) "His Immortality" and "To-Be-Forgotten" treat the fragile nature of immortality through memory. The first poem opens with the speaker believing in this possibility:

\[
\text{I saw a dead man's finer part} \\
\text{Shining within each faithful heart} \\
\text{Of those bereft. Then said I: "This must be} \\
\text{His immortality." (ll. 1-4)}
\]

But as time passes, the speaker sees the memory of the dead man shrinking "into a thin / And spectral mannikin" (ll. 11-12). Finally, all that remains of the dead man's memory is in the speaker's mind, and there the memory has become "a feeble spark, / Dying amid the dark" (ll. 14-15). Again in "To-Be-Forgotten" old friends from the grave speak to the living man of their fear of a "second death" (ll. 15-16)—when they will be forgotten by the living:

\[
\text{"But what has been will be—} \\
\text{First memory, then oblivion's swallowing sea;} \\
\text{Like men foregone, shall we merge into those} \\
\text{Whose story no one knows. (ll. 21-24)}
\]

Immortality, then, in Thomas Hardy's universe is an impossibility. Although man's being transformed into trees and grass and flowers—a "Portion of this yew" (CP, p. 472)—makes for imaginative poetic speculation, no evidence is given of this, and could it even be considered immortality? The dead live on for a time in the memory of the living, but
memory fades and men die.

Just as Thomas Hardy denies the possibility for immortality more effectively than Matthew Arnold does, he also faces the problems brought on by the increased knowledge of the Victorian period more soberly than either Arnold or Tennyson. Arnold died in 1888, Tennyson in 1892, and Thomas Hardy did not publish his first volume of poetry, *Wessex Poems*, until 1898. This passage of time may in itself account for the different treatment Hardy gives theories on the origins of existence and man's state of spiritual isolation in an indifferent universe. The great emphasis on these problems and the similarities which do exist between Hardy's poetic themes and those of Tennyson and Arnold do, however, place Hardy directly in the tradition of Victorian poetry, but they do not cut him off from the earlier Romantic tradition of Wordsworth.
NOTES


3 Gittings, Young Thomas Hardy, pp. 45-46.


6 Webster, pp. 90-91.


8 Webster, p. 25.

9 Webster, p. 26.

10 Robert Gittings, Young Thomas Hardy, p. 18 et passim, and Thomas Hardy's Later Years (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1978), passim.
11 Gittings, *Young Thomas Hardy*, p. 91.

12 Gittings, *Young Thomas Hardy*, p. 124.

13 Thomas Hardy, *The Complete Poems of Thomas Hardy* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1976), p. 85; hereafter cited as *CP*. Hardy's poetry and prefaces are quoted from this edition. Future references to poems will be by line number in the body; if the poem cited is not clear from context, reference will be to this edition and the page number.


17 Zietlow, p. 150.

18 Alfred, Lord Tennyson, *The Poetic and Dramatic Works of Alfred, Lord Tennyson*, ed. W.J. Rolfe (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1898), p. 163; hereafter cited as *PDT*. Tennyson's poetry is quoted from this edition. Future references will be by line number in the body; if the poem cited is not clear from context, reference will be to this edition and the page number.


24 F.E. Hardy, *Life*, p. 163. [Hardy's brackets].

25 F.E. Hardy, *Life*, p. 149.


29 Gittings, *Young Thomas Hardy*, p. 85.


31 Ransom, p. xv.

hereafter cited as APW. Arnold's poetry is quoted from this edition. Future references will be by line number in the body; if the poem cited is not clear from context, reference will be to this edition and the page number.

33 F.E. Hardy, Life, pp. 306-7.

34 Zietlow, p. 173.

35 F.E. Hardy, Life, p. 220.

36 Brooks, p. 81.


38 Pinon, pp. 170-71.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION: WORDSWORTH AND HARDY

Thomas Hardy's poetry evinces the influence of William Wordsworth in several respects. Rural settings and subjects, an intense interest in the natural world, the notion of a pantheistic force operating in the universe, the changing character of the poet's relationship to nature, and the negative view of technological progress are the central ideas in Wordsworth's poetry which also occupy a preeminent position in the poetry of Thomas Hardy. Although these ideas in Hardy's poetry are colored by the Victorian preoccupation with the increase in scientific knowledge, the similarities of Hardy's themes and treatment to those of Wordsworth lead to the conclusion that Hardy's poetry is the inevitable product of Romanticism colliding with Darwinian science.

The most obvious link between Hardy's poetry and Wordsworth's is in setting and subject. Characteristic of Romantic poetry, Wordsworth selected the English rural areas as the background for his narrative poems, and various aspects of life in these areas are the subjects for many of his lyrics. Thomas Hardy chooses the countryside of imaginary Wessex as the setting of his poems, and the lives of the rustics of Wessex are often his subject. Specific place names from the countryside pervade Hardy's poetry; Vagg Hollow, Wessex Heights,
Henstridge Cross, Mellstock, Ingpen Beacon, Wylls-Neck, Beeny Cliff, Bulbarrow, and Pilsdon Crest are only a few. William Dewey, Tranter Reuben, Farmer Ledlow, and 'melia the "ruined maid" are as suitable for poetic subjects to Hardy as Simon Lee, Michael, and Lucy are to Wordsworth. Hardy wrote about the places and the people he knew; he lived most of his life in rural Dorsetshire among people much like the characters in his poems.

Hardy's preference for Wordsworthian settings and subjects, however, reflects feelings similar to Wordsworth's about the value of life in the country as opposed to city life. A comment in Hardy's notebook illustrates his feelings about the superiority of country life: "Rural low life may reveal coarseness of considerable leaven; but that libidinousness which makes the scum of cities so noxious is not usually there." ¹ Another note indicates his specifically negative impressions of city life:

In the City. The fiendish precision or mechanism of town-life is what makes it so intolerable to the sick and infirm. Like an acrobat performing on a succession of sweeping trapezes, as long as you are at particular points at precise instants, everything glides as if afloat; but if you are not up to time—.²

Hardy's reference to the effect of city life on the sick and infirm is very much like Wordsworth's lines from The Prelude in which he comments on the inability of love to develop
Among the close and overcrowded haunts
Of cities where the human heart is sick,
And the eye feeds it not, and cannot feed. 3

Wordsworth's concern is that people are crowded into cities and nature is pushed out; Hardy's concern, on the other hand, is the mechanistic quality of city life. Both poets are led, for slightly different considerations, to value the rural way of life and to celebrate it in the settings and characters of their poems.

In the English countryside Wordsworth and Hardy also developed a keen interest in the natural world. Many of Wordsworth's lyrics extol the beauties of nature. "My Heart Leaps Up," "To a Butterfly," "To the Small Celandine," "To the Daisy," "The Green Linnet," "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," and "To a Sky-Lark" are titles which illustrate Wordsworth's enthusiasm for nature's beauty. Hardy's lyrics also reflect his interest in the natural world and its inhabitants. "At a Lunar Eclipse," "The Bullfinches," "The Caged Thrush Freed and Home Again," "The Darkling Thrush," "Yell'ham-Wood's Story," "To the Moon," and "The Blinded Bird" are titles which indicate Hardy's inclination toward Wordsworthian subjects. Hardy's lyrics, however, do not usually extol nature's beauties, but rather they ponder its mysteries. Of the shift from Wordsworth's theme of natural beauty to his theme of nature's mystery, Hardy commented in his notebook, in 1887: "I feel that Nature is played out as a Beauty but not as a Mystery." 4
A comparison of "The Green Linnet" by Wordsworth and "The Darkling Thrush" by Hardy illustrates the contrasting approach of the two poets to natural subjects. A primary difference in the poets' treatment of nature is indicated by the description of setting. Wordsworth's setting, fixed in the first stanza, is spring in a wood:

Beneath these fruit-trees boughs that shed
Their snow-white blossoms on my head,
With brightest sunshine round me spread
Of spring's unclouded weather.
In this sequestered nook how sweet
To sit upon an orchard-seat!
And birds and flowers once more to greet,
My last year's friends together. (ll. 1-8)

Hardy's setting, also established in the first stanza, is in a wooded area, but the desolation of the winter scene is in sharp contrast to Wordsworth's spring beauty:

I leant upon a coppice gate
When Frost was spectre-gray,
And Winter's dregs made desolate
The weakening eye of day,
The tangled bine-stems scored the sky
Like strings of broken lyres,
And all mankind that haunted nigh
Had sought their household fires. (ll. 1-8)

Wordsworth's nature is animated with the renewal of life in spring, but Hardy's nature is everywhere devitalized by winter's harshness. A death motif runs throughout Hardy's poem; the setting, as indicated in the first stanza, is a winter's evening--the death of a day and the death of a year.
The poem, composed in December 1900, also commemorates the
death of a century, as witnessed by the opening lines of the
second stanza:

The land's sharp features seemed to be
The Century's corpse outleant,
His crypt the cloudy canopy. . . . (ll. 9-11)

Rather than Wordsworth's "turf of hazel trees, / That twinkle
to the gusty breeze . . ." (ll. 25-26), in Hardy's wood "The
ancient pulse of germ and birth / Was shrunken hard and
dry . . ." (ll. 13-14).

The birds, Wordsworth's linnet and Hardy's thrush, are
as different as the poets' descriptions of setting. The
linnet in his "green array" (l. 13) is "the happiest guest /
In all this covert of the blest . . ." (ll. 9-10). Hardy's
"aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small, / In blast-beruffled
plume . . ." (ll. 21-22) finds no welcome amid the "growing
gloom" (l. 24). Unlike Wordsworth's linnet, who is the
"Presiding Spirit here to-day . . ." (l. 14), Hardy's "darkling
thrush," whose appearance does parallel the setting, sings a
song "of joy illimited" (l. 20) which is ironically inap-
propriate for his condition and the condition of nature:

So little cause for carolings
Of such ecstatic sound
Was written on terrestrial things
Afar or nigh around. . . . (ll. 25-28)
Wordsworth's "Presiding Spirit" receives the poet's praise, but Hardy's "darkling thrush" gives the poet cause for doubt. The speaker wonders whether the bird knows something he does not:

That I could think there trembled through
His happy good-night air
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew
And I was unaware. (ll. 31-32)

The conditional "could" in this stanza, the poem's death motif, and the irony of the bird's song indicate the speaker's knowledge that the bird knows of no "blessed Hope." The ghostly motif and the adjective "darkling" suggest Hardy's interest in nature's mysteries, but the conclusion to be inferred from this poem is that nature does not reveal its secrets through its inhabitants.

In many of Hardy's poems that have the natural world as their subject, he turns to nature for an answer to his questions about the mysteries of the universe. The return to nature for knowledge is a legacy from Wordsworth, who insists in "The Tables Turned" that nature is man's best teacher:

She has a world of ready wealth,
Our minds and hearts to bless—
Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,
Truth breathed by cheerfulness.

One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can. (ll. 17-24)
Even when man is separated from nature, its lessons are so powerful that they serve as a source of solace and a norm of conduct for Wordsworth, as he says in these lines from "Tintern Abbey":

These beauteous forms,  
Through a long absence, have not been to me  
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye;  
But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din  
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,  
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,  
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;  
And passing even into my purer mind,  
With tranquil restoration:--feelings too  
Of unremembered pleasure: such, perhaps,  
As have no slight or trivial influence  
On that best portion of a good man's life,  
His little, nameless, unremembered, acts  
Of kindness and of love. (ll. 22-35)

Not only does nature offer man comfort and instruct him in ethical behavior, but nature, contemplated in solitude, also brings on the transcendental state which allows Wordsworth to understand the mysteries of the world about him:

that blessed mood,  
In which the burthen of the mystery,  
In which the heavy and the weary weight  
Of all this unintelligible world,  
Is lightened:--that serene and blessed mood,  
In which the affections gently lead us on,—  
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame  
And even the motion of our human blood  
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep  
In body, and become a living soul:  
While with an eye made quiet by the power  
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,  
We see into the life of things. (ll. 37-49)

The lessons Hardy learned from nature were not worthy of the student. Because Hardy saw man, much as Arnold did in
"In Harmony with Nature," as further advanced morally and intellectually than the natural world, Hardy's lessons were those of the witless chrysanthemum or the darkling thrush. As to Wordsworth's belief in nature as a norm for man's conduct, Hardy commented on this in his notebook: "To model our conduct on Nature's apparent conduct, as Nietzsche would have taught, can only bring disaster to humanity." Although Hardy and Wordsworth both turned to nature for knowledge, the lessons they learned were quite different. The factor determining the difference was nineteenth-century science.

Both Hardy and Wordsworth, by turning to nature, attempted to create order in the natural world and in their own lives. The explanations provided by science and his personal observations of life led Thomas Hardy to his concept of the Immanent Will. The Will is the force operating in nature to produce such phenomena as the witless chrysanthemum blooming too late for survival, the thrush singing joyfully in the midst of a dead landscape, and the starving bird thankful for a rotting berry. Hardy's concept of the Immanent Will and its function is similar to Wordsworth's Active Principle in "The Excursion" or the "Wisdom and Spirit of the universe" in The Prelude. Both forces are a kind of life force operating throughout the universe, and both reveal themselves to man through the natural world and through man himself. Wordsworth, however, perceives the force behind the universe as being benevolent and purposeful, whereas Hardy's Will is conscienceless
and consciousless. In turning to nature for an explanation of its mysteries, both Wordsworth and Hardy perceived a pantheistic force operating throughout the universe.

Wordsworth and Hardy both perceived the force as immanent in man and nature, the source of all action in the universe. Wordsworth, in "Tintern Abbey," senses the force

in the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man. . . . (ll. 97-98)

More important, the force is

A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. (ll. 100-2)

Hardy also perceives the Immanent Will in the world around him. The late-blooming chrysanthemum is "but one mask of many worn / By the Great Face behind" (CP, p. 149). Man, in "He Wonders About Himself," is a puppet of the Will:

No use hoping, or feeling vext,
Tugged by a force above or under.
Like some fantocine, much I wonder.
What I shall be doing next! (ll. 1-4)

The meteorological and physiological elements in "The Subalterns" are, like man, subject to the Immanent Will's directions, the "laws in force on high." It is the Immanent Will, in "The Convergence of the Twain," which "stirs and urges every-
thing . . ." (l. 18). The Immanent Will of Hardy's universe
and Wordsworth's force are the powers in and behind the natural world and man.

Although Wordsworth perceives the power behind the universe as benevolent, "A spirit and a pulse of good" (CPW, p. 94), and Hardy sees the power as that "Willer masked and dumb" (CP, p. 186), both forces have the power of creation. In The Prelude Wordsworth attributes all action, thought, and life to this power:

Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!
Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought,
That givest to forms and images a breath
And everlasting motion. . . . (I. 401-4)

Hardy's Will is the force "Who makest Life become--" in "Agnosto Theo," and the "Mother of all things made . . ." in "Doom and She." Hardy has followed Wordsworth in substituting, as the Cause of Things, immanent process for the separate Christian Deity. By attributing to some force in the natural world and to man the power of creation, Wordsworth had given that force, indwelling in man and nature, the power previously reserved for the God of Christianity, a separate Deity rather than an immanent presence. Wordsworth had, in effect, evicted God from his separate residence, heaven, and brought him to earth to live in man and nature.

For Wordsworth to sustain his belief in a benevolent force operating in man and nature, he had to view the operation of the universe as purposefully leading to the ultimate good of all. Once Wordsworth was personally confronted by nature's
senseless cruelty, he retreated from his natural religion into Christian orthodoxy, whose doctrine maintained the separateness of man, nature, and God.

Although Wordsworth's doctrine of a benevolent power in man and nature failed him in the years after "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" (1802-4), his pantheistic ideas had made their mark on English literature and on Thomas Hardy. The startling revelations of science, which had begun in the nineteenth century, would color Wordsworth's pantheism for Hardy. The scientific explanations, from Lyell to Darwin, for the existence of life and the earth, as well as those which accounted for the workings of nature, would all but deny the possibility of a benevolent creator to men like Thomas Hardy. Hardy, a great reader of the Romantic poets, indicates, by two brief comments in his notebook, the hold Wordsworth's ideas exercised on him. The first is dated May 30, 1876:

"I sometimes look upon all things in inanimate Nature as pensive mutes."  

The second entry is much later, February 10, 1896: "In spite of myself I cannot help noticing countenances and tempers in objects of scenery, e.g., trees, hills, houses." These notebook entries are remarkably similar to Wordsworth's lines in "Lines Written in Early Spring":

And 'tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes. (ll. 11-12)

And in a more solemn mood, Wordsworth's lines in "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" suggest Hardy's notebook entries:
To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears. (ll. 202-4)

From the affinity Hardy's notes have to Wordsworth's
pantheistic poetry and from the close resemblance of Hardy's
concept of the Immanent Will to Wordsworth's concept of an
immanent deity, the influence of Wordsworth on Hardy becomes
strikingly evident. Hardy apparently had something of Words-
worth's pantheistic universe in his mind when he began to
speculate on the Cause of Things. Taking into consideration
scientific knowledge and his personal observations of life,
Hardy enlarged upon Wordsworth's views. The God Wordsworth
had evicted from heaven is still living on the earth in man
and nature for Thomas Hardy, but he is without consciousness
or conscience.

The benevolent, purposeful spirit Wordsworth saw in
nature and man began to fade as he approached manhood, until,
by the time he composed "Elegiac Stanzas Suggested by a
Picture of Peele Castle," he could no longer see nature as
an outward and visible manifestation of this spirit.
and "Elegiac Stanzas Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle"
give accounts of Wordsworth's changing relationship to nature,
and, in each instance, there is a sadness for what once had
been. "To Outer Nature" is Hardy's account of his maturing
view of nature; this poem also suggests Hardy's sadness for
a lost harmony with nature. Both poets suffered disillusionment
with a universe in which man and nature were alienated.
But more often Hardy's poems express, more specifically, a regret for the loss of faith in God. "The Impercipient" and "Before Life and After" have been cited by scholars as communicating a note of melancholy for a lost illusion similar to Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality." A Man's sentience, his consciousness, is ultimately the cause for man's unhappiness in Hardy's poems. Man can no longer believe in God because of the increase in scientific knowledge. Scientific knowledge is also responsible for man's recognition of his alienation from nature. Scientific knowledge had led to the disagreeable aspects of industrialization and urbanization. Frequently in Hardy's poetry, as in Wordsworth's, images of industrialization and urbanization are associated with unhappiness and pain.

Reminiscent of Wordsworth's themes in "The World Is Too Much With Us" and "In London, September 1802" are the views of modern society and technology conveyed in Hardy's "Love the Monopolist," "Midnight on the Great Western," "The Jubilee of a Magazine," and "Dream of the City Shopwoman." In "Love the Monopolist," the train is bearing away a young lover who expresses concern for the uncertain effect his departure will have on his love affair. The poet has misgivings about the future of a "journeying boy" in "Midnight on the Great Western." The images attributed to the railway car in this poem reflect a dislike and distrust of industrialization. The roof-lamp's flame is "oily"; the lamp's beams are "sad." "The Jubilee of
"a Magazine" is a bitter indictment of industrialization:

The steel-roped plough now rips the vale,
With cogs and tooth the sheaves are won,
Wired wheels drum out the wheat like hail. . . . (ll. 15-18)

The verbs "rips," "won," and "drum" suggest a battle motif. The implication is that man, because of modern technology, is now at war with nature. In "Dream of the City Shopwoman," the speaker views her life with much disgust. She has been "tried oft and hard" by "city people's snap and sneer" (ll. 3-4). She cries out against the God who wills it that she "should writhe on this eternal wheel / In rayless grime . . ." (ll. 27-28). The same concept of the city as repugnant appears in "Lonely Days." The city no longer pleases the old woman because of the changes wrought by industrialization:

Streets were now noisy
Where once had rolled
A few quiet coaches,
Or citizens strolled. (ll. 37-40)

. . . . . . . . . . . . . .

Tramlines lay crossing
Once gravelled slopes,
Metal rods clanked
And electric ropes.
So she endured it all,
Thin, thinner wrought,
Until time cured it all,
And she knew nought. (ll. 45-52)

Industrialization, urbanization, and technology are all directly related to the rise of science which, in turn, is a significant factor in the modern man's loss of faith in a
benevolent creator. Thomas Hardy could not deny the scientific advancements of his time, nor could he ignore the arguments of the "Higher Criticism." In "A Drinking Song" he details the major developments in man's progress from the belief "That everything was made for man" (l. 7) to his realization that "we are, in piteous case: / Like butterflies . . ." (ll. 73-74). Although Hardy accepted the premises of modern science and expressed some hope for man's betterment, the knowledge acquired through science has alienated man from nature, and it has destroyed his belief in God. Man and nature are now locked in a battle, and God is not in his heaven to act as a mediator.

William Wordsworth was unable to sustain his belief in his natural religion in light of his personal knowledge of nature's meaningless cruelty. Thomas Hardy recognized, as a result of the expanded knowledge of the nineteenth century, the illusory nature of Christianity. For both poets, however, the beginning had been the English countryside. For both poets, nature is an important subject for poetry. For both poets, nature figures prominently in their philosophical view of the universe. But the "becoming" universe, which creates optimism for the future of mankind in the works of William Wordsworth and his fellow Romantics, creates pain for Thomas Hardy: "It is the on-going--i.e., the 'becoming'--of the world that produces its sadness. If the world stood still at a felicitous moment there would be no sadness in it."
But the world could not stand still, and, somewhere around 1866, according to Robert Gittings, Thomas Hardy knew that "there hath past away a glory from the earth." As a result of "those obstinate questionings / Of sense and outward things" (CPW, p. 355) begun by the Victorians, Thomas Hardy's universe became that of "The Darkling Thrush" where

The ancient pulse of germ and birth
   Was shrunken hard and dry,
And every spirit upon earth
   Seemed fervourless as I. (ll. 13-16)
NOTES


2 F.E. Hardy, Life, p. 207.

3 William Wordsworth, The Complete Poetical Works of Wordsworth, ed. Alice N. George (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1932), p. 214; hereafter cited as CPW. Wordsworth's poetry is quoted from this edition, which includes the 1850 Prelude. Future references will be by line number in the body; if the poem cited is not clear from context, reference will be to this edition and the page number.

4 F.E. Hardy, Life, p. 185.

5 F.E. Hardy, Life, p. 315.


7 F.E. Hardy, Life, p. 114.

8 F.E. Hardy, Life, p. 315.


11 Gittings, *Young Thomas Hardy*, p. 91.
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